

SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMIC COACHING FOR LEADERS IN CAREER TRANSITION

by

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DECLARATION

I, Neville Mark Goldin, Student Number **3841871**, declare that **SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMIC COACHING FOR LEADERS IN CAREER TRANSITION** is my own work, and that all the sources that I have used or quoted from have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. I further declare that this thesis has not been previously submitted for publication at another university.

N. GOLDIN _____

DATE _____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Extract from "1st September 1939"

By W H Auden in *Another Time*, published in 1940

...

For the error bred in the bone
Of each woman and each man
Craves what it cannot have,
Not universal love
But to be loved alone ...

To my parents, Molly and Bokkie Goldin, whose premature deaths deprived me of the chance to share my achievements with them. They would have been so proud of me.

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you have shared with me your vulnerabilities and struggles. Together, we have worked to uncover your strengths and resourcefulness. I have observed, listened, witnessed, intervened and I have learned and grown as a result.

SUMMARY

The post-modern economy has altered the career landscape – career trajectories are now far more fluid and unpredictable, punctuated by multiple occupational changes, increased job mobility and more frequent and increasingly difficult job transitions. Leaders are frequently ill-prepared for the changing world of work that is progressively dominated by self-managed careers.

Taking on a new role is fraught with complexity - for the “chosen one” and for organisations. The implications of successful, failed or derailed job transitions can have strategic and other ramifications for organisations and individuals alike.

This study explores the career transition experiences of and the usefulness of career transition executive coaching for eleven individual leaders from various South African organisations. It is a descriptive, explanatory and exploratory qualitative study, employing the systems psychodynamic paradigm, chosen because it focuses on depth psychology and is a developmentally oriented, psycho-educational organisational theory.

The study adopted an interpretive stance for understanding leaders’ systemic conscious and unconscious behaviour. The ACIBART model helped to interpret the experiences of leaders in transition. These transitions involve the taking and making of a role, implying the loss which attends leaving a previous role, and adjustment to and being authorised in a new, unfamiliar role, including a liminal period of being “in between”. This inevitably produces an inner drama in which internalised *past* figures, possibly related to the new role, are brought back to life, and perhaps even amplified *in the present*. These “unconscious echoes” explain the powerful emotions that frequently attend transitions, especially at the so-called mid-life, and which in turn activate various defence mechanisms.

The systems psychodynamic approach to career transition coaching was particularly useful in helping the participants identify personal patterns and link these to their past and thereby develop personal awareness and insight. The “coaching space” thus became a containing, “transitional space” where the participants could safely do the work required to make the adjustment to their new roles.

Finally, recommendations to various stakeholders regarding the provision of systems psychodynamic coaching for leaders in career transition are made.

Key words:

Adjustment, authorisation, career, role, systems psychodynamic executive/career coaching, systems psychodynamics, transition

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CHAPTER ONE: SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter which provides a framework for the research, the scientific orientation to the research is discussed, including the background to and motivation for the research, the research questions, academic justification for the research problem, the aims and specific objectives of the research, the research paradigms adopted, research design, research method used, as well as the chapter lay-out.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO AND MOTIVATION FOR THIS RESEARCH

“Stability is not of this world” say Amado and Elsner (2007, p.1) and change is the new norm (e.g. Bridges, 2003; Cilliers, 2005; Clutterbuck, 2003; Grady & Grady, 2008; Kilburg, 2002a; Kilburg, 2006; Sher, 2013; Talbott, 2013). The twenty first century world of work and careers is very different to what it was ten or fifteen years ago and is characterised by turbulence, imposed transience, endemic insecurity, a new conceptualisation of what a job entails and of patterns of working (Boxer, 2014; Klein, 2008; Mersky, 2008). Given the salience of work in an individual’s life and the changing nature of jobs (Brawer, 2014; Rasmussen, 2008; Vansina, 2013a), individuals will increasingly face both self-initiated and imposed career transitions. In the world of organisational and consulting psychology, the concept and reality of change is dealt with on a daily basis. In the new world of work, lifelong employment has become less prevalent and traditional, linear, predictable career paths are becoming less common; managers will change roles in the churn of changing, restructured organisations and the work itself will encompass new tasks and hence require new and different skills. Multiple occupational changes (reflecting mobility or churn) are part of a modern, complex career (Bridger, 2009; du Toit, 2015; Gouws, 1995; Mayrhofer & Iellatchitch, 2005; Rasmussen, 2008; Spero, 2007). Role holders need to cultivate the ability to be

ever flexible and to re-invent themselves at each crossroad (Gilmour, 2009; Siltala, 2003, in Mersky, 2008). Employability becomes key and leaders need to acquire the skills to be able to manage their own careers (Coetzee, 2014) - “one has to make oneself” (Sennett, 1996, in Mersky, 2008, p. 101). And any change implies loss – having to let go of something familiar for the promise of something as yet unknown (Bridges, 2003; Grady & Grady, 2008; Kets de Vries, 2006; Miller, 2011; Nagel, 2014; Palmer & Panchal, 2011).

In this study, a career transition has been conceptualised as any change in career and or role; it includes changing career direction, moving into self-employment/portfolio life, being promoted to a higher or different level in an existing or new organisation, redundancy or retrenchment and finally, retirement (Talbot, 2013). In general terms a career transition is a process of disengagement from one situation and engagement in a new work situation which might induce a task change, a role or position change and or an occupation change (Peake & McDowell, 2012). The traditional concept of youth transitions from school to university (e.g. Shildrick & MacDonald, 2007) are not part of this study. Also, as there is much literature on imposed transitions such as retrenchment and redundancy (e.g. Joubert, 1993; Sonnenberg, 1997; Winterboer & Winterboer, 2013), these will similarly not be covered in this study. The transitions which form the scope of this study are thus mainly self-initiated rather than imposed career transitions.

A leader taking on a new role, according to Amado and Elsner, 2007, is an action fraught with complexity and involves many issues not just for the “chosen one” (p. 1) but also for the organisation as a whole. It is among one of life’s most difficult personal challenges, often requiring fundamental personal transformations. While much has been written about leadership, there is minimal research concerning the critical phase when the leader begins to take charge (Amado & Elsner, 2007; Fischer, 2006; Gabarro, 2007; Talbot, 2013). Leadership transitions, especially in the form of the “hoped for” leader (de Board, 2005, p. 40) could pose major

challenges for a newly appointed leader and, if the appointee is at a senior level, for the organisation as a whole.

When a leader takes on a new role, this change or transition is pronounced and can be extremely complex. The percentage of leaders who fail early when taking up their roles is disproportionately high and no clear reasons can be advanced (Amado & Elsner, 2007; Terblanche, Albertyn & Van Coller-Peter (in press)). Grady and Grady (2008) have written about “anaclitic depression blues” (p. 282) which describes the loss of stability or equilibrium experienced when change takes place as well the resultant behavioural symptoms such as anxiety, frustration, withdrawal, retardation of development and so forth and consequent loss of effectiveness, productivity, increase in conflict and loss of morale. Because of the centrality of work in one’s life, when work is not going well, this may be a profound problem, undermining one’s sense of oneself (Eisold, 2013). For the most part, newly appointed leaders are expected to “sink or swim” (Terblanche, Albertyn & Van Coller-Peter, 2017). The day to day reality which leaders experience during the transition phase is often downplayed. Amado and Elsner (2007) have described the approach of new leaders to a new role as one of navigating between the extreme poles of “unavoidable tensions” (p. 61).

A number of business managers with extensive experience of sourcing and introducing coaching into their organisations (when interviewed by Shaw & Linnecar, 2007, pp. 22-25) said that the biggest impact (of coaching) is in helping people prepare for promotion and in role transitions. Coping adequately with these types of role and sometimes life transitions (as in the case of mid-life and retirement, for example) may be very stressful and challenging for leaders (Amado & Elsner, 2007; Kets de Vries, 2006; Talbott, 2013).

Besides the technical requirements of understanding the industry, market, customer and processes, new leaders also need to make a quick assessment of the (new) culture, the power relationships and the team dynamics. They also need

to establish their credibility, build critical relationships and take up their authority in their new role (e.g. Alford, 2001; Gabarro, 2007). Understanding, navigating and applying these additional skills in a business environment where success is everything, finds many leaders on foreign territory. Moreover, besides the individualised demands for performance, the world of leadership has progressed and the range of skills required from senior leaders in modern day organisations has changed dramatically (Rasmussen, 2008; Shapiro, 2000; Sherman & Freas, 2004). No longer valued for their specialised functional skills, leaders today need to focus on getting the best out of people rather than simply being “the boss” or the expert. “Good leadership interprets the hopes and fears of followers to them so that they will not despair or be overcome with anxiety, according to Alford (2001, p. 153). For leaders seeking linear answers to complex and nuanced inner workings of connected organisations and their people, the modern leader has had to acquire a skill set both comprehensive and daunting. In addition, career moves (even positive ones) can be disruptive not only for the individual but for the organisation as a whole and the impact often underestimated (Amado & Elsner, 2007; Talbott, 2013). Leaders are in a perpetual state of new beginning and fresh start (Mersky, 2008).

The role and uptake of executive coaching

Over the last 10 years, executive coaching has become more popular in South African organisations and is gaining a reputation through reports in the so called popular journals as well as in scientific ones, as a well-acknowledged management and leadership development technique (Cilliers, 2005; Meyer, 2006; van der Walt, 2000). Individuals and their companies are investing resources in coaching efforts, almost in an act of “blind faith” (e.g. Kahn, 2014). The field of executive coaching is currently unregulated in South Africa – and while professional organisations like Coaches and Mentors of South Africa (COMENSA) and the Society for Industrial and Organisational Psychology of South Africa (SIOPSA) are attempting to professionalise the field, almost anyone can call him or herself an “executive coach” and the qualifications, background and experience of coaches vary greatly.

As Kilburg (2002b) has said, the work of a person engaging with executives at the individual level in an organisation is extraordinarily visible. Despite this, coaching is generally viewed as a useful way to improve the effectiveness of a leader, exploiting the learning potential in the everyday challenges that executives and leaders face (e.g. Brotman, Liberi, & Wasylshyn, 1998; Cox, Bachkirova & Clutterbuck, 2014; Kets De Vries, Guillen, Korotov & Florent-Treacy, 2010; Palmer & Whybrow, 2008; Peterson, 1996; van der Walt, 2000).

This researcher proceeded from the premise that all coaching is primarily a psychological endeavor aimed at enhancing well-being and performance in personal and work domains (Bunning, 2007a, citing Grant & Palmer, 2002). Systems psychodynamic executive coaching (Bunning, 2007a; Cilliers, 2005; Kets de Vries, 2006; Kilburg, 2002a; Newton, Long & Sievers, 2006; Pooley, 2004) which will be expanded on in Chapter 3, is a model of coaching developed at the Tavistock Institute in London and which recognises that task and organisational performance are influenced by both conscious and unconscious behaviour (hence, working on and below the surface, see Huffington, Armstrong, Halton, Hoyle & Pooley, 2004a). The work of systems psychodynamic coaching is to experientially examine how specific constructs such as anxiety, conflict, identity, boundary, authority, role and task manifest in the leader's behaviour (Cilliers, 2012a), with the aim of providing developmentally and psycho-educationally focused reflection and learning opportunities to the individual leader (Cilliers & Terblanche, 2010), to gain insight into their behaviour at work in general and, in this research, the way they manage career transitions. In a way, the systems psychodynamic career transition coach becomes a transitional object, while coaching turns into a transitional space for the leader in transition, transforming the past into the present (Diamond, 2014). This idea will be expanded on in Chapter 3.

The socio-political-economic and cultural context

It is important to understand the socio-political-economic and cultural context in which the research was conducted (see Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009; Kahn, 2014).

The current South African business environment, characterised by complex legislative, infrastructural, social, moral and competitive transformational challenges, offers a unique context to explore the unconscious conflicts and anxiety manifesting in organisations and the resulting defences (Cilliers, 2004). On a macro level, the research took place at an interesting, albeit unsettled, time in South Africa's history. Despite the country's own relatively recent transition to democracy and its progressive constitution, the country's economy is in recession and has been rated in the "junk status" category by a number of global rating agencies. Business confidence is at a nine year low, protests are rife, particularly by the unemployed youth whose expectations for a better life remain unmet and the major political party is fighting for survival amidst claims of "state capture" (Chernick, 2017; Khumalo, 2017; South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), 2017). According to Nagel (2014), fear is triggered by two omnipresent conditions: any change in the social environment of relationships and thinking about a future that cannot be planned. The system itself is filled with instability, uncertainty and anxiety with the accompanying spillover and threat to individuals' self-esteem and identity, resulting in personal vulnerability and loss of confidence (Huffington, James, & Armstrong, 2004b).

On a micro level, the researcher's own circumstances warrant mention (see Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). While no longer in mid-life himself, the existential questions of the mid-life experience (Biggs, 2003; Kets de Vries, 1978; Levinson, 1988) were very much a part of his world. During the period of being registered with the University of South Africa for his doctoral studies, he made a decision to take early retirement from his corporate job of more than thirty years and to become self employed as a consulting psychologist and executive coach. His personal experience of his own career transition with its attendant anxiety and sense of loss prompted him to change the focus and title of his research (see Cilliers, 2017; Richter & Tyeku, 2002). He sought his own personal coaching in the year before making the transition and this personal experience highlighted the need for this kind of support during a career transition. He is cognisant of his

identification with the participants of this study and his own subjectivity. As a “reflective researcher”, careful interpretation and reflection are central and empathy is linked to the interpretation of understanding – thinking or feeling oneself into the situation of the acting (speaking or writing) person or participant (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 9; 93). As co-producers of meaning (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000), the researcher’s own transferences, counter-transferences and projective identification as and “defended researcher” and the impact on the participants as “defended subjects” as well as the research relationship were taken into account (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009b, p. 41). This dilemma of qualitative research will be expanded on later in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

It is envisioned that this study will contribute to the understanding of the kinds of difficulties leaders in transition face, the role and usefulness of executive coaching in facilitating the transition and will also provide guidelines to various stakeholders about the kinds of practices that impede and support adjustment to a new role.

1.3 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Kilburg (2002a) has noted that the practice of consulting psychology is underpinned by science in guiding, executing and evaluating the effectiveness of interventions (p. 118). While the issue of “career” often comes up in coaching conversations and is frequently the catalyst for initiating coaching, the specialised field of career coaching is relatively new (e.g. Amado & Elsner, 2007; du Toit, 2015; Eisold, 2013; Sandler, 2011; Slater, 2012; Talbott, 2013). Additionally, relatively little scientific research has been conducted into the nature of leaders’ career transitions and the usefulness or value of executive coaching for such transitions, especially from a systems psychodynamic stance. Despite all the funds which are being poured into executive coaching, there is a dearth of research attesting to its efficacy (Baek-Kyoo, 2005; Kilburg, 2004a; Wasylyshyn, 2007) as well as a lack of clear empirical evidence of behavioural and organisational change (Cilliers, 2005; Jarvis, Lane & Fillery-Travis, 2006; Kampa & White, 2002; Kilburg, 2002a). Jarvis

et al. (2006), have written comprehensively regarding the evaluation of coaching interventions but not specifically from the systems psychodynamic paradigm and not specifically relating to career transition coaching. Most trained executive coaches will employ a range of coaching models and techniques to assist particular clients, the so called eclectic approach. Eisold (2013), while not referring to the concept of career coaching, writes of conversations which open up a reflective space to examine dilemmas, exploring his clients' relationships with the world of work in the turmoil of the current job market (p. 158-169). Kilburg uses the practice of a reflective space in his approach to executive coaching (Kilburg, 2002a; Kilburg, 2006). This study examines the usefulness of transitional career coaching by means of a systems psychodynamic lens. Not to say that the coaching was done in a purely systems psychodynamic framework but rather that using such a lens to help understand the coachees' dilemmas and goals in the context of their new roles and organisations, offers a number of benefits (Kets de Vries, et al, 2010; Peltier, 2011). The nature of the specific type of coaching applied in this study will be explained in Chapter 4.

In the South African context, the rate at which less experienced leaders are promoted is likely to increase due to affirmative action and employment equity initiatives. Newly promoted leaders, even the experienced ones, are likely to continue to struggle to conquer the unfamiliar territory of bigger, more complex, and higher risk roles and responsibilities. Leadership transitions are prevalent and, as mentioned, the implications of successful or failed, derailed transitions may have strategic consequences for organisations (Lombardo, Ruderman & McCauley, 1988; Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2008; Shipper & Dillard, 2000; Terblanche et al., in press). The above raises the question of how leaders experience the transition and how helpful transitional career coaching is in supporting leaders make the transition as well as preventing derailment in a new role. The 2014 Deloitte's Global Human Capital Trends (Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends, 2014) surveyed in excess of 2500 human resources personnel and business leaders: the major finding was that the shortage of leadership was

considered to be the biggest impediment to growth. Companies face an urgent need to develop leaders at all levels—from bringing younger leaders up to speed faster to developing leaders globally through keeping senior leaders relevant and engaged longer. Furthermore, in the new world of work, people are less likely to remain in one job, career or profession for their entire lives, hence providing support in the form of career coaching during these transitions is becoming more common (Goldberg, 2012; Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2008; Williams, Palmer & Edgerton, 2014, cited in Cox, Bachkirova & Clutterbuck, 2014). Changing roles, as Borwick (2006) remarked, can theoretically bring about an almost instant change in behaviour but it is not easy (p. 8).

Understanding the unique challenges transitioning leaders face and providing support in the form of career transition coaching is, however, a relatively unexplored area in the South African and international coaching literature (Hatala & Hisey, 2011).

The research question

The problem underlying this research is that when leaders face a career transition, certain issues are highlighted which impact on the extent and speed of their adjustment to their new roles. With increasing “churn” (especially in South African organisations), the demise of the traditional psychological contract with its promise of a job for life in exchange for the employee’s loyalty and conscientiousness, the pressure to perform and deliver results quickly in a new role places the leader who is in transition in an invidious position.

In a general sense, then, the research question is: What are the kinds of conscious and unconscious issues from a systems psychodynamic stance that leaders face when in a career transition and how useful is systems psychodynamic coaching as an intervention, in helping leaders who move into (successively more) challenging roles (career transitions) in dealing with the complex array of issues they face?

1.4 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The general aim of this research was to describe the systems psychodynamic experiences of leaders facing a career transition and to ascertain the usefulness of executive coaching specifically in the systems psychodynamic paradigm and as an intervention to assist leaders during career transitions to deal with the people-related and organisational issues they face.

The specific research aims are as follows:

- To conduct a theoretical investigation into systems psychodynamics, specifically using the systems psychodynamic ACIBART model and to theoretically investigate systems psychodynamic executive coaching (Chapters 2 and 3).
- To conceptualise the phenomenon of a career transition, to attempt to understand from a theoretical point of view what the leader/manager in transition experiences and to explore the notion of career transition coaching (Chapter 4).
- To conduct an empirical investigation into the challenges of career transitions in order
 - to describe and understand the leaders' conscious and unconscious psychological and behavioural dynamics during a career transition;
 - to formulate working hypotheses to act as a guide in understanding and interpreting the experience of leaders who face a career transition;
 - to describe the coaching experience and to understand the usefulness of career transition coaching for the leaders from a systems psychodynamic stance (Chapter 5 and 6) and finally

- To formulate recommendations for the various stakeholders involved in career transitions and to propose ideas for further research into career transitions and career transition executive coaching (Chapter 7).

1.5 THE PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE

Systems psychodynamics was selected as the theoretical paradigm for this study. Systems psychodynamics, based on the original work of Freud, Klein, Bion and others from the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (in Gould, Stapley & Stein, 2006) is based on psychoanalysis; in particular object relations, group relations and open systems theory (Dimitrov, 2008; Fraher, 2004a; Obholzer & Roberts, 1994; Stapley, 1996). In the discipline of Industrial/Organisational and Consulting Psychology which is focused on enhancing the effectiveness and productivity of the organisation as well as the wellbeing of the workforce, systems psychodynamics occupies an established place as a paradigm that focuses on depth psychology, is a developmentally focused, psycho-educational organisational theory and adopts an interpretive stance towards the understanding of systemic conscious and unconscious behaviour (Brunner, Nutkevitch & Sher 2006; Huffington, et al., 2004a). Traditionally the paradigm focused on the organisational group (macro level) but more recently the focus has shifted to include the individual (as an object) and individual behaviour with specific reference to the way roles are taken up (Newton et al., 2006).

The essential concept is the application of an analytical (clinical) paradigm to the study of people in organisational settings. Using this paradigm helps researchers better understand the less obvious, deeper, under-the-surface behaviour of executives in their world of work – their “inner theatre”, as it were (Kets de Vries, et al., 2010, p. 8; Lee, 2014; Peltier, 2011, p. 59; Western, 2012).

The open *systems* concept supports the understanding of the structural aspects of organisations (including design, division of labour, authority levels and reporting relationships as well as their mission and task, sentient boundaries and transactions across them) (Gould et al., 2006, p. 2). The institutions which humans create to accomplish tasks and satisfy needs become external realities which affect them emotionally and psychologically. The *psychodynamic* element refers to the (psycho-)analytic perspective with its emphasis on individual experiences, especially of primitive anxieties, primary (cognitive) process thinking, conflicts, transference, fantasy, unconscious understanding and interpretation, as the individual attempts to understand their own experiences from the inside (Brunning, in de Haan, 2008). As Czander (1993) wrote, “We see the outside world in terms of internal concerns” (p. 45). Consequently, our perception of the world in psychodynamic terms is based upon our own internal needs, wishes and fantasies and personal development which inevitably produces a distorted view of matters (Peltier, 2011, p. 71) and thus conflict. Although the approach has been stereotyped as “pathologising”, an “endless probing in search of childhood memories” (Peltier, 2011, p. 59) and more useful for the couch than the coach (with apologies to Kets de Vries), it is a useful paradigm if a researcher wants to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (e.g. Diamond, 2013).

In the psychodynamic view, behaviour is the result of the interplay between conflicting, irrational, internal forces creating a new, different dynamic. Three channels are used to express psychic energy – the id (dominated by the pleasure principle), the ego (reality principle) and the superego (conscience) which come together in one’s fantasies (of an idealised self) and the unconscious (that of which one is unaware). We protect our sense of self and reduce our anxiety through the use of defence mechanisms, often distorting reality in the process. Both individuals and organisations use them (Dimitrov, 2008). Recognising these defences in ourselves and others and having attention called to them (by, for example, a systems psychodynamically trained and informed executive coach) helps make the unconscious more conscious, leading to improved self-discovery, awareness,

insight and self-management, thereby understanding and reducing anxiety (Peltier, 2011).

Hermeneutics (the study and interpretation of human behaviour or meaning making (Turnbull-James & Collins, 2008)), was chosen as the interpretive approach alongside systems psychodynamics as the paradigmatic approach (Alexandrov, 2009; Clarke & Hoggett, 2009b; Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). As an interpretive stance, hermeneutic phenomenology and its hierarchy of interpretations of texts provided a useful psycho-social (Alexandrov, 2009) research paradigm. In the hermeneutic hierarchy, simple hermeneutics means the individual leaders' interpretation of themselves and their own subjective or intersubjective reality of their career transitions and the meaning they assign to this. Double hermeneutics refers to the recognition that both conscious and unconscious forces mediate the researcher's interpretation of the subject's experience of a career transition and also refers to the way the researcher understands and develops knowledge about the subject's "reality". While finally triple hermeneutics adds the third systemic element relating to the critical interpretation of unconscious processes, ideologies, power relations and other expressions of dominance from a systems psychodynamic point of view involving both the researcher and the participants. Hermeneutics is based on the epistemological understanding that a researcher-practitioner's empathic listening (and reading, addition the researcher's) allows for deep understanding of shared experiences (Alexandrov, 2009; Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009; Clarke & Hoggett, 2009b). Social constructionism and depth psychology with its focus on interpretation (see Kelly, 2002b) of the lived experience of the participants, formed the ontological and epistemological foundations of this study (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). The researcher adopted an interactive and intersubjective approach with the objects (participants) of the research who made up the eleven case studies (see Cilliers, 2017).

1.6 RESEARCH APPROACH

Psycho-social, descriptive and explorative qualitative research (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009b; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was chosen as the research approach because this study, investigating, describing and understanding the career transition and coaching experiences of leaders in transition lends itself to researching beneath the surface and the co-construction of the research environment by the researcher and those researched. The data of human experience is collected and analysed (Wertz, Charmaz, McMullen, Josselson, Anderson & McSpadden, 2011). An inductive approach, using interpretive analysis, making of meaning from case studies (Eisenhardt, 1989), is consistent with the analytic view that human behaviour is complex and often irrational (e.g. Johnson & Waterfield, 2004). Essentially qualitative research uses findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other methods of quantitative analysis and produces narrative descriptions of events and processes which involve discussions of how people experience, feel and make meaning of events in their lives. In addition, the investigator takes an active role in the participants being studied (Ehgie & Ehgie, 2005).

Qualitative research produces findings from real world settings where the phenomena of interest unfold naturally (Durrheim, 2002). With the researcher as the main instrument of this research, taking on the role of both practitioner (executive coach to the participants) and the researcher (analyser/interpreter), yielding rich, “thick” descriptions (see Cilliers, 2012; 2017; Schutt, 2015) of the phenomena (in this case the participants’ experience of being in a career transition and in executive coaching), qualitative research was the logical approach (Henning et al., 2004). The qualitative research method enabled the researcher to understand and describe the participants’ lived experience of a career transition and how they felt about these events in their lives (i.e. from their perspective) which served as a useful means of generating hypotheses about the phenomena of career transitions and executive career transition coaching (Ehgie & Ehgie, 2005).

Given the paucity of literature about the career transition experience of leaders (see also Shongwe, 2014) and the application of executive coaching, especially from a systems psychodynamic perspective, qualitative research methodology was deemed appropriate and useful.

The research approach best suited to the analytic paradigm is both descriptive and explorative qualitative research. The main advantage of qualitative research is that it provides a richness of depth and detail to create an understanding of phenomena and lived experiences (Bowen, 2005; Miller & Salkind, 2002). A qualitative, descriptive explorative approach is thus deemed appropriate for understanding the experience of leaders being coached at career transitions.

1.7 RESEARCH STRATEGY

The research strategy used in this research was the collective or multiple case study (Durrheim, 2002; Eisenhardt, 1989; Fouche in De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2002; Wilson & MacLean, 2011) which offers a thorough description and yields an in depth understanding of the phenomenon of career transitions (Yin, 2003). Baxter and Jack (2008) indicate that the case study method facilitates an in-depth exploration of phenomena in the context in which they occurred. Multiple case studies of leaders in transition were used to understand their experience and the role of career transition coaching in their adjustment. These case studies are both intrinsic (have merit in and of themselves) and are instrumental (illustrate an issue, in this case issues associated with career transition) (Miller & Salkind, 2002). These cases are bounded systems in terms of time and place and the researcher attempted to develop a thorough understanding of the cases through collecting multiple forms of data as he analysed the issues or themes that the cases presented (see data analysis below).

The multiple case study design allowed the researcher to focus on those cases which illustrated and provided insight into the underlying systems psychodynamics

of leaders' career transitions and experience of coaching by collecting detailed data such as coaching field notes, written texts of sessions, email correspondence between coach and participant in between coaching sessions and participants' own essays. This allowed the researcher to explore how leaders adjust to career transitions by taking up new or changed roles and the usefulness of the coaching in this adjustment against the background of their organisational, social and cultural contexts as well as their particular developmental life-stage. Eleven participants for case studies were selected all of whom faced some sort of career transition and of whom all but one fulfilled all the criteria by submitting a personal narrative (the "essay") at the end of the coaching.

1.8 RESEARCH METHOD

The research method is explained next with reference to the research setting, entrée, the researcher's roles, the sampling and data collection instruments and methods employed, the data analysis process followed, the measures taken to ensure quality data and finally how ethicality was ensured in this study.

1.8.1 Research setting

The researcher's experience and expertise are as follows: He is a registered Industrial Psychologist and Tavistock certified Executive Coach. He also recently completed training as an Analytic Network Coach (Western, 2012). He is furthermore contracted to a number of organisations (vendors) who provide coaching services to South African organisations and also contracts directly with private clients who seek coaching services for themselves.

The research setting was thus "closed" and "overt" (Silverman, 2001, p. 57) in that access was controlled by gatekeepers (see section 1.8.2 Entrée below) and was based on subjects knowingly participating in the research. There was no one single system domain since the participants came from different organisations in various

industries with diverse objectives in referring individuals for coaching. The reasons for these organisations engaging the various coaching companies differ from company to company but centre mainly on assisting senior level staff to become more effective in their leadership and or managerial roles and or as part of a management development intervention to prepare leaders/managers for more senior roles. In many cases the organisations had a set of predefined and agreed leadership competencies which form the basis of their leadership development interventions. Even those participants who were self-referred sought coaching for different reasons.

1.8.2 Entrée and establishing the researcher's roles

The research setting was not uniform across all participants. The coaching vendors as well as the line managers and HR partners of the participants were the “gatekeepers”; access was gained by explaining the nature of the research to both the vendors and the eligible participants themselves (see Sampling in section 1.8.3 below) and obtaining their informed consent.

The researcher fulfilled a number of different roles in this study. The primary contact with the participants was in his role as a systems psychodynamically informed executive coach (Bunning, 2007b; Cilliers, 2005; Western, 2012) with the participants having been either referred to the coach through a coaching vendor or having referred themselves. Participants were “matched” with the coach-researcher and after an initial chemistry session (highlighting the issue of choice) (Roberts & Jarrett, 2007), they made a decision to enter (or not) into a coaching contract. A second role taken on by the researcher was that of consulting psychologist to the system (Lowman, 2002) in the form of group supervision sessions and client-vendor meetings. The third role was that of a doctoral student and researcher, a research-practitioner (Cook, 2013; Gray, Iles & Watson, 2011, p. 248; Kahn, 2011; Maritz, n.d.; Motsoaledi & Cilliers, 2012) who also used himself as an instrument (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002; Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim,

2006) in collecting and analysing the data. Mindful of these multiple roles and identities, the researcher sought his own supervision with a psychodynamically trained supervisor (see for example Ward, 2007).

1.8.3 Sampling and the recruitment of clients

Non probability, purposive or judgmental sampling (Henning, et al., 2004; Johnson & Waterfield, 2004; Wilson & MacLean, 2011) was employed; participants who were already in or about to embark on coaching and who were experiencing some sort of career transition were invited to participate in the study. All eleven participants in this study were all middle to senior managers/leaders of large South African corporations who are either part of a team of managers/leaders selected for coaching as part of their ongoing development or were self-referred. They were selected purely on the basis of their willingness to participate in this study (purposive sampling) which may indicate a bias for assistance to improve their leadership effectiveness. They were participants who matched the criteria for available and suitable participants. Coincidentally (or perhaps not, given the organisational level and seniority of the majority of the participants in this study), many of them were at the chronological age period referred to as mid-life (Jaques, 1965; Kets de Vries, 1978; Levinson, 1988) which was believed to overlay another type of dynamic onto the career transition being experienced.

On terminology

The terms leader/manager have been used interchangeably in this study. While all participants were at a relatively senior level in their respective organisations (leadership responsibilities) and most had staff reporting directly to them (managerial responsibilities), Reed and Bazalgette's (2006) and Western's (2013) conception that a person at any level of an organisation who finds, takes up and makes a role is offering leadership was adopted in this study. In reality, all participants demonstrated elements of both leadership and management in their roles. Furthermore, executive coaching describes a method of coaching as will be

discussed in Chapter 3, the recipients of which are managers and leaders and not necessarily executives in the sense of their seniority. Similarly, the participants are referred to interchangeably as clients or as coachees and the researcher is also referred to as the coach or consultant in the later sections of this study.

1.8.4 Data collection instruments, procedure and the storage of data

Multiple data sources are important in qualitative research (Yin, 2003). Data was collected from three main sources: Hand written field notes were made in each coaching session and then, within a few days of the session, were typed up in the form of detailed notes which included the researcher's thoughts and feelings, hypotheses, interpretations and questions. Participants were invited to communicate with the coach/researcher between sessions and these emails or transcribed telephone calls formed part of the data set (Strydom in De Vos, et al., 2005). Finally, each participant was asked to write a two page essay of their "experience of the coaching" – a powerful means of communication despite or perhaps because of it being selectively constructed (Cilliers, 2005; Chapman & Cilliers, 2008; Clark & Standard, 1997). The essays, having been written at the end of the coaching process, served the following purposes: they offered an opportunity for review and reflection, interpretation and sense making of the career transition and coaching experience for both participant and researcher.

All the data referred to above was securely stored electronically.

1.8.5 Data analysis

The data was analysed by means of systems psychodynamic thematic content analysis. This method of analysis was best suited to accommodate the explorative and descriptive nature of the research and the complexity inherent in executive coaching. This process of qualitative data analysis as described by de Vos, et al. (2005, p. 334) was followed. It essentially involved the following phases: Planning

for recording of data; data collection and preliminary analysis; organising the data; reading and writing memos; generating categories, themes and patterns; coding the data, testing the emergent understandings; searching for alternative explanations and representing and visualising. De Vos et al. (2005) describe this as a process of “winnowing” the data and refer to it as the “tough intellectual work” of research (p. 338). The following hermeneutic steps (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009) were applied in the analysis: First, the written texts (coach’s notes, email correspondence and participants’ essays) were read through many times in order to become familiar with the content. Then simple hermeneutics was applied in trying to understand the meaning of the texts, with significant sections underlined and notes made in the margins in order for the researcher to begin to discern themes, patterns and critical incidents. Following this double hermeneutics was applied to the texts and emerging themes, using a systems psychodynamic lens (a systems psychodynamic interpretive stance (Cilliers, 2005)) and in particular the ACIBART model to begin to understand some of the conscious and unconscious patterns operating. Single cases were examined first after which cross case analysis was done to find patterns amongst the cases. Finally, triple hermeneutics was applied in examining the researcher’s own reactions and conscious and unconscious experience (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009) in the form of transference, counter-transference and projective identification and the effect on the coaching relationship.

The analysis, description and interpretation of the qualitative data revolve around the purpose of the study which provides the context for making meaning of the data. This view is consistent with the constructivist approach where the pursuit of knowledge concerns the meaning that people attach to their worlds (Steinberg, 2004, p. 116). Graneheim and Lundman (2004) add that observational or narrative texts in qualitative content analysis always involve multiple layers of meanings and there is invariably an element of interpretation. The description of the content analysis process will be further dealt with in Chapter 5.

1.8.6 Strategies employed to ensure quality data

Qualitative research is pluralistic and interactive (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004) and does not easily lend itself to validity and reliability testing but as Coetzee (2007), has stated “it is a recognized form of enquiry offering learning from a specific perspective” (p. 12). She adds (after Eisner, 2003) that the credibility of qualitative studies is increased by doing the necessary “homework” (p. 12) to fully understand the situation being addressed and by being sensitive to and experienced about the content that is worked with so that the interpretations are credible and can contribute to evidence based practice (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four alternative constructs which more accurately reflect the assumptions of the qualitative (as opposed to the positivistic) perspective with regard to reliability and validity: credibility (internal validity); dependability (reliability); confirmability (objectivity) and transferability (external validity). Qualitative, interpretive researchers use the term trustworthiness (e.g. Loh, 2013; Morrow, 2005) to secure quality data and ensure “good” research (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). Credibility was ensured through the employment of multiple sources of data such as the researcher’s field notes and subsequent written up notes as well as the participants’ reflective essays. Thorough theoretical research was concluded to describe the theoretical framework of this study. A single discrepant case was reported on while triangulation in the form of collaborative hypothesising with the so called “third eye” (another systems psychodynamically trained and experienced researcher) also enhanced the credibility of the data and findings. In this research, triangulation refers to the use of multiple data sources (coaching notes, coachee essays, coachee manager input, consulting with another researcher to seek to corroborate or refute overall interpretations and expose different aspects of reality). Recognising that there are multiple views of reality especially in the analytic paradigm and in qualitative research in general, contradictions and paradoxes were anticipated. It was acknowledged that they would stimulate interaction and dialogue and bring about

a more complete and comprehensive understanding (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004) of the phenomena being studied. Dependability, (the degree to which the reader can be convinced that the findings did indeed occur as the researcher reported them) was ensured by using rich and detailed descriptions as well as fully describing the method and logic of data collection and analysis. In addition detailed raw data in the form of verbatim comments made during coaching sessions and comments taken from the text of the reflective essays were provided in Chapter 6, the Findings section, to provide evidence for the interpretations made and the working hypotheses put forward. Graneheim and Lundman (2004) emphasise the importance of the subject and the context when interpreting text; they suggest that the researcher's own personal history as he or she collects the data *and* performs the analysis requires a delicate "balancing act" (p. 111) and he or she should "let the text talk and not impute meaning that is not there". Johnson and Waterfield (2004) describe reflexivity rather than a source of error or bias as something that lends plausibility to the findings and enhances understanding of complex phenomena. They describe the researcher as central to the construction of valid findings (p. 128). Clarke and Hoggett (2009a) use the term "reflexive practitioner" (p. 7). The researcher additionally sought out his own coaching supervision in order to ensure that his coaching was of a high professional standard and that his own biases, needs, conflicts, and the like were understood and moderated in the pursuit of positive coaching outcomes for the client and his or her organisation.

Confirmability was enhanced by adopting a reflective stance throughout the research and relying on the researcher's own extensive experience of the corporate world as well as his training as both a psychologist and systems psychodynamic coach. His experience of his own career transitions, having supported line managers in a corporate setting with their transitions and subsequently acting as a coach to leaders in transition provided much material for self-reflection. During this he questioned his role as a researcher and a practitioner and enquired how (with the aid of supervision) these might have influenced the interpretations he made and the working hypotheses he formulated. Finally,

transferability was ensured by providing rich, detailed and thick descriptions not only of the processes followed and the outcomes achieved but also the demographics and context of each participant which shaped their experience of the career transition. The trustworthiness of the research will be reported on more fully in Chapter 5.

1.8.7 Ethics of this study

There are strong ethical implications for psycho-social research (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009a), primarily related to care for the subject and the danger of misrepresentation through the selective use of material. In addition to rigorous coaching “contracting” (e.g. Kahn, 2014), written informed consent was obtained after the purpose and requirements of the research were explained to the potential participants. The confidentiality and anonymity of the participants and their respective organisations was guaranteed as was their right to withdraw at any time from the research without any negative consequences to themselves (in terms of the coaching contract) (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 2002). The psycho-social approach to research, according to Hollway and Jefferson (2000), does not encourage immediate interpretations but as the researcher in this study also fulfilled the role of executive coach to the participants, extreme care needed to be taken in interpreting the encounter in a responsible manner with primary concern for the wellbeing of the participants as coachees according to the coach’s professional associations’ ethical guidelines (COMENSA, n.d.; SIOPSA, 2006). Care and respect for each participant’s unique situation and career transition journey / story was demonstrated. The question of ethics will be elaborated on in Chapter 5.

1.8.8 Reporting on the findings

A qualitative writing style was followed in reporting the research findings. Implications for coaching practice and supporting leaders during career transitions

and coach training in the systems psychodynamic model were identified. The limitations of this study are reported on and recommendations for further research provided in Chapter 7.

1.9 CHAPTER LAY-OUT

- Chapter One - The scientific orientation to the research
- Chapter Two - Systems psychodynamics
- Chapter Three - Systems psychodynamic executive coaching
- Chapter Four - Career transitions and career transition coaching
- Chapter Five - Research design
- Chapter Six - Research findings
- Chapter Seven - Conclusions, limitations and recommendations

1.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter the background to and motivation for this research was provided. The problem statement and research question and aims were stated. The paradigm perspective was described and the research design and research method proposed. Finally, the chapter outline for the rest of the study was laid out. In Chapter 2, systems psychodynamics, the paradigmatic foundation of this study, will be explained.

CHAPTER TWO: SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMICS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the term systems psychodynamics and its origin is explained, the theory relating to psychoanalysis, object relations, systems theory and group relations is provided and relevant concepts which make up the systems psychodynamics approach are highlighted. Finally, a model and diagnostic tool, ACIBART (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005; van Niekerk, 2011) which is used to understand conscious and unconscious organisational and individual behaviour is discussed.

2.2 THE HISTORY AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMICS

The systems psychodynamic approach which originated at the Tavistock Institute in London in the 1960s (Miller & Rice in Gould et al., 2006) integrates the triad of psychoanalysis, group relations theory and open systems theory (see Cilliers, 2005). Miller and Rice never actually used the term systems psychodynamics which was first employed in the early nineties in the Review of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (Fraher, 2004a; Klein, 2006; Miller, 1993). It was Bion, considered to be the father of group relations, who developed the original theory of this so called “Tavistock paradigm” (French & Vince, 2002b, p. 5). In his post-World War II work with groups, Bion (1961) treated the whole group as the patient and found patterns in what initially appeared to be random activities, giving rise to his theory of basic assumptions (see section 2.4.3 below). Systems psychodynamics is an emergent but not yet fully articulated field (Armstrong, 2005; Kets de Vries, 2006; Klein, 2006) and was as much an organisational strategy as it was an integration of theoretical approaches (Dimitrov, 2008). This study will now turn to the triad as its source.

2.2.1 Psychoanalysis

Although he wrote very little about work (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2000; Czander, 1993; Kets de Vries, 2006), Freud's classical psychoanalysis provides the conceptual origin of the systems psychodynamic approach.

Describing him as an archaeologist of the mind, Kets de Vries (2006) states that Freud believed that neurotic symptoms can be used to decode why people behave the way they do and that their cognitive and affective distortions can help them recognise the extent to which unconscious fantasies and out-of-awareness behaviour influence their decision making and management practices in their organisations. Psychoanalysis rejects as overly mechanical and definitive the rational, positivistic and economic views of human beings and work. In asserting that there is more to organisational behaviour than meets the eye, Kets de Vries (2006) states that the psychoanalytic method of investigation offers an important window into the operation of the mind, identifying meaning in the most personal and emotional experiences (p. 5). Psychoanalytic theory with its emphasis on unconscious motives and social defence mechanisms, used to defend against primitive, often pervasive anxiety, laid the foundation for systems psychodynamics (Fraher, 2004b). According to Menzies (1985), anxiety is believed to be the basis of all organisational behaviour (see also Cilliers & Koortzen, 2000; Cilliers & Koortzen, 2002). Freud's "psychic apparatus" (de Board, 2005, p. 26) of the id, ego and super ego and the constant interaction between the conscious and unconscious mental processes are significant in understanding individual behaviour and development (Armstrong & Huffington, 2004; Freud, 1947; 1957). Behaviour thus represents the ego's attempt at reaching at least a truce among the id or pleasure seeking forces, the reality of the physical and social environment in the form of the ego and the authority, conscience or moral code of the super ego (after Cartwright & Zander, 1968).

Strongly influenced by Freud, Melanie Klein's contribution of object relations to systems psychodynamic thinking and particularly her theory of the depressive position derived

from her work with children is noteworthy (Czander, 1993; Klein, 1997). Klein, who both built on and departed from the work of Freud (for which she was censured as a 'heretic' by the purists (de Board, 2005, p. 26)), can be credited with laying the theoretical foundation of the systems psychodynamic approach (Dimitrov, 2008). Her important work on object relations predominantly focused on children, and her theories about splitting, projective identification, and the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, later applied to adults, will be described in section 2.4.2. Czander (1993) tellingly asserts that individuals unconsciously seek from their organisations the love they may have never received from their family of origin but nevertheless still try to obtain (p. 7). Psychoanalysis explains not only intra- and inter-personal behaviour but also group behaviour.

2.2.2 Group relations

The second major influence on the systems psychodynamic approach was group relations. Studying the group as a whole social system and the individual's relatedness to the system, Le Bon and McDougall provided an important piece of the history of group relations (cited in Dimitrov, 2008; Freud, 1957). Kurt Lewin is also regarded as a contributor to our understanding of group behaviour, based on his work with experiential groups and the concept of interdependence in the 1940s (Dimitrov, 2008; Miller, 1993). Principally associated with the work of Wilfred Bion, but also influenced by Freud, Klein and Lewin, Bion published a series of papers called the "Wharnccliffe Memorandum" in 1939 (in Fraher, 2004b, p. 72) grounded on his so called Northfield experiment in the military, which later became a comprehensive theory of group working. Using himself as an instrument, Bion's premise was that the focus needed to be shifted from treating the individual to treating the entire group which is developed so as to be able to analyse its own dynamics rather than waiting for external intervention from authority (Bion, 1961; de Board, 2005; Dimitrov, 2008; Sher, 2013). This philosophy became a central tenet in group relations and subsequently in systems psychodynamics. By making it safe for the group to dramatise its unconscious behaviour, Bion drew on the object relations work of Klein such as splitting and

projective identification – the often contradictory feelings of the child in response to the mother (Newton et al., 2006). These concepts will be expanded later in section 2.4.2. Bion further hypothesised that all groups have essentially two modes of operation – a sophisticated, productive group referred to as the work group and a basic assumption group whose aim is to alleviate the anxieties of the group. There are a number of basic assumption modes in which a group can operate which will be explained later in section 2.4.3 (Armstrong & Huffington, 2004; Bion, 1961; de Board 2005; Kets de Vries, 2006; Dimitrov, 2008; Fraher, 2004a; French & Vince, 2002a). Czander (1993) thus asserts that all the psychoanalytic principles and concepts such as identification, anxiety, defence mechanisms and the unconscious which apply to individuals, apply to groups as well.

2.2.3 Systems Thinking

With its central idea of interlocking positions and roles, authors such as Rice, Trist and Miller (in Fraher, 2004a) associated with the Tavistock Institute, have used systems theory extensively to describe organisations. Drawing on the open systems work of von Bertalanffy (cited in Dimitrov, 2008), and viewing the individual as inherently “entangled” in their relational field and in a constant state of relatedness to their environment and context (Kahn, 2014, p. 8), a general systems theory emerged which heralded the association and integration of academic disciplines and the sciences (de Board, 2005). Rice (in de Board, 2005) described the individual as an open system who exists and can only exist through a process of exchange with his/her environment (p. 89). In fact the existence of any human system depends on a continuous interchange with its environment, whether of material, people, ideas, values or even phantasies (delineated later from fantasies) (Gould, et al., 2006). Hence the concept of boundaries (time, task, role and territory) and the exchange across permeable or insulated boundaries was introduced. Trist and Murray (1993), in advancing their socio-psychological perspective, emphasised the influence of psychological forces on social systems and identified two undercurrents – the sociological factors of organisational structure, culture, policies, products and services and the psychological factors of the

people who work there, such as their anxieties, hopes, values and beliefs, both of which need to be examined and understood. Jaques and Menzies (in Dimitrov, 2008; also Miller, 1993) later demonstrated how organisations develop mechanisms to defend against the anxiety inherent in the system (e.g. Huffington et al., 2004a). By being able to look at the interrelationships between the individual worker and the work group, the work group and the organisation and the organisation and its broader community, the embeddedness of open systems theory not only enabled researchers to examine the micro, meso and macro system level dynamics of the socio-technical system but also enabled an understanding of their interaction with the broader external environment (Bion, 1961; Czander, 1993; Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002).

2.3 WHAT IS SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMICS?

The central tenet of the systems psychodynamic perspective is contained in the conjunction of the two terms – systems and psychodynamics (Gould et al., 2006). The term “systems” refers to the open systems concept (Rice, 1969) (described above) which provides the dominant framing perspective for understanding the structural aspects of an organisational system (design, division of labour, authority levels, reporting relationships, nature of work tasks, especially the primary task, processes and activities and particularly its boundaries and the transactions across them). Systems theory is especially appropriate for any discipline that studies human interaction (Hanson, 1995, in Kahn, 2014). The individual is viewed as part of a whole and is “entangled” in their relational field (Kahn, 2014, op. cit., p. 8), the system being far more than the sum of its relational parts. As alluded to above, this relatedness or process of mutual influence extends between individual and individual (originating from the early maternal relationship), individual and group, the group and other groups, group and organisation, and organisation and society at large (Kahn, 2014). Human beings create social institutions to satisfy their needs (and to accomplish tasks) and these institutions become external realities (Gould et al., 2006) which affect individuals in significant emotional and psychological ways. Learning about the impact of these external realities can be extremely useful in “shedding light on the dilemmas that

members of organisations may be facing” (p. 3). Hence, learning from experience is important in the systems psychodynamic tradition and is of relevance for this study of coaching leaders in transition.

The “psychodynamic” element refers to psychoanalytical perspectives of individual experiences and conscious and unconscious mental processes such as transference, resistance, object relations, phantasy, and so forth. Stapley (2006) has referred to these as “beneath the surface phenomena” (p. 2) which he asserts become part of our internal world and help us deal with unbearable thoughts and feelings and make meaning, initially at an individual level but ultimately impacting on the groups, organisations and institutions of which we are part. These concepts are explained further in section 2.4. Additionally, the psychodynamic aspect refers to the dynamic interplay, between the observable and structural features of the organisation and its individual and group members at various levels, which stimulates patterns of individual and group dynamic processes. These processes may well determine how features of the organisation such as its unique culture, work ethic and structure come to be. Furthermore, this view implies that one examines and works with the individual/group/system, simultaneously, both from the inside out and the outside in (Gould, et al., 2006, p. 4). Neumann (2002) maintains that the term psychodynamics is borrowed from individual psychology and is used to describe the energising or motivating forces resulting from the inter-connection between various parts of the individual’s personality. “System”, she adds, draws attention to the connected parts of a complex organisational whole. Consequently, systems psychodynamics provides “a way of thinking about the energising or motivating forces resulting from the inter-connection between various groups and sub-units of a social system” (op cit., p. 57). According to Smit and Cilliers (2006), the systems psychodynamic perspective enables a psycho-educational approach, pushing the boundaries towards understanding deep and covert behaviour in the system, including the challenges of management and leadership (p. 306) which are particularly relevant to this research.

2.4 SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMIC THEORIES AND CONCEPTS

In this section the theories and related concepts which underpin the systems psychodynamics approach such as psychoanalysis, object relations, and organisations as social defences are explained.

2.4.1 Psychoanalysis as a theoretical construct in systems psychodynamics

All psychodynamic theories, despite being a broad and evolving body of knowledge (Gould, et al., 2006; Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008), trace their roots back to Freud and his (at the time) revolutionary ideas about the human mind. These theories are concerned with understanding the inner world of human beings and their relationship with the outer world (Sandler, 2011). As suggested just above, in this inner world there is a constant interaction between conscious and unconscious thoughts, feelings, wishes, urges and phantasies (as opposed to fantasies which are generally regarded as conscious or at least pre-conscious, Hinshelwood & Skogstad, 2005), the role of emotions is considered central. The barrier between the conscious and unconscious mind is almost impermeable primarily as a result of the unconscious material, originating in childhood and having been repressed, therefore, accessing this unconscious material requires effort. Anxiety comes about as a result of the constant interplay between the id, ego and super ego where the ego must find a way to constrain the libidinal and pleasure driven demands of the id while at the same time being constrained by the prohibiting, conscientising demands of the superego which can be seen as the introjection of parental figures (Stapley, 2006). Primitive anxieties, both persecutory and depressive, are a central feature of the psychodynamic view (Gould, et al., 2006), the use of defence mechanisms (an emotional reaction to anxiety) which function automatically and unconsciously to control this often overwhelming anxiety is regarded as normal, helpful and indeed a necessary aspect of our mental functioning (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). The mobilisation of a social defence system (as an analogue to the concept of individual defences (see 2.4.1.1 below) may either

facilitate or impede task performance in organisations as well as readiness for change and new learning.

Stating that work can be both a pleasurable activity and a painful burden highlights Freud's view that work is a pathway to pleasure and happiness (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2000), provided that three psychic requirements are met: 1) instincts are renounced; 2) the pleasures associated with play and childhood are surrendered and the reality principle (as opposed to the pleasure principle) adopted and 3) the freedoms associated with childhood are relinquished. If these requirements are not met, work will be avoided because the worker is unable to delay gratification or endure the necessary suffering to reap the benefits associated with accomplishment (Czander, 1993).

Our primary mental processes (infantile sexual and aggressive desires, threatening and unwanted feelings and desires, and so forth), present from birth, may seemingly be replaced at about the time of puberty for secondary process thinking (language, logic, rationality, and so forth) but in fact never really disappear, remaining active in the background and impacting not only the individual but also on the groups and organisations of which the individual is a part (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). Similarly, groups and organisations have their own dynamic unconscious (Brunner et al., 2006) which is surfaced and aggravated while supposedly working on its primary task (developing a heuristic as opposed to normative concept, describing the work a group needs to perform for its survival (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008, p. 52)). Systems psychodynamics thus explains the motivating forces which are embedded in the conscious and unconscious of individuals, groups and organisations; it assists us in understanding these forces as a function of the interconnectedness of various parts of the social system, fostering an understanding of organisations and the challenges of management and leadership (Albertyn & Koortzen, 2006; Neumann, 2002). This understanding facilitates the psychic development of managers and leaders, enabling them to take effective action (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). Reflexive practice, when it engages with both conscious and unconscious processes, involving understanding, interpreting and working through these individual and collective

defences, creates possibilities for learning and change by enlarging the individual's and the organisation's capacity to develop task appropriate adaptations, including a more rational distribution of authority and clearer role and boundary definitions (French & Vince, 2002a; Gould, et al., 2006).

2.4.1.1 Defence mechanisms

In individuals anxiety is caused both by objective external sources as well as internal dangers. These internal dangers are subjective, often unconscious feelings, thoughts and memories that may cause intense feelings and which arise entirely from within the psyche (de Board 2005). While fight or flight responses are often used to deal with external threats, the ego devises additional ways to deal with and protect itself from the internal threats; these methods are called ego defences.

In order to protect themselves from these painful anxieties and fears, the unconscious develops primitive and often destructive defence mechanisms (Dimitrov, 2008). As part of the unconscious, defence mechanisms are activated to repress threatening ideas, thoughts and feelings (Fraher, 2004a) and to distort or deny reality in order to protect one's sense of self (Peltier, 2011). When the ego is put under strain and the defence mechanisms are inadequate, the person is considered to lack ego strength, which denotes an inability to act in relation to a specific reality (Beck, 2012). Stapley (2006) describes defences as neither good nor bad but useful in helping to reduce anxiety. Useful in the short term but ultimately self-defeating, defence mechanisms can become extreme and habitual if people cling to them and regress to using very primitive defences when under extreme threat (Diamond, 2013). Stapley (2006) also suggests these defences could become habitual and create blind spots in our thinking. Peltier (2011) distinguishes between adaptive and the more immature or primitive defences, both of which are likely to be adopted by "healthy executives" (p. 63).

As these healthy and also the more primitive defences should be noted by the executive coach they will be referred to again in Chapters 3 and 6, and are briefly described below

(Beck, 2012; Blackman, 2004; Gabriel, 1999; Kets de Vries, 2007; Peltier, 2011; Stapley, 2006).

Adaptive defences:

- *Affiliation* – turning to others for support in the hope they will share one’s perceptions when faced with negative feelings or anxiety. This is different to the basic assumption of one-ness described below.
- *Altruism* – using psychic energy for the benefit of others, thereby avoiding one’s own uncomfortable feelings
- *Compensation* – overstriving in certain areas as a way to handle a perceived weakness in self and/or others
- *Humour* – laughing or joking about things rather than facing them; individual could become sarcastic or hostile
- *Identification* – taking on another’s identity or aspects of their behaviour to mask feelings of inferiority or avoid the primal dread of being abandoned. In its worse form, identification with an aggressor (the introjection of power and omnipotence) may be seen as a way of overcoming feelings of weakness and helplessness. See also projective identification in section 2.4.2 below.
- *Rituals* – observed at the micro, meso and macro levels – habituated or repeated behaviours which cover or manage anxiety
- *Sublimation* – channelling uncomfortable energy into something more productive, the re-directing of unacceptable aspects of the self into areas that are acceptable to others

- *Substitution* – substituting one comfortable behaviour for a threatening one (much like avoidance).

Primitive defences:

- *Conversion* – dealing with anxiety through a physical response e.g. coughing or becoming ill
- *Denial* – a simple but common defence involving the unconscious ignoring of the facts which may be obvious to others but to which the individual turns a blind eye or unconsciously disowns in order to allay anxiety
- *Devaluation/idealisation* – when an idealised person is found to be wanting, that is, simply human, the person is then regarded as having no value at all
- *Displacement* – expressing hostile urges to safer targets, for example snapping at someone when the real anger is directed at someone else or even oneself, and or the substitution of one desire by another. This is often seen as a reaction to frustration in the form of hostile aggression against another bad object (not the perceived source of the frustration)
- *Help-rejecting complaining* – complaining or making requests for help that are not sincere, rejecting offers of help, thereby concealing hostility, inadequacy or even rage that cannot be expressed directly
- *Intellectualisation* – ignoring feelings and discussing matters at a purely cognitive level. Complex arguments are advanced to avoid talking about or acknowledging feelings

- *Isolation* - separating feelings (which remain unconscious) and thoughts, where an idea or memory is acknowledged in consciousness but the accompanying emotion is rejected; alternatively, an idea or memory may be acknowledged but only if it is dissociated from other related ideas
- *Passive aggression* – when it is unacceptable, dangerous or inappropriate to express anger or hostility, one reacts by becoming passive or silent, thereby remaining blameless, denying the feelings when challenged
- *Projection* – attributing an undesirable or unacceptable feeling or experience to others; it is present in someone else, not ourselves. See also 2.4.2 – object relations below
- *Provocative behaviour* – mostly shown by adolescents but sometimes in adults, this is a way of showing hostility by provoking another person to behave poorly so that the individual can retaliate without feeling guilty about it
- *Rationalisation* – a common defence of changing an explanation to make it more acceptable, making excuses or explaining things away
- *Reaction formation* – tolerating or obliterating a threatening impulse by expressing its opposite; that way one does not have to acknowledge it
- *Regression* – reverting to an earlier, more immature but possibly more gratifying way of functioning when the anxiety becomes unmanageable or unbearable
- *Repression* – an extreme form of denial, banishing a thought or line of thinking from consciousness and relegating something to the unconscious when the thought becomes unbearable. The unconscious mind consists mainly of repressed sentiments

- *Resistance* – the analysand remaining silent after an interpretation offered by the analyst/coach or angrily rejecting it in an attempt to block access to his or her unconscious, the observation of which is taken by the coach that he/she has hit on a repressed idea. The analysand may also resist the pointing out of the resistance (Blackman, 2004)
- *Stereotyping and scapegoating* – having a readymade “other” on which to displace our unbearable feelings, thereby easing one’s own distress
- *Sublimation* – already referred to under adaptive defences, sublimation also involves the de-sexualisation of the libido and its transformation into a creative, bonding or spiritual energy, re-oriented towards non-sexual aims in artistic, scientific, economic, political or spiritual pursuits (a vital process in the service of civilisation, according to Gabriel, 1999)
- *Suppression* – when a client vehemently denies something, the truth is usually precisely about that something.

Although described as applying to individuals, almost all of these defences can be demonstrated or replicated as social defences at the meso and macro levels in group and organisational behaviour (Dimitrov, 2008; Miller, 1993; Stapley, 2006). Social defences against anxiety refer to socially structured defence mechanisms developed over time. They are “created” unconsciously by members of the organisation through their interactions in carrying out the “primary task” (Hirschhorn, 1988), and may be evident in the organisation’s or group’s procedures, culture, roles, systems and particularly in the “gap” between what the organisation formally espouses but does in practice (van Niekerk, 2011). Menzies (1985) and others after her (cited in Gould et al., 2006) described evidence to support the idea that unconscious anxieties are often reflected in organisational structure and design which function to defend against them – hence it is crucial to analyse social defences of organisational structure and its relation to and relationship with task and process. When defence mechanisms become

the dominant mode of group behaviour, often as a result of (unconscious) collusive interaction and agreement between organisational members, they become dysfunctional and the group struggles to perform its primary task (Miller, 1993; Obholzer, 2007).

2.4.1.2 *Transference and counter-transference*

In everyday life, rarely, if ever, is any relationship free from transference reactions (Czander, 1993). Kets de Vries in (Diamond, 2013) referred to transference as the “t-word” (p 371), since it is such an important and pervasive phenomenon.

Beginning with Freud, psychoanalysts have claimed that transference permeates all perceptions and communicative processes. Czander and Lee (2001) cite Durkin (1964) who confirms the position that transferences evolve from social interactions by suggesting that in groups and organisations transferences collide, meet and fuse. All forms of commitment require what are referred to as transference reactions. Although the psychoanalytic literature abounds with research on transference in the clinical sphere, little attention has been paid to transference as it occurs in the organisation (Peltier, 2011). Hirschhorn (1997), citing Freud, claims that an individual responds to authority figures in the organisation by projecting onto them childhood images of authority (especially parents).

Consequently, a transference reaction, either positive or negative, occurs when a person consciously or unconsciously projects earlier wishes, feelings or fantasies onto an object. In this sense transference reactions are repetitions of these early experiences, no relationship is a new relationship and people are constantly dealing with unfulfilled and unconscious family and especially parental and sibling power issues (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2000; Diamond, 2013; Dimitrov, 2008). Freud (1957, p. 22) referred to this as a repetition compulsion. Transference is thus almost invariably ambivalent, combining positive and negative feelings towards the manager/coach; these fight for predominance (Gabriel, 1999, p. 38). These reactions are interactive,

which means that the organisation is capable of inducing transference reactions, for example, through the specific roles it offers in the “drama” at work (using the theatre metaphor); such reactions may mobilise in role holders transferences which enact various childhood dramas (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005; Sievers & Beumer, 2006). Because the work group, work colleagues, and especially one’s manager or one’s coach are not one’s parents or family, the individual will experience conflict, frustration and anxiety (Czander, 1993).

Counter-transference is described as the feelings of those who receive the transference projections (Peltier, 2011; Sandler, 2011). These conscious and unconscious reactions make it difficult for a consultant/coach to be completely neutral and require him or her to attend to his or her own emotions as well as tendencies to distort or defend stimuli provided by others. This is particularly important as the coach’s reaction to a client’s transference reflects a mix of the coach’s own inner landscape and that of the client which must be acknowledged and managed and learned from. In itself the reaction of the consultant/coach is seen as a very valuable source of data about the client and how clients relate to other figures in their lives.

Because transference and counter-transference are such important aspects of systems psychodynamic coaching, they will be referred to again in Chapter 3.

2.4.2 Object relations and the associated concepts

Working with children in the early part of the twentieth century, Melanie Klein (1997) conceptualised an unconscious inner world comprising conflicting parts of an as yet unintegrated ego. The earliest fantasies are omnipotent and oral; the infant cannot distinguish reality from fantasy, focusing on incorporation and expulsion – the beginnings of projection and introjection. These fantasies in early life about the ego and objects (which often include people and especially the mother and the breast) determine the structure of later personality. The good, nurturing breast and the bad withholding breast are the infant’s first object relations. The infant’s desire for unlimited

gratification as well as the persecutory anxiety the infant experiences, contribute to its perception that there is a good and a bad breast and that these are separate entities. She or he uses the defences of *introjection* and *projection* to keep the good and bad objects apart (splitting), thereby reconciling the experienced conflict between the nurturing and satisfying breast/mother and the frustrating or withholding breast/mother (Czander, 1993; Klein, 1952; 1997). Projection refers to the unconscious, involuntary act of disowning unacceptable impulses or feelings and locating them in another, attributing something that is in fact one's own undesirable thought or feeling to another (Gould, et al., 2006). Introjection, conversely, is an unconscious process of taking in objects, people (including their emotional aspects), values and concepts and making them part of oneself (Dimtrov, 2008).

Object relations theory explains how experiences in groups can trigger primitive phantasies, the origins of which lie in the earliest years of life (Fraher, 2004a). Such internalised representations and images are used throughout life. The interaction between these defences is important for ego development and the increased ability to cope with anxiety. When anxiety becomes overwhelming in adult life, regression to more infantile coping mechanisms occurs: *splitting* (dividing feelings into differentiated elements e.g. love and hate; hope and despair) and *projection* (locating bad feelings in others rather than in oneself). Klein called the combining of these two defences the *paranoid-schizoid position* (paranoid referring to the experience of badness coming from outside of oneself while schizoid, refers to splitting). The paranoid-schizoid position originates from the infant's inability to see the whole mother all at once. When the mother's breast is present to gratify the infant's needs it is a "good" object; when it is absent it is a "bad" object, persecutory and destructive. The child's main concern in this position is his or her own survival. This merging of reality and fantasy is a threatening experience (persecutory anxiety – see Curtis, 2015, p. 35) for the infant; in order to cope, he or she develops this schizoid defence mechanism called splitting and projection so that the bad aspects of the self can be located in others (with the consequent fear of retaliatory danger). Splitting is the separation of good and evil and,

as Stapley (2006) has pointed out, is one of the most common defence mechanisms which remains with us in a very impressive way (p. 61).

Through the normal maturation experience, the infant enters the *depressive position*, recognising its mother (and other objects) as whole objects, containing both good and bad parts. The infant becomes aware and afraid of the destructive impulses it has felt towards the bad objects e.g. sadistic phantasies against the mother and experiences guilt for the harm it thinks it has caused (through its hostile thoughts); it attempts to make reparations now that it “understands” the mother to be both a good and a bad object (a form of psychological integration). The main anxiety concern then shifts to the survival of precious and loved figures. The depressive position with its concern for the object on which the infant depends and the subsequent experience of guilt and desire for reparation (for the hostile thoughts one harboured and the harm one might have caused) is part of normal development, according to Klein (in Fraher, 2004a; also Huffington et al., 2004b; Klein, 1997). Lawrence (2000), parenthetically, suggests renaming the depressive position the “impressive” one (p. 151) because it is reality oriented and the “thinker” becomes impressed with liberating potential.

“Positions” are both specific characteristic mental stages of development as well as general ways of functioning mentally throughout adult life. The shift from the one position to the other depends on the particular personality and experiences of the individual, but also – importantly in terms of this research – on the degree and nature of emotional support available in childhood and later adult life (Henderson, 2014). Lawrence (2000) refers to the oscillation between the two positions as opposed to a clean transition from one to the other. These major positions originate in childhood and are displayed in later life, consequently being relevant to both career transitions and career transition coaching. Peltier (2011) suggests human beings use object relations (their internal representations of people and things, even organisations, and their connectedness to them) to help them manage and stabilise their inner worlds.

Projective identification is another important Kleinian term which is relevant to this study. Like other defence mechanisms (see section 2.4.1.1), it is a psychological mechanism (although Vansina and Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008, refer to it more as a process and a means of communication than a mechanism) by which an individual dissociates from anxiety by inducing similar feelings in another person with whom a continuing connection is established; that other person consciously or unconsciously accepts the projected attribute as part of him or herself. It involves another step beyond blaming and scapegoating according to Dimitrov (2008), inducing the target of the projection to experience the projected feelings, and leads to splitting – them and us, the idealised and the despised. Directed towards the idealised object, projective identification may help avoid separation or help to gain control if directed towards the bad object (Stapley, 2006). As an important language of primary process thinking, Vansina-Cobbaert (2008) asserts that projective identification is only possible in situations where people are in direct contact (unlike projection) and is in operation when the receiver becomes what is put into him or her (p. 46) or as Stapley (2006) remarked, the recipient of the attribution or projection is essentially inducted into the originator's scheme of things (p. 64). He or she is subtly pressured into thinking, feeling or behaving in a manner congruent with the feelings or thoughts evacuated by the other. Knowing *what* is happening but more importantly *how* and *why* it is happening constitutes the analytical work required to make sense of both projection and projective identification, starting with what people are consciously aware of and slowly working to the level of primary process thinking. Ways of using information about defences will be expanded on in Chapter 3: Systems Psychodynamic Coaching.

Introjection has its origins in emotional experience and occurs when one “takes in” some part of the external world, making it part of oneself. For example, internalising a leader's interpersonal skills to facilitate following him or her is an instance of introjection (Dimitrov, 2008; Klein, 1997). Introjected “objects” may include significant people but more often feelings, values and or qualities of others, and comprise the material of our unique individual experience which builds up throughout the course of our lives (Stapley, 2006, p. 58). These internal mental images or representations are called upon

when an individual experiences a problem in later life and uses this absent person as a model of how to deal with the problem by relating to what they might have done in these circumstances.

Czander (1993) has stated that the need to be attached, related and connected to other objects is an integral part of object relations theory and that over time the individual develops the psychological capacity to relate to external (real) and internal (phantasy) objects, including people, groups and organisations as well as ideas, symbols and parts of the body. See also the later discussion on attachment in section 2.6 below.

A discussion of projective identification would be incomplete without reference to the concept of *valence*. First used by Kurt Lewin in the 1930s it was based on the theory that behaviour is a function of the person in his or her environment. Lewin employed valence to refer to the intrinsic attraction to or aversion from an event, object or situation for an individual. Bion later used the term to refer to an individual's predisposition to reproduce particular patterns of behaviour in the form of roles (usually in a group context but not exclusively) as a way of dealing with anxiety (Kahn, 2014, p. 17, 18). Stapley (2006) adds that the person onto whom the feelings are projected may be a "ready receptacle" (p. 66) for these thoughts, feelings or behaviour. If the recipient enacts the role assigned to him or her, a tacit, collusive agreement is established where the original meaning of the unwanted feelings is reinforced and the defence against thinking about them is confirmed. However, where the person does not accept the projected feelings, the originator has to "own" them and take them back. See also valence and basic assumptions in section 2.4.3.2.

2.4.3 Group relations and the theory of basic assumptions

From its early days, psychoanalysis has been interested in the nature of groups and organisational process (Gould, et al., 2006) but it was not until Bion put forward a theory of group processes in his 1961 publication *Experiences in Groups* (Bion, 1961; Gould, et al., 2006), grounded largely on the developments in object relations pioneered by

Melanie Klein (see section 2.4.2 above), that this was formalised. Bion treated the whole group as the “patient” and gave his interpretations not to individuals but to the group as a whole (de Board, 2005; Miller, 1993). What Bion has written in relation to groups can also be applied to individuals in other systems, for example the individual leader in a triadic relationship with his or her coach and the organisation of which s/he forms a part (Armstrong, 2005; de Board, 2005; Huffington, 2008; Pooley, 2004). It is in this context that the concepts of group behaviour and their modes of operation are now dealt with.

Bion (in Beck, 2012) describes visible and invisible groups and hypothesised that groups have two modes of operation. The visible or work group cooperates in a rational and realistic way to achieve its primary task. It is the productive, sophisticated group, more often referred to as the work group (*W group*) which focuses on the group’s task and maintains close contact with reality. The other, more psychotic mode was called the basic assumption or *ba group* and it is to this that the theory now turns.

2.4.3.1 *The basic assumptions group*

Bion, using Klein’s object relations theory to explain how experiences in groups can trigger primitive phantasies familiar to us from our early childhood, almost like psychosis (Fraher, 2004a; Klein & Pritchard, 2006), introduced the term basic assumption to refer to this second, omnipresent mode of mental functioning in groups in which members behave as if they shared unspoken and unconscious assumptions about the group, its task and leadership (Huffington et al., 2004a, p.229).

The basic assumption group finds its roots in the paranoid-schizoid position; its primary task is to ease the group members’ anxieties and avoid the pain or emotion that further work might bring (Fraher, 2004a; Miller, 1993). This basic assumptions group is the state the group members arrive in when the individuals regress because of a threat into a primitive defence position characterised by a reduced sense of reality and individuality (Beck, 2012). There are a number of different types of basic assumption

groups. A group in the work state may be threatened, for example, by the risk of retrenchments. When this happens the regression pressure increases and the group is characterised by the basic assumptions state, a collective stance which the group assumes, its emotional existence, usually unspoken and unconscious (Gould, et al., 2006). It may look as if the group is working on the primary task but in actual fact, its members are working on another, unconscious assignment which is a fantasy about how the group can be preserved, the “as if” group (Beck, 2012, p. 126).

In the basic assumption mode (adopted to deal with anxiety or tension in the group, governed by the assumptions group members have about how to get their needs met, and often swinging from one basic assumption mode to another), the group/organisation is derailed from its primary task and is off- or even anti-task (Obholzer, 2007). This interpretive framework is instructive in identifying psychologically regressive interpersonal dynamics within organisations under stressful conditions (Diamond, 2013). There are popularly believed to be five basic assumptions which undermine the group’s ability to think and act rationally, to plan, reason or control. Bion (1961) described the first three: dependence, flight or fight and pair forming or pairing:

- *Dependence* – with blind faith in the leader (not necessarily the formal one), the group displays trust, reverence and submissiveness in the hope that the all-knowing leader will solve its problems, reinforcing its members’ own helplessness, inadequacy and immaturity. If they blindly and uncritically follow their leader, stick to the rules and policies, they will stay together and nothing will happen. Cilliers and Koortzen (2002) have added that dependence is a projection of the individuals’ own anxiety and insecurity; hence the leader is manipulated out of his/her authority role into the role of parent. Inevitably the leader fails to accomplish the impossible task set by the group which then goes on to commandeer another leader. A further phenomenon associated with this kind of group culture and of relevance in this study of career transitions and especially newly appointed leaders, is that one person is made to be the really stupid one, the “dummy”, who has to be taught by the others.

Similarly, a process is set up with one member being the object of care which other members proceed to deliver. A further phenomenon is to create a “casualty” – someone who is made to feel inadequate, even to the point of breakdown (Lawrence, 2000) – the so-called “identified patient” in clinical terms.

- *Fight-flight* – much like the emotions of the paranoid-schizoid position, rage, hate, envy, destructiveness and fear, the group must flee or fight the common enemy in order to survive. The common enemy may be external to the group but could also be a subset of the group and result in scapegoating, where an individual or group of individuals may “carry” an unwanted and projected feeling on behalf of other members of the group or another group (Gould et al., 2006). Over-activity or urgency without reflection characterises the behaviour of this group.
- *Pairing* – involves feelings of hope, optimism, confidence, and self-assurance, even euphoria by two or more people or groups pairing up or fusing to create something new in the hope by the rest of the group that they will be “rescued” by this messianic saviour. But hope is only sustained for as long as the new leader remains unborn. Pairing can also manifest as splitting where the group breaks up into smaller groups for safety, leading to intra and inter-group conflict

Two further basic assumption groups were later described: *one-ness* by Turquet (1974 cited in Lawrence, 2000, p. 84) and *me-ness*, offered as the direct opposite, by Lawrence, Bain and Gould (see also Fraher, 2004a; Lawrence, Bain & Gould, 2000, p. 84; Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008):

- *One-ness* – members of a group seek to join in a powerful union with an omnipotent force and surrender the self to feelings of “oceanic unity” or “salvationist inclusion” (Fraher, 2004a, p. 37) so as to feel safe and whole.
- *Me-ness* – emphasises the individual’s desire to remain separate from the group, withdrawing from the group into one’s inner self as the outside world becomes more

persecutory and hostile; this self fears being undifferentiated and consequently, being engulfed. In me-ness people behave as if the group has no reality and can nor does not exist because the only reality is that of the individual. Transactions are instrumental and affect is absent. The overriding anxiety is that the individual will be consumed by the group (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008, p. 73). Calm and polite, this group will use informal spaces such as tea times to speak their thoughts and do their work (Fraher, 2004a). In a culture of selfishness, the me-ness group is aware only of its personal boundaries which have to be protected from others (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005).

For a group in the basic assumption mentality, the formation and continuance of the group becomes an end in itself. The work task becomes secondary so that while giving the impression of “working hard” (Vansina & Vansina Cobbaert, 2008, p. 414) or “as if” what is happening is relevant for task accomplishment (ibid., p. 73), the group members are more concerned with their membership of the group (Obholzer & Roberts, 2003).

The basic assumption groups believe that whatever is desired, will happen and when it does not, a new fantasy will arise and the group will move towards another of the basic assumption states, usually only holding one such assumption at a time. For a group to develop, it must move out of a basic assumption state and into the working group state. Inevitably, this involves much frustration; hence one sees swings from idealisation of the leader to devaluation and back. Attempts are made to draw in other groups to expand and strengthen the group but equally, splitting may occur, where the group breaks up into sub groups in an attempt to get rid of the “slow, stupid or strange one” (Beck, 2012, p. 127) as mentioned above. However, the group soon finds a new scapegoat as its members realise that the projective fantasy has not been successful in keeping them together or helping them become a work group again. For the group to progress, they need to take back and own their projections, re-integrate whatever or whomever was identified as slow, stupid or different and find other solutions (Beck, 2012).

Although initially understood as such, the basic assumption mode is not always debilitating to a group's task and can sometimes be engaged for productive purposes for example the basic assumption of fight-flight may act as the basis for action, commitment and loyal followership or this mode may become evident when a group seeks to mobilise the relevant basic assumption group in the service of its work (Baker, 2006; Fraher, 2004a, citing Gould and Turquet, p. 36). Baker (2006, p. 159) cites Stacey (2001) arguing that this is not an either/or situation and that desirable dynamics could be created by both work group and basic assumption functioning. Furthermore, groups often oscillate between the work group and the basic assumption group (though the way in which this occurs is not very clear); a pure work group is very rare and is almost always suffused with basic assumption elements. Fraher (2004a) points out that Bion reminded us optimistically that the sophisticated work group will triumph in the long run (p. 41). The "anxious edge", presumably is the place for transformation.

The group culture is the group's expression of form while its mentality is its expression of will. When an individual challenges the group's norms, she or he will feel uneasy as the natural tendency is to seek security within the group. Yet seeking security also makes one uneasy, which leads to a type of ambivalence – on the one hand wanting to be part of the group (and hence needing to fit into the group (its unconscious norms) while on the other hand being afraid of melting into the group and disappearing. Hence a lot of the work in groups comprises individuals trying to achieve a balance between becoming part of the group or remaining themselves to such an extent that they risk losing their membership and alienation. Evidence and examples of this work will be provided in Chapter 6.

2.4.3.2 Basic assumptions, individuals and valence

Having borrowed the term "valency" from physics where it denotes the proclivity of an atom to combine with others, Bion used the term in the unconscious group or institutional sense to mean the capacity for involuntary, instantaneous combinations of one individual with another for the purpose of sharing and acting on a basic assumption

(Gould, et al., 2006, p.203). The valency factor in the individual's personality is the connection between the individual and the institutional process. Valence is thus "the individual's propensity to take up a particular role in a group or to adopt a particular type of basic assumption" (Huffington et al., 2004a, p.229). Basic assumption behaviour can also be manifested in individuals and, as de Board (2005) noted, individual psychology is essentially group psychology; the "organisation-in-the-mind" (Armstrong, 2005) can trigger individual basic assumption behaviour which, if it interferes with the primary task, should be worked through in coaching (Pooley, 2004). This will be taken up again in Chapter 3: Systems psychodynamic executive coaching and the concept of the organisation-in-the-mind will be explained below in section 2.5.6.

2.4.4 Open systems theory

Von Bertalanffy (in Beck, 2012, p. 141) formulated open systems theory which springs from the living systems of biology, namely, that cells live and survive (their primary task) in a selective exchange relationship with their surroundings through permeable walls (the limits of the system). Miller and Rice extended this theory to social systems (Miller, 1993). Similarly, according to Rice (1965), an individual can only exist through a continuous exchange with his/her environment by taking on specific roles. The system in which individuals and groups work is thus a complex web of interrelated departments and reciprocal, recursive relationships. From a systems psychodynamic perspective, it is understood there will be rational, conscious and primary task oriented processes as well as irrational, unconscious, off-task processes that take place. The permeable boundary across which energy, people, material and relationships must flow for survival came to be seen by the open system theorists as a critical area for the exercise of leadership as well as the maintaining of an appropriate degree of insulation and permeability for survival (Dimitrov, 2008).

Individuals must similarly maintain or preserve their personal boundaries for survival and growth (Huffington et al., 2004b) (see also section 2.5 below on ACIBART). Rice (1965) described this notion as follows: "In the mature individual, the ego - the concept

of the self as a unique individual - mediates the relationships between the internal world of good and bad objects (a product of previous work and childhood experiences) and the external world of reality, and thus takes, in relation to the personality, a 'leadership' role" (p.11). Rice added that the mature ego is one that can define the boundary between what is inside and what is outside and is able to control the transactions between the two (in Dimitrov, 2008). The group might evoke more primitive, unconscious feelings in the individual, particularly in the areas of dependency, aggression and hope which slip under the guard of his ego function and, although they may be undetected by the individual, may have an impact on the group and come to the notice of others in the organisation. Rice (1965) states that this tendency in people to split the good from the bad and to project their resultant feeling onto others is one of the major barriers to the control and understanding of behaviour. Individuals' primitive feelings and defences become mobilised when they come together in groups on behalf of, and in service to, the group: bad feelings are often split off and projected onto authority figures whose task it is to regulate the boundary. Haslebo and Nielsen (2000, p. 96) refer to the strong desire to place blame somewhere, to develop an image of oneself as a victim and develop a negative stereotype of authority. This point is particularly relevant to this study, especially when new leaders are appointed in positions of authority.

2.5 THE ACIBART MODEL

Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) developed the CIBART Model based on Cytrynbaum and Noumair's (2004) BART (boundary, authority, role and task) model, as a diagnostic tool to assess and attend to the manifestation of both conscious and unconscious conflict in teams which results from uncertainty and anxiety (defined as fear of the future). Van Niekerk (2011) added the "A" (for anxiety) to the acronym. The ACIBART model is used as the basis of analysing and interpreting the data obtained from the empirical study described in Chapter 6. The seven constructs of ACIBART are now explained:

2.5.1 Anxiety

Anxiety may be a sign that we are struggling to contain the dangerous urges of the id in the psychic battle between the id, ego and super ego (Peltier, 2011). This anxiety, as a result of an internal perception of danger, such as memories or experiences arising from the psyche, has been referred to by Gould, et al., 2006, as neurotic anxiety. Anxiety from an external source is experienced in the same painful, distressing way but can be dealt with by avoidance or mastering and overcoming it (Gould, et al., 2006). The techniques we use to overcome neurotic anxiety are called ego defences and have been described earlier. Obholzer and Roberts (2003) have identified three layers of anxiety: primitive anxiety which is all pervasive, affects all of humankind and threatens our survival and sense of belonging (free-floating anxiety); anxiety arising from the nature of work which has to do with the fear of, for example, retrenchment, retirement, organisational change etcetera, and finally personal anxiety which could be conscious or unconscious and is triggered by memories of past experiences. Obholzer (2002) has also suggested that work-generated anxieties resonate with primitive and personal anxieties, at a conscious and unconscious level. This has implications for leaders making career transitions, particularly if they occur in the so called mid-life period. (See Chapter 3).

Stapley (2006) writes of two stages of anxiety which can be quantitatively differentiated: firstly, signal anxiety – the initial response to a threatening situation which can be seen as a call to fight or flight. The second stage, when anxiety increases to a certain threshold, may result in an increasingly regressed mental state and the use of phantasy, irrationality and magic (p. 46).

2.5.2 Conflict

Conflict may be regarded as a natural, human condition which often drives performance, creativity and progress (Gould, et al., 2006). As organisations have changed from traditional, hierarchical structures and become more demanding of

individuals and teams for performance and outputs, conflict has been an inevitable outcome. Staff too have become more outspoken and demanding so that managers have been required to learn to tolerate uncertainty and conflict (Amado, 2013; French & Vince, 2002b; Huffington et al., 2004a). Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) perceive conflict as a split between differences which may for example manifest intrapersonally (within the individual between thoughts and feelings, and intrapsychically as the conflict between the id, ego and superego) or interpersonally (the experience of differences between two or more team members), intra-group (differences between sub-groups or factions) and inter-group (differences between one team or department and the larger organisation) (from van Niekerk, 2011). Stapley (2006) suggests that mental conflict exists when two or more drives are opposed in an actual situation so that the nature and outcome of these antagonistic tendencies results in anxiety. Whilst the resolution of conflict almost always represents a compromise, as opposed to a solution (Stapley, 2006), both Stapley (2006) and Kilburg (2002a) see conflict as an opportunity for growth, adaptation, adjustment and the learning of new skills.

2.5.3 Identity

Identity is perceived as that which defines an individual, group or organisation: the distinguishing characteristics or what one stands for, making it different or unique from other individuals, teams, and so forth (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005). Dimitrov (2008) refers to the biological term “autopoiesis” (p. 71): the dual ability of an organism (individual or team in this case) to adapt to its environment but at the same time retain its unique identity as separate from it. According to Haslebo and Nielsen (2000), in systemic thinking, identity is primarily the product of interpersonal interaction. The concepts of relatedness (defined as the process of mutual influence between different parts of a system (Stapley, 2006)) and connectedness are relevant here. As Stapley (2006) has commented, no one is ever alone in their minds. While the infant’s sense of self, developed early on in life, may no longer be conscious in adult life, the imaginings and memories of infantile experience, especially as they relate to feelings of anxiety, have a profound influence on subsequent mental development; they help to determine the

character of personal and social relationships, cultural interests and way of living. They become part of the bounded self (p. 23).

Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) understand identity as the “fingerprint” (p. 52) of the team, where the term refers to the characteristics that make the team, its individual members, their task, climate and culture different and unique. Identity in these authors’ view is influenced by the personality and style of the leader, the team’s and individual’s experience of leadership and the way the team members are allowed to take up leadership. A lack of, or discrepant, identification with the team and unclear identity boundaries will create a high level of anxiety for the team, manifesting in feelings of not belonging, helplessness and hopelessness. Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) specifically ask in relation to the identity of the team and its members: how well new members have been integrated, how much time is spent on mourning the loss of those who leave the team, what this loss might represent and how new roles and tasks are renegotiated. This is salient for understanding the systems psychodynamics of career transitions and will be expanded on in Chapters 6 and 7.

Pooley (2004, p.176) similarly raises questions of identity in relation to an individual taking up a new role: “How will I know how I am doing?”; “Are they going to value me?”; “What sort of person do I need to be?”; “What can I uniquely bring to this role?”; “What sort of working relationships do I need to build?”; “How can this team or company be developed and what is my role in this?; “Do I have (*or can I build*) the kind of relationship with colleagues that will enable us to give and receive good feedback to and from each other?”; “How will we have differences and create something from them?; “Will I be remembered at all?” (italics added by researcher). These questions reflect the issue of personal identity and are relevant for understanding the life stage of and coaching for leaders in transition. They will be referred to again in Chapter 3.

2.5.4 Boundaries

Boundaries: The area of distinction between the differing parts of a complex system in organisational psychodynamics is termed a boundary. It is more than territorial/spatial and may include time, status, role, racial or occupational identity and even psychological boundaries. It can be regarded as an interface which simultaneously connects and separates (Stapley, 1996). Czander (1993) remarked that a boundary represents the place where the organisation and the environment meet and as such is indeed a significant “boundary” for this study in relation to leaders joining a new organisation or team. Intra-organisationally the boundary is not imposed from outside the system; rather it emerges because of differences within the system itself (Dimitrov, 2008). Although she didn’t refer to boundaries, Napper (2010) emphasised the importance of context and the sense of belonging when joining a new organisation. The boundary becomes the focal point for change and adaptation of the system; as Neumann (2002) has indicated, boundaries matter because it is across these literal and sentient (referring to the social and emotional bonds of organisational life) lines that emotions, opinions, perceptions and phantasies travel (p. 57). Boundaries may also create a sense of comfort and security (Stapley, 2006). However boundaries might create anxiety if the person feels the former are threatened as it is at these nodes that risk exists and decisions must be taken. If individuals and groups are not authorised and willing to take up the authority to transact across boundaries they may retreat (Hirschhorn, 1988). According to Hirschhorn (1988) and Stapley (1996) the creation and maintenance of boundaries by leaders is crucial for both organisations and individuals to feel secure and do their work. Appropriate boundaries according to Czander (1993), are those that are permeable and flexible, at times closed while at other times open to allow the right amount of information through. Obholzer and Miller (2004) assert that one of the key functions of leadership in organisations is maintaining the “osmotic” boundary (p. 37).

Interestingly, Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) refer to boundaries as the “safety blanket” (p. 53) of the team. The concept of the safety blanket as a transitional object (Lazar, 2014; Mersky, 2008; Winnicott, 1965) is well known in childhood, but transitional

spaces and objects, as will be discussed later, take on a special meaning during career transitions.

In the context of this study, boundaries are significant because leaders in transitioning from one role to another, cross various boundaries. Creating a reasonable amount of structure surrounding in particular spatial (relating to territory), temporal (concerning time) and psychological (concerning self-identity, “me and them”) boundaries (Stapley, 1996, p. 20), reduces anxiety and enhances containment (see section 2.7), according to Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) whereas unclear boundaries increases anxiety. In the context of this research, Gabriel (1999, p. 97) notes that organisational boundaries have become extremely complex, marking the entry of new members and the departure of others into or from a system with rites of passage which may symbolise a significant change in a person’s life. New members may not be admitted to full membership and are considered to be neither in nor out but are on trial and may be seen as uninvited intruders, welcome guests or anything in between.

2.5.5 Authority (and power)

Authority – referred to as the level of power to perform roles and tasks by Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) is the formal and official power the individual or team members experience and exercise to perform their task. Stapley (2006) as well as Vansina and Vansina-Cobbaert (2008) define authority as the legitimate application of power to act upon others to achieve a given outcome/task. Czander (1993) defined authority as connected to (but different from) power and saw it as a right to issue commands and punish violations, given as a result of the rank or office one holds. Obholzer (1994) states that authority is the right to make an ultimate decision in an organisation and refers to the right to make decisions which are binding on others (p. 39). Authority, he declares, is a quality that is derived from one’s role in a system (unlike power which is an attribute of the person) and is exercised on its behalf; it is important to understand where the authority ultimately comes from (or should come from), to whom it is delegated and to what extent (p. 40). Obholzer and Miller (2004) assert that authority,

while necessary, is insufficient without power which in this context they define as having the resources to be able to enact decisions (p. 38). Authority can be derived from above (i.e. delegated in a hierarchical sense), from below (sanctioning from one's subordinates, implying that the withholding of this authority may lead to undermining through insubordination or sabotage) and or from within (authority in the mind, derived from one's previous experience of authority and based on one's inner world, referred to as "personal authority" by Miller, 1993, p. 310). However, the leader might be unable to exercise authority competently possibly due to the undermining of self in role or, at the opposite extreme, psychopathological omnipotence, leading to authoritarian (as distinct from authoritative) attitudes and behaviour (Obholzer, 1994, p. 41). Lazar (2014) adds that those leaders and managers who are too afraid of their vulnerability tend to mask it through demonstrations of power which do not ring true (p. 9). Informal authority refers to being liked or appreciated by colleagues while formal authority is a quality derived from one's role and exercised on behalf of the organisation, being recognised as a subject expert or an achiever or acting as a mentor or coach to others (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005). Obholzer (1994) refers to "good enough authority" (p. 41), a term borrowed from Winnicott which refers to a state of mind arising from the continuous mix of authorisation from the sponsoring organisation, sanctioning from within the organisation and connection with the individual's inner world authority figures (p. 41). For him, full authority is a myth. Authorisation is thus a key concept for leaders in transition.

Power, a related but separate concept though often used interchangeably with authority, leading to confusion, requires some explanation in the context of leaders in transition. Obholzer (1994) defines power as the ability to act on others or on the organisational structure (p. 42) and states that it arises from both external sources (what the individual controls, resources such as money, promotions, and the like, his/her social/political connections) and internal sources (a person's knowledge and experience, strength of personality, state of mind regarding how powerful they feel and how they present themselves to others). The perceived powerfulness or powerlessness counts more than the actual power; in consequence, Obholzer (1994) tellingly asserts,

powerlessness is a state of mind connected to problems with taking up one's authority. Where there is external authorisation but the individual feels powerless, it may be a case of power being projected onto the system (located outside of the self), rendering the individual powerless.

In an interesting take on power, Henderson (2014) writes of "power over" and "power to" (p. 89). Power over is an approach that concentrates on ensuring objectives are met; it involves expertise, skill and focus, leading to personal mastery and self-sufficiency. "Power to" develops dialogue and uses inputs, wisdom and perspective from all involved in the outcome or decision, enhancing the capacity of all to think through meaning and purpose, developing new and emergent thinking. She equates the two terms - power over and power to - with the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions respectively: the degree to which a leader is able to empathise with and value the perspective of others as opposed to being driven to impose his or her own way, a form of omnipotence but equally of impotence. Miller (1993) adds to this discussion by asserting that power can only be taken, not given (p. xvi).

In the view of this researcher, the answer lies in the judicious use of both approaches, not one to the exclusion of the other. What is essential though is that the presence or absence of love, containment and holding (see below section 2.7) will exert a major influence on which of the dominant power modes is used. Taking up authority as a leader might be anxiety provoking (Stapley, 2006); faced with such anxiety, a leader may well invoke the ego defences discussed earlier. Authority without power leads to weakened, demoralised management, whereas power without authority leads to an authoritarian regime. It is the judicious mix of the two and balance which leads to an effective, on-task management in a well-run organisation (p. 43). Unresolved conflicts over authority and control could result in heightened anxiety and off task behaviour (Dimitrov, 2008).

2.5.6 Role

Role is another important concept which takes on a specific meaning in the systems psychodynamic framework. In an organisational context a person enters into a contract with the organisation to take on and occupy a specific role, requiring the individual to perform tasks and, in so doing, add value to the organisation in return for a reward, both financial and non-financial. Taking up a role implies being authorised to do so while knowing the boundaries of the role implies an understanding of the right way to behave and doing that which will be rewarded or sanctioned by the organisation and avoiding that which will not. These are overt roles which are observable and given names and are part of the conscious organisation (Kahn, 2014) and they act as the link between the individual and the organisation. Triest (2002) has referred to this as the formal role – the role as defined by the organisation, regardless of the persona who will fill it and dedicated to the organisation’s primary task (p. 210). But this is a static conceptualisation of role with little consideration for the dynamic nature of role behaviour in organisations (Reed & Bazalgette, 2006). A role is also a covert concept and, in the “undercurrent of organisational life” (Newton et al., 2006, p. xi), takes on another meaning. Newton et al. (2006) define this kind of role as an idea or conception in the mind through which one manages oneself and one’s behaviour in relation to the system (organisation-in-the-mind) in which one occupies a position so as to further the system’s aims. In contrast to the formal role, Triest (2002) describes the informal role as the role the individual takes which is driven by needs, more often than not unconscious, in response to the basic assumption “call” of the group, and is associated with psychological functions to balance tensions, reduce anxiety as well as gratify instinctual and emotional needs (p. 210). Obholzer and Roberts (1994) add to our understanding of the dynamic nature of role by distinguishing between three types: the nominal role (as described in the objective job description and for which the incumbent was ostensibly hired); the phenomenological role (the role which the person is thought to be fulfilling, as perceived by the team and others) and the existential role (the role as the incumbent him or herself believes he/she is performing it). Incongruence or dissonance between these three views of the role will lead to anxiety and underperformance whereas the closer the three are, the more likely it is that performance will be on task (Newton et al., 2006). “To take a role implies being able to

formulate or discover, however intuitively, a regulating principle inside oneself which enables one, as a person, to manage one's behaviour in relation to what needs to be done to further the purpose of the system within which the role is to be taken." (Reed & Bazalgette, 2006, p. 46). The "person-in-role" concept (Reed & Bazalgette, 2006, p. 46) emphasises the dynamic nature of the individual in terms of his or her inner world which is itself in constant flux, continuously interacting with the external world which also constantly changes and shifts. One could add to this the concept of the "organisation-in-the-mind" – a term originally coined by Turquet (in Armstrong, 2009, p. 184; Armstrong, 2005, p. 9) signifying an internal model of what an individual has in his or her mind of how activities and relations are organised, structured and connected internally. But the organisation-in-the-mind is more than the conscious or unconscious mental constructs of the organisation and the assumptions the individual makes about power and authority in this organisation; the term also refers to the emotional resonances in the mind of the person and is equivalent to Hirschhorn's (1988) "graphic" phrase, "the workplace within".

Introducing the client to this world-within-a-world promotes development in the relatedness of the client to the organisation (in Armstrong, 2005, p.7). In a psychodynamic sense, taking up a role is influenced by the double reality of the individual's personal history and experience as well as the reality of the organisation in which the role exists. The role holder's transferences are mobilised by the organisation and the individual performs his or her role on the basis of previous, often family related relationship experiences so that the ensuing childhood dramas are enacted at work (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005). As Triest (2002) has observed, taking a role in an organisation inevitably produces an inner drama in which internalised past figures and which are in some way related to the role in the mind, are brought back to life (p. 209).

Organisations are demanding more of their employees, especially those in leadership roles, as a result of greater competitiveness, increasing complexity and unrelenting change as well as harsh economic realities – a new organisational order (Bluckert, 2008; Dimitrov, 2008; Huffington et al., 2004a; Kahn, 2014; Lawrence, Bain & Gould,

2000). As a result, the pressure on role holders increases to the point that the integration of the self is threatened, fear of failure rises and defence mechanisms are activated, blocking the possibility for learning or change and breaching the process of accommodation and assimilation between the inner world and the organisational reality. Behaviour becomes dictated by internalised past behaviour patterns transferred onto the present, however irrelevant, leading to the creation of malignant vicious circles of projections, projective identifications and splits amongst the various sub groups of the organisation. The boundaries of tasks and roles are shattered and the organisation similarly responds with social defence mechanisms, becoming increasingly unable to fulfil its primary task (Triest, 2002, p. 211). Role analysis is designed to break this cycle and enable the role holder to regain his or her ability to function efficiently from a position of awareness of and separateness between self, role and organisation and to understand the role both as given and taken (Newton et al., 2006; Triest, 2002). In this respect, organisational role analysis or ORA as it is known is a consulting/coaching approach that helps clients work more effectively and humanely through their organisational roles with the emphasis on clarification of the role within a system (Newton, et al., 2006); it enables leaders and managers to take up their roles more effectively (Brunning, 2007b), address dilemmas and take up their roles with more authority. Although not used in its pure form in this study, the conceptualisation of the person in role in an organisation (PRO) was used, and, because it is so central to systems psychodynamic executive coaching, it is expanded on in section 3.4.4.1 in the next chapter.

2.5.7 Task

Most organisations need to complete a complex set of tasks simultaneously; tasks are a basic component of work. Rice argued that one task above all is the critical one (in Dimitrov, 2008). The primary task refers to that which the organisation must perform to survive (Huffington et al., 2004, p. 228; Miller, 1993); as with role, it is possible to distinguish between the normative primary task (what the organisation ought to pursue); the existential primary task (what members believe they are doing) and the

phenomenal primary task (the hypothesis about what members are engaged in and of which they may not be consciously aware). The primary task is influenced by both conscious and unconscious dynamics: hence it may change temporarily or permanently as a result of these dynamics. Task clarity and definition are regarded as important from a systems psychodynamic perspective – Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) state that clarity about primary task behaviours leads to on-task performance whereas confusion about the primary task leads to off-, as-if- and even anti-task behaviour. Asking probing questions focusing on the primary task (e.g. what it is and how it is currently being performed) may reveal the hidden fears of people in the organisation and allow them to consider new avenues of possible action. As such, organisational psychodynamics could liberate people from unexamined fears and create a psychologically safe space to consider new possibilities (Dimitrov, 2008; Miller, 1993).

2.6 ATTACHMENT, SEPARATION AND LOSS

For Stapley (2006, p. 31), “An important notion is the understanding that perhaps the most outstanding and the most continuous of human psychic needs is that for emotional response from other individuals. There is much good evidence that young infants require a certain amount of emotional response for their well-being. In the highly dependent world of the infant one of the greatest dreads must be that of being left alone or abandoned”. According to Bowlby, the infant needs to form a relationship, a lasting psychological connectedness with at least one primary caregiver for normal social and emotional development to occur and these earliest bonds have a major impact which continues throughout life. Knowing that a care giver is available and dependable, especially in times of danger and distress, creates a secure base for the child to explore the world (resulting later in independence, self-reliance and self-sufficiency). However, an inability to establish secure attachments in early life can have a negative impact throughout one’s life, manifested as a person being overly dependent, clinging or detached (Bowlby, 1970; Lazar, 2014). Attachment theory asserts that through these early experiences of attachment (or not), people develop templates for relating to adults or peers (Pooley, 2004) and that it is helpful for people to see how and why these

patterns may be repeated in later life (see also the discussion on valence in section 2.4.3.2 above). Research suggests that the attachment system shapes one's capacity to interpret relational experiences, influences one's comfort about intimacy and affects one's method of seeking help and guidance from others (Bennett & Saks, 2006).

Secure adults are able to actively monitor their own thought processes, recognise contradictions and biases in their conversations and to acknowledge that their view of reality is both changeable and subjective. They are also able to show empathy and emotional regulation presumably because they had care givers who were responsive, predictable and sensitive to them in childhood. Individuals with secure attachments relate easily and with confidence, are able to explore their environments with interest and curiosity and are willing and able to ask for help when needed (akin to ontological security; see Amado & Elsner, 2006, p. 182). Feeling relatively secure in one's job frees one up to be more adventurous and daring in making changes, experimenting with new ideas and strategies (Lazar, 2014). By contrast, three insecure patterns of attachment, based on anxiety and avoidance, have been identified in adults: dismissing (they dismiss or ignore attachment needs, are uncomfortable with intimacy); pre-occupied (anxious, needy, dependent, intrusive) and unresolved, fearful or disorganised, usually as a result of major loss or trauma (disorganised, frightened to ask for help) (Bennett & Saks, 2006, p. 671; Lazar, 2014).

On an organisational level, leaders with insecure attachment patterns tend to lower morale, foster anxiety and rebellion, focussing more on their own needs. Avoidant leaders are unable to offer a containing environment to their followers and equally fail to nurture them. In times of need, members of groups will position themselves close to their in-group in seeking a secure base (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007) and, more than likely, engage in regressive defences and routines (such as becoming a basic assumption group). The corollary would seem to apply that leaders with secure attachment patterns will foster inter-dependence, risk taking and experimentation and be better able to offer a containing environment for their followers.

Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) cite evidence which suggests that attachment security facilitates career commitment and more effective performance in a chosen career, with respondents reporting greater self-efficacy in career decision making, more realistic career choices that coincide with abilities and more often aspiring to leadership positions in their chosen career field. They conclude that these findings indicate that attachment security is an important antecedent of favourable career development (p. 237), and proceed to assert that work is an adult form of what Bowlby called exploration. Hazan and Shaver (1990) (cited in Mikulincer and Shaver, 2007) found that securely attached people held more positive attitudes towards work and fewer work related problems whereas anxious people's work experiences were affected by their chronic hyperactivation of attachment needs and strivings for goals, perceiving work as an additional opportunity for social acceptance but also a potential source of disapproval and rejection based on poor performance (p. 239).

2.7 CONTAINMENT AND HOLDING

Initially described as holding by Winnicott (1965) who helped mothers feel that being good enough was alright (also in Obholzer & Roberts, 1994), Bion (in French & Vince, 2002a) believed that mothers who are able to take in and accept (contain) their infant's toxic feelings, metabolise them and return them in an improved and partly understood form provide an environment where the infant learns to adapt to the mother's coming and going and learns to reconcile his/her feelings of good and bad, love and hate, acceptance and rejection towards the simultaneously nurturing and withholding mother. The maturation of the child depends on the mother's ability to contain these projected emotions from the "contained" child into and onto the "container" mother. By creating this "facilitative holding environment", she provides the child with the interpersonal security and safety necessary for healthy separation and individuation. The "transitional space" thus created is also important for the emergence of play and imagination, curiosity and reflectivity (in Diamond, 2013, p. 374; Klein, 1997). Consistent with the idea that career transition coaching may offer this transitional space, this concept of the said space will be expanded on in Chapter 3 which deals with coaching.

Obholzer (2002) suggests that the leaders and management of an organisation need to perform a similar anxiety containing function for the staff. It is a state of mind in touch with the threats to the organisation's survival, a containment which rather than creating dependency, needs to be based on the transference process as well as a model of role performance by all concerned in a way that acknowledges both their skills and deficits. It is essentially a boundary keeping and facilitating function and implies being connected with both the outside and the inside of the organisation, with a sense of belonging to both systems and having a keen "weather eye" (p. 94) for the unsaid, unacknowledged and the unconscious. He remarks that the concept of "detachment" – careful and considerable observation of what is happening without preconceptions (which is central to psychoanalytic practice) – and the ability to tolerate ambiguity and not knowing (p. 95) – are the most important elements of managerial containment. Huffington et al. (2004b) refer to the anxiety reducing value and point to the containing role of clear organisational structures, providing clarity about accountability and assured role boundaries in order that the organisation and its members may focus on the organisational tasks. Facilitating a good enough holding environment depends on the leader's ability to act as a container of another's emotions, bad and unwanted feelings which evoke anxiety. Failing to provide this type of containment could result in individuals experiencing distress and anxiety, consequently resorting to primitive defences such as regression, splitting and projection to alleviate such emotions (Diamond & Allcorn, 2009). Other researchers point to the containing role of the leader not only as a shield against anxiety but also in fostering creativity, curiosity and growth within the organisation as well as the pleasures of self-discovery and the discovery of the world (Obholzer and Miller, 2004; Huffington, et al., 2004b).

Offering a holding and containing environment is a key element of executive coaching according to Pooley (2004): she perceives this both in the physical form of a quiet, comfortable room, regular meeting time (creating known boundaries) as well as attention to the emotional – a reliable and consistent attitude and non-judgemental approach. In this way the client is freer to behave in a less defensive way, as well as

to express strong feelings knowing that the relationship is robust enough to withstand differences and contain feelings of anger and anxiety. As few organisations provide such a safe environment, there is a danger Pooley (2004) points out, that the client could become dependent on the coach, replacing the secure attachments lacking in organisations. This will be referred to again in Chapter 3 which deals with coaching and will be demonstrated in Chapter 6.

2.8 APPLYING THE SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMIC PERSPECTIVE

A consultant or even a coach working in the systems psychodynamic paradigm would be alert to and selectively interpret the unconscious, covert and dynamic aspects of the client system or individual client (e.g. Brunning, 2007b; Newton, et al., 2006; Sandler, 2011). The focus would be on relatedness and how authority is psychologically distributed, exercised and enacted in contrast to how it is formally invested; the work would include a consideration of attitudes, beliefs, phantasies, core anxieties, and social defences, patterns of relationships and collaboration and how these may influence role and task performance (Gould, et al., 2006, p. 9). The manner in which the individual takes up his or her role is the core part of systems psychodynamic executive coaching and will be dealt with in Chapter 3.

Three different models of systems psychodynamic coaching (viz. those of Brunning, 2007b; Kilburg, 2002a; Western, 2012) will be briefly explained in Chapter 3.

But how receptive are organisations to this kind of approach and paradigm? Furthermore, what are the pitfalls or traps the systems psychodynamically informed coach/consultant needs to watch out for? Is it accessible or is it overly dark and clinical? Cilliers and Koortzen (2000) argue that systems psychodynamics does indeed have a place in the world of work and furthermore aids the industrial/organisational psychologist's understanding of particularly deep and complex organisational issues by looking at both the conscious and unconscious life of organisations and the individuals who work in them. Cilliers (2005) found that systems psychodynamic executive

coaching was effective in empowering and authorising a group of executives in taking up their organisational leadership roles and facilitating insight and wisdom. Working from the Tavistock stance, the systems psychodynamically informed consultant/coach has the opportunity to offer the individual, the group (or team), and organisation insight into its own dynamics through working hypotheses, leading to organisational change and development and, one would hope, optimal functioning (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2000; Kets de Vries, 2006; Roberts & Jarrett, 2007).

2.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter began with a brief history and conceptual framework of systems psychodynamics followed by an explanation of this term and a description of the main system psychodynamic concepts and terms. The ACIBART model was subsequently explained as the model which will be used in understanding the experience of leaders in transition. Separate sections were devoted to the concepts of attachment and loss as well as containment and holding because of their importance in this study. In Chapter 3, systems psychodynamic executive coaching and specifically, career transition coaching as the major interventions in this study, will be described.

CHAPTER THREE: SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMIC EXECUTIVE COACHING

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the concept and practice of executive or leadership coaching, especially coaching in the systems psychodynamic modality, both in the South African context and more broadly, will be explored. Models of systems psychodynamic coaching will be put forward and the theoretical constructs of the approach explained. A special type of coaching, career transition coaching, will be discussed as a way of supporting leaders facing such a transition. Finally, some thoughts on the usefulness and value of executive coaching will be offered.

Although Western (2012), for example, maintains that leadership coaching has a more specific remit (and demands a particular understanding of the psychodynamics applied to authority and power and influencing and the management of boundaries), it overlaps with executive coaching, and particularly systems psychodynamic executive coaching (see also Kets de Vries & Cheak, 2010). Consistent with the position adopted in Chapter 1, that most managers in an organisation will play a leadership role in the way they influence, guide, coach and in general use their leadership “presence” to act as role models for their teams and others, the purist and sometimes artificial distinction between leaders as strategists and managers as “doers” is ignored in this study. While it is acknowledged that leadership coaching is sometimes used in organisations for the specific aim of developing managers into leaders (e.g. Bluckert, 2008), this researcher views executive coaching as an umbrella term that encompasses leadership coaching.

Western (2012) claims that executive coaching refers to coaching in an organisational setting with middle to senior managers who fit into the general category of being an executive (i.e. of managerial class), with a focus on the individual, his/her performance in role, career advancement and life-work balance (p. 59). He states that leadership coaching has the specific remit of supporting often younger managers/leaders to take up their leadership roles to the best of their ability (p. 61), helping them feel contained

and safe. In practice in this research elements of both executive and leadership coaching were used, hence the terms are used interchangeably in this study. Similarly, executives, leaders and managers who are coached are referred to as clients and or coachees.

3.2 THE CASE FOR COACHING

One of the most rapidly growing areas of endeavour in the field of business is that of executive coaching (Bluckert, 2008; Cilliers, 2005; Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006; Hernez-Broome & Boyce, 2011; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Kets de Vries, Korotov & Florent-Treacy (2007); Kahn, 2014; Kilburg, 2002; Peltier, 2011; Pooley, 2004; Price, 2003; Sandler, 2011; Scoular, 2011; Sherman & Freas, 2004; Talbott, 2013; Western, 2012). In a fast paced, rapidly changing and relentlessly demanding working environment, characterised by technical and interpersonal complexity (Clutterbuck, 2003; Kets de Vries & Cheak, 2010), executive coaching is used by organisations to support, guide and even advise their leaders to help improve their personal and their team's/group's performance (Coutu, Kauffman, Charan, Peterson, Maccoby, & Scoular, 2009; Huffington, et al., 2004a; Kets de Vries et al., 2007). Executives themselves are expected to be always "on", and are experiencing the loneliness and despondence of command, fear and envy, feeling that they are constantly being watched and judged, and experiencing consequent performance and existential anxiety, guilt and shame (Cilliers & Terblanche, 2010; Kets de Vries et al., 2007; Palmer & Panchal, 2011; Weinstock, 2011).

Western (2012) adds to this discussion by explaining the growth and success of executive coaching as partly the desire for sense-making and for middle and senior managers to regain some sense of control and "wisdom" (borrowing from Kilburg, 2002a), in the quickly changing, hyper-technical, hyper-informational workplace (described later in Chapter 7 as VUCA). Here many managers feel isolated, unwise when facing the speed of change, and fear that their sphere of influence is very limited. With the explosion in the demand for coaching services there have been at least two

unintended consequences: 1) a proliferation of the number of coaches all trying to promote and sell their techniques, but not all of them rigorously trained or competent with some doing more harm than good (Brunning, 2007a, p. xxv citing Kay (2003) who referred to this as the “menace of coaching”; Sherman & Freas, 2004); and 2) there is a dearth of empirical research attesting to the efficacy of executive coaching, despite the clear anecdotal evidence of its usefulness (Baek-Kyoo, 2005; Bono, Purvanova, Towler & Peterson, 2009; de Haan, Duckworth, Birch & Jones, 2013; Kampa & White, 2002; Kilburg, 2004b; Lowman, 2005; Pavur, 2013; Peltier, 2011; Smither, London, Flautt, Vargas & Kucine, 2003; Thach, 2002). It is interesting to note that, according to Kilburg (2007a), the first academic article on the application of executive coaching to leadership development was published in 1993. Bono et al. (2009) suggest that coaching has received more attention in the practitioner community than among academics. Clutterbuck (2008) noted that this trend was beginning to alter owing to increasing interest from both practitioners and academics in establishing an evidence base that is truly coaching-focused and involves both qualitative and quantitative data. The number of academic journals specific to coaching is also testimony to this development. (If one types in the word “coaching” in an online eJournal search one will find more than 251million hits from a general search: Garvey, Stokes & Megginson, 2014). Organisations are contracting coaches to assist individuals and teams with learning new skills/capabilities/attitudes, with personal development and growth and, sometimes, for remedial reasons but most often for a combination of all three (Cox, Bachkirova & Clutterbuck, 2014; Newton et al., 2006; Pavur, 2013; Western, 2012).

3.3 EXECUTIVE COACHING EXPLAINED

The number of different definitions of executive coaching is probably indicative of the fact that coaching is a relatively recent field, its broader application only emerging since the late 1990s (Cilliers, 2005; Clutterbuck, 2003; Kampa & White, 2002; Kilburg, 2002a; Ives, 2008; Newton et al., 2006) although Lowman (2002) has traced its origins back to the 1940s. Roberts and Jarrett (2007) describe the origin of executive coaching in the 1980s in the UK, initially stemming from a sports coaching framework. Western

(2012), in situating coaching in a broad historical and social context, asserts that contemporary 'coaching theory' is more a collection of models and approaches mostly transferred from psychotherapy theory (the talking cure) and he reminds readers that original sources of coaching stem from a multitude of informal, personal, dyadic, helping relationships (based on friendships) that evolved into social, sanctioned relationships. Evered and Selman (1989) remind one that the original use of the term "coach" in English, somewhere in the 1500s, refers to a particular kind of horse drawn carriage (as it still does), originating in a town called "Kocs" in Northern Hungary (Cox et al., 2014, p. 2), while the verb means "to convey a valued person from where he or she was to where he or she wanted to be" (Evered & Selman, 1989, p. 32).

Over the last 15 years executive coaching has become more popular in South African organisations and has been gaining a reputation, especially through reports in the so called popular journals, as a well-acknowledged management and leadership development technique (Meyer, 2006; Price, 2003; van der Walt, 2000). Following the worldwide trend noted by de Haan (2008), coaching has increasingly moved from being remedial to developmental and has become somewhat of a positive status symbol or a prized possession (Page & de Haan, 2014; Western, 2012, p. 98) for the coachee. Cilliers (2005) comments on the dearth of academic and scientific research in South Africa with reference to the psychological effects of executive coaching.

Additionally, there is a plethora of coaching models in which practitioners are approaching coaching from diverse backgrounds; the field is said to be in a state of flux and only just beginning to be regulated (de Haan, Duckworth, Birch & Jones, 2013; Garvey, Stokes & Megginson, 2014; Kilburg, 2002a; Sherman & Freas, 2004). In this section the researcher will provide some of the more common definitions of coaching and thereafter distil the common elements before describing the form of coaching used in this study in section 3.4.

3.3.1 Executive coaching defined

Kilburg (2002a) defines executive coaching as “a helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organisation and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioural techniques and methods to assist the client to achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction and consequently to improve the effectiveness of the client’s organisation within a formally defined coaching agreement” (p. 67). Kampa and White (2002) quote Caplan (1970) who identifies coaching as “consisting of a relationship between a consultant and consultee with the goal of improving the professional functioning of the consultee” (p. 141). Peltier (2011) adopts the following definition in his book: “Psychological skills and methods are employed in a one-on-one relationship to help someone become a more effective manager or leader. These skills are typically applied to specific present-moment work-related issues (rather than general personal problems or psychopathology) in a way that enables this client to incorporate them into his or her permanent management or leadership repertoire” (p. xxxi).

Central to the above three and many other definitions of executive coaching (e.g. Huffington et al., 2004a; Lowman, 2002; Peltier, 2011; Stern, 2007; Western, 2012) is the term (interpersonal) “relationship” between a client, usually identified as a manager and/or leader and/or executive in an organisation and a professionally trained coach or consultant. Wampold (2001) like Rosenzweig (1936) before him, found the “relationship” between client and therapist to be central to the efficacy of psychotherapeutic practice; even in coaching the relationship between coach and client is more important than the particular model or approach the practitioner adopts (de Haan et al., 2013; Kilburg, 2004b). Additionally, as Kilburg (2007a) has noted, common to many of the definitions of executive coaching there is reference to a time limited engagement, the collaboration between the coach and client placing the focus on the acquisition and internalisation of skills to improve the functionality of the executive which often involves some form of initial assessment. These definitions also imply a

specific form of organisational development with benefits (such as skills acquisition, growth and enhanced performance) accruing to both the individual being coached and ultimately, the organisation.

Grant and Cavanagh (2007) use the Australian Psychological Society's Interest Group on Coaching Psychology's definition of coaching psychology as "an applied positive psychology (which) draws on and develops established psychological approaches, and can be understood as being the systematic application of behavioural science, which is focused on the enhancement of life experience, work performance and wellbeing for individuals, groups and organisations with no clinically significant mental health issues or abnormal levels of distress" (p. 240). These authors proceed to describe the field of coaching psychology as one that, while drawing heavily on and developing previously established psychological approaches, has a coaching specific research base and theory which is increasingly being developed. Palmer and Whybrow (2007) refer to a psychology of coaching and mention 28 different psychological approaches to coaching (p.10). The website of the International Society for Coaching Psychology (the ISCP, part of the British Psychological Society or BPS; the local South African SIOPSA Interest Group in Coaching and Consulting Psychology has a memorandum of understanding with the ISCP) describes the practice of coaching psychology as "a process for enhancing well-being and performance in personal life and work domains underpinned by models of coaching grounded in established adult and child learning or psychological theories and approaches. It is practised by qualified coaching psychologists who have a graduate degree in psychology, relevant post-graduate qualifications, and have undertaken suitable continuing professional development and supervised practice" (British Psychological Society, 2016).

Tobias (2007) distinguishes executive coaching from consulting stating that the emphasis is on the individual in coaching as opposed to more of an organisational focus when one is consulting. He avers that when coaching is done in isolation from consulting, the absence of an organisational context may limit the coach's perspective on the presenting problem (p. 134).

As Kets de Vries et al. (2010), Lowman (2005) and others have noted, effective coaching appears to be anchored in multiple levels: individual, group, and organisational/systemic. It appears especially to integrate individual psychology with organisational needs.

For the purposes of this research, the definition of executive coaching adopted by Cilliers (2005) will be used: “Executive coaching is a form of consultation, namely a formal ongoing relationship between 1) an individual or team having executive (including managerial and leadership) authority and responsibility in an organisation and 2) a consultant who possesses in depth knowledge of behaviour change and organisational functioning from various psychological perspectives and paradigms” (p. 23). He adds that the underlying facilitative process involves providing learning opportunities towards reflection, self-awareness, self-esteem and increased quality in the communication with colleagues, peers, subordinates (and, the present researcher would add, manager), especially with regard to the individual’s leadership role and accompanying authorisation.

3.3.2 Executive coaching paradigms

A review of the literature has highlighted a multiplicity of theory based approaches to coaching including cognitive behavioural, solution focussed, person centred, Gestalt, existential, ontological, narrative and transpersonal, amongst others (Cox et al., 2014; Palmer & Whybrow, 2007). While there are links between many of these approaches, Cilliers (2005) points out that coaching is generally studied from behaviouristic (i.e. self-efficacy), humanistic (i.e. client centred) and or positive (i.e. a focus on wellness and strengths) psychological paradigms. In addition, Cilliers (2005) remarks, studying executive coaching from these paradigms, on the one hand, ensures that the interpersonal relationships and outcomes are understood from a cognitive and immediate relationship perspective; studying executive coaching from a systems psychodynamic perspective on the other hand ensures that the dynamic and

unconscious nature of the coaching relationship as well as the individual's relationships and interrelatedness with his/her team and organisation is taken into account (p. 24). Roberts and Jarrett (2007) suggest that most executive coaches, irrespective of their "school" of coaching, are working to broadly similar aims and what makes the difference is the coach's competence. Coaching, they assert, is disciplined work and not merely "empathic support" (ibid., p. 35).

3.3.3 Delineating the field of executive coaching

In this section the differences and similarities between the terms coaching, mentoring, counselling and therapy, which are often confused, are explained.

3.3.3.1 Coaching and mentoring

While the said terms have many areas in common (see Clutterbuck, 2008; Garvey, 2014; Western, 2012), the distinctive difference between coaching and mentoring is that of the strong performance, action bias and goal orientation in coaching. Ives (2008) has added to these the fact that coaching is non directive as opposed to mentoring, which he describes as "instructional" or directive (p. 100). However, he cautions that the boundaries between coaching and mentoring are not firmly set. Garvey (2014) in fact claims that coaching as a concept is derived from mentoring (p. 372). Other differences include the points that mentoring normally takes place over a longer period than coaching, that the mentor tends to be "older and wiser" than the mentee, implying an unequal relationship (especially in terms of power) between mentor and mentee; while mentoring tends to be more holistic and career development oriented than specifically performance goal oriented, with the mentor being able to "open doors" for the mentee and act as an internal sponsor (Frisch, 2001). Thus, the emotional bond between mentor and mentee is one of the features distinguishing between coaches and mentors; it may even result in mentee and mentor becoming friends, according to Garvey (2014). While context is important (Garvey, 2014), more similarities than differences have been noted between coaching and mentoring (Clutterbuck, 2008).

3.3.3.2 *Coaching and counselling/therapy*

According to Kets de Vries and Korotov (2007), coaching could be regarded as a repackaged therapeutic offering for the office where the terms counselling and psychotherapy are less acceptable. Kets de Vries et al. (2007) use the phrase “therapeutic but not therapy” (p. xvii) to describe executive coaching. Although the type of coaching they advocate is clinically oriented (see section 3.4 on systems psychodynamic executive coaching), they acknowledge that, depending on the orientation of the coach, coaching may take on different forms, making it hard to differentiate executive coaching from short term psychotherapy.

Western (2012), for example, believes coaching operates between the two poles of the “wounded and celebrated” selves and, depending on how it is delivered and the demand for it, will lean towards one or the other (p. 10). Similarly, Bachkirova (2007) comments that coaching (sometimes described as therapy for those who do not need it) no longer needs to fight for a niche in the market as a way of developing people, in contrast to counselling and psychotherapy, and that the need for a psychological underpinning of coaching interventions is more readily acknowledged amongst professional coaches (p. 351). Both practices draw heavily on psychotherapeutic frameworks and skills, deal with behaviour, emotion and cognition and depend on meaningful discussions between client and therapist or coach. Coaches need to take on a more systemic approach and have or develop a deep understanding of management and the organisational context of the client, drawing also on the views of the client’s colleagues. Other factors distinguishing coaching from therapy are the following facts: that the client’s organisation is more often than not funding the coaching (suggesting the duality of client, both the individual and the organisation (Kahn, 2014); the organisation is highly invested in the coaching goals and outcomes (Bachkirova, 2007); coaching takes place in a variety of settings (telephone, Skype, etcetera.); generally has longer sessions than the therapeutic fifty minute hour; is more action oriented, focussing more on the present and future than on the past, and has more

flexible boundaries in terms of extra sessionary contact (for example Woolfe, Dryden & Strawbridge, 2003). (Having said this, and as will be seen in section 3.4, systems psychodynamic coaching does emphasise the importance of the client's early development.)

Hart, Blattner and Leipsic (2001) interviewed thirty practitioners who ran both clinical and coaching practices and who identified distinct differences between therapy and coaching, including the focus of attention, time orientation, level of activity, and types of conversations between themselves and their clients. They also articulated the overlap between coaching and therapy; in particular, they highlighted the similar methods of inquiry, propensity for advice giving, boundary issues, and potential for power differentials that exist in both. The participants also said they related differently to therapy versus coaching clients and experienced more flexibility with coaching clients in terms of looser boundaries and more latitude, as described above. The authors also identified "danger signals" in their clients, including signs of depression, anxiety attacks, alcohol or drug addictions, personality disorders, and paranoia. At the same time, participants also identified that a therapist turned-coach must possess business knowledge in addition to clinical experience (i.e. a business mind-set) and must also be able to achieve business results. Therapists may need to avoid using certain therapy techniques or, more to the point, realise that being a good therapist does not necessarily make one a good coach (ibid., p. 236). Adequate and ongoing supervision, the researchers say, is essential in order to ensure a proper boundary between coaching and therapy.

Based on their assertion that coaching clients reveal significant levels of psychological distress and at least the same level of psychopathology as is found in the general population if not higher, Grant and Cavanagh (2007) pose the question: how does the task of coaching differ from the task of psychotherapy? For them the answer lies in the focal points of the different approaches. Counselling psychology uses therapeutic techniques in the amelioration of distress and the regaining of functionality whereas the focal point of clinical psychology is the cure of psychopathology or mental illness.

Western (2012) claims that psychotherapists look for the “wounded self” (p. 4), adding that industrial/organisational psychology examines the role of psychological dynamics as they affect work behaviour, attitudes and organisational structures in the service of organisational goals, effectiveness, productivity and individual wellbeing. The subtle difference between these approaches and coaching psychology is that “coaches seek to assist their clients to articulate self-congruent goals and aspirations (that improve their professional performance) and to systematically work toward their achievement” (ibid., p. 241). An additional differentiation they make is that coaching draws on a multidisciplinary approach; hence although the behavioural sciences are a major source of knowledge and practice, coaches draw on understanding and techniques from diverse areas such as economics, management, leadership and business sciences, philosophy, education and religion.

According to Huffington et al. (2004a), the boundary between coaching and psychotherapy may be fluid because therapy is a healing art, while coaching addresses the dis-ease of clients in organisations. Kilburg and Levinson (2008) add to the discussion about the differentiation between coaching and counselling by acknowledging that many of the techniques that coaches use today were invented by psychotherapists in their work with patients. These include: developing and maintaining a positive working alliance that involves empathy and positive regard; creating a holding environment for the management of powerful emotional forces while doing difficult psychological and technical work; the use of multidimensional communication skills; constructing simulations and working through negative emotional reactions to work situations; homework assignments; behavioural rehearsals, and limited use of confrontations and interpretations. However, these authors go on to emphasise that it is very important to recognise first and foremost that the use of these methods in coaching is for the purpose of focusing on improving the professional performance of the executive client and the effectiveness of the organisation he or she leads. The material that emerges in coaching sessions almost always deals with the reality based situation in the executive’s life and should be used by a coach to help manage such challenges in the present. They caution that if historical information is also forthcoming

or elicited, coaches must strive to quickly integrate this data with, and provide value to, what the leader faces on a day-to-day basis. Coaching interventions can and most often do offer a therapeutic benefit, but they are explicitly not designed for retrieving and working through traumatic life events, or the identification and resolution of historically developed and neurotically based compulsions and conflicts. As Bachkirova (2007) asserts, it is not appropriate to do psychotherapy within coaching. Or is it? Simon (in Bachkirova, 2007) suggests that because such a high degree of self-knowledge is essential for successful leadership, external coaching should comprise elements of counselling (p. 355). Western (2012) likewise advocates beginning coaching with a depth analysis of the client's history and background, including family of origin. Either way, coaches must remain vigilantly aware of these differences and boundaries and focus their efforts on the reality based problems in the executive lives of their clients, engaging in contexts that match their expertise and work within the area specified by the client (coachee and organisation); or re-contract if the coaching agenda is extended.

Kilburg and Levinson (2008) maintain that coaches can profitably extend their relationships with their clients and encourage them to include additional organisational resources and consultations and collaborations with others to address the challenges that they are facing. The emphasis in these coaching engagements, they assert, must always be on reinforcing and supporting the mature ego functions of executives and their leadership teams as they manage their organisations; not on the creation of transference relationships through which clients can learn how their early histories, attitudes, values, beliefs, educations, relationships, and personal trauma continue to create misery in their lives and how to stop such negative patterns from having such negative impacts. To be sure, there may be a need to do such work, and the systems psychodynamic approach would support this, but if a coach finds him/herself constantly engaged in such discussions (a possible repetition compulsion on the part of the client), it should become quickly obvious that a referral to a highly skilled psychotherapist may well be in order (p. 30).

Newton et al. (2006) suggest that organisational role analysis (ORA), a systems psychodynamic coaching technique or method (see Chapter 2 section 2.5.6 and section 3.4.4.1 below) helps make the distinction between coaching and therapy, in that ORA focuses on the individual's role within a system while therapy or counselling tends to focus on personality and character. Western (2012) adds to the discussion by declaring that counselling/psychotherapy focuses on 'self-actualisation', personal insight and individual well-being, whereas coaching focuses on 'role actualisation'. He qualifies this by stating that role actualisation can nonetheless only occur if the individual reflects and works on themselves, and on their work.

Bachkirova (2007) helps to round off this discussion by suggesting that the rapidly developing field of coaching psychology may assist with a clearer understanding and practical appreciation of the boundaries between coaching and counselling (p. 363). Nevertheless, she cautions that this is not likely to be simple and straightforward for individual practitioners and points to the crucial role of the self of the coach, in being able to observe and interpret the nuances and complexities of the one-to-one process of engaging with a client's development and making sound decisions on the basis of these. This obviously has important implications for the education, training and ongoing development of coaches, including their supervision.

As will be seen in the following section on systems psychodynamic executive coaching, historical information about the client, in particular the way they related to significant others in their earlier lives (transference relationships), does have a major relevance for their present patterns of behaviour, not only positive but, more likely, also their negative patterns.

Although we are dealing with a "normal" as opposed to a "clinical" population, of all the coaching paradigms and models, systems psychodynamic coaching is probably closest to counselling; hence the systems psychodynamic executive coach needs to be particularly alert to the coaching/therapy/counselling boundary.

3.4 EXECUTIVE COACHING FROM THE SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMIC STANCE

In this section a specific type of coaching, systems psychodynamic executive coaching, will be explained, the theoretical underpinning of the approach will be provided and three models of systems psychodynamic executive coaching will be proposed. The essential concepts relating to the approach will be explained and the generic coaching process outlined. Finally, the characteristics of a systems psychodynamically trained executive coach will be discussed and a typical client described.

3.4.1 A description of systems psychodynamic executive coaching

Brunning (2007a) asserts that all coaching is primarily a psychological endeavour and makes reference to the definition of coaching psychology as a distinct field of psychology, described in section 3.3 above. Roberts and Brunning (2007) define systems psychodynamic executive coaching as more “meaning making” than “goal attainment” in its purpose, with its roots in both therapeutically informed (individual) approaches to coaching and (organisational) role consultancy (p. 254).

As discussed in Chapter 2, all psychodynamic approaches trace their roots back to Freud and are concerned with understanding the inner world of human beings and how they behave in the outer world and relate to other people, organisations and society. According to Freudian theory, every human being has an unconscious as well as a conscious part to their minds. The unconscious, rather than being a part where issues are simply stored away, is a dynamic internal world where there is constant interaction between conscious and unconscious thoughts, feelings, wishes, urges and phantasies. Emotions play a key role in the unconscious world; in particular humans have the capacity to regulate their own experience of their emotions without being aware that they are doing so. In so doing, they are able to ban from their conscious minds unpleasant, frightening or threatening feelings that are too difficult to tolerate (Sandler, 2011). The *psychodynamic* element refers to conscious and unconscious individual experiences and mental processes as well as the experience of unconscious group and

social processes, which are simultaneously both a source and a consequence of unresolved or unrecognised organisational difficulties (Gould et al., 2006).

The *systems* element signifies the dominant framing perspective for understanding the structural aspects of the organisational system in which the individual is located and refers, inter alia, to its structure, design, levels of authority, roles, tasks, processes, activities and boundaries (Gould et al., 2006).

Sandler (2011) claims that the psychodynamic approach explains the complex and deep rooted nature of the emotional and behavioural patterns humans develop over their lifetimes, as well as why they persist with these patterns even though they may no longer serve them well (p.6).

Brunning (2007a, p. xxviii) describes systems psychodynamic coaching as a powerful and robust approach that is a multi-factorial, multi-layered process which primarily addresses itself to the person in the role and the multiple organisational and social fields that comprise the context in which work with the client takes place....by virtue of working with and making links across person-role-system/organisation boundaries. Brunning's (2007b) six domain model of executive coaching, which will be discussed later in section 3.4.3.1 is based on the person-role-system interconnection (p.132).

Roberts and Brunning (2007) acknowledge that while systems psychodynamic coaching outcomes may not be different from other methods of coaching in terms of options opened up for the client, what is distinctive is that psychodynamic coaching focuses on helping the latter address, understand and harness some of the unconscious drivers of their situation, helping them establish links between the organisational dynamic and structures, their personal dynamic and the wider context. This makes it possible for them to "re-imagine" their role (p. 274). Cilliers (2005) referred to the benefits of systems psychodynamic executive coaching as psycho-educational, facilitating insight and wisdom in the clients, impacting on their skills, performance and development (p. 28). Kilburg (2007b) suggests that the psychodynamic effort of

changing dysfunctional behaviour by making unconscious material consciously available to the person experiencing symptoms is likely to produce more complete and lasting changes (p. 189).

Interestingly, in their 2007 survey of coaching practices, Palmer and Whybrow (2007) found that between 10% and 15% of the coaches they surveyed used the systems psychodynamic approach, whereas solution focused or cognitive behavioural coaching was most commonly used by their survey respondents (60-70%) (p. 9). Despite the former being a less popular approach for coaches, Lee (2014) praised it for its capacity both to work in depth, below the surface (compared to behavioural approaches which deal more with a symptom than a disorder or root cause level), and its ability to manage boundaries, enhancing the creation of containment and safety, allowing for defences to be released. The use of restraint and silences, he claims, allows clients to think more than do, reflect more than solve, and tolerate the discomfort of not knowing - which allows the transformative power of awareness to work. Notwithstanding systems psychodynamic coaching's potential to provide a rich learning environment for evoking authenticity and increased effectiveness, it is not for everyone. Those organisations and business executives looking for relatively short term engagements to help them think through a particular issue may not need to dig into patterns learned from the past. Moreover, its problem-centric bias, possibly pathologising clients, may cause the coach to miss the value of focussing on a coachee's strengths (Lee, 2014).

Nonetheless, systems psychodynamic coaching brings great depth and insight to the work of coaching and is most appropriate for contexts where coachees are interested in exploring the roots and interconnections of their meaning making patterns, want to enhance their interpersonal skills and enhance their self-understanding, where they feel stuck and are looking for a more enduring shift (Lee, 2014; Peltier, 2011; Roberts & Brunning, 2007). Ultimately, though, coaches need to be able to flex their styles, drawing on multiple approaches.

3.4.2 Theoretical underpinning of systems psychodynamic executive coaching

The Tavistock Consultancy Service approach of “working below the surface” is distinctive in that it addresses non-rational, unconscious and systemic processes and draws on the thinking of psychoanalytic practice (Freud), group relations (Bion, Rice) and systems thinking (Miller and Rice, von Bertalanffy) (as cited in Huffington et al., 2004a and Kilburg, 2002a). As Dimitrov (2008, no pagination) has stated: What really goes on in organisations takes place in the intrapsychic and interpersonal world of key organisational players, below the surface of day to day organisational behaviours.

He continues that in the face of “knotty” organisational situations, (individual) and organisational psychodynamics can go a long way to bringing clarity and providing solutions by offering an important window into the operation of the mind, identifying meaning in the most personal, emotional experiences.

The current South African business environment, characterised by complex legislative, infrastructural, social, moral and competitive transformational challenges (Natrass, 2017; SAIRR, 2017), offers a unique context to explore the unconscious conflicts and anxiety manifesting in organisations together with the resulting defences (Cilliers, 2004; Cilliers, 2005; Cilliers & Terblanche, 2010). In describing the history and role of the Tavistock Institute, Trist and Murray (1993) have referred to the “turbulent field” and “vortical state” of organisations (p. 32).

Dimitrov (2008) argues that human beings often mistakenly regard organisational behaviour as conscious, mechanistic, predictable, uncomplicated and easy to understand, yet find that there is something they just can not put their fingers on. Workers often approach the work situation with unfulfilled and unconscious family needs which they want to fulfil in the work place. Using the Tavistock paradigm assists the system psychodynamically trained practitioner in paying attention to the nuances of unconscious thoughts, feelings and experiences and, through interpretation, to gain a deeper and multidimensional understanding of the individual in the context of her or

his workplace. Gabriel and Schwartz (1999) assert that people's actions, thoughts and emotions in organisations are expressions of wishes and desires similar to those in the rest of their lives. The meaning of these actions, thoughts and emotions is not always clear because they are muffled and distorted by powerful psychic and social censors and interpretations (see section 3.4.5.5 below) which may help to reveal hidden meanings (p. 11).

In this respect, therefore, "many organisation development (OD) practitioners and coaches find the insights and methods offered by modern psychodynamic theory useful for extending their appreciation of the complexity of organisational and executive behaviour and for supporting their work in highly resistant and emotionally charged situations" (Kilburg, 2002a, p. 21).

Carl Rogers, although a humanistic psychologist, never abandoned his psychoanalytic training; he retained the concepts of the unconscious and the importance of childhood in later life. He referred to the real and the ideal selves (in systems psychodynamics these are referred to as the real and false selves; there is also the ideal self, the feared self, the true self and the possible or aspired self – in reality what one hopes for is an integration of these different selves (in Palmer & Panchal, 2011, p. 7 and p. 117). Rogers maintained that the closer these are to one another, the greater the chances of a satisfactory life, both privately and at work. This in essence is the goal of psychodynamic coaching – setting up realistic goals while simultaneously working on a realistic self-perception. While he advocated the therapist's totally neutral position, in psychodynamic coaching, it is important to register all the feelings and sensations generated in meeting the client, since these are considered to be data in the coaching process. The modality of systems psychodynamic coaching is one of connecting the past (history and relationships) with the present and current situation to create an understanding and acknowledgement (of the influence of the past on the present) in order to form a framework for a realistic future (Beck, 2012, p. 131). Melanie Klein's focus on the inner world of the infant and its interplay with the external world, its object relations, has provided psychodynamic coaching with, amongst other aspects, a focus

on unconscious fantasies which are described as psychological expressions of instincts and are always active in every person, right from birth (in Beck, 2012).

Beck (2012) defines the purpose of psychodynamic coaching as follows: “The person being coached (the client), through acknowledgment and insight into his or her own history, personal patterns, inner structure, and the present context and its dynamics, can combine past, present and wishes for the future with realistic, feasible actions” (p. 2). Diamond (2013) has declared that at its core psychodynamic coaching is about self-understanding (consciousness and awareness in the world of work) and truth (or psychological reality) (p. 365).

In part, the approach can be summed up in the following phrase: understanding the there and then to deal better with the here and now (after Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008).

Lee (2014, p. 22) reviews the theoretical underpinning of the systems psychodynamic approach to coaching by drawing attention to four key assumptions: 1) Human behaviour is powerfully influenced by unconscious motives, implying that the coach must be constantly curious about what is implied, hidden or a blind spot for the client; 2) Human behaviour is also unconsciously shaped by past experiences, so that as part of the coaching conversation the coach will invite the client to talk about his/her past experiences and explore links or resonances between past and present; 3) Because different parts of the mind could be in conflict with each other, the coach is curious about the apparent inconsistencies between what the client says and does, and therefore encourages the client to become aware of and explore mixed or conflictual feelings and thoughts and 4) Because unconscious communication between people is possible, the coach will periodically bring to attention his or her own bodily sensations and emotions as possible clues about unconscious communication from the client (the counter-transference).

According to Roberts and Brunning (2007), systems psychodynamic coaching has as its goals the development of insight, bringing into conscious awareness that which was previously outside awareness and creating a better fit or alignment between the clients' aspirations and abilities and the purpose of their organisational system (p. 264). Scholars and practitioners such as Brunning (2007a); Cilliers (2005); Motsoaledi and Cilliers (2012); Cilliers and Terblanche (2010); Kets de Vries (2006); Kilburg and Diedrichs (2007); Newton et al., (2006) and others shifted systems psychodynamics from its traditional group orientation to the individual context of executive coaching.

3.4.3 Models of systems psychodynamic executive coaching

In this section three models of systems psychodynamic coaching will be discussed: Brunning's Six Domain Model, Kilburg's 17-Dimension Model and Western's Analytic-Network Coaching.

3.4.3.1 Brunning's Six Domain Model

Based on her person-role-organisation (P/R/O) approach, Brunning (2007b; and in Roberts & Brunning, 2007) developed a model of coaching practice called the six domain model, opening up each of the three elements and including more information about the client's personality, life story, set of skills, talents and competencies, current organisational role, current workplace environment and his/her own aspirations, career progression to date and future options. Each of these six domains, illustrated in Figure 3.1 below, are thought to be simultaneously present during a coaching session; any one or more of them constitute(s) an appropriate and legitimate focus of work. Additional sources of knowledge or expertise that might complement or inform the client and the coach during the session are listed on the outside of each of the six domains: psychotherapy and personal development, counselling, training and qualifications, organisational dynamics, business in context and professional development. The six domains are regarded as being cogwheels in continuous motion, each able to affect the movement of neighbouring wheels. This influence could be harmonious or

disharmonious. Some roles and work environments may be more conducive to optimal performance, while some personalities and life stories may predispose certain individuals to work effectively or less effectively. It is essential for clients to work with all the domains in order to avoid focusing on one domain only (Brunning, 2007b). In this model the coach needs to negotiate with the client regarding access to personal information so as to deepen the discourse that takes place during coaching sessions, being wary not to drift into psychotherapy.

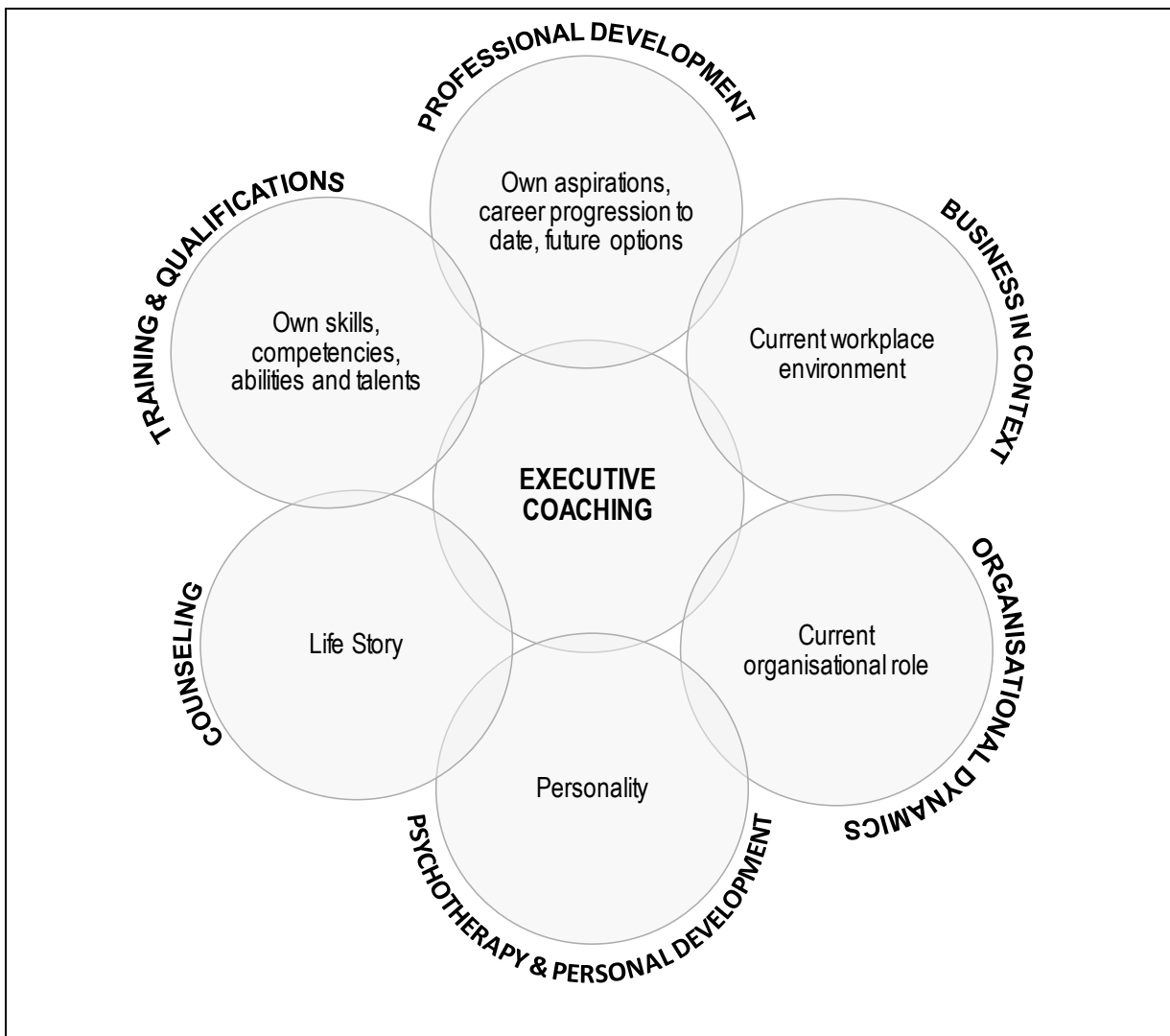


Figure 3.1: Brunning’s six-domain model of executive coaching in action (Brunning, 2007b)

3.4.3.2 Kilburg's 17-Dimension Model

Kilburg (2002a) developed his 17-dimensional model of psychodynamic and organisational systems which demonstrates the complexity a consultant (*or coach*) faces when working in an organisation. The seventeen elements of his model are listed on the periphery of the circle in Figure 3.2. Each of the dimensions occurs at a myriad of different levels in an organisational structure (especially in large organisations) and they are constantly interacting, influencing the events of organisational life (p. 23). Kilburg (2007a) distinguishes between the psychodynamic and systems factors. The latter comprises input, throughput, output, structure, process and content while the psychodynamic factor is further divided into four psychological structures - conscience, idealised self, instinctual self and rational self - and three types of relationships: past, present and focal. These seventeen elements interact with one another, at various levels of an organisation from individual through team/group subsystems and eventually the entire organisation. Kilburg suggests that executive coaches (and consultants) use this model to help them navigate the complexities of organisational life, in assisting individuals with authority and responsibility to improve their performance and that of the enterprise.

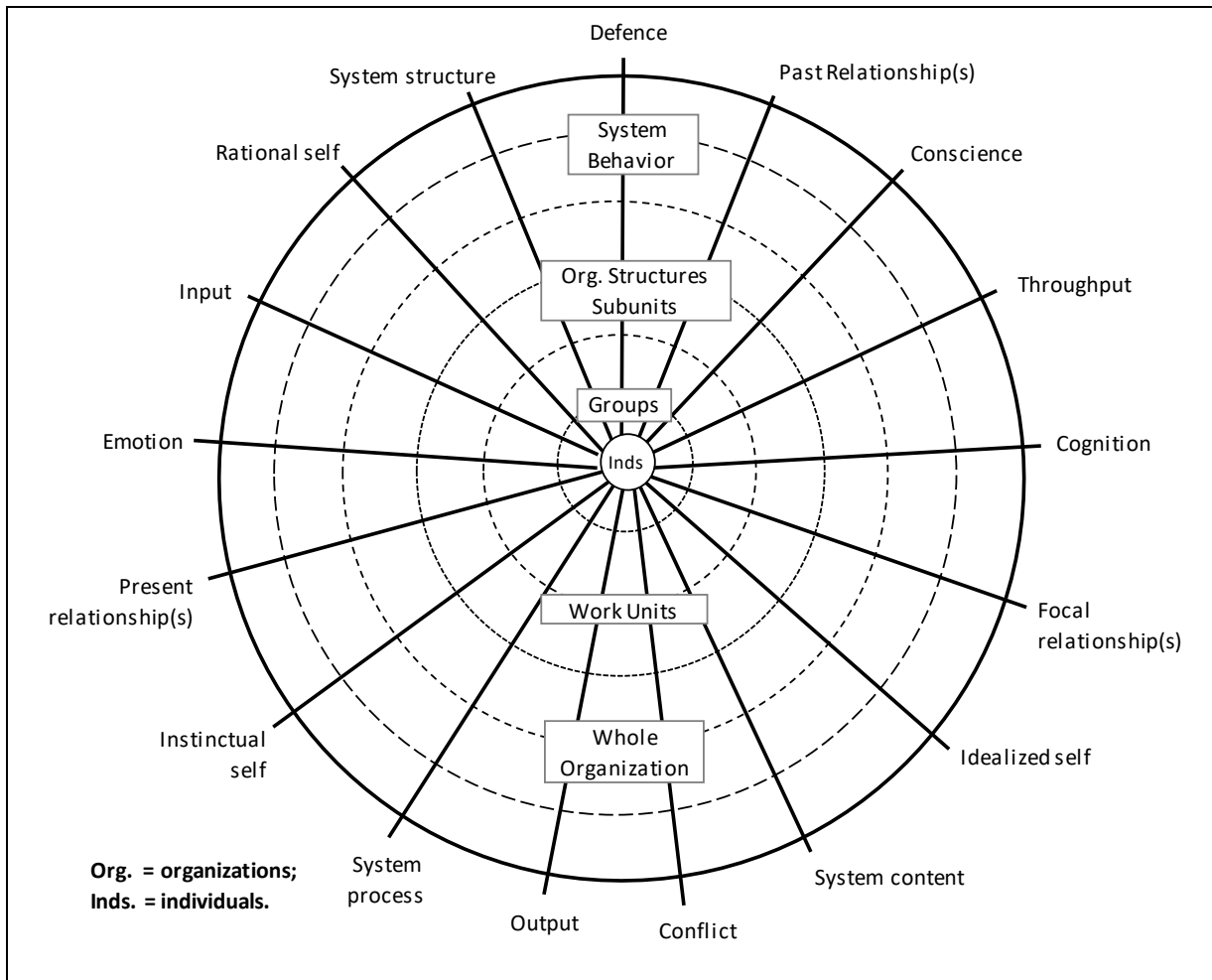


Figure 3.2: Kilburg's 17 - Dimensional Model of Psychodynamic and Organizational Systems (Kilburg, 2002a)

3.4.3.3 Western's Analytic Network (A-N) Coaching Model

Western's analytic network (A-N) coaching (2012) is influenced by psychoanalytic approaches. As he states, whether we like it or not, the unconscious is at work, at work; hence he believes that depth analysis coaching is needed, working with unconscious, emotional and relational dynamics at individual, team, organisational and social levels to uncover the unconscious processes that drive desires and defensive behaviours (Analytic Network Coaching, n.d.). It is not a prescriptive coaching formula, but a process to help coaches work systematically through five "frames" to guide their clients on a profound leadership journey:

- a. Depth Analysis: Coaching the inner-self - coaching for personal insight, authenticity, joy, meaning, and spirituality, clarifying values, purpose and desire
- b. Relational Analysis: Coaching the relational-self - exploring how humans relate to others, and how others relate to them, finding patterns, addressing challenges and managing emotions attached to relationships, to improve teamwork, leadership and living well
- c. Leadership Analysis: Coaching the leader within - coaching the client to fulfil their unique leadership potential. Developing new understandings of 21st century leadership and of how to distribute leadership throughout organisations
- d. Network Analysis: Coaching the networked self - locating the client in their networks to ground them, and develop a 'networked mind-set'. Coaching to influence nodal change-points, harnessing the power of the network to grasp emergent opportunities
- e. Strategic Analysis: Coaching the strategic mind-set - coaching clients to develop strategic agility, and deliver strategic personal, team and organisational plans after reviewing the other four frames. Developing strategic thinking, to work with emergence and innovation is a core task of today's leaders.

Western (2012) goes on to say that each frame in the A-N coaching system is vitally important in its own right. However, the five frames together create a very powerful, holistic coaching system that has a profound impact on clients. Having used the coaching system to address current challenges, clients internalise the framework, which they draw on as a map to guide future decision-making and actions. This coaching system is designed to achieve short-term goals whilst also delivering long-term benefits through changing the way leaders think and work. He describes the role of the coach as follows: An expert in facilitating another's personal journey, focusing on both personal and organisational success. An organisational coach is a professional

partner whose task is to improve 'role performance' thereby working towards organisational as well as individual aims. Using expert 'people skills' the coach will create a 'thinking space' and encourage reflection and dialogue, sharing insights, thoughts and posing challenges to the coachee before helping them focus on appropriate action. The organisational coach should focus on 'person in role', and an experienced coach takes systemic, organisational and strategic perspectives (Western, 2012, p. 44).

The specific coaching approach adopted in this research is explained in section 4.6.5 in Chapter 4.

3.4.4 Systems psychodynamic coaching concepts

In addition to the central concepts of systems psychodynamics such as the unconscious, anxiety, transference, defences and boundaries, amongst others, covered in Chapter 2, there are some important systems psychodynamic concepts pertaining to executive coaching which will be explained in the sections below.

3.4.4.1 Organisational role analysis

Organisational role analysis or ORA (mentioned in section 3.3.3.2 above) has emerged from the systems psychodynamic theory and practice of group relations as an important method of working with a client and for creating a containing environment between the individual and systemic learning. Initially it was used with individual managers, but French and Vince (2002b) suggest that it is becoming more common as an action research method between managers in a group setting. Borwick (2006) on the other hand perceives it as a group or system process that can be successfully adapted for one on one use. Brunning (2007a) regards ORA as a way of helping managers and leaders take up their roles effectively. Newton et al., (2006) suggest that ORA has been adapted by many systems psychodynamic practitioners and may be referred to as

organisational role consultancy or more recently (for marketing purposes) as executive coaching.

Taking up a role represents the individual's efforts to commit themselves to the tasks inherent in their role. According to Sievers and Beumer (2006), in this way the tasks and targets of the organisation interact with the conscious and unconscious aspirations of the individual. A role is taken up when the individual role holder identifies with the aim of the system, aligns his or her own desires and aspirations to that aim and chooses actions and behaviours which best contribute to the overall aims of the system (Reed & Bazalgette, 2006). Comprehending tasks in context is crucial for the effective taking up of a role. As noted, taking up a role is a complex process; while the specific techniques of ORA were not applied in this study, ORA is briefly presented here to demonstrate this complexity. Being in role assumes an "organisation-in-the-mind, the emotional experience of task, purpose, role, boundaries, accountability, competence, success and failure and working in role is offering leadership from any position within the organisation by containing the organisational experience delegated to the role holder" (Reed & Bazalgette, 2006, p. 48). What did prove useful in this study was the person/role/organisation or system (as a nexus of relationships) concept as leaders took on new roles. By acting in role, individuals unconsciously offer containment of organisational experiences delegated to the role holder. However, when role taking is avoided, violation of boundaries occurs (because the boundary represented by the role is rejected) (Sievers & Beumer, 2006).

In the P/R/O approach, role is the link between the individual and the organisation (or system). It is the role that should change and consequently behaviour, not the individual's personality; ORA redefines the individual's role within the system (Borwick, 2006). Changing the role is far from easy as Borwick (2006) states, since the weight of one's experience and the power of others' expectations "act as cement in maintaining the status quo. The strongest rationale for not changing one's role is not knowing what one should do in one's new role" (p. 9). This is of course highly relevant for those who are changing roles. ORA allows the individual to examine, at different levels of

meaning, his/her behaviour as it relates to how he/she takes up the role, and not to his/her person. Person has a particular meaning in P/R/O and is not the same as an individual, who is seen as an entity. "Person" is at the nexus of relationships and may play many roles in the same system. A person who is appointed to a position in an institution and given a job description is assumed to have some of the ingredients for taking a role – the necessary capacities, a grasp of the purpose of the system and an appreciation of conditions (the environment, resources). The person then sets out to integrate this knowledge and understanding and to find a way of working to achieve the system's purpose by constructing a set of self-disciplined behavioural patterns (Reed & Bazalgette, 2006).

The ORA process suggested by Reed and Bazalgette (2006) broadly covers the three phases of finding the role, making the role and taking the role. The client is invited to describe a current incident that points to their difficulties in the work place. By describing the realities of their here and now, the client expresses their feelings about what is happening, opening up to their inner world of ideas, objectives, satisfactions, disappointments, relationships – a plethora of activities and feelings that form the working context of the client. It may take some time before the client begins to see the "whole" as co-ordinated and having intrinsic meaning rather than simply a number of parts. The client eventually begins to see an internal image of their organisation, not as something "out there" but as a subjective mental construct. Drawing on the client's experience, the coach helps the client develop working hypotheses (see below) to test realities both during the ORA sessions and back in the workplace. Leaders and managers become alert to the reality that their executive role is located at the boundary of the system and to realise that their role is to take decisions and actions that influence the engagement of the system with its context. This is called "working in role" (Reed & Bazalgette, 2006, p. 52).

Once the client has found his/her role, the next phase of the ORA process is to make the role: by embodying the qualities, aptitude, competence and character, the client finds the courage to take action in the role with a better understanding of the systems'

boundaries and aims. On the one hand the psychological role is that internalised by the client, developed and disciplined, adaptive and responsive to the internal and external contexts, expressing the desire of the person which they bring to their responsibilities and which provides them with the emotional energy which they invest in the work of the system. The sociological role, on the other hand, is the role as seen from the point of view of those who experience the behaviour of the client, such as the client's subordinates, colleagues or bosses. The client realises that he/she has both admirers and detractors who may express critical or derogatory opinions about the client's behaviour, which may put pressure on him/her to conform to their sociological perspective, to become anxious and refuse to take risks or step out of line, thereby compromising the client in how they work in their role. Understanding the concepts of both the psychological and sociological roles enables the client to monitor how their intuition or desire is being expressed in the reality of their own behaviour and activities. At a deeper, unconscious level, role may be thought to consist of the normative, existential and phenomenal roles (Obholzer & Roberts, 2003, p. 30); the further apart the three are, the higher the level of anxiety the individual experiences. The normative role is the rational, objective, conscious and measurable role, as defined for example in a job description. The existential role is the role the individual takes up, how he or she chooses to interpret and enact the role, and is made up of introjections – the unconscious incorporation of feelings, ideas, attitudes, thoughts and values about the role. The phenomenal role is made up of projections and projective identification – what the role holder believes others think of his or her performance in the role (Cilliers, 2017). Once again the coach helps the client come up with working hypotheses (see below) which the client will test in the workplace and which will enhance the client's understanding of themselves and the reality of the system in which they work, as well as helping them develop how they use their personal qualities (Reed & Bazalgette, 2006, p. 54).

The third element that of *taking the role*, will be dealt with as a separate section in 3.4.4.4 below.

Clarifying an individual's role within a system is considered to be central for this study as managers and leaders negotiate new roles in existing systems or new roles in new systems while they manage career transitions. While ORA was not a central methodology of this study, discussing the participants' role as part of the career coaching process was, revealing the "in the mind aspects of the clients' role experience" (Newton et al., 2006, p. xiv). Western (2012) in fact describes coaching as 'role actualisation': Coaching individuals to become fully empowered in their roles, in order to contribute to organisation success (p. 187). Thus, taking up and managing oneself effectively in especially a new organisational role, requires a deep understanding of the systemic interrelatedness in the triangulated self/person, role and organisational system (Dimitrov, 2008; Lawrence, 2006; van Niekerk, 2011).

As will be evident in the following chapter, supporting leaders in transition to become actualised in their new roles is the main focus of the empirical work of this study.

3.4.4.2 The organisation/institution-in-the-mind

ORA (described above) is a way of exploring the internal objects that have been patterned by the client to form his or her "organisation-in-the-mind" (in French & Vince, 2002b, p. 12). Huffington (2007) terms organisation-in-the-mind, as it manifests in coaching, "the third party in the wings" (p. 49).

Hutton, Bazalgette and Reed (1997), after Turquet (1985), introduced the term, initially described *organisation-in-the-mind* as follows: "Organisation-in-the-mind is what the individual perceives in his or her head (an internal object in the mind) of how activities and relations are organised, structured and connected internally. It is a model internal to oneself, part of one's inner world, relying upon the inner experiences of my interactions, relations and the activities I engage in, which give rise to images, emotions, values and responses in me, which may consequently be influencing my own management and leadership, positively or adversely. . . ." (p. 4). Armstrong (2005) who described it not so much as a mental construct but more as the client's emotional reality,

the space between, compares organisation-in-the-mind to Hirschhorn's concept of *the workplace within* (p.7). Huffington (2007) adds that this reality is also reflected or echoed in the coach, much like the concept of counter-transference, evoking in the coach his or her organisation-in-the-mind in terms of the organisational settings in which the coach works or has worked over time (p. 50).

Roberts (2002) suggests that in modern complex organisations of the 21st century, it is seldom adequate to hold in mind only one's immediate work unit; opportunities for managers at different levels to work together at conceptualising the relatedness of parts to the whole are crucial, both for attempting to make sense of disparate and disturbing experiences and for effective management (p. 229).

Reed and Bazalgette (2006) define *organisation-in-the-mind* as a construct held only in the mind, focused around the emotional experiences of tasks, roles, purposes, boundaries, rituals, accountability, competence, failure or success within the enterprise. It may be more or less conscious or unconscious but calls for management (p. 48). It may reflect unexplored and unresolved ordeals of childhood. *Institution-in-the-mind* on the other hand centres on the emotional experience of ideals, values, hopes, beliefs, dreams, symbols, birth, life, and death. It is not confined to the institution but has resonance within the wider system and calls for leadership. Reed and Bazalgette (2006) use the metaphors of the body and spirit to describe the organisation and institution in the mind respectively, which together constitute the whole (p. 49). Armstrong (2005), who stated that organisation-in-the-mind should be understood literally and metaphorically, did not see this distinction between organisation- and institution-in-the-mind as useful.

The organisation-in-the-mind is a fluid concept, influenced by the tensions, conflict and flux in organisations and in the minds and perceptions of the individuals who work there, highlighting not so much the behaviour of individuals but rather the meaning of their behaviour and the deeper motives for their actions (Gabriel & Schwartz, 1999). Huffington (2007) refers to the primary process of the organisation as something

“pervasive and constitutive” (p. 51) and discusses how this affects behaviour and the emotional experience we see and feel in our clients (and in ourselves). This primary process finds various means of expression, influenced by pressures from society, the marketplace and other factors, that impact on individuals and groups in various ways, mediated by their own constraints, opportunities and valences. It is not always easy, she adds, to capture the organisation-in-the-mind because it sometimes emerges fleetingly or not at all. Often, the organisation’s reaction to the stresses and strains of organisational life is to “reorganise” or “restructure”, since the pathology is perceived as a side effect of defective structures or processes. Sometimes this is the case but more often there is something more fundamental and inherent in the system that needs to be understood, acknowledged and managed and its creative potential exploited, rather than something to be denied, avoided or “structured out” (p. 51).

3.4.4.3 The working hypothesis

Lawrence (2007) describes the working hypothesis as a sketch of the situation, a guess at what might be happening (p. 31), stating that it is difficult to capture truth because it is evasive (as opposed to an interpretation which is delivered).

Sandler (2011) asserts that in attempting to understand the internal and external world of her clients, she takes a proactive approach and uses her judgement in identifying their characteristic psychological and behavioural patterns. She adds that she cannot know for sure that her perceptions are correct and must regard her assertions as possible or probable, rather than certain (p. 12). Using the working hypothesis, she aims to strike the right balance between application of theory and keeping an open mind as to what is taking place for her client as an individual within a particular organisation. Originally used by consultants working with groups and in attempting to decipher and explain the fast moving group dynamics, the working hypothesis was used to represent the version of reality that makes most sense to the consultants at a particular time. Sandler (2011) goes on to explain that the working hypothesis, which is not assumed to be necessarily correct, does not emerge purely as a result of theoretical

assumptions but is based on carefully observed evidence, provided by the words and non-verbal communication and behaviour of the client and often too by her own responses to the client. The coach thus looks for evidence to confirm, develop, amend or discard this hypothesis.

Nonetheless, the coach is not the only one encouraged to develop working hypotheses. The formulation of these by the client and coach is thought to be central to making and taking the role (Reed & Bazalgette, 2006). It offers propositions to be tested by the client, to explore the meanings of the realities that confront them in their system and to establish what is for them the appropriate role distance between themselves and others as they prepare to take action. According to Reed and Bazalgette (2006, p. 54) a good working hypothesis will reveal the points of leverage in the system to the client and can suggest how to use them to best effect.

Working hypotheses are constantly being formulated as the client's subjective view of the whole system and her or his subsequent behaviour is revised over time. They refer to the cross currents and vested interests, often unknown and possibly unconscious processes at work and suggest that the coach enables the client to question and address the meanings of the processes, focussing not so much on the individuals but more on the hidden forces of the institution (much like the organisation-in-the-mind described earlier) to explain the obscurities, thereby releasing the energy which exists in the system to the client to take up her or his role and enable the system to become "fit for purpose" (p. 55).

3.4.4.4 Taking up a role

A person joining an organisation or a team or a group comes into a particular position which has assigned duties and responsibilities attached to it, as well as expectations (either overt or covert) about what appropriate behaviour is. According to Reed and Bazalgette (2006), neither the position nor expectations define the role, nor do they enable the post holder to know how to manage his or her behaviour appropriately in

the circumstances and situation he or she meets (p. 49). The role is fashioned or taken up only as the person “makes something personal of it based on individual skills, ideals, beliefs, and their understanding of what is required” (Roberts & Jarrett, 2007, p. 20) and, according to Reed and Bazalgette (2006), when the person:

- Identifies the aim of the system they belong to (evolves a mental image of the system – the organisation-in-the-mind)
- Relates their own desire to that aim
- Takes ownership of the aim as a member of the system
- Chooses the action and personal behaviour which from their position best contributes to achieving the system’s aim (by testing a hypothesis, the client is open to the possibility that there may be factors and forces s/he hasn’t fully taken into account and may need to be ready to learn from what happens).

The task is the basic component of the role where the primary task contains or manages anxiety and comprises rational, conscious processes as well as irrational, unconscious, off-task or even anti-task processes that indicate high levels of anxiety. Management’s task is to ensure that the primary task is carried out, acting as border guards (or a boundary) and ensuring that optimal permeability is achieved and maintained. To be successful in this role, they must have sufficient authority which comes from above (delegated), below (acceptance) and within (self-authorisation) (Beck, 2012, p.141).

Taking up an organisational role implies uncertainty and risk (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2000; Czander, 1993; Hirschhorn, 1997; Lawrence, 1999). Anxiety is not simply rooted in the person’s internal voices or private preoccupations, since it reflects real threats to professional identity. If the individual’s anxiety is too great or too difficult to bear, the client may escape by stepping out of role.

Once the role is taken up, the client may come to realise that the “taken for granted” aim of the system may need to change and that by working in role, they have the authority to take action to enable that change to occur (Reed & Bazalgette, 2006, p. 49). Role boundaries are important not only for relatedness and relationships but also because working across, and at, boundaries is a key feature of work in modern day organisations (Struwig & Cilliers, 2012). Understanding and managing boundaries takes considerable psychological work and impacts the way an individual takes up his/her role because they both offer a defence against anxiety, at the cost of generating an anxiety all of their own (Gabriel, 1999). The notion of role is really an idea in the mind; by observing someone at work, we can deduce from how they behave what system (or organisation) they have in their mind and what they imagine is needed to contribute to the aim of that system. Taking and making a role, understanding and carrying out the tasks inherent in that role and managing the role boundaries are important concepts for leaders in transition, as will be noted in Chapters 4 and 6.

3.4.5 On being a systems psychodynamic executive coach

In this section the role of the systems psychodynamic executive coach is examined in terms of their mental model, understanding the coach as container, the use of empathy, making interpretations, their role as a transitional object and their use of self as an instrument of change.

3.4.5.1 Mental model of the systems psychodynamic executive coach

The systems psychodynamically informed coach is required to operate with a dual mode of attention. One of the main tasks of coaching is understanding the client – making sense of their thoughts, emotions and behaviour (Sandler, 2011), thereby participating fully in the coaching. Nevertheless, working with the transference and the counter-transference represent particular difficulties for the systems psychodynamic coach because disowned feelings of the coachee might be unconsciously projected onto the coach; containing these feelings often challenges, to the limit, the coach’s own

capacity for emotional regulation. Finding themselves filled with feelings of rage or disgust or desire or boredom may block the coach's capacity for thinking, in which case the goal (especially with the help of supervision) is to find a way to reinstate the capacity to think. Beedell (2009) and Gilmour (2009) both emphasise the concepts of the defended subject and defended researcher (as well as the vulnerability of their respective egos) and the mutual influence between the psycho-social researcher/coach and participant/client. Remaining curious is also a key attribute, especially when the limits of understanding are reached and the coach might feel confused or overwhelmed (Obholzer, 1994). Lawrence (2007) refers to the "capacity for wonderment" and the coach's ability of "bearing to think the unthinkable" (p. 98), oscillating between knowing and not-knowing and coming to know. Van de Loo (2007) refers to this as the ability to be sensitive and open to deeper, primordial levels of the mind and to tolerate intense, volatile, and immediate emotions and impulses. The "good enough coach" (an adaptation of Winnicott's phrase) does not always get this right. Most often this person is a coach who manages to return him/herself to a state of regulation, having been temporarily overwhelmed (Lee, 2014, p. 26).

The notion of the "defended subject" (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009) is important for the systems psychodynamically informed coach, both during the coaching itself and during the data analysis and interpretation. The defended subject and defended researcher both defend themselves against their respective anxieties, consequently it is suggested that the researcher/coach use reflexive field notes to record their own emotional responses (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009b). By suspending memory, desire and judgement (Cytrynbaum & Noumair, 2004) and focussing on the researcher's unconscious psychological experience and inter-subjective dynamics, in terms of transference, counter-transference and projective identification, the systems psychodynamically informed coach should recognise the effect this might have on the coaching alliance (see for example Horowitz, 1985).

Sandler (2011) describes crafting her coaching interventions with care (in discussing her psychodynamic approach to coaching); she cautions that psychodynamic coaches

must apply a rigorous distinction between what they think and what they say to their clients, or risk not only damaging the coaching process but possibly also undermining the client's wellbeing if the coach's intervention (often in the form of interpretations) is experienced as attacking or intrusive (p. 12).

According to Kets de Vries et al. (2010), by its nature leadership or executive coaching has a Socratic quality; it involves asking a series of questions about a central issue, and trying to find satisfactory answers through dialogue. The use of questions and conversation implies that a leadership coach begins from a position of humility and curiosity, rather than authority and knowledge. Alvesson and Sköldeberg (2009) refer to this as reflexivity, noting that the researcher and the researched affect each other mutually and continually (p. 79).

The relational processes between the coach and the client need to become conscious, recognised and then attended to so that the coach can locate him or herself in a space (the analytic third – see below) (Diamond, 2007, p. 149). Diamond (2007) also refers to the dual position of observation and participation (p. 145) which is necessary to produce both consciousness and reflectivity for creating insight and change.

Roberts and Jarrett (2007) in their review of coaches and their coaching practices found that most learn to adapt their approach based on experience, and seek out new tools as they encounter limitations of their existing skills (p. 29). They are mindful of the limitations of their approach and pay particular attention to the potential for “unconscious collusion” or “shared blind spots” (ibid., p. 35) and mutual idealisation. Coaching, they declare and as stated previously, is disciplined work, not merely empathic support. This is one of the advantages of systems psychodynamic coaching in that the concepts of transference and counter-transference should make the systems psychodynamically informed coach more alert to this possibility.

O'Broin and Palmer (2008, p. 317) identify common principles of effective change from other contexts, such as psychotherapy and counselling, to the field of coaching and

highlight the importance of the coaching alliance (and its sub components of tasks, bonds and goals), the coach's ability to customise or tailor the coach-client relationship to optimise outcomes and the coach's appropriate responsiveness to an individual client's needs (amongst other factors). While they acknowledge that further research is required, they do emphasise the fact that, regardless of the coach's preferred theoretical perspective, the foundation of effective coaching is the formation of a successful collaborative relationship (Stober & Grant (2006) in O'Broin & Palmer, 2008). Grounding their study on the work of Wampold (2001) in the therapy field, O'Broin and Palmer (2008, p. 311) identify the key components of building a therapeutic alliance which, they claim, translates directly into the coaching context as i) relating to clients in an empathic way; ii) adopting an attitude of caring, warmth and acceptance and iii) adopting an attitude of congruence and authenticity. Western (2012) succinctly and plainly states that coaching rarely works unless the coachee "likes" the coach (and vice versa).

Executive coaching is also not ideologically benign; therefore coaching has a covert content, an invisible curriculum that is determined by the very techniques the coach deploys, the modes of questioning, the language used, etcetera (Swan & Cwerner, 2006, in Western, 2012).

Many researchers (e.g. Kets de Vries et al., 2010; Lee, 2014) assert that the true effectiveness of coaching comes from the ability of the coach to flex his/her style and to draw on multiple approaches. They advocate the use of the psychodynamic approach in contexts where coachees are interested in exploring the roots of their meaning making patterns or where they feel stuck and are prepared to do the work required to make an enduring shift. Researchers and practitioners are far from claiming that a single model or approach can be used to fully understand human beings, dyadic relationships, and complex organisations (Kets De Vries et al., 2010). Western (2013) uses the term "bricolage", alluding to the plurality and hybridity which contemporary coaches employ, drawing on a vast array of influences... (p. 206).

What follows is a discussion of some of the core characteristics and competencies that systems psychodynamically informed coaches should possess:

3.4.5.2 The coach as container

Human beings become anxious much more easily than is generally realised and anxiety manifests in a wide range of hidden and indirect ways; hence recognising, understanding and containing anxiety is vital in this approach (Sandler, 2011). The containing role which organisations used to fulfil in providing safety and support for people through the management of boundaries, systems and processes has been ruptured. Individuals contain the organisation within themselves as opposed to the other way around and have been obliged to become responsible for their own career plans and development and provide support for themselves by seeking out mentoring or coaching (Huffington, 2007). Huffington adds that organisations seem to be struggling with the kind of relatedness they need to do business and that can foster growth and innovation. Although people still look to leaders to provide the containment, they are increasingly unable to do so. Finding a coach who understands and can create a containing environment which is predictable and reliable is essential. It is primarily through the experience of holding and safety that the coachee can allow their defences to loosen. The containment provided through proper contracting, managing boundaries well such as agreeing on fixed start and end times, a consistent, safe physical environment, an agreed formal contract which specifies inter alia mutual roles and responsibilities, fees and cancellation policies as well as explicit confidentiality makes it possible for a deeper exploration of the coachee's ways of making meaning (Lee, 2014; Pooley, 2004). They should be able to experience their coach not only as someone who has the capacity to listen, be present and build trust but also the ability to understand what is often not being said or what is hidden, revealing different layers of understanding at successively deeper levels (Diamond, 2013). Kilburg (2002a) refers to the role of reflective containment in providing a safe, respectful, non-judgemental and trusting space away from the daily pressures of executive life where executives can express themselves openly and honestly, think through their issues and focus on

the work at hand (p. 73). Western (2012, p. 172) also explains that the executive coach is potentially a container for emotional and psychological overload, a sense-maker, a sounding board, adding that the role of executive coaching potentially provides a 'privatized retreat space' in a workplace dominated by activity.

The coach should possess or acquire the ability to accept projections without turning them back, and be able to acknowledge that coachees may have feelings and emotions they are not yet ready to own for themselves, which feelings they need to acknowledge, name, hold and hand back to the coachee at an appropriate moment (Pooley, 2004). Huffington (2007) suggests that, paradoxically, coaching could compound the problem in organisations in that each executive may be obtaining his or her support from an external coach as a substitute for genuine connectedness across the team or organisation). Lawrence (2007) has referred in coaching to the politics of salvation or revelation and cautions the coach against becoming a surrogate manager in the rescuing mode. Rather, the coach should focus on revelation where, as Brunning (2007b) has noted, the chances of the client developing insights and awareness and transforming (where clients have to own their thinking and exercise their authority) are bolstered.

Attachment theory and the concept of a secure base (Bowlby, 1970) is also relevant when discussing the coach's ability to create a holding environment. As intimated, through their experience of attachment to their parents in infancy, people develop templates for relating to adults and peers. If they are unable to consider how these attachment relationships impacted on them, they are likely to repeat them in adult life, as they inevitably re-appear in the context of the work (and home settings). Coming to terms with this kind of material can free them to understand why they often become stuck in unproductive and repetitive relationships by responding in habitual ways (Pooley, 2004). Securely attached adults are able to monitor their thinking, to recognise their biases, express empathy, and are able to manage their emotions and seek guidance. Three insecure patterns of attachment have been referred to in Chapter 2: dismissing (manifesting as discomfort with intimacy), pre-occupied (displaying

neediness and dependency), and unresolved or disorganised (fear of asking for help, often as a result of early abuse or trauma) (Bennett & Saks, 2006).

3.4.5.3 *Empathy*

Expressing empathy for the client's internal and external world in the right way at the right time is crucial to establishing rapport and trust with a client and plays a central role in reducing their anxiety, identifying with them in that moment and experiencing and understanding their thoughts and feelings (Sandler, 2011). Lawrence (2007) defines empathy as the ability to see the other as one would see oneself by imagining what it might be to be the other (p.101). In attaining the "tragic position" (understanding the milieu of one's own and one's clients' difficulties), the coach can enter into their client's world. In being empathic, what does the coach learn about his or her own transference? Compassion and truth are the basis for empathy which enables the client to work with material from the unconscious.

Van de Loo (2007) distinguishes between "mentalizing" (a cognitive skill) and "empathizing" (the capacity to appreciate and understand the feelings of others). This author describes mature empathy as a temporary merging on an emotional level with the other as an orchestrated regression that facilitates getting to know the other, while remaining oneself and simultaneously having the capability of installing an empathic wall to protect oneself as a coach from the pain and suffering of others (p. 227). A key element of empathy is the ability to listen deeply in order to discern the meaning of what is being said; Van de Loo (2007) also emphasises the role of intuition, applying one's professional judgement to a situation, complemented by formal and conscious thinking. Eisold (2013, p. 159) refers to three guidelines; tactfulness, sensitivity and focus which he has identified as essential for "conversations" with clients at work. Bion (1970) advocated that empathic listening, especially to the unconscious, should be done without memory or desire because if the mind is preoccupied with these it will be much less able to perceive elements that cannot be sensed.

3.4.5.4 *Making interpretations*

A large and important part of the psychoanalytic task is interpretive, not as an end in itself but as a technique leading to an understanding of deeper psychic realities, whether individual, group and or organisational. As many of the particulars relating to an individual's childhood are repressed, their non-sexual, organisational manifestations are not available for direct analysis but require the intervening task of interpretation (Gabriel, 1999). Lee (2014) refers to this as making links, especially between past and present, helping the coachee to develop a more integrated self-awareness and a more compassionate self-understanding of why they are the way they are. The coach interprets the hidden meanings of the coachee's utterances, recollections and silences in a way analogous to the interpretation of dreams. The coach thus directs the client's attention to issues, behaviours, problems, thoughts or emotions that are evident to the coach but are out of the client's conscious awareness (Kilburg, 2007a). These interpretations are gradually fed back to the coachee as he/she learns to overcome the resistances that have kept these pathogenic desires repressed. The coach's skill lies in offering the interpretations at appropriate moments, not risking premature or wild interpretation which would raise powerful and justified resistances that would lead to an inhibition or termination of coaching. The self-knowledge or self-understanding brought about through interpretations is thought to be the key to successful systems psychodynamic coaching (Gabriel, 1999, p. 39). As mentioned, "Where id was, there ego shall be" (Freud, in Western, 2012, p.135). Positive transference also aids the coachee in that there is a strong motive for progress and release from his/her symptoms and anxiety. Negative transference, characterised by hostility, undermines the process and leads the client to regress to precisely those types of experiences which caused his/her condition in the first place.

Schafer (2003, p.17) cautions against the temptation on the part of the coach to instruct or "triumphantly find". He or she should rather search collaboratively for insight and meaning, offering these links in a tentative way (if the coachee has not already made the connection) by inviting the coachee to "try on" an interpretation of his or her

behaviour rather than immediately accepting or dismissing it (Lee, 2014, p. 27). In this manner an interpretation or link may be phrased as a working hypothesis.

3.4.5.5 The analytic third and the coach as a transitional object

According to Ogden (2004), the analytic third refers to the inter-subjectivity created by the individual subjectivity of the analyst (coach) and the analysand (client); it is the unconscious life of the analytic pair. With its origins in traditional psychoanalysis, the relevance of the concept of the analytic third to this research stems from Freud's belief that the analyst should turn (or tune) his or her own unconscious, like a receptive organ, to the transmitting unconscious of the analysand. It is also called the "subjugating third" because it possesses the characteristic of encompassing the individual subjectivities of the participants. In this sense, the analytic third can be seen to be the result of projective identification and the respective transferences of the analyst and analysand, which subverts the experience of the subjectivities of each of them by subjecting them to the "analytic third", a type of resonance of their unconscious minds, transcending the individual and the dyad and thereby transforming both. This shared emotional sap will be gathered by patient and analyst alike, each in their own way, and the experience could cause a thought process in the analyst leading to interpretive restitution and resulting in the dismantling of the defensive aspects of the patient (Ithier, 2016).

Diamond (2007) asserts that the concept of the analytic third shares much in common with Winnicott's notion of the transitional and potential space, the intermediate area where culture, play, creativity and imagination reside, coinciding with the baby's earliest acknowledgment of itself as separate from yet attached to the mother. There is good enough mothering where the baby develops the capacity to be alone and the curiosity to explore its internal and external worlds. In Diamond's (2007) view, the analytic third is established when we make genuine contact with one another at a deeper emotional level of experience, whether in dyads, groups, communities, or organisations (p. 145). It is a place of surrender, not submission. Winnicott's third as a transitional and potential space is a dimension of the analytic third in which the analyst provides containment

and fosters innovation and creativity in setting and solving problems. In the same way, analysts (and coaches) may become transitional objects for their clients.

According to Vansina-Cobbaert (2008), Winnicott described a range of transitional phenomena with the help of concepts such as transitional objects, transitional space, potential space and intermediate space, amongst others. Transitional objects, perhaps best known in the form of comforting soft toys provided to children or, even more effective, soft cloths which children themselves select, help the person move from one way of being to a more appropriate, necessary or wished for one. It helps the person distinguish the “me” from the “not me” and assists her or him to move from a state of absolute dependence to relative dependence or even interdependence. In the field of organisational development and change and indeed any change an adult needs to navigate (such as a career or role or job change - the subject of this study), the transitional object (saying, ritual, tune, and the like) belong to the field of “doing” but the change they aim at is at the level of “being” (Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008, p. 65); the object becomes unimportant as soon as the change is completed. What is key is that the transitional “object” helps us navigate a passage which almost always has to do with reconciling or harmonising our inner world with the external reality, or vice versa, and is central to the course of psychic development as well as a significant source of creativity. The importance of holding and containment at times of change, particularly during the difficult task of working through anxieties, fears, phantasies, hopes and wishes is obvious. This is especially true if one considers the transitional task of actively and explicitly exploring that part of their inner world that concerns the experience of the change, in a specific context or environment (which itself is undergoing change), and the consequences this will entail for themselves and their families. In this regard, it is interesting to note that Clement (1987) (cited by Western, 2012) describes the role of the psychoanalyst as a ferryman (sic) who receives and transports the excess weight of heavy loads to the opposite bank (adrift at the mercy of the waves of the river), “...someone you meet once and who accompanies you up to the point where you know the way...” (Clement, 1987, p. 73 cited in Western (2012), p.118). This metaphor is applicable to the systems psychodynamic coach in particular.

Spero (2007), draws on the work of Winnicott (1951) and Bridger (2001) (cited in Spero, 2007) in asserting that the one-on-one coaching relationship provides a transitional space, not only in time but also in the mind, evoking many of the earlier unconscious processes (such as dependence, independence, attachment and separation, where the infant “tested” the environment) and provides a kind of “cover” or transitional object where the coachee can explore, question, make mistakes, try things out and learn about himself. She describes this space as reality and not-reality, where he can feel safe and unthreatened (p. 219).

Vansina-Cobbaert (2008) concurs and adds that the leader in transition also needs to find the time to “play around” with possible scenarios on how to navigate the hectic period of transition and how best to prepare for the new situation ahead. If this works out well, she continues, it may provide “the basis for enthusiastic and creative work in the new organisational setting” (p. 67). This is a fundamental assumption of this study and will be addressed further in Chapter 4: Career transitions and career transition coaching.

3.4.5.6 The use of self as an instrument of change

Developing the ability to “helicopter” (Bluckert, 2008, p. 142) above a client and observe the way the client makes contact (and not just the words he or she uses) as well as what is evoked in one (the observing self) is one of the key characteristics of a systems psychodynamically informed coach. It enables the coach to collect a rich array of data to share with the client; the premise is that the reactions evoked in the coach by the client may reveal something important about how others relate to the client too. Skogstad (2004) referred to this as psychoanalytic observation and the use of the mind as a research instrument. Having the self-awareness to discriminate between the coach’s issue and the client’s personal material is critical in ensuring no harm is done, and re-emphasises the importance of regular supervision to ensure the self as an instrument is not unduly contaminated. Using the internal data gained from

“helicoptering” in a skilful intervention for the benefit of the client could be risky in terms of how it may “land” with the client; timing, selectivity, brevity, use of metaphors or images, thoughtful and kind intentionality are essential. It is normally the ideas, thoughts and feelings aroused in the transference and counter-transference interactions which provide the material for the coach as instrument. (See also the earlier section on the mental model of the systems psychodynamic executive coach in 3.4.5.1 above.)

3.4.6 On being a systems psychodynamic executive coaching client

Executive coaching is a label or reference to coaching a senior leader in a business organisation where hierarchy or level is important. However, the term has come to be used not only for executives (i.e. those reporting directly to the CEO) but any senior leader or manager who desires or needs coaching. As mentioned previously, the terms executive/leader/manager, coachee, client and analysand have been used interchangeably in this study, depending on the context.

Huffington (2007) asserts that clients bring to coaching issues related to the turbulence around them, because often in their minds the organisations are fragile and fragmented places (p. 60). She describes broad issues of this nature: anxiety, and especially vulnerability and ambivalence, about their leadership roles (and being idealised and denigrated); difficulties with the public performance side of leadership roles; getting things done and being directive (vs. inclusivity and empowerment which are in fashion); issues of overwork and bombardment; avoiding relatedness and delays in dealing with uncomfortable relationship problems; letting go of the operational and technical parts of their roles in favour of a more strategic approach and risk taking. She also identifies leaders who are new in role, needing help to think more broadly than the specific function they held previously as well as to think about the whole organisation and the systemic ripples between its constituent parts and the environment around it (p.61). The present writer suspects that many, if not all, of the former issues are spotlighted when a leader has to negotiate and adapt to a new role. Much like Huffington, Pooley

(2004) points out that clients enter coaching with the hope that something new will emerge which will relate to all aspects of their lives and improve their functioning and prospects. But, she adds, with hope comes despair and the coach's task is to work in this paired relationship without collusion, fight, flight or dependency.

Based on the research of Castonguay and Beutler (2006) in therapeutic practice and that of Grant (2006) in coaching practice (both cited in O'Broin & Palmer, 2008), the client's motivation and readiness for coaching (or "coachability" (Bluckert, 2008, p. 34) is also a key factor in determining coaching outcomes. Fillery-Travis and Lane (2007) point to the "overwhelming" research that demonstrates the client's willingness to change as a key factor in the successful outcome of coaching (p. 63). The coach's ability to attune his or her interventions to the client's motivational goals in customising interventions aids in providing need-satisfying experiences (O'Broin & Palmer, 2008, p. 310) and, as mentioned above in relation to the coach, fosters the bond, goal and task components of the coaching alliance.

Lawrence (2007) writes of the client's ability to develop an empathic relationship for him/herself in his/her role; only once this self-compassion is developed can they take a more objective stance towards their self by identifying the more unpleasant and hateful aspects of their own role performance.

3.4.7 The coaching process

Kilburg (2007a, p.25) adapts Weinberger's 1995 outline of the five major components of executive coaching interventions as follows:

- developing an intervention agreement (or what is commonly referred to as contracting (e.g. Huffington, 2007, p. 65; Pooley, 2004)

- building a coaching relationship (or what has been referred to previously as a coaching alliance, which includes attending to issues of transference and containment)
- creating and managing expectations of coaching success
- providing an experience of behavioural mastery and cognitive control (including identifying and working with emotions, conflict, resistance, defences, making the unknown, known, using feedback and disclosure; working with the reality principle for best long term outcomes (i.e. the work of coaching over a number of contracted sessions) and
- evaluation and attribution of success or failure.

Kilburg (2007a) proceeds to suggest that these components are a roadmap for the “true work of coaching” (p. 25). Bachkirova (2007) adds assessment as the initial point of a coaching model, referring not only to the assessment of the client but also understanding the context of coaching in terms of the client’s system as a whole with its values and culture.

3.4.7.1 Stages of systems psychodynamic coaching

Pooley (2004) has suggested three stages of coaching – the beginning stage (or establishing trust in order for the client to lay out their needs and concerns as well as boundary and goal setting and contracting for a collaborative relationship); the mid stage (or the search for perfection and the exploration of presenting issues, hopefully leading to a widening and deepening of discussion between coach and client; speaking the unspeakable and thinking the unthinkable, knowing and not knowing; uncovering deeper layers of meaning) and the end stage – termination and evaluation (working with endings and loss which may trigger anger and/or regression, evaluating whether desired outcomes were achieved). She adds that throughout the life cycle of coaching

each of the three stages evokes anxiety over the relationship between coach and client, good enough coaching and good enough progress on the part of the client, issues of judgement and concerns about the trustworthiness of the coaching space.

Kilburg (2002b, p. 81) proposes six stages in a typical coaching session: Establishing contact; presenting the current situation; exploring the current situation; choosing focus areas; implementing the working dialogue (with feedback loops) and finally closure, review, evaluation, planning and follow up.

Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson (2001) and Fillery-Travis and Lane (2007) similarly suggest that there appears to be general agreement about the stages or phases of the executive coaching process that include relationship building, assessment, feedback, goal setting and intervention, follow-up and evaluation. There is an interesting parallel to the the phases of psychodynamic psychotherapy described by Tangolo (2015, p. 79).

As will be evident, there is much overlap between the various authors' descriptions of the phases and process of coaching; elements of all of these have been incorporated into the approach adopted in this study (see Chapter 5, also the Appendix). The researcher is particularly drawn to the description by Western (2012) of what is sometimes referred to as the bridging work between sessions: it is not strictly referred to in the above descriptions of the coaching process, but is nevertheless considered to be very important and was a core part of the career transition coaching applied in this study: He remarks, "As any experienced coach knows, it is better to end a coaching session with untidy endings, leaving the coachee with some 'yeast in the dough' that they will work on between sessions, consciously in their waking hours, and hopefully also in their daydreams and their sleeping dreams. The coachee will work on real tasks between sessions, putting their coaching work into practice in their personal lives and their work-roles. Coaching should provoke and inspire this dual work, the task-focused, and the internal-emotional and cognitive work. ...". He adds: "The coach (*also*) works

between sessions, holding the coachee in mind, reflecting on their work together” (Western, 2012, p. 292) (*italics the present researcher’s*).

3.4.8 Coaching dilemmas

The main coaching dilemma anticipated in this research related to the ethicality of coaching individuals, where their own career aspirations and needs may not match those which the organisation envisages for them in the system, especially where the former is funding the coaching. Brunning (2007) refers to clients who leave the system when they realise their roles are beyond salvation and points out that this may well be in the best interests of both the individual and the organisation. This and the fact that in career coaching, coaching goals may change as the situation unfolds, will be dealt in Chapter 4 in section 4.6.3, the ethics of career coaching.

3.4.9 Strengths and limitations of systems psychodynamic executive coaching

Diamond (2013) has stated that few published papers have adopted a psychodynamic orientation, partly because these approaches lend themselves less well to scientific methods of evaluation in favour of case study methods.

The psychodynamic approach to coaching opens our minds to the possibility that there is substantially more going on below the surface of the coaching interaction than can be seen on the surface. Key features of it are: providing a holding space for deeper exploration and using restraint and silence, thus creating a space for deeper thinking rather than simply doing; sitting with the discomfort of not knowing and tolerating distressing feelings to discover the transformative potential of awareness, although not unique to systems psychodynamic coaching, are key features of it. The emphasis in psychodynamic coaching on boundary management is thought to enhance the creation of holding and safety, thereby allowing the defences to loosen. Perhaps more than any other approach to coaching, the systems psychodynamic approach stretches the coach’s own developmental capacity by forcing them to take a meta perspective on

their own implicit biases and defences and, by doing this, acquire a more expansive awareness of self and others (Lee, 2014). Kilburg (2004a; 2007b) in his seminal paper “When Shadows Fall” is at pains to point out that it has been well established how research and practice offer evidence for the existence of unconscious mental, emotional and social processes and for the ability of the latter to influence conscious behaviour. He continues by describing a range of situations in which psychodynamic issues and interventions are relevant considerations, especially for executives who often find themselves in conflict situations and for whom human relationships are of central importance.

Western (2012) claims that despite much of the work in executive coaching being geared to performance and organisational aims, coaches are very often confronted with a “wounded” (p. 6) part of the executive who reveals a troubled aspect of the self they wish to resolve; he suggests that confident and experienced coaches allow all parts to surface. He describes coaching as a merger or bridge between the wounded and the celebrated selves (the innate human desire to self-actualise). In this regard, systems psychodynamic coaching is helpful in surfacing and processing these wounded aspects, surfacing unconscious dynamics which may be causing anxiety and, in so doing, facilitating the emergence of the real self.

Roberts and Jarrett (2007) in their comparison of four different coaching approaches, including behavioural approaches and role consultancy (the latter representing a systems psychodynamic coaching approach), maintain that each approach has its strengths and limitations and that being a “good” coach (well trained, supervised, etcetera) is what accounts for the difference (p. 35). In particular, being alert to one’s own shortcomings or biases as a coach, the often unconscious collusions or shared blind spots, is essential and is a strength of the systems psychodynamic approach.

However, as previously indicated, the depth of this approach is not always appropriate in coaching. With coachees (and companies) looking for short term engagements to help them think through a particular issue they may favour an approach that focuses

exclusively on the present and the future without needing to delve into patterns learned from the past. Like psychoanalysis, the systems psychodynamic approach may be overly concerned with problems. Without wanting to go into the so called “Freud Wars” and the fact that much of the psychoanalytic theory is based on clinical work with disturbed patients (Gabriel, 1999, p. 36), one should nevertheless note that the psychodynamic approach may miss the value of focussing on the coachee’s strengths and, instead pathologise them. Kilburg (2004a) also points out that there are pitfalls and limitations in using the psychodynamic approach which relate to the skill of the coach, the receptiveness of the client and the context or circumstances of the coaching. In another paper, he further states (Kilburg, 2004b) that Von Bertalanffy’s concept of equifinality also applies to executive coaching and that, irrespective of the specific approach, the same outcomes will be achieved (This arises from Rosenzweig’s (1936) Dodoville conjecture, based on the Alice in Wonderland metaphor, highlighting that a myriad of non-specific factors accounted for the success of psychotherapy and such success was independent of the form of psychotherapy applied).

3.5 CAREER COACHING

Hazen and Steckler (2014) describe career management as the conscious or unconscious process of managing our relationship to our work over a lifetime. They suggest that career coaches could add value to this process by maximising insights that are intrapersonal, interpersonal and market-based through turning the insights into action strategies (p. 329). They define a career transition as moving out, by choice, from a form of work or an organisation. The definition adopted in this study is somewhat broader and includes any change in role or position, whether by choice or not. In their view, career coaching is one of the most focused, result-oriented forms of coaching because of the clearly defined presence of work as an end goal, but is also one of the least researched coaching specialisations (p. 330). Talbott (2013) claims that she was prompted to write her book on career transition coaching when she was unable to find even a single resource to help coaches in this area. Career transitions and career

transition coaching will be dealt with more fully in the next chapter: Chapter 4: Career transitions and career transition coaching.

3.6 COACHING EFFECTIVENESS AND USEFULNESS

In this section the effectiveness of executive coaching is examined and various views advanced as to how its impact and usefulness might be gauged. The effectiveness of systems psychodynamic coaching is also studied.

3.6.1 Measuring the effectiveness of coaching

The boom in executive coaching described earlier (Cilliers, 2005; Kets de Vries, et al., 2007; Kahn, 2014; Kilburg, 2002; Palmer & Panchal, 2011; Peltier, 2011; Pooley, 2004; Price, 2003; Sandler, 2011 and others) raises the question: how effective is executive coaching really?

According to Kilburg, (2004b), executive coaching has been empirically shown to increase executive productivity and the effectiveness of the organisation as a whole, primarily through executive learning and self-awareness. Lowman (2002) also writes of the increase in productivity and profits and organisational morale as a result of coaching interventions. Much of this research has been based on case studies; consequently the empirical evidence, especially with regard to design and method, to substantiate these claims is lacking (Cilliers, 2005). Despite this, the case study approach has an extensive and respectable history in developing the theory and practice of organisational assessment and consultation. Case studies are significant because they provide a foundation from which generalisable truths are developed and offer a way to examine theory in practice and generate hypotheses that are then subject to quantitative analysis (Lowman, 2002). Peltier (2011) claims that coaching effectiveness is difficult to measure; describing exactly what a system psychodynamically informed coach does in concrete and measurable terms is equally difficult. He poses the question: when do we know if executive coaching is excellent, worthless or even

harmful? He goes on to say that most of what we think about coaching is anecdotal, as little outcome research is currently available (Peltier, 2011, p 356). Fillery-Travis and Lane (2007) point to the dearth of research on the impact of coaching on a company's bottom line (ROI) and the difficulty in attributing any change to the impact of coaching alone. Despite these assertions, there are many positive benefits – the executive finds the experience beneficial, coaching does impact positively on self-awareness, self-development and on relationships, team work improves and conflict reduces with the resultant positive impact on commitment, satisfaction, performance and productivity (Peltier, 2011). Yet, as Cilliers (2005) has pointed out, these results do not refer to the individual's learning about his/her own behavioural dynamics and its effect on the system of which they are a part.

Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson (2001) in their comprehensive review of the coaching literature, state that there is limited evidence that executive coaching is effective for increasing performance, that it is viewed positively by the executives and has the potential to facilitate developmental change - but caution that further research is required on the types of outcomes executive coaching leads to in the field. More recently, O'Broin and McDowell (2016) noted an increase in international, peer-reviewed coaching research and commented on its improved quality, reflecting, they surmise, the actual quality of coaching practice.

Kampa and White (2002) state that executive coaching efficacy depends on three variables: growth in the executive, the coach's skills and the quality of the interpersonal relationship, the latter being the most critical (see also Kilburg & Levinson, 2008; Wampold, 2001).

Drawing from the field of clinical psychology and psychotherapy and despite the rise of scientifically validated treatments, it is difficult to pin down what actually causes those positive outcomes (Blattner, 2005; Kilburg, 2004b; Rosenzweig, 1936). There are almost as many psychological therapies as disorders, and the empirical findings show

little difference across therapies although they indicate positive outcomes (Wampold, 2001). The same is thought to apply to the field of coaching.

Wasylyshyn (2007) concludes that psychologists with specific skills and experience are particularly effective executive coaches; that the data they can provide executives by way of psychometric and other tools are highly valued by the executive clients, as well as that behaviour change and learning are key indications of successful coaching. Her research generally underscores the value which psychologists with coaching credentials can provide but she also cautions about the need for greater rigour in standards of competence and proficiency.

In this vein Fillery-Travis and Lane (2007) suggest that rigorous coaching research and particularly that which is based on the purpose and mode of coaching (what works for whom and under what conditions), has not kept pace with the practice of coaching; they point to the important opportunities for academics and practitioner researchers to collaborate further to develop the best practice for the profession (p. 67).

Roberts and Brunning (2007) as well as Roberts and Jarrett (2007) assert that despite research which suggests that the coaching outcomes are unaffected by coaching modality or models or methods, what is distinctive about psychodynamic coaching in particular is that it focuses on helping clients to address, understand and harness some of the unconscious drivers of their situation. It assists the client to make links between organisational dynamics and structures, their own personal dynamic and the wider context, making it possible for them to re-imagine their role.

The effectiveness of career transition coaching applied in this study will be elaborated on in Chapter 4.

3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter the case for executive coaching, as well as its popularity and effectiveness as an intervention, was described. Executive coaching in general terms was considered with a special focus on systems psychodynamic executive coaching, describing the theoretical underpinnings, various models and concepts. Some of the characteristics and requirements of being a systems psychodynamic executive coach and client were discussed, as was the actual coaching process. The strengths and limitations of the systems psychodynamic approach to coaching were explained and the effectiveness of coaching in general addressed. In Chapter 4 the matters of career development and career transitions are dealt with in the context of life stage and career transition coaching is explained.

CHAPTER FOUR: CAREER TRANSITIONS AND CAREER TRANSITION COACHING

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the new world of work is examined as the context and backdrop for career transitions and a cursory introduction to career development theory is provided, most notably that of Donald E. Super (Super, 1992; Super & Bohn, 1971). A brief overview of work and careers is given from a systems psychodynamic point of view. Career and role transitions are defined in the context of this new world of work; specific reference is made to the mid-life and to retirement as particular instances of transitions explored in this study. The role of career transition coaching is explained in the context of such challenges for the leader. Coaching of this type is introduced as a way of supporting leaders in transition and the role of the career transition coach is explained. The ethics of career transition coaching are dealt with and the effectiveness of career coaching is discussed. Finally, the hybrid model of general executive and specific career coaching applied in this study is presented.

4.2 THE NEW WORLD OF WORK

In this section, the historical importance of work in human life will be briefly explored as a context for understanding the new world of work and the changes in job, career and role with which people are confronted today.

4.2.1 The meaning of work

The centrality of work to human existence is undisputed (e.g. Brunning, 2007; Cooper & Dartington, 2004; Hartung & Subich, 2011; Inkson & Savickas, 2013; Klein, 2008; Lent & Brown, 2013; Marci, 2013; Newton, et al., 2006; Super & Sverko, 1995) and the reasons why people work, although varied, can essentially be reduced to two philosophical positions: hedonic – people are motivated to survive and to experience

as much personal pleasure as possible (and avoid pain) and eudaimonic - where people are motivated to live a life of doing good, growth and social contribution (Lent & Brown, 2013). Rasmussen (2008) asserts that throughout the ages work has been the basis of the survival of the human race. He traces the origins of work from ancient Rome and Greece where work was considered contemptible, through periods of early Judeo-Christian beliefs where work was initially a curse, a necessary evil, but thereafter was regarded as something worthwhile, as part of the working class religion. The sixteenth century saw the rise of puritanism where work helped people live pure, ascetic and controlled lives. At the turn of the 20th century, work was glorified as a religious calling and a demonstration of “loving thy neighbour”. Work, morals and religion were united under Weber’s Protestant work ethic, where hard work was valued in that it led to success and being respected. Work had become a purpose in itself.

More recently work has become a curse and a blessing: work integrates us into society and we have come to define ourselves and each other by our jobs and job titles. Much more than a purely financial necessity and sometimes for those fortunate enough to experience “flow” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991), work means something different for each individual. Ciulla (2000) cites Studs Terkel (1974) who wrote in his classic book *Working* that for some, work is a daily humiliation and for others their salvation. Psychoanalysis has rejected the rational, economic view of “system man” (sic) and has maintained a position that “man’s” desire to seek and obtain commitment and fulfilment at work is not motivated by the need for material goods but by an array of social and psychological factors, both conscious and unconscious (Czander, 1993). Based on the work of Freud, the systems psychodynamic stance views work both as a painful burden in the form of tasks which need to be performed but also as a pleasurable activity in the form of the outcomes achieved (Kets De Vries, 1991).

Work is painful because the basic, childlike, pleasurable id instincts need to be renounced and sublimated in favour of a reality principle that dictates working hours, tasks to be accomplished and so on. If the employee is unable to delay gratification and endure the necessary suffering, they will not be able to enjoy the pleasurable fruits

of their labour. Freud regarded one of the central functions of work for human life as providing the individual with one of her main links to reality and the human community (in Klein, 2008).

According to Cilliers and Koortzen (2000), the worker (representing a micro system) approaches the work situation with unfulfilled and unconscious family needs which they want to fulfil in the work situation; for example, wishing to play out unfulfilled parental needs for recognition or affection towards the manager, who may be representing male or female authority in the mind for them. Because the manager is unable or unwilling to fulfil this role for the worker, the latter will experience conflict and anxiety, a basic experience of the systems psychodynamic model. Of course work always takes place in a systemic context – the meso-system of a group, team, department or division and the macro-system of an organisation and the broader society. The relatedness or connectedness between an individual worker and the broader system or enterprise is always a puzzle (Lawrence, 2000). Not only are organisations internalised as an experience, but individuals also put back into the system or project their feelings into and onto the organisation, often as a result of unresolved childhood experiences. Similarly they introject, or take into the self, aspects of their experiences which become part of their inner lives. This dynamic interplay between the unconscious psyche and the conscious reality of present workplace relationships makes for the depth and richness of understanding people at work from the systems psychodynamic stance.

4.2.2 The new world of work and the changing notion of “career”

Beck (2012) describes creating harmony between ourselves and the lives we want to live as difficult, soul searching work (p. x). The world of work has changed dramatically in the post-modern economy of the last two decades (Critchley, 2002; Bridges, 2003; Brown, 2012; Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2000; Hawkins & Smith, 2006; Marci, 2013; Sullivan, 2013). In the past, it was not unusual for people to spend almost their entire lives working for one employer; the psychological contract was strong and based on the belief that in exchange for loyalty and hard work, the employee would be “looked

after” and guaranteed lifelong employment (Savickas, Nota, Rossier, Dauwalder, Duarte, Guichard, Soresi, Van Esbroeck, & van Vianen, 2009; Watson & McMahon, 2012). When globalisation began to take root along with the emergence of the knowledge societies, a new contract was formed and the economic woes which started in the 1980s shattered this belief; companies became leaner and flatter by embarking on large scale retrenchments/redundancies for survival. Some of the structural and occupational implications of this new organisational model were: increased networking, fewer managerial jobs and layers, the collapse of internal labour markets, increased workloads, reduced commitment, increased job mobility, and a reduction in loyalty (Hassard et al., 2011). The new world of work is characterised by greater uncertainty with multiple occupational changes (reflecting mobility or churn) and are part of a modern, complex career (Bridger, 2009; du Toit, 2015; Mayrhofer & Iellatchitch, 2005; Rasmussen, 2008; Spero, 2007). Role holders need to cultivate the ability to be ever flexible and to re-invent themselves at each crossroad (Gilmour, 2009; Siltala, 2003, as cited in Mersky, 2008). Employability becomes central and leaders need to acquire the skills to be able to manage their own careers (Coetzee, 2014) - “one has to make oneself” (Sennett, 1996, as cited in Mersky, 2008, p. 101).

The notion of a career has changed (Cooper & Dartington, 2004; Guest & Sturges, 2007; Inkson & Savickas, 2013; Talbott, 2013). “Career” is used to mean the entire “evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time.” (Gunz, & Peiperl, 2007, p. 188)

Previously careers were perceived as hierarchical, linear and progressive (Hassard et al., 2011). One started at the bottom and if one was diligent and worked hard (and had a few lucky breaks along the way), one could progress up the ranks of the organisation. One's basic training or education stood one in good stead for a career that moved progressively through traditional career paths. Most people remained in or close to their core disciplines throughout their working lives.

As intimated, with the advent of globalisation and developments in technology and as the pace of change increased, this situation altered. The future became less predictable and organisations were obliged to become more nimble. They became less bounded, flatter, and the vertical opportunities became fewer. Responsibility for career management and development became the individual's task rather than the organisation's, while progressive companies began to play a different role with regard to employees' careers. Careers became far less definable or predictable; employees realised that they needed to become far more self-sufficient if they were to survive in this new world of work. As Duarte (2004) (cited in Savickas, et al., 2009) has suggested: in the new conception of work, career belongs to the person and not the organisation (p. 240). The protean career, the career of the 21st century, is one driven by the individual not the organisation and will be re-invented periodically (Hall, 2013, p. 245; Izod, 2006).

The focus has shifted from loyalty to contribution; from employment to employability. Under the new psychological contract, workers exchange performance for continuous learning and marketability. The "boundaryless career", defined as a sequence of job opportunities that transcend the boundaries of a single employment setting, is becoming more the norm than the exception (Sullivan, 2013, p. 272) and is characterised by independence from traditional organisational careers. People increasingly will have 'self-managed' careers – ones which are developed across a range of employing organisations.

Roberts (as cited in Watson & McMahon, 2012) urges one to debunk myths like "a job for life is no longer possible" but his seems to be an isolated view. Nevertheless, according to Hassard et al. (2011), these changes are destabilising and troubling for middle and senior managers across the world. These authors argue that managers' feelings of anxiety, insecurity, and low morale are real and understandable given widespread organisational change, the downgrading of career prospects, and the erosion of societal and organisational norms about career security and 'jobs for life' in an era of investor capitalism (p. 5).

In the early 20th century, the work of those in vocational guidance centred on matching people to jobs. The contribution of Holland (1973) (as cited in Savickas et al., 2009) focused on the person – environment fit. It was Super (Super, 1992; Super & Bohn, 1971; Super & Sverko, 1995) who, in the mid-20th century began to look at careers over a life span (Hartung, 2012) and concentrated on ‘fitting work into life’ (p.16). A third developmental phase faced career theorists in the last quarter of the 20th century – that of the social cognitive perspective – how people direct their thoughts, motives and behaviours to shape their careers. The revolutionary changes of the first part of the 21st century called for new paradigms to assist individuals feeling uncertain and insignificant in an ambiguous and unstable world (Hartung, 2012). In this new era, Savickas et al. (2009) envisioned “life trajectories” (p 241) where individuals progressively design and build their own lives, including their work careers. Izod (2006) referred to career development as embracing the notions both of movement between identities and organisations and of movement or expansion within identities and organisations, involving multiple positions and routes. She writes of a shift from a dependent set of behaviours to ones that are more autonomous, self-organising, exploratory and self-authorising (p. 85) where leaders need to be alert to the opportunities for creating formal roles out of the informal processes and the discerned needs of their organisations (p. 87).

Bridges (2003) similarly advises employees, especially those in organisations experiencing transition (the researcher would enquire: which aren’t?), to shift their mind-sets from that of a jobber to that of an independent worker or micro company who provides a customer with what he or she needs.

BlessingWhite define the modern career as a journey of exploration that is developed in multiple small steps, incrementally adding experience and skills; it is not about big steps up the corporate ladder (blessingwhite.com/research: Navigating Ambiguity: Career, 2014). They coined the by-line (after Dwight Eisenhower): “Career plans are worthless; but career planning is everything” (no pagination).

It has been argued that the underlying dynamics of social process are most tellingly revealed at points of discontinuity and change (Nicholson, 1984). Career progression and growth deals with lateral moves, enhancing and ensuring the currency of one's skill-set, in line with observed trends and directions, and opening oneself up to work experiences such as project work, "internal internships", secondments and special, challenging assignments both within the employing organisation and across organisations. People will change jobs and even careers many times in their lifetime. One's basic training in finance does not mean one will necessarily become the Financial Manager. One's career could and most likely will, move in a number of different directions. In this regard the work of Gorrell and Hoover (2009) as well as Feldman and Moore (2001) and Hunt and Weintraub (2007) who advocate the upskilling of line managers as internal developmental career coaches is noteworthy. Gorrell and Hoover (2009) advocate "contextual coaching", which they describe as aligning what people do best with what organisations need most (p. 5). Career coaching, at the nexus of performance management, training and development and succession planning, aids the organisation in its employer branding and retention and encouraging high performance efforts from an individual point of view. It helps raise awareness of and address skills gaps, focuses on professional and personal interests (through self-exploration), skills employees in career management, and supports them in building a personal brand and networking (see for example see DuBrin, 2011 on impression management and Western, n.d. on networking).

The end results of these changes are more frequent and more difficult job transitions, often ones for which one is not well prepared (Savickas et al., 2009; Sullivan, 2011). The emerging career rhetoric and the way people are enacting their careers in a changed world of work provide the backdrop for examining career trajectories and transitions not as a once off event, but rather as part of a larger career narrative, as it recursively links the individual to the organisation and the wider, changing social world (Cohen & Mallon, 2001).

4.3 CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF CAREER TRANSITIONS

Theories of career development abound, beginning in 1909 with Frank Parson's model, the forerunner of modern theories of career development (Brown, 2012; Gunz & Peiperl, 2007). Parson's tripartite model based on understanding oneself, understanding the requirements of the jobs available and then choosing one based on true logic underpinned career development theory right up until the 1950s. Career development is a complex, lifelong process involving psychological, sociological, educational, economic, physical and cultural factors that influence an individual's selection of, adjustment to and advancement in the occupations that collectively make up their careers (Brown, 2012, p. 25). Holland and Super are perhaps the best known of the post-modern or constructivist career development theorists. As a trait and factor theorist, Holland claims that an individual's personality is a primary factor in vocational choice and that to feel satisfied and be successful in one's career, it is necessary to choose an occupation that is congruent with one's personality. Hence he identified six personality and thus interest types which, even though they rarely occur in their purest form, influence one's career choice: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional (the so called RIASEC model). Holland's person-environment fit approach and particularly his assertion that individuals choose occupations that are congruent with their interests, has generally been supported by research; however his assertion that congruence results in satisfaction and stability has found less support (Gunz & Peiperl, 2007). Furthermore, theorists are calling for closer examination of the link between personality, interest and values as well as later career development, as opposed purely to initial career choice (Gunz & Peiperl, 2007). Holland's work continues to dominate the assessment of interests and variables such as job satisfaction but is of limited value in terms of understanding how a career unfolds. Super's focus on adult career development in the context of a changing labour market (in Super & Knasel, 1981) renders it a more congruent approach with the systems psychodynamic paradigm; hence his work will be examined next.

4.3.1 Super's career stages

Donald Super, as a proponent of the developmental approach to careers, proposed the life-span, life space theory (Brown, 2002; Hartung, 2012; Super, 1992; Super & Bohn, 1971) and suggested that career development proceeds through stages as the individual seeks to “implement a self-concept” in an occupation. Super's original stage theory (1957) described career development as involving five stages: growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline. In a later formulation (Super, Thompson, Lindeman, Myers, & Jordaan (1981), as cited in Gunz & Peiperl, 2007), four life stages or “maxi cycles” (Brown, 2012, p. 43) were incorporated, and, within each, three sub stages:

1. Exploration: Crystallisation, specification, implementation
2. Establishment: Stabilising, consolidating, advancing
3. Maintenance: Holding, updating, innovating
4. Disengagement, also called decline: Deceleration, retirement planning, retirement living

A small mini cycle (comprising the same stages and much like Levinson's (1988) seasons) takes place in transitions from one stage to the next or each time an individual is destabilised by retrenchment, redundancy, illness or injury or other socio-economic or personal events. Such unstable or multiple trial careers involve new growth (physical and psychological), re-exploration and re-establishment.

4.3.1.1 *Career maturity and career adaptability*

One key concept in developmental models is “career maturity.” This has been defined as an individual's readiness for coping with the tasks of career development as compared with others handling the same tasks. Career maturity denotes attitudinal and cognitive readiness to make educational and vocational choices. Because of Super's initial focus on the exploration stage, the theory later replaced (from its original

adolescent context) the term career maturity by “career adaptability” (Lent & Brown, 2013, p. 97; Savickas, 1997; Super & Knasel, 1981). This is a constellation of career attitudes and competencies and involves having the readiness and resources to cope with developmental tasks, career transitions and work traumas across the entire life span (Savickas, 1992, as cited in Lent & Brown, 2013, p. 97). Stressing the interaction between the individual and the environment, Super’s concept of career adaptability is described as including planfulness, exploration, information, decision making and reality orientation (Ebberwein, Krieshok, Ulven & Prosser, 2004; Super & Knasel, 1981). The concepts of career adaptability and adjustment are ones to which the researcher will return in discussing career transition challenges in section 4.4.2 below. It is in the maintenance stage where the individual attempts to continue or improve his/her occupational situation. Because the pattern of skills and preferences and thus an individual’s self-concept (broadly defined not only as an internalised view of the self but also the individual’s view of the situation or condition) changes, as does the work situation over time, either change or adjustment is necessary to keep the two in balance. The process of career development according to Super (in Super & Knasel, 1981), referred to as the life-span, life-space theory, encompassing the entire time span of adult careers, is the process of developing and implementing the occupational self-concept and synthesising this with reality, matching the self-concept with what the occupation has to offer. Work satisfaction depends consequently on the extent to which the individual finds adequate outlets for his/her abilities, needs, values, interests, personality traits and self-concept in a particular work situation. Where there is a congruence between the type of person the individual pictures him/herself to be and the type of experiences the work and workplace offers, he or she is likely to find pleasure and satisfaction in work (Weiss & Kolberg, 2003). This could also be interpreted as congruence between the real or rational self and ideal self or ego ideal in psychodynamic terms (Kilburg, 2002a).

4.3.1.2 *Career stages: The current focus*

Each individual career proceeds in its own unique way. Of interest in this study are Super's stages of establishment, maintenance and disengagement. In establishment, individuals are concerned with stabilising, consolidating and advancing (Super, 1992; Super & Bohn, 1971; Super & Knasel, 1981). According to Lent and Brown (2013) the main goal of stabilising, which traverses the ages of 25-44, is implementing the self-concept in the work role to yield both a means of "earning a living as well as a meaningful way of living a life" (p. 95). Work devoid of meaning requires workers to realise their self-concept in other roles such as parent, community member or "leisurite" (Lent & Brown, 2013, p. 95; Super, 1992, p.37). The transitional period between establishment and maintenance (ages 45–65) is often characterised by a questioning of goals and direction; to prevent plateauing, workers may employ a number of styles or strategies such as holding on to a job through continued job proficiency; or updating knowledge and skills to enhance performance, or innovating. In the contemporary global economy, maintenance may elude many workers because of the effects of job loss or insecurity as described above. The transition between establishment and maintenance also coincides with the mid-life period which will be described in section 4.3.4 below. The "grand narrative" of life span career development concludes with disengagement at about age 65 with the major life transition to retirement. Encompassing decelerating, retirement planning and retirement living, the focus shifts to implementing role self-concept in domains other than work. Having said this, with increased life expectancy, cost of living concerns (including youth unemployment) and earlier retirement options, retirees are finding themselves in search of bridging options of part-time work or self-employment in what have been referred to as the second act or as encore careers, often providing greater personal meaning, fulfilment and social impact than was possible in prior work (Corbett & Higgins, 2007; Critchley, 2002; Freedman, 2015; Lent & Brown, 2013; Marci, 2013; Nadler, 2007)

4.3.1.3 *Recycling and renewal*

Super (1992) believed that individuals “recycle”; for example, people experiencing mid-career transitions may need to engage in some of the tasks of their earlier working life. In fact, Murphy and Burck (1976) (as cited in Brown (2012) commented that the frequency of mid-life career changes may indicate that an additional stage, referred to as renewal, should be inserted between the establishment and maintenance stages as individuals around the ages of 35-45 reconsider earlier goals and plans and either rededicate themselves to pursuing those goals or decide to follow other directions – a midlife career change (see section 4.3.4 (mid-life) below). Super (1995) in fact postulated that instead of the transitional stage occurring only at midlife, it could occur at any stage in the life cycle. He coined the concept “role salience”, meaning that at any time in a person’s life, work, or any other life role, might vary in its importance for each individual, depending on their life circumstances. Work may not be the most valued role for everyone. Mid-life career changes could be voluntary as described above or involuntary (as is more often the case in the current economic circumstances), brought about by changes in the labour market. Brown (2012) and others (Hawkins & Smith, 2006; Schlossberg, 1984; Weiss & Kolberg, 2003) suggest that individuals experiencing these kinds of career changes may need a specialised kind of assistance due to the trauma associated with the job loss and often the inability to prepare for such changes. Sadly, in the researcher’s experience, this is however often not provided by companies. As discussed above in section 4.3.1.1, career adaptability is a term used to identify the individual’s ability to face, pursue or accept changing career roles (Brown, 2012, p. 47). It will be expanded on later in section 4.4.2 and referred to in the Findings section in Chapter 6.

Like Freud (see section 4.3.2 below), Super believed that most adults are what they do (Brown, 2012, p. 47; 1992; Super & Bohn, 1971) – the person is a reflection of their major role. Becoming the person one believes oneself to be through one’s work is a potent source of motivation (Lent & Brown, 2013). And yet it is difficult to see how

people working at all strata of society, but especially those in menial jobs or those where there is not much choice, are motivated, fulfilled and satisfied.

On the whole, like Holland, Super's model (Super, 1992) stimulated vast amounts of research on the exploration stage of development, but much less on later stages which are merely described in a general way. Super's (1992) model is unlikely to generate more interest from either practitioners or researchers due to the fact that its segmental construction makes it hard to generate testable hypotheses and its complexity makes it difficult to translate into practice (Brown, 2012). In terms of its applicability to a changing work environment, Sullivan (2013) has commented that revisions to Super's (1992) theory, such as the addition of the renewal or recycling stage, may help to explain the careers of diverse individuals, especially those with interrupted career paths.

4.3.2 Psychodynamic theories of career development

From a psychodynamic point of view, the new organisational order, characterised by relentless change, uncertainty, destructuring and increasing complexity, has resulted in a workplace that is no longer perceived as a safe place or one that offers secure dependency (Cooper & Dartington, 2004, p.133). Employment has become about survival with constant battles (or splits) between commitment and alienation, trust and autonomy, with a growing trend toward individualism. Against this back drop and often with insufficient "parenting" in organisations, leaders must use the "conceptual trinity" (Cooper & Dartington, 2004, p. 143) of role, task and authority in an often unbounded system to guide their staff in converting inputs into outputs. As mentioned, Watkins and Savickas (1990) assert that the two main assumptions of the psychodynamic approach are, first, that individuals' difficulties have their origins in early experiences and, second, that individuals may not be consciously aware of their motives. These life themes and repeated childhood patterns in the course of life are often played out in the work setting, characterised by defence mechanisms such as projection, projective identification, denial, repression and the like, to alleviate anxiety, as described in Chapter 2. The

researcher would hypothesise that the thoughts and feelings aroused at career transitions are reminiscent of other transitions the individual has had to traverse in life, and that the use of the defence mechanisms would be exacerbated, given the uncertainty and stress of the changed circumstances. In this sense, the career transition coach using the systems psychodynamic approach would need to attend very carefully to issues such as transference and counter-transference. An essential activity would be “making intelligible interconnections among the episodes of the client's life” (Watkins & Savickas, 1990, p. 108). Structured interviews, projective techniques, autobiographies, and card sorts are examples of some of the tools that can be used

The researcher struggled to find additional literature on the psychodynamics of career development; his supervisor suggested he interrogate Freud's (1965) theory of psychosexual development for clues. Each of the stages – oral, anal and phallic – which Freud viewed as fixed sequentially makes its imprint on the child's personality and contributes to his/her success or failure in the encounter with the stages to follow. It is during the phallic stage that the oedipal conflict must be resolved, the successful resolution of which sees the development of the superego as well as the internalisation of an idealised perception of the father's attitudes and values (for the boy) and the mother's for the girl. Oedipal issues which arose during the course of the coaching, for example, difficulty with authority figures, will be elaborated on in Chapter 6. The latency period, which lasts from about seven to twelve years of age, is regarded as more of a quiescent time, with the child's attention focussed on the development of skills needed for coping with the environment. The genital stage, coinciding with adolescence and puberty, marks the beginning of adult sexual concerns and pleasures. Freud believed that fixation at any stage could have a lasting effect on personality. For example, a child weaned too soon may be orally fixated and besides being overly fond of oral pleasures such as eating, drinking and smoking, may be overly dependent as an adult. Similarly, the anal personality may be overly concerned with cleanliness and orderliness in later life (Atkinson, Atkinson, Smith, Bem & Hilgard (1990). While Freud's theory of psychosexual development may help to explain some of the adjustment issues related to career transitions, the work of Erikson, who revised psychoanalytic theory and referred

to psycho-social stages of development from the first year of life to what he referred to as the aging years, may be more helpful. The eight major life stages during which psycho-social problems or crises must be resolved are:

- 1) First year of life: Trust vs. mistrust
 - 2) Second year: Autonomy vs. doubt
 - 3) Third to fifth years: Initiative vs. guilt
 - 4) Sixth year to puberty: Industry vs. inferiority
 - 5) Adolescence: Identity vs. confusion
 - 6) Early adulthood: Intimacy vs. isolation
 - 7) Middle adulthood: Generativity vs. self-absorption
 - 8) The aging years: Integrity vs. despair
- (from Atkinson et al., 1990).

The possible impact of each of these earlier crises on the leader's ability to cope with career transitions and develop career adaptability can be discerned.

4.3.3 Understanding career and work role transitions

A psycho-social transition describes any change that necessitates the abandonment of one set of assumptions and the development of a fresh set to enable the individual to cope with the new, altered life space (Parkes, 1971).

A career can be perceived as advancement (vertical moves), as a profession, as a lifelong sequence of jobs, and as role related experiences (Gunz, 2013). Interestingly, Reitman and Schneer (2008, p. 17) claim the word career derives from the French for racecourse! Careers can be investigated at both an individual and an organisational level of analysis. In this study *career* is defined, after Arthur, Hall, and Lawrence (1989), as the unfolding sequence of a person's work experiences over time. Careers involve both subjective and objective perspectives. The subjective career is defined as the individual's own interpretation of his or her career situation at any given time. The

objective career is defined as the parallel interpretation of any career provided by society and its institutions (Barley, 1989; Savickas, 2002).

As discussed earlier in describing the new world of work, careers themselves are in transition (Reitman & Schneer, 2008), providing an interesting parallel process (Carroll & Gilbert, 2011, p. 44) for this study and highlighting the accumulation and confluence of changes with which individuals have to deal.

Work role transitions can be seen as the points at which individuals move up and across the hierarchy (the objective career) and at which their talents or need for development, testing or resting are recognised (the subjective career) (Gunz, 2013, p. 219). Gunz (op cit.) uses the analogy of a climbing frame to portray the career. Individual career logics (unlike the above, the objective career, which is concerned with studying the shape of the climbing frame) has to do with *which* frame they choose to climb and *how* they decide to climb it (p. 220).

As will be noted in section 4.6 below, career transition coaching deals less with the selection of and who the successor (undergoing the transition) is but more with orienting the successor to the new role. However, the leader's background, experience and personality as well as the symbolism of the appointment cannot be ignored and will have an impact on the new leader's transition into the organisation/department in terms of impressions created and hopes or expectations raised.

Sullivan (2013) draws on the research conducted by Arthur and Rousseau (1996) (as cited in Sullivan, 2013, p. 279) to describe six different types of career transition experiences, all involving some sort of boundary crossing (italics below mine):

- transitions across occupational boundaries – *highlighting that professional commitment is becoming more important than organisational commitment and, despite the paucity of studies in this area, emphasising the importance of*

entrepreneurial strategies, especially for the boundaryless career. An example might be that of an accountant giving up accountancy to become an executive coach

- *transitions across organisational boundaries – moving to perform a similar role in another organisation*
- *changes in the meaning of employment relationships – this could mean taking on a part-time or consulting role*
- *network relationships – it is not clear what the author (Sullivan, 2013) means by this type of career transition but it is assumed that he is referring to the change in the important social network relationships which may be necessitated by, or is the catalyst for, one or more of the other career transitions he has identified*
- *transitions across the boundaries between roles – this might be referred to as a lateral move for example moving from a CFO to a COO role in the same organisation*
- *transitions across boundaries within roles – this might be moving from a selection and recruitment to a training and development role within an HR department.*

Mobility is at the heart of much thinking about careers and can be defined as the transition from one position to another (Arnold & Cohen, 2103). It is not always voluntary but in general it helps a person remain employable and move towards his or her career goals. Self-awareness and adaptability are considered to be key elements of overall “movement capital”. They also refer to “shocks” in the form of an unexpected event or insight which can trigger mobility (p. 284). Embeddedness may inhibit mobility. For this reason it is frequently argued that moving between organisations rather than within them is the way to advance.

4.3.4 A note about mid-life experiences and their impact on career transitions

Although psychoanalysis has ignored distinctions in adulthood (Levinson, 1988) (with Freud, himself aged 48, asserting that psychoanalysis is not possible above the age of 50! (cited in Biggs, 2003)), Gould (2007) makes the case for bringing the client's developmental stage into the coaching work. As the average age of the participants in this study was 43 years and having noted that multiple, simultaneous life transitions can be complex, the researcher felt that a note about mid-life transitions would be helpful in understanding the career transitions of the participants in this study. Average age notwithstanding, not all participants are in mid-life and even for those who are, not all of them will be in transition. However, an understanding of the issues relating to mid-life transitions and the developmental issues that arise, especially as they relate to meaning, purpose, values and identity (see Donaldson-Feilder & Panchal, 2011; Gould, 2007; Kets de Vries, 1978), has given an additional depth and utility to the career transition coaching undertaken in this study.

The mid-life transition is normally identified as starting between 40 and 45 years of age. Although the nature of the mid-life depends largely on the subjectivity and the social context of the individual, mid-life *does* emerge as a period of heightened sensitivity to one's position within a complex social environment, where the reassessment of self and personal goals with regard to career, family/relationships and physical body, is a prevailing theme. The way the mid-life is constructed will have profound implications for the individual's future development and the existential questions they will ask about their lives (Biggs, 2003; Kets de Vries, 1978; Levinson, 1988). Levinson (1988), in describing the seasons of a man's (sic) life, states that "a man's work is the primary base for his life in society" (p. 9) while Gabriel and Carr (2002) assert that through work people seek to fulfil deeper unconscious desires (p.355). Levinson (1988) describes the mid-life transition, starting at about age 40, as a link between two distinctive eras in the life cycle, early adulthood and middle adulthood. This corresponds with Super's (1992) establishment and maintenance phases (see 4.3.1 above) and Erikson's middle adulthood where the prevailing concern is: "Can I make my life count?" (see 4.3.2

above). The salience then of career, in accommodating multiple role expectations and socially constructed definitions of the point of the life course that the client has reached, cannot be overemphasised. It makes career transition coaching all the more important, since here the mid-lifer looks back to early adulthood but also forward with awareness of finitude (Jaques, 1965, who coined the term mid-life crisis and its link to the growing awareness of the imminence of personal death). In this historical (1950s and 1960s) perspective on the mid-life, the irony was evident: the adult was encouraged to excel at his/her chosen activities, whether work, family or personal but also expected to relinquish some of these and hand them over to a rising, more productive generation, with the consequent loss (of a more vital and valued social role, for example, or “some insult to his youthful narcissistic pride” (Levinson, 1988, p. 26)) and disengagement. The current, more fluid view, however, acknowledges that adults have to and want to work longer (“consumer driven agelessness”, Biggs (2003, p. 369)) and because people do live longer, the midpoint may actually be at a much older age than 40 (Donaldson-Feilder & Panchal, 2011; Kets de Vries, 1978). While not minimising the challenges of mid-life career transitions, this is not so much a period of aging, decline and disengagement but more about reappraisal and re-evaluation (as opposed to crisis) of personal identity, relationships and social roles; this results in different (existential) life course priorities, new perspectives and choices (in the Jungian conception) of the second half of life (Biggs, 2003, p. 375; see also Kidd, 2003; Levinson, 1988; Talbott, 2013). According to King (1980) mid-life issues are essentially a recapitulation of oedipal problems passed through the lens of adolescence, requiring the working through of the developmental phases of puberty and adolescence, confronting issues of dependence and independence, identity (self-perception and the perception of self by others) and the marshalling of inner resources to ride out narcissistic trauma and wounds to self-esteem. The reactions to these assaults and reversals are evident in the form of acting out.

Jung (1939; 1996) regarded the core task of mid-life (marked as the transition between the first half and the second half of life) as the third phase of individuation (centering and integrating), distinguishing the true self from the socially constructed mask of the

previous phases of life. This requires attention to the following mid-life processes: 1) looking back and forward and taking in the complexity of many life course positions; 2) an assessment of self before the gentle decline, with the realisation that life's projects are no longer open ended; 3) the shadow elements of the self previously projected onto others may return and require working through and acceptance and 4) the aspects of personal potential, which may previously have had to be repressed, now have possibility of expression (in Biggs, 2003, p. 376). Levinson (1988) describes this as reducing the tyranny of both the demands of society and the demands of our own repressed unconscious, allowing access to the "archetypal unconscious", an inner source of self-definition and satisfaction (p. 33). This introspection and reappraisal of one's life may activate unconscious conflicts and baggage from the past (in the form of anxieties, guilt, dependencies, animosities and vanities of earlier years). He (Levinson, 1988) suggests that those who go through this period with minimal discomfort (without the doubting and the searching typical of this period) may be denying that their lives must change, could be described as somewhat superficial or shallow (Kets de Vries, 1978, p. 54) and could thus be losing out on an important opportunity for personal development.

Not everyone experiences the crisis of mid-life and, as Levinson (1988) has stated, there are many people who are apparently untroubled by difficult, existential questions regarding the meaning, value and direction of their lives; although they may be working on them unconsciously, if they are not, they may pay the price in a later developmental crisis or in the "progressive withering of the self and a life structure minimally connected to the self" (p. 198). Jung (cited in Kets de Vries, 1978), states that the insights of this mid-life transition do not come easily but are, rather, gained by the "severest of shocks" (p. 45). Donaldson-Feilder and Panchal (2011) also point out that more recent research suggests that the mid-life transition is often evolutionary rather than revolutionary and will focus on active self-acceptance rather than fantasies of total transformation (p. 116). Either way, if managed well, mid-life transitions could be an opportunity for positive growth and development, generativity (vs. stagnation or self-absorption) and

lead to integrity (vs. despair), to use Erikson's terms (in Atkinson et al., 1990; Donaldson-Feilder & Panchal, 2011).

Often there is a "culminating event" in mid-life (Levinson, 1988, p. 191), which carries the ultimate message of one's affirmation by society. This takes on a magical quality in the person's private fantasy. If it goes the right way they will know they have truly succeeded and are assured of a happy future; a poor outcome will mean that they have failed in a profound sense not only in their work but as a person and have been found wanting and without value. This developmental crisis may prevent him from "becoming his own man (sic)" (p. 191).

Levinson (1988) describes the four tasks of mid-life individuation in terms of polarities: 1) young-old; 2) destruction-creation; 3) masculine-feminine and 4) attachment-separateness (p.197). These are not mutually exclusive pairs and appear on a continuum; they co-exist in every self and exist during the entire life-cycle but take on particular relevance in the mid-life. The developmental task is to make sense of one's own condition of being in between and to become young-old, for example, in a new way.

For many of the participants in this study, the career transition might be perceived as a manifestation of a more fundamental, generalised, mid-life transition (a more responsible version of the red convertible? (see Donaldson-Feilder & Panchal, 2011)). This comprises the transition from "passion" to "duty", the realisation of finitude and mortality (and mourning the loss of one's youthfulness), dealing with the disparity of what one is and what one dreamed one would become ("de-illusionment" (Levinson, 1988, p. 192)), re-appraising one's life and the desire to make one last big impression in the career trajectory. Dealing with the concurrence of these multiple transitions, and indeed losses, within and between different spheres of life (mid-life and mid-career), particularly in the South African context described earlier (where realism about career opportunities and consequent feelings of redundancy, obsolescence and worthlessness for certain members of the population may be exacerbated in mid-

career), would require considerable personal resources (Amado & Elsner, 2007; Biggs, 2003, p.373). It would also reinforce the value of career/transitional coaching (or what Kets de Vries in 1978 referred to as preventive counselling, p.58). Does systems psychodynamic executive coaching help managers and leaders who are facing career transitions, especially those who are in mid-life, adjust more effectively and result in personal growth vs. lifelong decline into boredom, frustration and stagnation? (Kets de Vries, 1978, p. 52). This question will be referred to again in Chapter 7.

4.3.5 Retirement as a career transition

Although only one participant in this study had recently been through the career transition of retirement, it is nevertheless considered to be such a significant transition (e.g. Kets de Vries, 2010) that it will be dealt with briefly here.

As mentioned earlier in connection with mid-life experiences, people are working longer, staving off retirement for a range of reasons but mostly financial ones (Critchley, 2002; Reitman & Schneer, 2008). Having said this, many are also being forced to take early retirement or are retiring voluntarily as companies change in line with strategic transformation initiatives, making way for younger employees and making organisations more relevant in terms of racial composition in a post-apartheid South Africa.

While age and career stage are often not perfectly synchronous, there are a number of issues which the late career leader faces. Feldman (2007) suggests that older, late career workers have a more positive attitude to their work (in terms of job satisfaction and involvement), possibly as a result of fewer discrepancies between their expectations and the reality of what their jobs offer them. Another possible explanation is that older, late career leaders tend to be more senior, earning more and carrying out more interesting and rewarding work. Clearly this is not the case for everyone and there are leaders in late career who have plateaued or have been demoted – these situations will be dealt with later in section 4.4.3 below. Feldman (2007) goes on to suggest that

while higher satisfaction may be true of the late career leaders' perception of their jobs, the same may not necessarily be true about their view of their careers. There is evidence to suggest that career satisfaction tapers off in late career. He cites sources claiming that up to 25% of retired leaders who come back in some sort of post retirement bridging work (meaning jobs that older workers take after leaving career-long positions but before exiting the workforce altogether) do so in an entirely different field or occupation. The reasons put forward for this may have to do with burnout but more likely it is the older leaders' way of preparing for eventual retirement by devaluing their careers. Organisationally based self-esteem also tends to decline in late career (Critchley, 2002; Feldman, 2007), possibly as a result of age discrimination in the form of negative comments about older workers from co-workers and managers and generally poorer performance appraisals. The fact that older workers in general exhibit less absenteeism and lower levels of voluntary turnover than their younger counterparts may partly be explained by the difficulty of obtaining another job at an older age. It is against this backdrop that older leaders in late career contemplate retirement and withdrawing from the workforce. The decision to retire, even if made voluntarily, is a difficult one (Corbett, 2007; Critchley, 2002; Feldman, 2007). Kets de Vries (2010) refers to it as the psychology of letting go (p. 203) and draws the sharp distinction between the active statement "I am retiring" and "I am being retired", the latter being seen as an act of symbolic rejection (p. 205). Feldman suggests the decision is generally made in two phases: firstly, financial feasibility and secondly, whether the quality of such people's current lives would be enhanced or worsened by exit from the workforce. In particular, poor health, heavy involvement in outside interests, and a spouse who does not work or is retired predispose older workers to take retirement.

The primary theoretical perspective used in understanding adjustment to retirement has been Atchley's (1989) "theory of continuity" which holds that, in making adaptive choices, middle-aged and older adults attempt to preserve and maintain existing internal and external structures; they prefer to accomplish this objective by using strategies tied to their past experiences of themselves and their social world. Continuity is thus a grand adaptive strategy that is promoted by both individual preference and

social approval. This theoretical framework suggests that the ability to continue valued activities and routines in retirement is positively associated with adjustment, while disruption of valued activities and routines is negatively associated with adjustment to retirement. According to Feldman (2007), the three factors that appear to be most critical here are income, health, and social contact (particularly with family members). In the absence of bridging work, it has been argued that volunteer service could offer an opportunity for retirees to feel useful, needed, and productive. Being retired (or unemployed) in a work oriented society as described above, without any active engagement in alternative activities or interests, could doom one to the status of being a nonentity (Ciulla, 2000, p. xii). The loss of power and control and the experience of “nothingness” may be overwhelming (Kets de Vries, 2010, p. 209). Of course, enduring individual personality factors also play a major role in the adjustment to retirement (and any transition for that matter) and the extent to which one feels that one’s career has been worthwhile and one’s contribution valued. The existential questions mentioned above, in relation to mid-life experiences, will inevitably be raised again at the retirement transition.

In the next section, the career transition challenges for the leader are examined.

4.4 CAREER TRANSITION CHALLENGES FOR THE LEADER

In this section the general challenges faced by the leader in career transition will be discussed, as will the way in which these represent a critical time for both the person in transition and the organisation as a whole. Specific challenges and risks during and after a career transition are then discussed: adaptability, derailment (including plateauing or demotion) and failure to read the situation.

4.4.1 General challenges during career transitions

However one understands career transitions, senior leader transitions represent a critical time for both an organisation and the individual (Amado & Elsner, 2007;

Ebberwein, et al., 2004; Feldman & Moore, 2001; Izod, 2006; Shaw & Linnear, 2007; Terblanche et al., 2017; Ulrich, 2000; Weinstock, 2011). There is a lot at stake for both: organisations have often invested significant resources in selection and recruitment and or training and development and much hinges on the success of the individual in the new role. From an individual point of view, there is no going back, there are high expectations (both internally and from the system) and while, generally, motivation to succeed is high, a new job will create feelings of insecurity (McAlpin & Wilkinson, n.d.) and disorientation and confusion (Hill, 2007). Unless overly hubristic, the transitioning individual would also experience anxiety and self-doubt to varying degrees (Amado & Elsner, 2007; Bridger, 2009; Talbott, 2013; Terblanche et al., 2017). Coined by Kets de Vries (in Kets de Vries et al., 2010) the term “imposter syndrome” signifies the fear that reasonably skilled and accomplished people feel when they begin to doubt whether they are good enough and start to undervalue their talent, risking their career and psychological wellbeing (p. 131).

In describing role change, Schlossberg (1984) distinguishes between role gain and role loss (p. 74). In a work situation, and perhaps even in other situations, the present researcher contends the distinction is not always that clear because a transition may bring with it both gains and losses. Schlossberg (1984) describes in the broadest sense anticipated or unanticipated events or non-events and “chronic hassles” (p. 45). In the context of this study, the focus is on anticipated and unanticipated events and, specifically in the arena of one’s occupation, non-normative events such as job movement (but not loss of job, due for example to retrenchment or redundancy) and normative role transitions such as retirement. To understand the meaning a transition has for a particular person, one needs to understand the type of transition, its context (both relationship and setting) and the impact on the individual’s life. The person’s appraisal of the transition and the extent of his/her coping resources (both personal and environmental) coupled with an understanding of the trigger, the timing, the source, the duration, the role change itself, previous experience with a similar transition and the concurrent stress (context), will determine how he or she assimilates, adjusts to and

deals with the change. The transition may be an opportunity for growth or deterioration (p. 59).

Sullivan (2013) has asserted that the process by which individuals make intra-firm transitions (both lateral and promotions) and their socialisation into new work groups and department cultures has not been fully examined. The boundaryless career, and other career literature, suggests that workers will be making more career transitions today than under the traditional career systems of the past (p. 285). As a result techniques and support interventions (such as career transition coaching) for facilitating these multiple transitions will be required, especially as individuals will be moving quickly across multiple, permeable boundaries, within and between firms and even countries (Ebberwein et al., 2004; Terblanche et al., 2017). Bridges (2003) distinguishes between change and transition; change, he asserts, is situational – accepting a new role, retiring from an organisation. Transition on the other hand is psychological; he describes it as the three phase process which people experience as they internalise, adjust and come to terms with the detail of the new situation that this change brings about (p. 3). The three phases involve ending (losing or letting go), being in the neutral zone and the new beginning.

Savickas (2007) describes two distinct aspects of stabilising in a new job: as organisational adaptation and position performance. First, a new employee must fit into the organisational culture that surrounds the job. Organisational adaptation involves participating in the work environment, not merely performing the job tasks. Organisational adaptation occurs through transactions and negotiations with co-workers in which the new employee engages in efforts to learn about the company and its workers, and the veteran workers engage in efforts to socialise with the newcomer. New employees, no matter how experienced in other settings, must first learn how things are done in their new organisation or department/team; this includes learning about the people, politics, values, language, culture and history/background (forming an organisation-in-the-mind). There might be some reciprocity in the newcomer changing the company, but in the early stages of the transition, this may be infrequent

and minimal when it does occur. The exception may be when a person comes in (is “parachuted” in) at a senior level with expectations from the shareholders that they will transform a failing organisation. With pressure to see changes and results quickly, the result of this sudden transformation will most likely be a split – those who reject the newcomer and those who welcome the newcomer – which in turn will most likely result in turbulent conditions for both the organisation and the newcomer for some time until the new culture brought in has been established.

Position performance is the second task of stabilising in a new job. In addition to organisational adaptation, individuals must demonstrate competence in performing their job duties. They must clearly understand their roles and job tasks, take these responsibilities seriously, and perform the tasks efficiently and effectively. In systems psychodynamics terms, this has been referred to above as finding, taking and making the role (Reed & Bazalgette, 2006).

4.4.2 Career Adaptability

The concept of career adaptability, coined by Super (in Super & Knasel, 1981, p. 198) who initially referred to it as career maturity (as mentioned in 4.3.1.1 above) was later developed by Savickas (2005, cited in Savickas, 2007). The concept is relevant for understanding the challenges faced by leaders in career transitions. Savickas (2007) describes it as a psycho-social construct that denotes an individual's readiness and resources for coping with imminent, intermediate, and distant vocational development tasks and career transitions. He regards the four dimensions of career adaptability as tools for career building throughout the life course:

- showing *concern* about choices to be made in the future or planfulness (vs. indifference)
- increasing personal *control* over the decision-making process, autonomy or self-determination (vs. indecision)

- displaying *curiosity* about possible selves and alternative work scenarios, (vs. unrealism) and
- strengthening the *confidence* needed to make occupational choices, anticipation of success in encountering and overcoming career obstacles (vs. inhibition).

Although described in the context of career choice, these four dimensions of career adaptability are equally relevant in determining how individuals will adapt to both voluntary and involuntary career transitions. Savickas (2007) cautions that development in these four areas may not proceed smoothly so that often the leader will encounter regressions (see Kernberg, 1985a, for example) and fixations; delays among or disequilibrium between the four dimensions will create problems for the leader. Hence, for example, being realistic about a future job may not necessarily imply that the individual possesses the necessary confidence to succeed in that role.

In line with the changes in the 21st century world of work described earlier in this chapter (section 4.2.2), a constructionist perspective on careers *and career transitions* (italics mine) seems more appropriate where careers do not unfold but instead are actively constructed by the individual; such a view focuses on subjective truths in meaning making and mattering (Khapova, Arthur, & Wilderom, 2007).

4.4.3 Derailment

Derailment, with the consequence of job loss or being plateaued or demoted, is a risk of career transition (and of course also a risk in the normal course of one's career). Chappelow and Leslie (in Wilcox & Rush, 2004) define derailed executives as those who, after reaching the general manager level, are fired, demoted (referring to the typically involuntary transfer of an employee to a position of lower authority and responsibility) or held on a career plateau (p.126). Derailment in a managerial or executive role is defined by Lombardo, Ruderman and McCauley (1988, p. 199) as

being involuntarily plateaued, demoted (or fired) below the level of anticipated achievement, or reaching that level only to fail unexpectedly. Later, the career plateau was perceived as the point from which employees would be unable to take up or be unlikely to be given positions of increased responsibility (in Feldman, 2007). Plateauing due to skill obsolescence (Feldman & Moore, 2001) is a special case which requires a somewhat different intervention (possibly re-training, re-skilling to broaden the skill set, etcetera) and is not considered as an unintended consequence of a career transition in this study. The fear of derailment as a consequence of not being successful in the new role is heightened at times of career transition. Wilcox and Rush (2004) add that interpersonal skills (the ability to work with others) is a critical factor for long term career success; this characteristic is one of the most important that separates executives who succeed from those who fail. Building and managing effective interpersonal relationships (*and networks*, addition the researcher's) is a key differentiator, especially if one considers that many managers are hired and promoted for their individual contributions. The inability to relate to people in a meaningful way is a common reason for career derailment, mainly these authors suggest because it is so difficult (but not impossible) to change. In the present researcher's experience, this is often one of the presenting reasons for undertaking executive coaching. What is required is an honest assessment and an ability to listen to and act on feedback by becoming more self-aware. Interestingly, Wilcox and Rush (2004) add that derailment is often predicted by co-workers, with the executives themselves unaware or unwilling to fix the flaws that lead to derailment. Based on the above, the researcher has deduced that derailment can be averted by those who have the ability and willingness to assess themselves (i.e. gain insight and self-awareness) as well as to learn and develop. In addition, derailment may be more common in leaders who have moved into more senior roles where their interpersonal relationship skills become more important than their technical or functional ability and they are found wanting in this area (e.g. in Feldman & Moore, 2001).

Two participants in this study experienced derailments: one in the form of a voluntary demotion and the other a voluntary severance into a different role with the organisation

(both job relinquishments as Gouws (1995) has referred to them) but many of the participants expressed fear of derailment as will be observed in Chapter 6.

4.4.4 Failure to read the situation and other variables

Failure to read the situation (similar to Savickas' (2007) concept of organisational adaptation described above) may relate to a newly promoted manager's inability or unwillingness to take time to read the culture of the new work environment, understand its history and get to know the key people both in his/her immediate team and other key stakeholders, i.e., building critical relationships and taking responsibility for making them work (building a network) and garnering supporting (identifying and nurturing) allies. It could also relate to the transitioned manager's failure to understand that the skills and competencies that made him or her successful in the previous role, may not and probably are not the ones that are the keys to their success in their new role. Not understanding priorities or clarifying expectations before strategies and plans are formulated (often acting too hastily in an effort to please) are also mistakes that new leaders make. The more the event alters an adult's role, status, routines, assumptions and relationships, the more he or she will be affected by the transition (Schlossberg, 1984). Based on the above-mentioned, the researcher believes that newly transitioned leaders may fail to read the situation clearly, possibly as a result of their anxiety and desire to perform, at times sweeping out the good with the bad in a misguided effort to deny or make a break with the past and create a new future.

Outside hires are far less likely to succeed than internal hires because they are unfamiliar with the established ways of doing things and do not have a support network of relationships in place (Wilcox & Rush, 2004). It is the contention of this researcher, based on personal experience, that while more challenging, it is not impossible for an outsider "parachuted" in to an organisation to succeed in a new senior role, provided he/she has the ability to read the situation clearly and carefully and can garner support, which will be described later in Chapter 6.

4.5 THE SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMICS OF CAREER TRANSITIONS

Freud is said to have equated mental health with the capacity to love and to work (Lent & Brown, 2013); while his view may be extreme, there is no doubt of the centrality of work in our lives, intersecting with other life roles, and the impact it has on our overall quality of life. In the previous section the challenges of career transitions for the leader were discussed more from a “general” psychology and practical perspective. In this section career transitions are discussed from a systems psychodynamic stance.

4.5.1 Transition moments and the symbolic “dance” of transition

Ulrich (2000) writes about “transition moments” (p. 189). He described these transitions as times when individuals experience major change and are thus more open to new ideas and willing to experiment with new behaviours. He adds that a significant transition moment occurs when an individual assumes a new role in an organisation, bringing as it does new excitement, energy and enthusiasm. A highly visible transition moment is when a new CEO or any other significant manager or leader takes the reins and faces a number of unique and paradoxical challenges, not least of which is honouring the past while creating a new future; setting an agenda that others will follow; managing the institutional and symbolic roles and dealing with the individual and personal challenges of leadership.

Succession is imbued with both realism and symbolism as a transition moment: realistically it transfers power and authority from one individual to another, an old to a new regime. Symbolically, it communicates values both in terms of who is being appointed and how the appointment is made. For example, where the new person comes from or what they believe in sends a strong signal about the future direction of the organisation.

During the selection, recruitment, induction and general socialisation processes (especially of new people into the organisation) “courtship” displays are acted out,

during which future partners assess each other's suitability for collusive projective processes. The newcomer's preparedness to participate in the particular interaction patterns enacted by the key players in the organisation – the actors who set the tone and define the corporate culture – is assessed (Kets de Vries, 2010, p. 37). Will the other be a good "container" for the other's projective identification? These are times of exploration where the person-organisation fit is being explored through subtle signs which constitute the beginning of some sort of secret alliance or collusion. Collusion (a neurotic form of collaboration) in this context is an out of awareness, repetitive pattern between people instigated and maintained in such a way as to manage and master anxiety about past conflictual experiences. Usually one partner keeps the other bound to a set of complementary reactions. Often in organisations, as stated above, given the dynamics of power, employees who are not willing to "play" with the senior executive, are not likely to last. The invitation to participate in collusive activities operates at three different levels of awareness: The first level is the one most often verbalised and relates to the effort the organisation makes when the new person joins to make him or her aware of the unique features of the prevailing corporate culture, its preferred interpersonal style and way of relating to others – articulating the kind of partnership arrangement the person will be subjected to. But just because this is verbalised does not necessarily mean the receiver truly understands the message. The process of projective identification is prone to distortion so that the person does not always react as expected to the given signals. The second and third levels of awareness refer to the levels of consciousness about the "contract" between the parties with at least one party being even subliminally aware at level two and no conscious awareness between the parties at level three.

4.5.2 Career transitions, loss and sublimation

From a psychodynamic perspective, transitions in general produce a mixture of emotions: a combination of sadness and a sense of loss for that which is passing as well as anxiety about what the next stage will bring and hope for future possibilities. Previous transitions, both the experience of loss and new beginnings, affect adults and

children alike when they encounter new transitions in the present. Earlier emotions return and may amplify those in the present, and these “unconscious echoes” perhaps explain the powerful emotions that often attend transitions (Fox Eades, 2011, p. 34).

Diamond (2013) describes change from an emotional loss point of view (p. 370). Work serves as a transitional and even transformational object – objects of our creative efforts derived from the psychological and experiential space located between fantasy and reality, which have the purpose of nurturing and facilitating psychological safety, interpersonal security, emotional bonding and maturation. Volkan and Zintl (1993) in their book on loss and grief maintain that the ability to handle life’s transitions begins with our first interactions with a mother or caretaker. If those early interactions were by and large constant, trusting and loving, we have reservoirs to draw on in the face of change. Loss in the sense of a career transition is the loss of something familiar and favoured, even if voluntary, although it is acknowledged that this is not always the case, since many individuals in transition flee from undesirable and intolerable work situations. Throughout life, our ability to give up is directly related to our readiness to make the next step, the security in the environment, the support of those around us and our track record with letting go (p. 13). Losing something (even moving from one role to another) strikes at our illusion of control and predictability and could unconsciously reactivate our primitive fears of abandonment, loss and helplessness. Volkan and Zintl (1993) proceed to describe anxiety experienced after a transition or loss – it is like an emotional fever signalling that our emotional equilibrium is out of kilter. Anxiety is so distressing that we go to great lengths to try to allay the cause of our panic. Splitting, as described in Chapter 2, is one of the defence mechanisms employed to reduce the overwhelming anxiety and may take the form of idealising the previous role because of its familiarity and feelings of competence about it while demonising the new role (and possibly organisation). Projection and projective identification may also be noted in the form of projecting the uncomfortable feeling of initial incompetence onto a colleague or boss while trying to maintain a semblance of control and competence in the new role. Projective identification may be manifested as the taking on of the new, inherited team’s sense of doubt and possibly aggression at

the new appointment, and feeling unworthy of this new role (see for example Horowitz, 1985).

In contrast, Stapley (2006) writes of the positive role of sublimation. He suggests that in reading about the lives of many great people, it is often possible to assess the effects of sublimation on their careers. He says that it cannot be coincidence that most have achieved success in spite of obstacles as much as due to positive goals, support, and encouragement. Indeed, it appears that a combination of strong frustration and positive encouragement is a part of every great person's biography; that failure to achieve the heights of success in one's original ambitions is sublimated into an even greater ambition to succeed with a new ambition. He concludes that it seems that the unbearable experience associated with the original failure has the effect of encouraging the individual to do everything possible to avoid the painful experience a second time around.

4.5.3 Other systems psychodynamic concepts relevant to career transitions

Paranoid-schizoid is a concept that, as mentioned, originates from Melanie Klein's theory of psychological development. It describes a position in infants where the world of experience is characterised by persecution and splitting. It is a state that arises in the attempt to soothe the anxiety that occurs in the child when the reality of the fact that good and evil are linked is acknowledged (Beck, 2012, p. 51).

Collusion, referred to earlier, is a mutual process where a sender transmits projections to a receiver who in turn identifies with them; that is, absorbs them and becomes the projection (Beck, 2012, p. 51). This is similar to *projective identification* (also referred to earlier) which Horowitz (1983) described as both a defence mechanism and an object relationship, occurring in the earliest stages of development (the first year or two of life), before the infant has been able to form a firm differentiation between self and the other.

Crossing boundaries. Career transitions may involve moving across different boundaries, both social as well as organisational. For example, they might mean that a career change involves relocation. This would involve crossing several boundaries, for example, between one social group and another and may also include moving from one department within the organisation to another. Another view of boundary crossing may include changes in relationships that occur as a result of a career transition. For example, an individual who is promoted within a department or organisation of which he or she was previously a member, may experience hostility and resistance as a result of the collegial inter-personal implications of the promotion.

4.6 CAREER TRANSITION COACHING

Building on the previous Chapter (3) on systems psychodynamic executive coaching, the field of career transition coaching as a specialised type of executive coaching is explained below. The role of the career transition coach is explored and the ethics relating to this type of coaching dealt with. Finally the nature of the career transition coaching as applied in this study is explained.

4.6.1 Understanding career transition coaching

Lent and Brown (2013, p. 2) have said that work is one of the most important domains and is also one of the most meaningful targets of intervention for our endeavours as industrial/organisational psychologists *and coaches (italics the researcher's)*. Work and the workplace are, for most, a compelling arena for our interest and investment (Hazen & Steckler, 2014, p. 329). Du Toit (2015) has said that, historically, career trajectories were predictable and in some careers, once choices were made, it was very difficult to change track without derailment. However, the career landscape has changed and is now much more fluid and unpredictable, punctuated by many changes and transitions. Instead of pursuing one career path, multiple occupational changes are part of a modern, complex career. Furthermore, she adds that these changes may require a change in assumptions, beliefs, behaviours and motivations on the part of the individual

experiencing the transition and also herald significant consequences for other areas of the individual's life.

As a relatively new specialisation in the field of executive coaching, career transition coaching is unregulated and coaches have added career coaching to their repertoire of skills and practices (Bench, 2003, in Brown, 2012; Talbott, 2013). Kilburg (2002a) noted that the utilisation of career coaching in organisations has quickly outrun rigorous research on its practice. Earlier, Feldman and Moore (2001) wrote about the emergence of career coaching as a major growth area. They acknowledge that there are many varieties of career coaching, but all seem to have three main aims: 1) to turn around deficiencies in leaders' current performance or to strengthen underdeveloped skills; 2) to groom middle- and upper-level managers for advancement, "smoothing of rough edges" (p. 28) and 3) to help upper level managers and leaders adjust to major changes in the workplace. They proceed to suggest that in all three cases the aims are the same – to improve the leader's adjustment to the current realities of their roles and organisational contexts; to raise their level of performance and to enhance their reputation within their current organisation. While they maintain that the focus of career coaching is largely internal (and they distinguish career coaching from career counselling, as will be noted in the section on ethics below), they do acknowledge that, increasingly, many successful leaders are employing career coaches on their own to further increase their competitive edge and to help them with a transition into other roles or self-managed enterprises.

Feldman and Moore (2001) distinguish between career coaching, mentoring, career counselling and therapy. These distinctions have been explained previously in Chapter 2. However, in the current researcher's view these authors' distinction between career coaching and career counselling is thought to be rather narrow. They suggest, for example, that career counselling typically involves a comprehensive look not only at the leader's work related skills and abilities but also at their preferences, values, interests and personal life concerns. The latter have been part of the approach adopted by the current researcher, maintaining that a more comprehensive approach to and in-

depth understanding of a leader's background (as advocated in the systems psychodynamic approach and for example in Western's (2012) depth analysis as part of his analytic network coaching approach) assists his or her adjustment to a new work role. While the major goal of executive and career coaching is to help leaders modify their behaviour in their current roles (by thinking more deeply about what drives their current thoughts, feelings and behaviours), having a broader view of career coaching, where it is possible that a leader may want to reposition themselves for better positions outside the organisation, may raise difficult ethical issues. These are dealt with in section 4.6.3 below.

Feldman and Moore (2001) suggest that career coaching is likely to be an inefficient solution when leaders are plateaued in terms of content knowledge and further suggest that career coaching (in terms of their definition) is contra-indicated where there are personal or family crises, addictive behaviours, lack of generic management tools, plateaued performance (*as opposed to plateaued careers*, addition the researcher's), discrepant core values, borderline illegal behaviour and lack of insight or inability to monitor (perhaps indicating receptiveness or readiness for coaching and resistance to change). Theeboom and Beersma (2013) and Bluckert (2008, p. 34) referred to this as coachability. While not ignoring Feldman and Moore's (2001) warnings, the present researcher believes their views are somewhat limiting and restrictive but acknowledges their article was written some 16 years ago. He found some of these conditions amongst his participants (excluding, to his knowledge, borderline illegal behaviour and substance abuse) but nevertheless went ahead with his version of career coaching, with some success as will be reported on in Chapter 6.

As far as he can tell, few specialised qualifications are offered in career coaching for already qualified executive coaches but it is surmised that most reputable coach training would include scenarios on career transitions. In his own case, this researcher completed an advanced, post coach training qualification in career coaching offered by an experienced international career coach. Career coaches facilitate career

discussions which include inter alia, career decision making and developing employability skills.

Lent and Brown (2013) explain career coaching as assisting, in particular, managers and leaders with their work performance and promoting their career progress e.g. preparing for or entering a new role. These authors state it is carried out by service providers from a variety of backgrounds such as counselling or industrial psychology. This is distinct from mentoring which involves pairing a worker with one or more experienced workers to help the person adjust to the work environment, receive support and advice. Schlossberg (1990, as cited by Lent & Brown, 2013) has described the role “career counsellors” (but she could equally be referring to career coaches in the view of the present researcher) might play in supporting workers undergoing transitions by helping them learn more about these coping strategies and steps to master change with the aim of helping them enhance their career adaptability. Limited research is available on career coaching from the employers’ perspective and the role it could play, especially in helping new appointees adjust more quickly and become more rapidly productive in their new roles. Notably, Feldman and Moore’s (2001) article addresses the role HR staff and line managers can play in career coaching within organisations.

Other authors (for example Ebberwein et al., 2004; Feldman & Moore, 2001; Hazen & Steckler, 2014; McAlpin & Wilkinson, n.d.; Sullivan, 2013; Talbott, 2013; Terblanche et al., 2017) have written of the value of transitional coaching. Ulrich (2000) astutely remarked that ultimately the difficulty of coaching comes from assuming that someone can change someone else’s behaviour or attitude and that, increasingly, opportunities for coaching success may come from focusing on “transition moments” (p 189).

4.6.1.1 Situations when career transition coaching is indicated

The views of Feldman and Moore (2001) regarding the key indicators for career coaching have been referred to earlier in this chapter. They deal specifically with the value of career coaching in times of transition when either the leader or the organisation

itself (and in the view of this researcher, often both) are in some type of major transition. They refer specifically to the situation where a leader has been recently promoted and might experience difficulty delegating effectively, picking up the norms appropriate to the new role, or interacting successfully with a new set of colleagues and other stakeholders (p. 33). They, like Terblanche, et al. (2017) and others, regard career coaching as a valuable intervention during short term adaptation to role change.

Hazen and Steckler (2014, p. 331) claim that career coaching is one of the most focussed, results-oriented forms of coaching because of the clearly defined presence of work as an end goal. They suggest five areas for career coaching which are at once cognitive, emotional and behavioural:

- Choosing work
- Moving up in profession or organisation
- Moving out, by choice
- Finding work after job loss
- Ending current work, retirement.

Having an understanding of work culture and client values to consider how age, gender, social class, language, family expectations, the larger culture and economy all interact in career strategy and design and execution are essential, according to Hazen and Steckler (2014). These researchers refer to the following strategies: Plan and implement, vs. test and learn – analysis and then action, vs. action and then analysis – this is useful as a guiding framework and at different career stages. They further suggest working with leaders to help them adapt their personal business models to better match the circumstances and environment (or system) they are in. Understanding personal business models and how to construct or modify them is the emerging skill set for career transition coaches as well as their clients (p. 339).

Binney, Williams and Wilke (2012) claim that based on their research, organisations invest large sums of money and effort in finding new leaders, but once they are

appointed, abandon them. This is especially true of high risk, external appointments. Faced with the anxieties of a leadership transition and the weight of expectations (p. 256), they suggest providing support especially to newly appointed leaders; while they refer to the support of a senior HR person or another executive, the assumption made by the current researcher is that career transition coaching would be most helpful in these circumstances. McAlpin and Wilkinson (n.d.) provide practical pointers for both those in transition and those coaching them, focusing specifically on the first 90 days in a new role. In a recent article Terblanche et al. (2017; also Terblanche et al., in press) have designed a coaching intervention to support leaders promoted into senior positions.

Career transition coaching could help leaders in transition, such as those moving from jobs in operations to positions of enterprise leadership that require “soft” interpersonal skills as well as execution ability. But, as pointed out in Chapter 3, coaching cannot ameliorate deep-seated psychological problems, such as chronic depression (Sherman & Freas, 2004) and such clients should be referred for clinical intervention.

Western (2012) describes the “Managerial Discourse” (one of four coaching discourses), where the coach focuses on supporting the executive to take up their role more effectively to improve personal and organisational output; the coach focuses on productivity *and effectiveness* (italics identify the current researcher’s addition) (p. 13). If the executive or leader is taking up a new or changed or different role, this could be described as career transition coaching.

As mentioned above, Jung described the process of individuation which occurs throughout life but comes to the fore in the second half of it, as we become more consciously aware of ourselves and our strengths and the need to face or deal with our limitations. This may manifest in a lack of self-confidence, with a person drifting into a midlife crisis and/or a temporary loss of meaning in their life (in Palmer & Panchal, 2011, p. 9). Clearly, executive coaching is a useful intervention in such circumstances

and specialised career coaching indicated if the individual in question is also facing a career transition.

Helping clients with career dilemmas or crossing boundaries in making a career step from one career level to another, particularly those new in a role, is one of the more common areas in which coaches are asked for help (Garvey, Stokes & Megginson, 2014; Huffington, 2007; Kilburg, 2007a; Palmer & Panchal, 2011; Peltier, 2011; Pooley, 2004; Sherman & Freas, 2004). Hazen and Steckler (2014) assert that career coaching goals might range from the tactical and measurable to the more intrapsychic and intangible, depending on the individual's circumstances, and suggest that career coaches could assist in the more satisfying marriage of work and current identity as well as refining the identity to the next stage of actualisation (p. 330). As will be reported in Chapter 6, there were many participants in this study who faced difficult life *and* career transitions.

Kilburg and Levinson (2008, p. 19), referring to classical texts in psychoanalysis such as Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917; 1940), have said that "We must always remember, all change involves loss, and all loss must be grieved." This simple statement comes close to being a universal truth in human behaviour and supports the conception explained earlier in section 4.5.2 above of career transitions as losses. Psychologists who have not been exposed to these original expositions of psychological responses to loss and change are probably more familiar with the more popular versions provided by Bridges (2003), mentioned earlier, that described a three stage process by which humans respond to change involving endings, neutral zones, and new beginnings. Bridges pointed out that change in human lives and human organisations can produce tremendous emotional upheaval and stated clearly that for people to move on appropriately they often go through a series of formal grieving stages and responses, for example those identified by Kübler-Ross (1997): denial, anger, bargaining, anxiety, sadness, disorientation, depression, reconciliation, and finally, integration.

Du Toit (2015) states that, to a certain extent, rites support an individual to make the transition from one state to another, which requires the separation from an existing state followed by integration into the new state. Career transition often includes various rites that, as part of the process, such as the interview, induction, probation, and the like, are designed to ease the passage between different boundaries. She goes on to describe transitional or career coaching which is often used as a way to support individuals in making the transition from one career boundary to another and dealing with the challenges of separation and integration into the new. “We may therefore perceive coaching as a ‘rite de passage’ in managing the cycle of change” (du Toit, 2015, p. 57).

Blattner’s (2005) study of a “downwardly mobile” executive over the course of job change illustrates additional concepts that are important aspects of a psychodynamic approach to career transition coaching, such as the importance of the perception of self, coping mechanisms, and emotional intelligence. In this case the coach takes a strengths-based approach and emphasises the awareness of the emotional states of self and others, especially as a tool for developing behavioural and supervisory strategies that enhance the effectiveness of employees and thus the manager or leader.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Triest (2002) describes the drama of “taking a role” and suggests that doing so in an organisation inevitably produces an inner drama in which internalised past figures, which are related in some way or another to the role in the mind, are brought back to life. He goes on to argue that these charged introjects meet and sometimes clash with the representation of the organisation-in-the-mind and therefore influence the perception of organisational reality, the experience of the self in the role and the actual role that is carried out (p. 209) – the normative, existential and phenomenal roles described earlier in section 3.4.4.4 above.

Pooley (2004) suggests that it is precisely at points of transition (such as those described in the preceding paragraphs) when clients are moving jobs or working

through a reorganisation, possibly making changes in their personal lives at the same time, that the coach is most acutely aware of the dynamics of containment, holding and timing of interpretations. Brunning (2007b) has also suggested that clients sometimes need to realise that roles within organisations are beyond salvation and the coach work needs delicate poise, containment, sensitivity and professionalism as well as clarity of purpose and a clear differentiation between the realms of coaching and psychotherapy (p. 143). The primary purpose of coaching, she says, is to help the client perform his or her organisational role better and to position the client closer to the organisation even if the occasional outcome may mean her or his departure from the organisation in search of a better fit elsewhere.

Companies face an urgent need to develop leaders at all levels—from bringing younger leaders on board faster, to developing leaders globally, to keeping senior leaders relevant and engaged longer (Deloitte, 2014). This takes on a particular relevance in the South African scenario as companies strive to meet transformation agendas and have their leadership teams more closely represent the demographics of the country. In general, as leaders grapple with an increasingly complex and fast paced changing world of work, the requirement to be effective as a leader early after appointment is evident. But, as Scheepers (2012) citing Senge (2006), has commented, it is not possible to figure everything out from the top, with everyone following “the grand strategist” (p. 8). Leaders exist at every level of the organisation (Western’s (2013) concept of distributed leadership); those companies that will excel in the future are the ones which will enable and develop this leadership. For example, as managers navigate the six passages as described in the Leadership Pipeline (Drotter, Charan & Noel, 2001) different challenges with shifts in time allocation and new skills and work values are required at each turn. Providing career transition coaching at each of these turns increases the chance of the leader being successful.

4.6.1.2 *Endings and beginnings*

Career transitional coaching in the context of succession thus facilitates a process whereby current and future roles are clarified, and makes the transition from the old to the new regime as seamless as possible (Ulrich, 2000). In some cases a retiring leader initiates the transition coaching and it occurs between the time when the new leader is identified and the old leader retires. It could be accomplished by the former and incoming leaders themselves (although Ulrich uses the term CEO, the researcher believes the principles apply equally to any leadership transition).

More often, though, the transitional coaching is initiated once the former leader has left and the new leader is installed; it takes place using a trusted outsider or third party coach. The value of an external transition (and for that matter, executive) coach is that she or he can often cut through the political issues, raise personal or sensitive questions and often has no agenda in the transition (unless he or she was the executive coach of the former leader, which would be unwise). Transitional coaching has implications for both the new appointee as well as the person leaving, who should do so with dignity and honour. When a leader leaves in an angry frame of mind, this sets a negative tone throughout the organisation. As Ulrich (2000) has pointed out, followers need to shift their allegiance from the old to the new regime and possibly even thank the exiting person who may have influenced their personal and professional lives. He refers to this as “relationship equity” (the network of personal contacts and alliances) of the leaving leader which needs to be transferred to the new leader. When this is not possible or the followers feel the exiting leader has been poorly treated, this transference may be stalled, and, angry, disappointed and frightened employees may not be able to be fully engaged, even resulting in the demise of the new incumbent and in extreme cases, the organisation (p. 191).

The incoming leader has at least two purposes in transitional coaching: they need to develop a point of view about how they will interact with, what they want from whom and how they will work to accomplish this with each of the stakeholders (peers, board,

top team members, key customers and suppliers, investors, regulatory agencies, family (in the case of a family owned business), and so forth). Secondly, coaching will help the new leader explore behaviours to enact their points of view (p. 192) and where to spend their most precious resource: time. Where and how the new leader spends her time will set the tone for her term. Hence, working with a career transition coach to create a stakeholder map and identify important relationships both from the past and in the future and thinking how to manage these relationships is a key element of transitional coaching. In those rare times when coaching can take place between or with the outgoing and incoming leader, endings and beginnings will be allowed to occur. The incoming leader has a major role to play in the transitioning out of the former leader and, while sometimes handled superficially, this has an extremely symbolic role to play for the new leader and assists employees (and the leader) to experience the endings and beginnings properly.

4.6.2 The role of the career transition coach

Companies are increasingly providing senior leaders with access to a coach at specific career stages or events. The value of career conversations, focused on the needs of the individual, has been much more widely accepted as important while the career or transition coach can add enormous value (Blattner, 2005; Feldman & Moore, 2001; Lent & Brown, 2013; McAlpin & Wilkinson, n.d.; Talbott, 2013; Terblanche et al., 2017; Ulrich, 2000; Yarnall, 2008).

As there are so many different types of transitions (Sullivan, 2013; McAlpin & Wilkinson, n.d.) it is difficult to be prescriptive about the exact role and strategy of the career transition coach. It is important that the support provided is tailored for the specific situation being experienced by the transitioning executive. The coach should work with the client to diagnose the situation, discover the coping strategies the client has utilised in the past and then develop a customised approach to the transition. McAlpin & Wilkinson (n.d.) have defined five general principles for the coach in helping individuals make a transition:

- Make a break from the past and start learning for the future
- Design a strategy that fits the situation and will secure quick wins
- Build effective relationships with your boss and your team
- Create a support network with internal and external alliances
- Support people through their transitions.

As mentioned in both Chapters 2 and 3, containment is an important concept in coaching. Developed by Bion (1961), it is described originally as the mother's capacity to receive the feelings the child cannot accommodate him/herself and to process them and return them to the child so that it is possible for the latter to accommodate them (p. 45). In coaching, containment refers to the coach's ability to accommodate or "render down" (op cit., p. 45) the difficult things so the client does not flee from them and that they can be used constructively again, like "composting". This is linked to the coach's ability to create a holding or considerate environment, both physically and psychologically.

According to Diamond (2013), executive coaches and consultants assist by supporting and facilitating a transitional space or reflective containment for participants engaged in change. To reiterate, transitional space refers to the need to provide a safe and creative, emotional and psychological, "virtual room" for people in their attempt to produce radical change and solve complex problems. By directing feedback so as to address unconscious, reactive and defensive behaviour patterns and dispositions that block positive change, executive coaches work to enhance participants' self-awareness and emotional intelligence. Heightened self-awareness and consciousness in executives is the first step toward minimising the toxic consequences of reactive narcissism and giving voice to the true self of authentic leaders and followers, while limiting the prevalence of the false self and the negative impact of excessively defensive operations on organisational culture.

Spero (2007, p. 221) describes the role of the coach in supporting leaders through transitions, concentrating on creating a containing environment, being non-judgemental and displaying empathy, and also the need to understand the client's use of defences, his or her role and the organisation-in-the-mind as well as to be alert to unresolved developmental (e.g. oedipal) issues which may affect the client's relationship with authority as well as the re-enacting of old sibling rivalries (Hindle & Sherwin-White, 2014; Skrzypek, Maciejewska-Sobczak & Stadnicka-Dmitriew, 2014). The coach acts as a container for the client's anxieties and projections, must use the transference and counter-transference feelings to understand the feeling the latter is experiencing and help her or him perceive the interrelationship of the past and its continuous presence in current behaviour. This understanding and the capacity to tolerate and understand the ambiguities and anxieties aids the client to move on and adjust and modify her thinking, feelings and behaviour in relation to the career transition.

4.6.3 Ethics of career transition coaching

According to Kahn (2014), executive coaching seems to enjoy a well-developed base in ethics for such a young field, presumably as a result of the influence of psychology on coaching practice. He notes that their ethical codes of practice are surprisingly similar.

Who is the client? Is it the individual or team receiving coaching or is it the organisation paying for it? This coaching conundrum as it has been called (Gorrell & Hoover, 2009, p. x; Kahn, 2014, p. 5) raises ethical issues in career coaching that are probably no different from the ethical issues in executive coaching per se. This is an ever-present risk in the "Free Agent Nation" (Pink (2001), in Gorrell and Hoover, 2009, p. 217). It is generally held that both the individual client or team being coached *and* the organisation are the clients and that one of the primary purposes of coaching is the ultimate success of the organisation through the professional performance of the individual (Gorrell & Hoover, 2009; Hazen & Steckler, 2014; Huffington, 2007; Kahn, 2014; Kilburg, 2002a).

In addition to the general ethical matters inherent in executive coaching, relating to contracting and especially confidentiality, a further conundrum often arises which is unique to career coaching. In line with the ethics of multiple clients (Kahn, 2014, p. 137) and in the experience of this researcher, leaders in the course of their coaching sometimes experience career dilemmas and wonder if they are in the right job and/or organisation. Alternatively, leaders may seek career coaching specifically for this reason (Hazen & Steckler, 2014; Feldman & Moore, 2001). In the latter case if they do this at their own cost and in their own time and contract with a coach who is not attached to their organisation, there is no ethical or professional dilemma for the coach – the lines are clear and straight forward and the leader is the coach's client. However, the waters are muddied if the leader's company is paying for the coaching. In cases like these, if the coach is already contracted to the company and no coaching contract has yet been entered into with the individual, the coach would be advised to refer the leader to an independent third party for individual coaching. If, as it often does, the question of organisational and role fit and job satisfaction in current role come up in the middle of a coaching intervention where the coach is contracted by the employing organisation, the client would be encouraged to talk with his/her superior and/or the HR department representative as soon as it becomes apparent that the leader is seriously contemplating leaving the organisation. Again, in the researcher's own experience, a three-way discussion between leader, his/her manager and the coach has been effective in enriching the current job or finding an alternative role within the same organisation, or coming to an amicable separation. Inherent in this position is the act of rigorous, up front contracting where boundaries with all parties and stakeholders (primarily, as suggested, the coaching client and employing organisation or the client's manager in cases of employer paid career coaching (Hazen & Steckler, 2014)) are negotiated. Feldman and Moore (2001) suggest that this is one of the features that distinguishes career coaching from career counselling, where career counselling may support a client to seek alternative employment outside the current organisation whereas career coaching is more internal in nature. In this study career transition coaching has been used to describe coaching in both scenarios.

4.6.4 The usefulness of career transition coaching

There is a dearth of research relating to the effectiveness of career transition coaching specifically. According to Feldman and Moore (2001), while the use of career coaching has burgeoned over the past several years, there has been little research on how career coaching should be implemented in organisational settings and only anecdotal evidence on its effectiveness (p. 26). Bozer and Sarros' (2012) study provides some support for the conclusion that executive coaching has a beneficial impact on executives. In particular, they demonstrated that the career satisfaction of coachee participants improved to a greater degree when compared with their peers. Further detail on the outcomes of this study is provided below.

With regard to executive coaching per se and as outlined in Chapter 3, there is clear evidence regarding its effectiveness (e.g. Grant & Cavanagh, 2007; Kampa & White, 2002; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Kilburg, 2004b; Kombarakaran, Yang, Baker, & Fernandes, 2008; Theeboom & Beersma, 2013). A number of factors have been identified which contribute to its effectiveness. These bear repeating and seem particularly relevant for career transition coaching: It is now recognised that the most consistently identified factor perceived as contributing to the success of a coaching engagement, of those factors within the influence of the coach, is the quality of the relationship between the coach and individual client (Kampa & White, 2002; Kilburg & Levinson, 2008; Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011; Western, 2012). Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) also attest that the readiness of the client for coaching has been identified as a major predictor of coaching effectiveness. Because the need for career transition coaching is more often recognised by the leader him or herself, if not self-referred, it is the researcher's contention that this may account for the success of the career transition coaching applied in this study. The range of areas for which executive coaching is a suitable intervention includes: developing new behaviours (and learning), enhancing self-regard, building hope and resilience, deepening awareness and emotional intelligence, enhancing motivation and goal attainment (Passmore & Fillery-

Travis, 2011) – all of which are closely aligned with the general goals of career transition coaching. Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) admit that they partially reject Kilburg's (2004b) "dodo" assertion and suggest that certain coaching approaches and methods work more successfully with certain types of presenting problems. They argue that the systems psychodynamic approach may be best suited to exploring values or purpose, which is a key element of systems psychodynamic career transition coaching. But they are careful to point out that this is just a hypothesis and further research is required. Bozer and Sarros (2012) consider that the proximal outcomes of executive coaching assessed in their study capture the immediate individual, behavioural, attitudinal, and cognitive changes experienced by the coachee as a result of his/her engagement in executive coaching, and include increased levels of coachee self-awareness, increased coachee career satisfaction, and job affective commitment. Organisational success, a distal outcome, was expected to result from an improvement in coachee job satisfaction, and job commitment. In their quasi-experimental design that drew on experimental and control groups in its data collection and analysis, they found that career satisfaction of coachees exceeded that of their peers post coaching. While they acknowledged that career satisfaction needs to be understood more thoroughly, they did conclude that through executive coaching, executives are able to focus on professional development areas as they face a succession of career challenges. They also concluded that executive coaching may be a mechanism by which executives could be helped in improving and maintaining a high level of career satisfaction (Bozer & Sarros, 2012, p. 26).

4.6.5 Career transition coaching as applied in this study

In defining the current researcher's approach to coaching in general and career coaching specifically, the words of Western (2012) resonate strongly. He refers to the hybridity and plurality of contemporary coaching with coaches drawing on a vast array of influences - a bricolage - the construction or creation from a diverse range of available things, drawing on the past to be awakened to the future (p. 206). Kets De Vries et al. (2010) also refer to the willingness to borrow from a variety of intellectual

perspectives on human functioning which, in their view, reflects the complexity of the phenomena coaches deal with when working with today's leaders, and, more importantly, the intricacy of the issues that the latter encounter in their daily practice. They assert that they are far from claiming that a single model or approach can be used fully to understand human beings, dyadic relationships, and complex organisations. The present researcher/coach utilised all six streams of Passmore's (2007) integrative coaching model: 1) developing the coaching partnership (humanistic tradition); 2) maintaining the coaching relationship (EQ and psychodynamics); 3) behaviour change; 4) conscious cognition (cognitive-behavioural); 5) unconscious cognition (psychodynamic tradition) and 6) cultural context (ethical, legislative and organisational boundaries).

While remaining true to the fundamentals of his training as a systems psychodynamic coach and adopting the belief that this approach is a "developmentally focussed, psycho-educational process for the understanding of the deep and covert behaviour in the system" (Cilliers, 2005, p. 25), the present researcher adopted the following assumptions and principles which informed his approach to systems psychodynamic career transition coaching as applied in this study:

- The researcher's anchor in his coaching approach is his psychological foundation – a basic human kindness and an interest in an understanding of individuals and teams in a work setting, their needs and human motivations against a background often characterised by conflict and change (Kets de Vries et al., 2007)
- By its nature, leadership coaching has a Socratic quality; it involves asking a series of questions about a central issue, and trying to find satisfactory answers through dialogue. The use of questions and conversation implies that a leadership coach begins from a position of humility and curiosity, rather than authority and knowledge (Kets De Vries, et al., 2010). The present researcher believes this principle (as well as the other principles listed here) is consistent with the new conception of the self-managed career, described earlier in this Chapter

- At its core, systems psychodynamic coaching is about self-understanding (consciousness and awareness in the world of work) and truth (or psychological reality), both of the coach and coachee (Diamond, 2013, p. 365)
- Taking up the coaching role in the relevant 'professional' manner' (as described by Brunner et al., 2006). This implies remaining within the appropriate role boundaries, remaining responsible for what one says and how one behaves, being able to differentiate between person and role, between task and personal needs, to recognise when personal feelings are affecting own role performance, realising that making mistakes is less important than the ability to recover from them (Cilliers, 2005)
- Attending to the ethics implied in this role of executive coach (see Clarke & Hoggett, 2009b)
- Ensuring that work in the coaching relationship is carried out through the exploration of overt as well as covert dynamics which appear to impact on the attainment of the objectives identified by clients, thereby providing the latter with opportunities to develop an in-depth understanding of their emotional and behavioural responses to their experiences in their work context. Through this in-depth understanding the client is assisted to access his/her own conscious/overt and unconscious/covert behaviour. This highlights the importance of consciousness and awareness of self and others (what some might call emotional intelligence) in the practice of executive coaching (Kilburg, 2004a)
- Defence mechanisms are an unconscious psychological reaction set up by the ego for protection against fear. Contrary to popular belief, defence mechanisms do not block development (Beck, 2012); therefore, rather than breaking them down, the coach works with them as they are part of one's personality

- Maintaining a systems perspective in coaching to be able to understand the dynamics of the wider (meso- and macro-) system which are regarded as co-players in the client's system and to perceive the client's thoughts, actions and feelings as products of the projective processes in the system (in Beck 2012, p. 141)
- And finally, from Western (2012), understanding that coaching can be an emancipatory force, a practice to help individuals achieve a fuller sense of self and become more creative and autonomous, alongside a collective endeavour to improve workplaces and society in general (p.12).

4.7 FIRST THEORETICAL WORKING HYPOTHESIS

The first theoretical working hypothesis, based on literature Chapters 2 (Systems Psychodynamics), 3 (Systems Psychodynamic Executive Coaching) and 4 (Career Transitions) is presented thus:

Career transitions, both voluntary and involuntary, are increasingly becoming a feature of 21st century careers. Studying, understanding and articulating the dynamics of career transitions from a systems psychodynamic perspective offers the researcher an opportunity to explore in depth both the conscious and the unconscious elements of thoughts, feelings, attitudes and behaviours which leaders and managers experience. Utilising a specific form of executive coaching, career transition coaching, in terms of a distinctive systems psychodynamic perspective, further enables both researcher and client/coachee to investigate and delve into the specific dynamics relating to the career transition (believed to be a re-enactment of previous dynamics) with the aim of increasing the manager/leader's self-awareness, self-insight as well as overall adaptation and adjustment to his/her new or changed role.

4.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter the new world of work was described as a context for the changing notion of careers. Career development, notably Super's theory of career development, was proposed as the background for understanding career and work role transitions. The types of career challenges the leader in transition faces were discussed with special reference to mid-life experience and retirement as examples of career transitions. Derailment as an unintended consequence of some leaders' transitions was also examined. The systems psychodynamics of career transitions was discussed with special reference to transition moments and the concept of loss in understanding career transitions. Career transition coaching and the role of the career transition coach were explained, with a focus on the ethics and value of career transition coaching. Career transition coaching as applied in this study was explained. Finally, the first theoretical working hypothesis was put forward. In the next chapter the research method used in this study is explained.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH DESIGN

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the research design for the study. It describes and reports on the qualitative empirical research approach, strategy and method and explains the research setting, sampling and data collection and recording procedures. It deals with the analysis of data and the overall trustworthiness of the research. The chapter ends with some comments about the ethics of this study and a brief summary.

5.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

Systems psychodynamics, with its foundations in the triad of psychoanalysis, group relations and open systems theories (Gould et al., 2006) as described in Chapter 2, served as the disciplinary framework for this study. In pursuance of design coherence, qualitative, descriptive and exploratory research was carried out (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009b; Durrheim, 2006, p. 38; Evans, 2007; Flick, von Kardorff & Steinke, 2004; Mouton & Marais, 1990). The interpretive approach or “turn”, understanding phenomena from within their context in an empathic manner (Kelly, 2002c, p. 399), was selected in order to describe the lived experience or internal reality of those researched, i.e. managers and leaders facing a career transition. The interpretative or phenomenological paradigm (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003; Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006) lent itself to understanding the richness and meaning of these leaders’ experiences. Hermeneutics and the hermeneutic circle (Alexandrov, 2009; Jones, Torres & Arminio, 2006), understood here to be the general practice of interpretation of a text and particularly, that the meaning of the parts should be considered in relation to the meaning of the whole (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009b; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003; Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim., 2006, p. 354), was thus adopted as the interpretative stance. The “reality” so constructed through the interpretation of texts provided by the subjects or participants of the research can never be judged true or false (Schutt, 2015, p. 399). Triple hermeneutics (Alexandrov, 2009, p. 46; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009)

with the “demanding yet liberating” (Alexandrov, 2009, p. 47) addition of the interpretation of unconscious processes inherent in the systems psychodynamic approach, was utilised. In the light of its epistemological assumption that close and empathic listening to the other allows for a deep understanding of shared experiences, triple hermeneutics is thought to be a particularly appropriate stance in the current qualitative psycho-social study of understanding leaders’ ontological experience of being coached through career transitions. The researcher sought to describe the coaching experience of leaders who were facing some sort of career transition using a systems psychodynamic approach in order to understand the below the surface behaviour (Huffington, et al., 2004), as described in Chapter 3. In attempting to obtain a deeper understanding of these experiences (meanings rather than merely behaviours) and with a preference for inductive reasoning (hypothesis generating as opposed to hypothesis testing), a psycho-social, qualitative research strategy was employed (Bowen, 2005; Clarke & Hoggett, 2009b; Evans, 2007; Jervis, 2009; Silverman, 2001). In Chapter Six, a more deductive reasoning approach (Mouton & Marias, 1990) was adopted for the analysis of the data using the ACIBART model. The purpose was to discover and articulate the systems psychodynamic meanings of the transition and coaching experience being lived by the participants; such meanings reveal the nature of the transition and coaching phenomena being researched (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003).

This study thus represents a reflective, interpretive, descriptive and reflexive effort to describe, make sense of and interpret actual instances of human action and experience from the perspective of the participants who lived through a particular situation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Fischer, 2006, p. xvi).

5.3 RESEARCH STRATEGY

Within the contextual research strategy (Mouton & Marais, 1990), the ideographic research method using descriptive case studies was selected (Cilliers, 2012a and 2012b; Evans, 2007; Lindegger, 2002). Given that case studies are characterised by a

focus on a phenomenon with identifiable boundaries (Henning et al., 2004, p. 40) and have the advantage of allowing new ideas and hypotheses to emerge from careful and detailed observation within a specific context, the case study design allowed rich and detailed descriptions for empirically investigating leaders'/managers' experience of and adaptability to career transitions and the effect of real-life coaching. Hence, in this research, the multiple, primarily descriptive case study method was selected, together with elements of exploratory and explanatory case study design (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009a; Henning et al., 2004; Jones et al., 2006; Kvale, 2003; Yin, 1984 and 2003). The reason was that the phenomenon of career transitions has not been extensively researched and the impact of coaching, while not necessarily a causal effect, is thought to have a positive impact on the person's ability to adapt to a career transition. According to Yin (1984 and 2003) descriptive studies aim to describe phenomena in their context accurately through narrative type descriptions, classification or measuring relationships, whereas exploratory studies generate speculative insights, new questions and hypotheses. In this study the rich and detailed career transition coaching experiences, spanning in all cases (except one) a number of months and many hours of dyadic work, were described and the participant's own perceptions of the experience, in the form of an essay, were included. (The exploratory case study adopts an inductive approach, being designed as an open and flexible investigation aimed at defining the questions and hypotheses for a subsequent study. The descriptive case study presents a complete description of a phenomenon within its context while the explanatory case study presents data bearing on cause-effect relationships and, although not the main focus of this research, explains which causes produced what effects.)

The boundaries of the individual cases studied comprise the participant's experience (or contemplation) of a career transition and the coaching work related to the transition. The units of analysis are thus the individual and the texts (see sources of evidence below) Although initially intrinsic – each case study was of interest in itself – the combined or collective cases were ultimately seen as instrumental in that they enabled the researcher to draw conclusions from the collective case studies (cross case analysis – see 5.4.6 below) and develop knowledge about the phenomenon of coaching

for career transitions, based on the analysis and interpretation of the individual cases (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Stake (2000) in Jones et al., 2006).

In this research, eleven cases were studied, each of whose protagonists faced some sort of career transition and sought coaching as a form of assistance to aid adjustment to, or prepare for, new work circumstances. Sources of evidence comprised notes from the coaching sessions, coach's field notes, email correspondence between the researcher and the individual participants which took place between coaching sessions and essays or narratives written by the participants themselves of their experience at the end of the coaching intervention. The essays are viewed as transcriptions representing the transition and coaching experience of each of the participants.

5.4 RESEARCH METHOD

In this section describing the research method, the research setting is presented, the way in which the researcher entered the setting and the various roles he played are described, the sampling method used and the recruitment of clients as well as the coaching process are elucidated. These are followed by a description of the data collection instruments utilised, the data collection procedure and method of analysis followed; finally, the strategies employed to ensure quality data and the trustworthiness of the research are discussed.

5.4.1 The research setting

The researcher, a registered industrial psychologist and qualified Tavistock coach, is contracted to a number of coaching organisations (vendors) who provide coaching services to large South African companies. Once a need for these services is established, usually through the HR department and or CEO's office, the individuals identified for coaching are interviewed by a representative of the vendor and then directed to a website where they have access to the profiles of a number of coaches. Here they are able to make a selection of one or more, whom they wish to meet for a

“chemistry” session (Bluckert, 2008; Cilliers & Terblanche, 2010; Roberts & Jarrett, 2007; Sandler, 2011). On the basis of the chemistry session the client made his or her selection of a coach and a coaching contract was entered into. Clients may enter coaching because they have expressed a need or because the company has identified a need either in an individual but more often in a group of individuals or work team, for example, as part of a leadership development initiative (e.g. Bozer & Sarros, 2012; Kets de Vries, 2006; Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2007a and 2007b; Kilburg, 2002).

The research setting was thus “closed” and “overt” (Silverman, 2001, p. 57) in that access was controlled by gatekeepers (Schutt, 2015, p. 369) and was based on subjects participating with awareness (see *Entrée* in section 5.4.2 below). The research comprised eleven executive coaching clients from ten different industries/sectors. See also 5.4.3.2 below.

5.4.2 *Entrée* and establishing the researcher’s roles

In this study the gatekeepers were variously the vendor or coaching company, the client organisation (in this case the HR staff and the managers of the individuals identified for coaching) and the clients themselves. During the chemistry session referred to above, the researcher ascertained the main motivation for coaching and the the client’s expectations were expressed (e.g. Lindegger, 2002; Roberts & Jarrett, 2007). If the client articulated a desire to deal with issues relating to career change or transition (gaining traction in a new job/role, wanting to explore career options or feeling stuck in the current role, facing self-initiated or organisation-imposed severance/termination, preparing for a new role or for retirement), then the individual’s informed consent (e.g. Kelly, 2006b; Lindegger, 2002) was obtained for participation in this research, formal contracting was entered into (Bluckert, 2008) and he/she was taken on as a client. The vendor’s consent was also obtained as this entity constitutes the primary link with the client’s organisation. Specific consent from the client’s organisation was not obtained but the line managers of some of the clients were involved in at least one session,

where appropriate (thereby entering a three party contract, e.g. Bluckert, 2008, p. 13; Sandler, 2011; Terblanche et al., 2017).

Clarke and Huggett (2009b), Eisner (2003), Schutt (2015) and other writers refer to reflexivity, a feature of qualitative research, as the sensitivity to, and adaptation by the researcher to, his or her influence in the research setting.

As a “research-practitioner” (Cook, 2013; Gray, Iles & Watson, 2011, p. 248; Kahn, 2011), utilising inductive reasoning to generate ideas and hypotheses and working from practice to theorising, the researcher took up the following roles (Bowen, 2005; Evans, 2007) in this research:

- Systems psychodynamically informed executive coach (Bunning, 2007a; Huffington, et al., 2004a; Sandler, 2011). As already indicated, being a registered industrial psychologist and Tavistock certified coach and with training and experience in this methodology, including career and retirement coaching, the researcher met the requirements as stipulated by Brunner et al. (2006). The coach was remunerated for this work.
- Consulting psychologist to the system (Lowman, 2002). Having worked for over thirty years in a variety of HR, OD and Leadership Development roles, the researcher has had a great deal of experience in consulting at the individual, team/group and organisational levels.
- Self as instrument (Skogstad, 2004; Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim, 2006). Using a reflexive approach (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2005; Clarke & Hoggett, 2009b; Hollway & Jefferson, 2010; Maracek, 2003), acknowledging his subjectivity as a researcher and being sensitive to issues of counter-transference, sorting out which feelings belonged to whom (Jervis, 2009), the researcher was aided by his own supervision under a psychodynamically trained counselling psychologist.

Schutt (2015) refers to the need to manage the personal dimension - the fact that the researcher both affects and is affected by the research setting and its participants - and suggests there is no formula for managing this personal dimension as it is more art than science (p. 376). Eisner (2003) states that the sensitivity with which the researcher reads the “scene/seen” (p. 23) is influenced by his/her own life experiences, the frame of reference he or she uses and the extent to which his or her sensibilities in the domain have been honed. He calls this “connoisseurship” (p. 23). Based on the psychodynamic understanding that threats to the self create anxiety, which in turn precipitate protective defences that are mostly unconscious, the researcher took up the role of the “defended researcher” and understood the role of “defended subject” (Alexandrov, 2009; Beedell, 2009, p.107; Boydell, 2009, p. 242; Clarke & Hoggett, 2009; Hollway & Jefferson, 2010, p. 45). Skogstad’s (2004) article on psychoanalytic observation and the use of the mind as a research instrument was particularly helpful in clarifying the various roles taken up by the present researcher.

In acknowledging that in the course of this research various feelings, for example of both affectionate identification and/or uncomfortable feelings of fear or anger, arose in both parties, the researcher needed to consider his own emotional responses to each participant and attempted to remain sensitive to the unconscious dynamics used to avoid or master his anxiety. Consequently he was sensitive to issues of transference, counter-transference and projective identification both during the coaching and during the data analysis/interpretation phases.

5.4.3 Sampling, the recruitment of clients and the coaching process

Purposive sampling

The way in which a sample is selected can have a significant effect on the generalisability of the findings of a study (Mouton & Marais, 1990). Qualitative samples, according to Evans (2007), are usually smaller than quantitative ones and could be purposive, based on non-probability sampling (as opposed to random sampling). Purposive sampling, which Evans (2007) describes as sampling with a purpose in mind,

involves one or more pre-defined groups that the researcher is seeking to investigate, and has to do with the unique qualities they possess or what Schutt (2015) has termed “their unique position” (p. 171). Silverman (2001) urges the researcher to think critically about the parameters of the population he or she is interested in studying, and to choose cases carefully (p. 250). Convenience sampling refers to taking cases on the basis of their convenience or availability (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). Schutt (2015) asserts that the purposive sample need not be large and identifies three criteria for the purposive selection of participants in a study: that they should be knowledgeable about the situation or experience being studied; that they be willing to talk and that they represent a range of points of view. Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim (2006) state that there is no specific requirement as regards sample size in qualitative research and that it is guided by the purpose of the study, the methodological approach and the research questions (see also the issue of saturation below).

Schutt (2015) suggests two additional criteria for purposive sampling: *completeness* (what one hears as a researcher provides an overall sense of the meaning of a concept, theme or process) and *saturation* (the researcher is confident that he or she is learning nothing new from subsequent interviews (p. 172); Schutt adds that using these guidelines will help ensure that a purposive sample adequately represents the issues being studied. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002) mention that this is also referred to as “sampling to redundancy” (p. 381) where new information no longer challenges or adds to the emerging interpretive account. Fusch and Ness (2015) posit that there is “no one-size fits-all” method to reach data saturation; moreover, more is not necessarily better than less and vice versa. There are, instead, some data collection methods that are more likely to reach data saturation than others, although these are highly dependent on the study design. To be sure, while the concept of data saturation may be easy to understand, the execution is another matter entirely (p. 1413). These authors suggest that data saturation is reached when there is enough information to replicate the study, the ability to obtain new information has been attained, further coding is no longer feasible and rich and thick data descriptions have been obtained

through relevant data collection methods. The data collection and analysis methods described below are thought to be thick and rich, yielding sufficient information.

Purposive, convenience sampling was thus used to select eleven participants for the study as described in 5.4.1 above. The purpose of the study, the methodological approach and the research questions all inform the selection of participants according to Mason (1996) (in Silverman, 2001, p. 252). Hence clients were selected in terms of their relation to the purpose of the research. They had all expressed a need to deal with some form of career transition in the coaching they had either asked for or had been sent to. They were experiencing the dilemma of career that led them to seek out coaching in the first place; all had framed, as either an overt or covert goal, some sort of resolution with respect to their career needs. Kelly (2002b) suggests that 6-8 “sampling units” (p. 381) generally suffice in a homogenous sample, or 10-20 cases where shorter interviews are held. Although a great amount of detail was gathered on each case in this study, allowing for an in depth understanding of the coaching experience, eleven cases were finally used because of their heterogeneity. The sample comprised the cases described as per table headings on the next page:

Table 5.1: Participant demographics, career transition code and details of coaching

Biographic summary of participants - race, gender and age			
Race, gender and age 10 White (W) 1 Indian (I) (limited diversity) 5 Males (M) (ave age 40) 6 Females (F) (ave age 47) Ave overall average age: 44 (N=11)		Career Transition Code: a) Being prepared for new role while in current role b) New in role (<100 days) c) Facing voluntaryseverance (resignation, retirement, retrenchment) d) Facing involuntaryseverance (termination for redundancy, retrenchment, retirement) e) At a "career cross-road"	
Participants	Start and end date of coaching Ave duration 7,8 mths (N=10) Excludes Participant Four	Number of 90 min sessions Ave 9,5 sessions (N=11)	Total Hours 150,5 hours Ave 13,7 hours each
Case One b I F 39	06/04/2016 - 08/01/2017 9 months	10 incl close out with line manager	16 hours
Case Two b/c WF 32	11/04/2014 - 05/08/2014 5 months	10 incl 1 for 360 degree feedback	17 hours
Case Three d W M 42	31/03/2015 - 10/09/2015 6 months	10 incl chem	15 hours
Case Four b/e WF 62	05/2016 Brief telephonic coaching (excluded from duration statistics)	3	3 hours
Case Five a/d W M 42	28/08/2015 - 28/07/2016 11 months	10	17 hours
Case Six b W M 34	05/12/2016 - 15/06/2017 6 months	7	11 hours
Case Seven a/b WF 48	22/04/201 - 23/03/2017 11 months	13 incl chem	22 hours
Case Eight b W M 38	04/08/2016 - 04/01/2017 5 months	10 incl chem	14 hours
Case Nine c/e W M 46	16/09/2016 - 02/06/2017 8 months	8 incl chem	14 hours
Case Ten a/b WF 49	18/10/2016 - 27/03/2017 6 months	5 indiv (plus 5 team)	8 hours (indiv only)
Case Eleven e WF 50	28/08/2015 - 28/07/2016 11 months	9 incl chem	14 hours

As described in Chapter 1, in this research the terms “leader”, “manager” and sometimes “executive” representing “coachee” or “client” will be used interchangeably while the term “executive” or leadership coaching” is used to refer to coaching conducted with managers/leaders of relative seniority in an organisation. The phrase or “transitional or career coaching” (as explained in Chapter 4) refers to a subset of executive or leadership coaching that focuses on supporting managers or leaders who are facing some sort of career or role change.

5.4.3.1 The briefing process

The clients were informed of the nature of the research and what would be required of them as research participants. It was explained that their participation in the research would be confidential, voluntary, that they could withdraw from the research at any time and that the coaching would not be affected by their participation or non-participation i.e. that coaching would be no different whether they agreed to be research participants or not (“a moral imperative to ensure optimum effectiveness” (Kahn, 2014, p. 51)). The normal coaching contract (see for example Kilburg, 2002a, p. 235; Pooley, 2004; Roberts & Jarrett, 2007) was entered into. This specified logistics, inter alia the number and duration of sessions, session cancellation conditions, venue, cost, the nature of coaching and the obligations of both parties as well as, most importantly, the issue of confidentiality (Kahn, 2014; Kilburg, 2002a; Sandler, 2011). Maintaining confidentiality in a corporate coaching session may be challenging, especially regarding the “duality of client” (Kahn, 2014, p. 137). (See also section 4.6.3 on the ethics of career transition coaching in Chapter 4.) It was explained to each client that just broad themes would be fed back to the coaching vendor and ultimately to the employer; not the detail of coaching conversations.

It was explained to the participants that the researcher would be making notes during the sessions. These would be subsequently written up in the form of reports with comments about the process and dynamics of the sessions (Henshelwood & Skogstad, 2005) and become the basis of the case studies. The normal mid and post coaching

evaluations were completed by the client (e.g. Blattner, 2005). At the end of the contracted coaching sessions, the clients were asked to write a short essay to describe their experience of the coaching and their learnings from it, in relation to their expressed career transition need (Camic, Rhodes & Yardley, 2003). This essay was for the eyes of the researcher alone and was not to be given to the coaching vendor or client's company.

5.4.3.2 *The coaching process*

The coaching of clients followed an eclectic approach, but with a bias towards systems psychodynamic coaching. This blended approach was described in Chapter 4, section 4.6.5.

As noted, an average of 9,5 coaching sessions were held with each client over a range from 3 to 13 sessions. Excluding one participant who went through very brief coaching (three sessions), each of the others received an average of 13,7 hours of coaching. The coaching took place over a period of between 5 and 11 (average 7,8) months during the period April 2014 to June of 2017. The duration of each session was 90 minutes: sessions were held every three to four weeks, either at the client's premises or, if the client preferred, at the premises of the coaching vendor, sometimes alternating between the two. The researcher was remunerated for the sessions through the coaching vendor, which billed the client organisation. In the first coaching session the nature of executive coaching, the purpose of the research and the issues of contracting and confidentiality were dealt with again. The ethical codes of the International Coach Federation (ICF, n.d.), COMENSA (n.d) and SIOPSA (2006) were adhered to. The aim of this first session was information sharing but also that of building rapport and trust with the client while offering some form of containment (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009b, p. 12; Kilburg, 2002a; Lowman, 2002; Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011) for the initial part of the coaching journey. In the first session the clients were encouraged to talk about how they came to occupy their current role, their current organisational context ("organisation-in-the-mind", in Roberts & Jarrett, 2007, p. 20) and also to share some

of their family history (depth analysis, Western, 2012). Clients were also asked to share their thoughts about their nominal, phenomenal and existential roles (Newton et al., 2006), but no formal ORA was conducted.

Within the first three sessions, and where appropriate, a three way meeting with the client's immediate line manager was included for part of the session. The purpose of this meeting was to engage the latter in the coaching effort by soliciting his/her input on the client's performance and coaching goals, aligning coaching goals better with the needs of the department/organisation and gauging/mobilising the line manager's support for the coaching intervention. It was also a useful way for the researcher to assess, by observation, the nature of the all-important relationship between the client and his/her manager (Feldman & Moore, 2001; Hunt & Weintraub, 2007; Terblanche et al., 2017). Where possible and appropriate, the line manager was also invited to attend the penultimate coaching session to review progress and to plan for sustainability of the coaching intervention. (In cases of "pure" career coaching which is more private, three-way sessions including the line manager may not be advisable.)

Subsequent coaching sessions were set up; clients were encouraged to think about and document their coaching goals. In some cases, adapting to the career change was the solitary goal; in others, it was one of a number of, often interrelated, goals (see Kilburg, 2002, on typical goals of executive coaching, p. 63; Roberts & Jarrett, 2007, p. 5). These sessions generally started with the client's preoccupations, a review of the interim period and revisiting previously discussed issues. Understandably, due to the unique nature of each client and the qualitative nature of this study, each session progressed and unfolded in different ways for each client (Motsoaledi, 2009) - see also section 4.6 on career transition coaching in Chapter 4. A broad overview of the coaching process (adapted from: Hazen & Steckler, 2014; Koortzen & Oosthuizen, 2010; Pooley, 2004; Terblanche et al., 2017) is provided in the Appendix: The coaching process. The middle sessions covered the clarification and deepening of the coaching goals, the formulating and testing of hypotheses, exploring the issues of "stuckness" and providing support for the adjustment to the new circumstances (role, etcetera). The

conscious and unconscious behavioural dynamics were explored and worked with (the “shadow side” of human behaviour as Kilburg (2002a, p. 16) has called it); clients tested out new behaviours and insights, reporting back on these in subsequent sessions. The final sessions were devoted to reviewing overall progress, planning for independence, future reflections and sustainability, discussing the essay requirement as well as planning for closure and termination of coaching and disengagement (e.g. Pooley, 2004).

5.4.4 The data collection instruments

Collecting data in context is a central axiom of qualitative research (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Kelly, 2006, p. 287). The method used for gathering the data was essentially the case study in the form of jottings (brief notes written in the field about highlights of an observation period and field notes (notes that describe what has been heard, observed or otherwise experienced, written after the observation period (Schutt, 2015, p. 374)) from the coaching sessions; these were later more fully written up as reports of each session and included observations, thoughts, feelings, interpretations etcetera from the coach/researcher (Hollway & Jefferson, 2010). Schutt (2015) describes the case study as an integrated social unit that must be holistically studied and in its particularity, creating a “thick description” (p. 361) of the setting studied. See also 5.4.5 below for the different kinds of data used.

5.4.5 The data collection procedure and the safe storage of the data

Data is collected in the form of written or spoken language or observations which are recorded in writing and then analysed by identifying and categorising themes (Evans, 2007; Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Kelly, 2006). Gubrium and Holstein (1999) maintain that the pursuit of meaning plunges qualitative enquiry into the complexities of social *and personal* context (italics mine) (p. 131).

Data was recorded by means of brief notes (jottings) taken during coaching sessions, with the permission of the client. Within three days of each session, the notes were then more fully written up in the form of field notes as described above (Cilliers, 2004; Cilliers, 2012b; Cilliers & Terblanche, 2010; Hollway & Jefferson, 2010). Spradley (1979) cited in Silverman (2001) suggested keeping four sets of notes: short notes made at the time; expanded notes made soon after the field work; a field work journal to note problems and ideas as they arise and a provisional running record of analysis and interpretation (p. 227). Ideas about the possible meaning of the texts (jottings and field notes) began to emerge and were noted as data was being collected (in fact from the time of the initial contact with the vendor and subsequently with the client him or herself) and continued throughout the process of coaching, gradually refining the focus. Writing up the reports from the field notes aided the process of interpretation because this supplied the researcher with the space to think, analyse, interpret and discover, as suggested by May (2010) (and furnished a method of holding the client in mind between sessions). Schutt (2015) refers to this process of working with the data as “progressive focussing” (p. 400).

Email correspondence between the coach/researcher and the individual participants, as well as notes from telephone conversations containing both administrative messages such as those relating to the scheduling of appointments but also occasionally their thoughts, fears, concerns and successes between sessions which they felt they wanted to share with the coach were also used as data in the study.

Finally, as indicated earlier, towards the end of the coaching process, the participants were then requested to write an essay (e.g. Blattner, 2005; Cilliers, 2005; Cilliers & Terblanche, 2010) of about two to three pages describing their experience of the coaching, their insights, interpretations and associations as well as the impact these had on their adjustment to the specific career transition they had sought help with (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003).

The reference to data from here on refers to the data as a whole, including all the subsets described above, unless otherwise specified.

All the data referred to above was electronically stored securely. Copies were made of all electronic email correspondence between the researcher and each participant, while notes from telephone conversations between coaching sessions were also transcribed and stored electronically. Finally, the reflective essays, obtained from all but one of the eleven participants, were electronically filed. A copy of all the electronic files was made at regular intervals during the research period for safe keeping; all electronic material was password protected. Hard copies of annotated notes were filed in a safe place.

5.4.6 Data analysis

Since the goal of this qualitative research was to understand the subjects' own frame of reference, it made sense to use interpretive, phenomenological analysis which focuses on exploring the life world of the participant to make sense of their personal and social (and in this case, work) world. Language is the basis of this analysis of the texts (Evans, 2007; Fischer, 2006). In line with Hollway and Jefferson's (2010) recommendations, single cases were first analysed, avoiding fragmentation and attending to the whole or "gestalt", after which cross-case analysis was performed, which led to the identification of themes and the generation of tenable hypotheses.

Although it was first referred to in the 1970s, thematic analysis, a form of, but different to content analysis (Henning et al., 2004), has only recently achieved recognition as a method for identifying and analysing patterns in qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2013). In this study the approach to content analysis described as conventional and the direct approach by Hsieh and Shannon (2005) was employed. The flexibility and versatility of thematic analysis means:

- it can be applied within a range of theoretical frameworks and does not require adherence to any particular theory

- it works with a wide range of research questions, including people's experiences or understandings as well as the representation of particular phenomena in particular contexts and
- it can be used to analyse different kinds of data, from secondary sources to transcripts of interviews, and works with data sets of various sizes (Wilson & MacLean, 2011).

Thematic analysis is a method for systematically identifying, organising, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set (see for example Pollio & Ursiak, 2006). Through focusing on meaning in this way, thematic analysis allows the researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 88). Clarke and Braun (2013) emphasise core principles of undertaking thematic analysis such as its inherent "messiness" (p. 122), so that there is no one right way to carry out thematic analysis. They also declare that reflexivity is the starting point: on one's own initial assumptions about the research topic and questions as well as one's own values and life experiences, and how these may shape the ways in which one reads and interprets the data (a critical issue in terms of counter-transference). As can be seen from the six phase process these authorities recommend (see Table 5.2 below), and which has been adopted in this study, familiarisation before data coding is essential in order to construct codes that evoke relevant features of the data and from which the themes and a thematic map are identified, based on interpretive analysis. Ryan & Bernard (2003) describe their phases of analysing texts and refer to the process of discovering themes, winnowing them into a manageable few, building hierarchies of themes or what they refer to as "code books" (p. 85) and finally linking themes into theoretical models. A combination of two broad styles of qualitative thematic analysis was used: (a) descriptive, in which data tends to be used in illustrative ways, and (b) conceptual and interpretative, in which extracts tend to be analysed in more detail, often for the latent or implicit systems

psychodynamic meanings on which they draw. The aim is to arrive at rich, complex, sophisticated, conceptually informed and interpretive analyses (Clarke & Braun, 2013).

Three levels of hermeneutic hierarchy were used (after Cilliers, 2016; Clarke & Hoggett, 2009) – simple hermeneutics for the interpretation of all of the data itself; double hermeneutics for the interpretation by the researcher of the data (including the researcher’s reactions) from the systems psychodynamic frame of reference and triple hermeneutics which includes the aforementioned but also encompasses the critical interpretation of the unconscious processes of both the clients and the coach/researcher, in the context of their interaction (both as defended subjects). A process of “progressive refinement” was adopted (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003, p. 252).

Content or thematic analysis offers researchers a flexible and pragmatic method for developing and extending knowledge of the human experience generally as well as specifically in this study of leaders’ adjustment to career transitions.

Table 5.2: The six phases of analysing themes (after Braun & Clarke, 2012 and Clarke & Braun, 2013)

Phase	Explanation	Key issues
1. Familiarisation with the data	Immersing oneself in and becoming completely familiar with the data.	Read and re-read. These phases are not linear but recursive, noting initial analytic observations and possible hypotheses.
2. Coding	Generating pithy labels for important features of the data which are relevant to the broad research questions. The coded data is then collated.	Coding is not just a method of data reduction but captures both the semantic and conceptual reading of the data. It could be both descriptive and interpretive. Using ACIBART in

		the present study as a method to categorise the themes.
3. Searching for themes	A theme is a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data relevant to the research question. The data is then collated relevant to each theme.	Themes are not hidden in the data; rather, this is an active process of construction of single codes and clusters of them.
4. Reviewing themes	This phase involves checking that the themes are meaningful in relation to both the coded extracts and full data set. It may be necessary to collapse themes or to create sub-themes or to scrap the themes and begin again.	Do the themes tell a full and compelling overall story about the data and begin to define the nature of the theme as well as the relationship between the themes? Not all the data will be relevant, while some themes may be discarded as the purpose is to tell a particular story related to the research questions.
5. Defining and naming themes	Writing a detailed analysis of each of the themes, identifying the essence of each theme and constructing a concise, punchy and informative label for each one.	What story does each theme tell? What is unique and specific about it? How does each theme fit with the overall story about the data?
6. Writing-up	Weaving together the analytic narrative and vivid data extracts with the understanding that writing and analysis are interwoven in qualitative research.	Telling the reader a coherent and persuasive story about the data and contextualising it in relation to the existing literature by selecting data extracts from across the data items to show coverage of the themes.

5.4.7 Strategies employed to ensure quality data

The quality and trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of this study were demonstrated by examining the issues of credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability in order to increase the likelihood that this research would be thought to make a contribution to the field of industrial/consulting psychology (Alexandrov, 2009; Bowen, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Golafshani, 2003; Healy & Perry, 2000, in Motsoaledi, 2009, p. 182; Loh, 2013).

Loh (2013) cites Silverman and Marvasti (2008) who state that research is of a good quality if it meets the following criteria (p. 11):

- It thinks theoretically through, and with, data
- It develops empirically sound, reliable, and valid findings
- It uses methods that are demonstrably appropriate to the research problem
- Where possible, it contributes to practice and policy.

One test for credibility is when the realities revealed by the participants and the context are presented as adequately as possible, so that those who live the experience can instantly recognise its description and interpretation. This has also been referred to as the study's "truth value" (or "Krefting", Johnson & Waterfield, 2004, p. 123). Considering the researcher is an instrument in qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003), this person is responsible for ensuring quality and rigour in the research. The current researcher's education, training and experience has been referred to earlier in sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2 above. As the primary instrument for both the collection and analysis of the data, the researcher used his experience, training, qualifications and skills, thereby enhancing the credibility of the study. Smit and Cilliers (2006) refer to this as the investigator's craftsmanship and precision, care and accountability, open communication and ethical conduct (p. 308). The richness and variety of the participants, their demographics, experience and perspectives contributed to a stronger variation of the phenomena being studied, complemented by having a number of

sources of data. Ensuring the themes identified are comprehensive and all-inclusive (in other words, offering “thick descriptions” as previously mentioned and as described by Henning et al., 2004, p. 6) is another requirement for credibility and dependability (see below) (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004). Thus, the credibility of this study was further enhanced through the use of a “third eye” in the form of a seasoned expert as a co-interpreter of the data to corroborate the interpretations made by the researcher. This peer review (e.g. Smit & Cilliers, 2006, p. 308) is in keeping with the principle of dialogue amongst researchers, emphasising confirmability over verification (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004) or what Alexandrov (2009) refers to as a communal construction of reality by way of conversation in the research community (p. 34).

Dependability, which is akin to reliability in the positivist paradigm, refers to the consistency or variability in data collection, particularly when this process endures over a period of time (Bowen, 2005; Johnson & Waterfield, 2004). As a result, the degree to which data and the researcher’s decisions with regard to data collection and analysis are stable or change or alter over time, and the audit trail consequently kept by the researcher, will inform the dependability of the study (Golafshani, 2003; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). How the researcher accounts for and explains changes in processes and conditions in the phenomena of the study over a period, as well as the repeatability of the study, informs its dependability, especially as regards the four variables: the researcher, the participants, the instruments and the context (Mouton & Marais, 1990, p 79).

In this study dependability was demonstrated in the following ways: a thorough literature search was undertaken and the methodological design, logic, processes and procedures documented in detail. The raw data, in the form of the notes taken during the coaching, the subsequently detailed, written up field notes, and the subsequent researcher’s reflections (three levels of data) as well as the participants’ essays (fourth level of data) were constantly referred to and hypotheses were refined along the way as interpretations were made. The sharing of insights and interpretations during the

course of coaching was regarded as helpful and took the form of tentative, working hypotheses in the coaching sessions (Lawrence, 2000; Sandler, 2011).

Some researchers have suggested using the participants themselves to examine and comment on the themes and categories (member checking or respondent validation) (e.g. Johnson & Waterfield, 2004, p. 125; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Smit & Cilliers, 2006) but this was not possible in this study due to the systems psychodynamic overlay and the ethical considerations in raising interpretations after the fact (when these had not been evident or noticed and commented on in the coaching sessions). While this transparency may be valued in the current environment, Alexandrov (2009) cautions that revealing research findings to participants may be distressing. Moreover, the discovery of new ideas derived from a more theoretical approach may involve the application of etic rather than emic themes; researchers would not expect that their findings would necessarily correspond to the ideas and beliefs held by the participants. Ultimately, as Ryan and Bernard (2003) have added, we are left to deal with the effects of our own judgement (p. 104).

The research methods and techniques were accurately explained and followed. Supported by the literature, the steps followed to arrive at the various interpretations (corroborated by the “third eye”) and the subsequent hypotheses formulated, added to the dependability of this study.

Transferability or external reliability refers to the extent to which the working hypotheses and findings of a study can be applied to other settings or groups or generalised to other situations (Eissner, 2003; Terre Blanche et al., 2007). Again, the clearer the described pathway of decisions taken during the design, methodological and interpretive stages of the research, and the more accurately the context described (previously referred to as “thick or dense descriptions” (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004, p. 127), the greater the transferability of the study and the reliance by other researchers on preceding researchers in their own work (Alexandrov, 2009; Bowen, 2005; Durrheim & Wassenaar, 2002, p. 63; Graneheim & Kelly, 2002a, p. 431; Lundman, 2004).

To obtain transferability in this study, the context was clearly described as were the demographics of the participants. The original theoretical framework as well as the research procedures were also precisely defined (Bowen, 2005), adding to the chances of this study being accurately replicated and the findings confidently generalised to other settings or populations by other researchers.

Confirmability refers to the neutrality of the data (not of the researcher – see researcher’s positionality in 5.4.2 above), the purpose being that other researchers arrive at the same interpretations of meaning and significance as the original researcher (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004). Would other researchers agree with the way in which the data were sorted and labelled? Would they agree with the first researcher’s interpretations? This is a key issue in qualitative research where the researcher plays an active role and is not neutral as her interpretations are influenced by her own biases or valences. Data and interpretations must be logically and coherently gathered (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Kelly, 2006). Alexandrov (2009) refers to the coupling of knowledge generation with social action, describing the community of participants *and* researchers (emphasis the present researcher’s) who together produce practical knowledge about social situations (p. 35). Constructivism values multiple realities and triangulation (see below): utilising participants in research to assist the researcher as well as employing multiple data sources, different methods of data collection and making use of peer researchers in the analysis, enhances the confirmability (and general trustworthiness) of the study (e.g. Fusch & Ness, 2015; Golafshani, 2003). Alexandrov (2009) goes on to write of the researcher’s tendency towards self-deception and the dangers of not attending to transference and counter-transference issues in the research relationship. This is especially applicable in the constructivist-interpretive paradigm (Bowen, 2005).

The researcher has had training and experience in the fields of systems psychodynamic coaching as well as career coaching (the researcher studied short courses in both career and retirement coaching in 2012 and 2016 respectively). In order

to enhance the confirmability in this study, the researcher underwent training (over a ten month period) as a coach supervisor during the period this research was being conducted and has been in his own regular supervision with a psychodynamically trained therapist for the last 9 years. His self-knowledge and capacity for self-reflection and the use of the “third eye” further enhanced confirmability. The fact that the data was collected over a considerable period of time (twenty four months in total and an average of 13,7 hours of coaching per participant), over multiple sessions, provided sound evidence for observation and interpretation: from these, inferences were made and hypotheses developed. Engellau (2007) suggests a number of techniques for effective coaching, including knowing oneself and obtaining supervision, especially in light of what Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) have referred to as the subjectivity of the researcher (p. 199).

Triangulation as a method for increasing trustworthiness

Denzin’s triangulation strategy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013) is described as the combination of multiple methods of observation and the utilisation of different tools and data sources and analysis/methods in one study (Bowen, 2005; Fischer, 2006; Golafshani, 2003; Marais & Mouton, 1990; Silverman, 2001). Golafshani (2003) describes triangulation as a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence amongst multiple sources of information to form themes or categories; it is an important strategy to control bias and establish valid propositions. The rationale is that no one method/data source/perspective/interpretation alone can treat all problems of discovery as each has its own limitations or restrictions; by combining several methods in the same study, these limitations are compensated for by strengths in others, thereby limiting a single researcher’s personal biases and increasing the researcher’s confidence in his or her findings (Marais & Mouton, p. 206). In this study, three sources of data (coaching notes, reflections, email correspondence and participants’ essays) were subjected to analysis and interpretation by the researcher as well as by the “third eye”.

Summarising the trustworthiness of this study

Table 5.3: Summary of the key strategies used to ensure the trustworthiness of this study (adapted from Denzin & Lincoln, 2005 and van Niekerk, 2011).

Aspect of Trustworthiness	Explanation	How applied in this study
Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careful selection of the setting, population and theoretical framework • In depth description embedded with data • Researcher credibility. 	The research paradigm for this study was clearly described, as were the research setting and population of cases. The theoretical paradigm was clearly embedded in the empirical findings. The researcher's experience and qualifications were adequately described.
Dependability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity/relevance of the theoretical parameters of the research. 	The research questions and research aims were clearly formulated.
Transferability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounting for changing conditions in the phenomena under study • Consideration is given to the researcher, the participants, the context and the instrument used for measurement. 	Both the background to this study and the theoretical underpinnings in systems psychodynamics were clearly elucidated, and accounted for the changes in the phenomena being studied. The researcher's training and experience as a systems psychodynamically oriented industrial psychologist, executive coach and HR practitioner authorised him to conduct the research, carry out the coaching and offer interpretations about conscious and unconscious behaviours with care and sensitivity. The participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity in the ethical use of the data.
Confirmability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectivity of the findings and their corroboration. 	The use of the "third eye" as well as triangulation of the data helped enhance objectivity by confirming and corroborating the findings.

5.4.8 Ethics of this study

Bowen (2005) has warned that ethical considerations pose more of a risk in qualitative than in quantitative studies, mainly because of the closer involvement of the researcher with the research process and the participants and because a qualitative study generally involves considerable “interpretive latitude” (p. 214). Ethics becomes as important as methodology when pursuing the two paths of therapeutic (or in this case, coaching) and academic research (after Kvale, 2003, p. 293). He refers to the ethical dilemma of mixing therapeutic and research interests. Silverman (2001, p. 252), citing Mason (1996), cautions the researcher about ethical issues, especially because of the intimate nature of qualitative research, involving as it does the private and public lives of participants as well as the inevitable changing directions of interest and access to participants during the course of a qualitative study (p. 55). Clarke and Hoggett (2009) add that ethical issues are present throughout the entire process of psycho-social research and a duty of care for the subject and the avoidance of any harm dominates the ethical discourse. Four ethical principles, identified by Beauchamp and Childress (2001) (cited in Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006, p. 67) and referred to as “principlism” are relevant here: 1) autonomy and respect for the dignity of persons; 2) non-maleficence (ensuring no harm) or what Schutt (2015) has referred to as subject wellbeing; 3) beneficence (maximising the benefits for both participants and society at large) and 4) justice (participants treated with fairness and respect throughout the process. Schutt (2015) also emphasises the need to maintain appropriate boundaries in qualitative research. This is especially important because in building rapport with participants and entering into a coaching relationship with them, they may be predisposed to revealing more than they might in other types of research and, as Maracek (2003) has stated, data collection is not clearly limited or defined in qualitative research (p. 65).

How, then, were ethical issues dealt with in this study? Firstly, the ethical guidelines of the Health Professions’ Council of South Africa (HPCSA, n.d.) as well as the ethical guidelines and codes of SIOPSA (2006) and COMENSA (n.d.) were consulted once

again. Subsequently, the informed consent checklist devised by Lindegger (2002, p. 263) was used as a guideline. Informed consent and signed coaching contracts ensured the participants understood the nature and purpose of the research, their role in it and the confidentiality of the data obtained (respecting their anonymity and privacy). Voluntarism (e.g. Silverman, 2001) was stressed so that participants knew they could withdraw from the research and the coaching at any time. Being in a coaching relationship with the participants posed both an ethical and subjective, personal threat in this study especially with regard to the integrity of the data. Was the researcher/coach positively predisposed to certain clients? Did transference and counter-transference (Jervis, 2009; Czander, 1993) influence his interpretations? By revealing the projective dynamics of the researcher-researched relationship and using it for the purpose of deeper understanding (Alexandrov, 2009), there is an additional ethical requirement for the researcher to be mindful of and attend to the issues of transference and counter-transference in his coaching relationship with the participants (Hollway & Jefferson, 2010). As mentioned in sections 5.4.2 and 5.4.3 above, the researcher not only trained as a coach supervisor but also entered his own supervisions as well as keeping the notion of the defended subject/researcher constantly in mind (Beedell, 2009; Clarke & Hoggett, 2009b) and utilising the “third eye” in an attempt to enhance ethical considerations over primitive anxieties and social defences (Alexandrov, 2009). As a trained psychologist he applied the ethical principles of care, respect, dignity, justice and autonomy throughout both the coaching and the research process. The participants, who had contracted as both coachees/clients and participants in this study, also claimed that they benefitted from the coaching in adjusting to their specific career transitions (see Chapter 6: Findings).

5.4.9 Reporting of the findings

The findings of this research were reported on in a qualitative, narrative style at both the individual case level and at the level of the collective cases. Thereafter common themes across the cumulative cases were discerned from the case descriptions; analyses of the cases were also reported on, linking them to systems psychodynamic

and other constructs. Individual case experiences were reported using rich, thick, descriptive, raw data in order to exemplify the individual experiences. The leaders' experiences during the coaching were interpreted, again using systems psychodynamic constructs, supported where possible by the literature (Henning et al., 2004), and their adjustment to their respective career transitions recounted, explored and assessed (Gherardi & Turner, 1999). This was done in order to offer a situated, descriptive account of the participants' experience of career transitions and the ensuing coaching (Kelly, 2002a; 2002b). This was followed by the reporting of an analysis using the theoretical ACIBART model (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005; van Niekerk, 2011). Subsequently, working hypotheses were formulated and reported on for each theme and ACIBART construct by integrating the data mentioned above; these were eventually incorporated into the research hypotheses (Chapter 6). Finally, conclusions based on the research questions, recommendations, limitations and ideas for further research were provided (Chapter 7).

5.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter the design and methodology of the research was presented. The research approach and strategy were discussed. The research method was then described with specific reference to the research setting, entrée and establishing the researcher's roles, sampling and the recruitment of participants, data collection, recording of data and data analysis. Finally, consideration was given to the strategies employed to ensure the quality of data, ethics and reporting of the findings of this study. In the next Chapter, the Findings of this study are reported.

CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of this study in the form of the various themes and sub-themes which were identified during the empirical research. To begin with, the cases are presented, highlighting important biographical information, the nature of the transition each of the leaders faced, their reported experience of the career transition coaching as well as the perceived experience (by the researcher). Interpretations (see Western, 2013, p. 15) of the events and experiences as captured in the researcher's field notes, discerned from email correspondence between the coach and from the individual participants in between coaching sessions and the participants' essays, are offered, and, where possible, are augmented by the literature. The findings in terms of broad themes (both in a general sense and using ACIBART (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005; van Niekerk, 2011) as a framework) and working hypotheses (Borwick, 2006) for each theme are suggested. Finally, the impact of the career transition coaching is presented. The chapter concludes with the integration of the individual working hypotheses into a research hypothesis.

6.2 THE CASES

In this section a brief overview of each of the eleven cases which made up the sample studied is presented, focussing on basic biographical information, the entry into coaching and the nature of the transition, well as the coaching experience from both the coachee's and the coach's perspectives. In each case, a description and tentative interpretations are offered (drawing from the researcher's field notes and case write ups), and links to the literature are made. Being interested in both understanding and interpreting the voices of the participants in their respective contexts, the researcher used the hermeneutic circle (Kelly, 2002c) and looked for commonalities as well as differences amongst the cases. Because he was also an agent in the field of study, single, double and triple hermeneutics were applied in order to sustain the reflexive

distance towards his cognitive and emotional involvement (counter-transference) and remain with the uncertainty of unanswered questions and fragile or provisional hypotheses (Alexandrov, 2009, p. 45; Schafer, 2003). These are reflected in a subsection under each case labelled “researcher’s experiences”. After Stapley (2007, p. 206), the coaching process undertaken with each case is not a therapeutic endeavour but is, rather, concerned with helping individual leaders to fulfil their new or changed roles by supporting them in the process of professional and, as a consequence, personal development.

The eleven “cases” reported on below represent a total of almost one hundred 90 minute coaching sessions, totalling in excess of 150 face to face coaching hours (mostly individual, including one and sometimes two sessions where the line manager of certain of the coachees was present) held over a period of some three and half years and for which the researcher/coach was remunerated as part of his professional work as an executive coach. The text in italics is extracted from the verbatim text or transcript taken from the coaching notes, email exchanges and or coaching essays written by the participants and also the verbatim dialogue from the in vivo coaching sessions which are used to illustrate the points being made. Because these extracts may illustrate more than one construct or theme, some repetition was inevitable.

Further anecdotes and examples from the cases and the coaching will be explored later in the Themes, in sections 6.3 and 6.4 below. But first, a note about the heterogeneity of the participants.

6.2.1 The heterogeneity of the participants

Table 6.1 below (developed from Table 5.1) extends the information about the participants revealing the industries in which they work and shows that the nature and circumstances of each participant’s career transition were unique and uneven, making the identification of common themes at a content level across all 11 participants somewhat problematic.

Table 6.1: Participant demographics, details of coaching, entry into coaching and nature of transition

Biographic summary of participants - race, gender and age		Race, gender and age 10 White (W) 1 Indian (I) (limited diversity) 5 Males (M) (ave age 40) 6 Females (F) (ave age 47) Ave overall average age: 44 (N=11)				
Participants	Start and end date of coaching Ave duration 7,8 mths (N=10) Excludes Participant Four	Number of 90 min sessions Ave 9,5 sessions (N=11)	Total Hours 150,5 hours Ave 13,7 hours each	Industry	Background and presenting reasons for coaching	Nature of transition: from... to...
Case One I F 39	06/04/2016 - 08/01/2017 9 months	10 incl close out with line manager	16 hours	Healthcare	Promoted into new matrix role in the head office from a strong operational role where she had 40+ reports.	From head of a large department to a consulting/advisory role where influencing and collaborative skills replaced positional power, adjustment to new role.
Case Two W F 32	11/04/2014 - 05/08/2014 5 months	10 incl 1 for 360 degree feedback	17 hours	Psychological services	Hired to head up an existing team of specialists, new to management, intra team conflict and struggling to assert authority and influence in new role.	Initially to assist in taking up new role but in the end stepped down from management role and became a consultant to the organisation in a specialist role.
Case Three W M 42	31/03/2015 - 10/09/2015 6 months	10 incl chem	15 hours	Construction	Senior executive diagnosed with a long term terminal illness. Wanted to use coaching to help adjust work life in view of failing health, to achieve a sustainable pace for his life and remaining productive years ('self-preservation').	A journey from engaged senior executive to disability pensioner.
Case Four W F 62	05/2016 Brief telephonic coaching (excluded from duration statistics)	3	3 hours	Human Resources	Voluntary retiree, adjustment issues to new role. Dilemma around "the retired life" versus undertaking consuming postgraduate studies.	Dilemma around further studies. Retiree or active student?
Case Five W M 42	28/08/2015 - 28/07/2016	10	17 hours	Financial services	Interpersonal difficulties with colleagues and particularly manager. On retrenchment list "Sort out the devil in you!"	From "delinquent" to head of department.
Case Six W M 34	05/12/2016 - 15/06/2017 6 months	7	11 hours	Auditing and accounting	Seasoned professional promoted into associate director's role at a relatively young age. Behaviours identified during development centre especially around creating a positive first impression, maintaining curiosity in others' ideas and engagement.	From senior manager to director level appointment – adjustment to new role.
Case Seven W F 48	22/04/201 - 23/03/2017 11 months	13 incl chem	22 hours	Motor	Already in a managerial role with needed development in managerial skills especially delegating and staff development, empowering her staff, emotional self-control and strategic thinking. Promoted during coaching.	From being a self-taught manager to developing more sophisticated managerial skills to be exercised in a larger branch, a significant promotion.
Case Eight W M 38	04/08/2016 - 04/01/2017 5 months	10 incl chem	14 hours	Municipality	Struggling with achieving outputs, loss of confidence and motivation, organisational uncertainty, wants to move from an NGO into the private sector.	Promoted during course of coaching with new people responsibility.
Case Nine W M 46	16/09/2016 - 02/06/2017 8 months	8 incl chem	14 hours	Armaments	Self-referred for career coaching, at a career crossroads and uncertain about whether and how to market himself, wanting to test the job market but uncertain of how to go about this.	Process of career management and planning, self-reflection and personal branding.
Case Ten W F 49	18/10/2016 - 27/03/2017 6 months	5 indiv (plus 5 team)	8 hours (indiv only)	Motor	Part of a management team that was taken through an equal number of team and individual coaching sessions. Had been part of a major project implementation for two years and now having to find her feet and her voice in a new, post-project permanent role.	From a shy, quiet but competent project team member to asserting her authority in a new managerial role and re-branding herself.
Case Eleven W F 50	28/08/2015 - 28/07/2016 11 months	9 incl chem	14 hours	Insurance	A good functional specialist referred for coaching by her then manager based distantly in Cape Town because she needs to build relationships and network more in her role, also be more innovative and pre-empt problems and resolve them – both a development and a performance issue. Lacks assertiveness skills. She noted her main reason for coaching as developing her leadership skills to better manage her five direct reports.	About three quarters way through the coaching, she requested a voluntary demotion from a managerial role back into her specialist role.

Amado and Elsner (2007) refer to the diversity of both the internal and external contexts of their subjects and the influence of context on behaviour, making it easy for them to resist the temptation to draw general rules and norms, applicable to all (p. 185). Gabarro (2007) also noted that generalisations in studies of “managers taking charge” (p. 106) are difficult. Ten out of the 11 participants actually changed roles; the eleventh was contemplating a change. Of the ten, for two, the changes represented lateral moves; three participants faced a move out of their organisation for different reasons; one was demoted (voluntarily) and while four were promoted during the course of, or just prior to, the commencement of the coaching and were considered new in role.

Another moderating factor is obviously the nature of the role from which, and into which, the participants transitioned. The level of the new role compared to the previous role in terms of, for example, complexity, reporting relationships (both vertical and lateral) and organisational context will all influence the adjustment. A person moving, for example, from a line role into a matrix role (a matrix role is one which the reporting relationships are set up as a grid, or matrix, rather than in the traditional hierarchy and often require a dual reporting relationship for example to a functional and regional manager) will need to develop a different set of skills in the area of influencing and persuasion. Each of the participants in this study faced a different set of challenges in their respective transitions. The terms role and career transition are used inter-changeably; both refer to the role change experienced by the participants either within the same organisation or, for three participants, leaving the corporate world completely.

The homogeneity of the participants in terms of race is a further issue which needs to be commented on, especially in the South African context. All but one were white and while there was nearly equal gender split with five males and six females, the experience of white South Africans in the workplace and in the wider social context may not be the same as for other races. Booysen (2006a) discusses social identity conflict in a post democratic South Africa, highlighting the intergroup anxiety and the underlying tensions in the workplace (p. 52). While white South Africans (and especially white South African males) may have been privileged in the past and continue to occupy

senior roles disproportionately (SAIRR, 2017), in the current scenario there is growing evidence of subtle reverse discrimination. One participant said *“If I was black, I would definitely have been on the Executive Committee.”* The power balance is changing in the workplace and there is a sense that whites are feeling more marginal, excluded and devalued, consequently experiencing job insecurity (Booyesen, 2006b; Motsoaledi, 2009). Moreover, the researcher suspects that had there been more black participants in this study, he might have picked up issues related to expectations and pressure to perform as well as having to deal with doubts from others about their abilities and reasons for promotion. Booyesen (2006b) refers to this as tokenism. From a generational perspective, different issues might have been raised by a younger group of participants.

Each of the cases is now presented in the form of basic biographical information, nature of transition (current role/future role), entry into coaching (and into this research), coaching goals, initial interpretations from the coachee’s story, the experience and impact of coaching and coaching outcome. The importance of the researcher/coach’s reaction to the participant in the form of counter-transference and coach as instrument has already been referred to; this is reflected in the section following each case description headed “researcher’s experiences”. Watts’ (2009) exploration of “(her)self in role” (p. 215) served as the basis for the inclusion of the researcher’s reactions in this section of the study.

The sequence in which the cases are presented simply reflects the order in which the participants’ essays were received by the researcher.

6.2.2 Case study one

This person is a thirty nine year old South African Indian female who is qualified in an allied medical profession, and headed up a department with about forty staff members reporting to her in the private healthcare industry for almost five years prior to her transition into a new role. She had won a national award for this operational role two years previously, the banner of which still appears as part of her electronic email

signature. Clearly, she was a results oriented person who enjoyed success and had credibility amongst her peers. As part of her career plan she applied for, and was appointed to, a consultant role within her speciality at the head office of this private healthcare business where she had no direct reports. Her manager felt she could benefit from coaching to assist her with the adjustment from a strong line position to a matrix position and to address areas identified in the recruitment and selection process that might be derailers (Lombardo et al., 1988; Nelson & Hogan, 2009) for her in this new role. She selected the researcher from an on line review of the panel of executive coaches associated with a particular coaching vendor who has a contract to provide coaching services to this organisation. Because this client's circumstances in facing a role transition were aligned with the aims of this study, she was approached to become a participant and willingly signed the consent form. She set two major goals for the initial contract of six coaching sessions, eventually extended to nine sessions, plus a final, tenth, shorter, close out session with her line manager. These goals were to improve her influencing skills in order to obtain buy in and respect from her colleagues as well as to demonstrate tact and diplomacy (identified as a needed development area from the psychometric assessment completed prior to the commencement of coaching, in addition to EQ, conscientiousness, work ethic and interpersonal relationships which were also relatively low). The input from her manager in an initial three-way discussion in session two, about a month into her tenure in the new role, included: *making her voice count in the new role and supporting her chosen two goals*. Early on in the coaching this participant expressed remorse about taking on the role, in an emotional email sent to the researcher one Sunday night. During the course of the coaching she ill-advisedly applied for more senior roles in the organisation (flight response). It soon became apparent in the coaching that the lack of structure and the uncertainty in this role (perhaps as a result of her unfamiliarity with it) was contrasted with her success in her previous role (a split), that the "not knowing" caused her a great deal of anxiety and that this role transition highlighted a gap in her interpersonal skills: Not only did she struggle with influencing her colleagues when she lacked the positional power of a solid line reporting relationship with them, but she very quickly dismissed or disregarded them when they did not meet her expectations, causing conflict in the team. She was

aware of an alienating, non-verbal habit of rolling her eyes and making other disapproving facial expressions when she disagreed with or became irritated with a colleague or ...*when a person does not add value to me*. It was interpreted that she put up a “shield” to protect her vulnerable self because she experienced confusion and uncertainty in her new role (projecting her incompetence onto others to alleviate her anxiety). She reported using the defence of *writing people off* in her personal life too (she is single and it appeared there was no romantic interest in her outside of work life). There was a particularly emotional moment in one of the coaching sessions when she realised what she does when people attempt to come close to her (and it was thought that it was for this reason, towards the end of the coaching engagement that she asked for the names of therapists the researcher could recommend). She was now one of three equals reporting to the manager and the newest in the team; images of sibling rivalry came to mind for the researcher (e.g. Hindle & Sherwin-White, 2014; Sherwin-White, 2014; Yanai-Malach, 2014) - rivalry for the attention and love of the “mother”, which the researcher suspects to be reminiscent of earlier family drama in her own family of origin where she has one male sibling who is quite critical of her. In trying to improve her interpersonal skills and build better relationships with her colleagues, she would often report on “*woopsies*” as she called them, referring to “mistakes” she had made where she had said or done something to upset someone in her work team. A “woopsie”, according to the researcher, is slang, and represents something a parent would say to a child if the latter had a little accident or fell or broke an object so as not to overplay the incident or unnecessarily alarm the child and help it recover quickly. The researcher wondered if these “woopsies” were her way of minimising the damage she might have caused others in her careless gestures or words, making them seem small to her and being unaware of the hurt they may have caused others.

Although initially resistant, this client started using a written journal on a weekly basis to make notes about her feelings, thoughts, ideas, associations, etcetera, which she reported as being very helpful in deepening her insight and helping her understand the source of some of her difficulties. In her essay delivered at the end of the coaching she claims she found the coaching a challenge as she didn't believe ...*it was what I needed*

at that moment in time and it was difficult because I couldn't think of examples to bring to my coaching sessions. Interestingly, this was never raised in the coaching sessions, despite ample opportunities for reviewing how the coaching was working for her. She wrote about *...faking it till you make it...* which she understood to be asking oneself questions about the individual and or interaction to put things into perspective, perhaps buying time before responding when in a difficult conversation with another. She referred to an *...aha... moment in the coaching where I realised I write people off if they do not suit my expectations.* Despite a number of attempts to deepen this discussion in the coaching and find its source (creating a “tipping point”), the researcher and the client did not get much further than agreeing it was a way to alleviate her anxiety about her uncertainty and her feeling threatened as a result of her personal view about not making a difference in her new role (a defence mechanism – projection). She commented in her post coaching essay that she now saw coaching as an ongoing process and journaling (reflection) *...being key to my unravelling and making sense of my outcomes...* and that *... I need to go deeper into what triggers some of my reactions. I would like to continue having a coach to support my development and progress going forward.*

A positive performance review by her manager and a mostly positive post coaching 360 degree assessment report (Kwiatkowski, 2007) toward the end of the coaching engagement and about nine months into her tenure into the new role helped consolidate some of the progress. (The pre-coaching 360 assessment had not been done early in the coaching engagement as would normally be the case because the client was too new in the role). The post-coaching 360 report did, however, highlight a number of blind spots where her own assessment of herself was very different to that of the other respondents, mainly peers, in the areas of listening, being empathic and showing interest in others, giving feedback, and being generous in supporting the ideas of others which seemed to emphasise her egocentricity. In the final close out session with her manager who expressed satisfaction with her progress in coaching and adjustment to the new role and agreed to support the client in her ongoing development work, highlighted by the recent 360 report, the client said she thought that the coaching

had helped her develop awareness and insight and in changing some of her behaviours.

Researcher's experiences

The researcher/coach had worked in this healthcare organisation in a senior HR role some ten years previously and although he was not known to the client, he was well known to the client's manager. The researcher experienced performance anxiety, wanting to do an excellent job on the assignment with which he had been entrusted because of his previous association with this organisation (see Gilmour, 2009). He experienced some frustration and anger towards the client due to her lack of responsiveness (for example to email requests in between coaching sessions and some questions about her essay at the end of the coaching engagement which were never responded to) and the cancellation at very short notice of a scheduled coaching session for what he considered a spurious reason ("not having done her homework"). Her "carelessness" with the emotions of others troubled him, as she perhaps represented those who had been careless with his emotions and dismissive of him. Thus he too at times felt like one of the dismissed, disapproved of, ignored individuals in this client's life. Understanding the client's initial reluctance to enter into coaching and her closed, shielded and defensive personality, resenting the intrusion, helped the researcher deal with a "polite" client (perhaps because of her knowledge of the researcher's previous collegial history with her line manager) but one with possibly rather negative transference and counter-transference feelings. When this was put to the client and specifically about her cancellation of the session at short notice, it appeared that she made the connection with her dismissive behaviours towards her colleagues, gained some insight and was apologetic. Whether this translated into changed interpersonal behaviour is questionable. Building trust and deepening the coaching discussions were seen as key enablers for the positive outcome which, to some extent, was achieved with this client. The fact that the participant requested referral to a counselling/clinical psychologist following the coaching was welcomed by the researcher but he is not aware of whether she has followed up on these, reminding him of the importance to suspend memory, desire and judgement during (and after

(addition the researcher's)) the coaching (Cilliers, 2012a; Cytrynbaum & Noumair, 2004).

6.2.3 Case study two

This thirty two year old white female is a very small, petite woman. She reminded the researcher of a tiny, fragile bird. She did say she suffered from an incurable illness which was exacerbated by stress and which she managed with medication. She was referred to coaching because, although she had many years of practical experience in her field (of psychological assessments) as a specialist individual contributor, she was new to the management (of people and function, see Udall & Hilltrop, 1996)) role into which she had been appointed. She described herself as a driven individual who had excelled academically. In the first session she said *the reality of my new role has hit home* – she was performing a highly pressurised role and managing a team of seven professionals whom she had inherited. She told me how she had heard that their previous manager had been *...chewed up and spat out*.

Feeling overwhelmed by the role, working exceptionally long hours and focussing on mainly the operational (as opposed to the leadership) components (not authorised from within or below), she faced resistance from the team. For instance, she received particularly scathing and hurtful 360 degree assessment feedback and feedback from a company initiated engagement survey report in which these team members were very critical of her. She had described herself as someone who likes to please others and, therefore experienced not being accepted by her team as intensely painful. She could also be described as a victim of group bullying with the team possibly acting out their low self-esteem, frustrated growth needs and hostility, thereby stripping her of her own self-esteem and her self-confidence (Cilliers, 2012b; White, 2013). “Upward bullying”, as White (2013) described it, is a way by which dissatisfaction with organisational issues can be voiced by staff (p. 148). In a way she was an ideal container for the team's rage and unhappiness and it was hypothesised that because the team was reluctant to confront the senior manager for fear of offending him about their problems

and difficulties in their roles, they used this newly appointed manager (as they had utilised previous managers in the past) as a scapegoat to vent their frustrations. Czander (1993) described “scapegoating” (p. 322) as using an external object to project hateful or aggressive impulses to relieve internal stresses. De Board (2005) defined this as a defence mechanism used by individuals in an organisation who project their bad internal objects and impulses into a member of the organisation who, by unconscious selection or choice, introjects and absorbs them. At the same time this allows a more senior member of management to be retained as the good, protective figure (p. 118).

Her major goal in coaching was to develop her assertiveness skills and to lead the team while her manager wanted her to be bolder and create an impact by talking up more in meetings and persuading and inspiring her followers. Much of the coaching was spent trying to understand how difficult it was for her to find her voice with this team and identify why this was the situation; another goal was to overcome her fear of their bullying and vicious outbursts. Why could she not authorise herself in the role and how could client and researcher understand the lack of authorisation from below (and, as it turned out, the subtle de-authorisation from above)? Time was also spent preparing for difficult individual and team interactions and preparing to run meetings in a more focussed and directed way, by involving team members more and delegating to their strengths.

While the client reported feeling more confident and valued the support offered in the sessions, her managers (she reported to two senior managers) felt that the progress after five sessions was insufficient; they recommended the researcher conduct interviews with the client’s direct reports to gain their views of what the specific problem was. The interview questions were formulated with the input of the client and her managers and the individual interviews conducted. In the researcher’s mind the input from certain influential members of the team was duplicitous and their dysfunctional, resistant behaviour a way of keeping lines open to these senior managers, resenting the “interference” of another layer of management. This may have been the

manifestation of their feelings of loss as a result of the uncertainty and instability due to a succession of managers (Amado & Elsner, 2007).

The senior managers, it appeared, subtly de-authorised the client from performing her role by indulging direct approaches from the team members. The feedback from the colleague interviews did not go down well (particularly with one of her managers) and despite a full team intervention with an outside facilitator having taken place prior to the appointment of this client which only came to light later in the sessions, the difficult team feedback was rejected by one of the senior managers, a large, bearded man. He then made a particularly vicious attack on the client, taking the side of the team, and in a way threatening the client. After the managers left this session, the client broke down and sobbed saying how upset she felt at the manager's bullying behaviour towards her, and how she felt unfairly treated by him and that she could not deal with this any longer. She had to face the difficult question whether this role was really right for her at this point in time. She was worried about how giving up this managerial role might affect her career in the future and how she depended financially on the income this role afforded her. During the final two sessions much time was spent on discussing her options, given what had become an untenable situation for her and finally on considering her decision to step down from the role. She was encouraged to tell her manager (the one who had been more supportive of her) and we discussed how she could best position her decision.

With her permission the researcher then informed the managers that the nature of the coaching had changed and that transitioning out of the role was the focus of the final two sessions. An agreement was reached to keep her on in the organisation in a contracting role within her specialist area of expertise, shouldering no managerial responsibilities. She seemed relieved with this arrangement as it represented a stepping stone to her setting herself up as an independent contractor. In the final coaching sessions, discussions centred on what this role had meant to her, what she had learnt about herself and what she would take forward with her in terms of preparing for the next phase of her career. Her mood seemed a lot lighter and she responded

that despite the difficult journey, she felt comfortable with her decision about self-employment. She chose not to pursue the bullying allegations against one senior manager. In subsequent, on going, casual contact with this client through his association with her (now previous) employers, she has told the researcher that her new portfolio career is going well and that she is happy and satisfied in her work role.

Researcher's experiences

The researcher found it satisfying to be working across all six domains of Brunning's (2007b) coaching model (well suited to people in transition, p. 258), placing specific focuses on current organisational role, skills, competencies and talents, professional development (especially future options) and business context. The researcher/coach experienced a strong positive counter-transference reaction of empathy for and wanting to rescue and protect this injured bird. He had to understand his collusive anger towards the team and the senior manager who made her life more difficult (and represented for the coach the bad, bullying managers he had come across in his own career). Perhaps as a result of over-identification with her, he wanted to empower her to prove them wrong. In this case the coach represented the "good object" for the client, contrasted with her "bad" manager. In the end, the acceptance that a managerial role was not the right thing for her at that point in her career and her transition into self-employment was a good enough outcome. The researcher/coach's role altered to helping the client bear the uncertainty and anxiety of the change as well as playing a containing role in terms of the transition to an independent consultant.

This client was approached subsequent to the termination of her coaching to participate in the study and enthusiastically signed the consent form.

6.2.4 Case study three

This forty year old white male, an engineer by training, had requested coaching from his company (in the construction industry) through a coach vendor organisation with whom this researcher is associated, to assist him in dealing with the work related impact

of a life threatening, ultimately terminal illness he had been diagnosed with six months previously. After a lengthy chemistry session, he decided to engage the researcher/coach and a contract for ten sessions was signed. He was initially resistant to writing yet another set of goals/objectives, but these ultimately became an anchor for him during the coaching and beyond. He had been seeking a reflective space to understand the impact of his medical diagnosis on his work role and particularly to find ways to conserve his waning energy. He wrote: *I want to be in a place of rest to enable me to reflect and observe and (decide) what to focus my energy on.* His coaching objectives were stated as: *Sustainability (health, work, personal life); to take pleasure and enjoy (life overall: work and personal); to work smarter (free up time to think, free up time to test the status quo) and to build a legacy (it's not about me, it's about my family and colleagues).*

He had had enjoyed a successful corporate career as a high performing leader; even in his current role, before the disease worsened, he had managed to turn a dysfunctional team around and achieve good business outcomes using an inclusive leadership style which was very different to his predecessor's, despite also having to lead a major downsizing exercise which resulted in him having to retrench almost a third of his staff. He enjoyed the accolades from his manager as well as the interest and visits from the executive of this organisation to see what he and his team were doing and he was also at pains to highlight the effort and contributions from his team members. This suited his high need for personal achievement above all else and his need for the admiration of his superiors and colleagues.

He believed that he had brought his illness upon himself due to the stress he was working under in his previous role, which included extensive overseas travel and in an effort to prove himself. *...I will show them, I will do this even better, no matter what it takes...* He described himself as an achiever all his life and the researcher wondered if this had something to do with his being one of three sons and the competitiveness between them. Birth order and sibling rivalry (Sherwin-White, 2014; Skrzypek et al., 2014), although not explored, may have been a factor. His status and success at work

may have represented and been closely tied to his feelings of self-esteem. Consequently, much time in the coaching was spent redefining what “success” looked like for him in the present, reframing and recalibrating and including non-work activities in the definition. Miller (1993) referred to this as “constructing a new set of meanings which, to be viable, cannot afford to rest at all heavily on the organisational role... and have to be built on a new integration of external resources and new affiliations” (p. 310). This participant realised he could no longer be as overinvested as he had been in his work outcomes and ...*needed to pace himself better...*

His tight and supportive family and home network was made challenging by an autistic teenage son; naturally, issues around finances and his ongoing care became paramount, especially when the client was no longer able to earn a living. After a particularly disturbing and embarrassing incident in a board meeting when this client got up to help a waitress move a large jug of water which he lost grip on due to his failing strength and which came crashing down, smashing a whole lot of drinking glasses, issues around his identity and inevitable changes in his role became the dominant themes of the coaching discussions. Increasingly he experienced what he referred to as ...*meltdowns*... characterised by feelings of panic, sweating, weakness and pain, some of which episodes and relapses required days of hospitalisation. He was on a strict daily medication regimen for his neurological condition. Increasingly delegating responsibilities to the senior members of his team, adjusting his working hours to include periods of working from home and some relaxation and visualisation techniques helped ease the load; he claimed at times during the course of the coaching to be feeling more relaxed and in control of things. But the real issue was understanding his changing identity from that of a functional senior leader to the increasingly real possibility of being forced to relinquish his role because of his illness. He embodied the split between Thanatos (the death drive) and Eros (the life drive) (Akhtar & O’Neil, 2013; Freud, 1947; 1957; 2013) or what he referred to as his *sustainability*. In one heartfelt session he exclaimed: *Every day is a battle. I can’t do this anymore.*

He wanted to discuss his legacy both at work and at home – what would he be remembered for and what lasting impression could he leave? His illness and the changes implied seemed to have precipitated an early review of the scope and trajectory of all aspects of his life. Much of his anxiety surrounded being able to provide for his wife and children when he was no longer able to work. His mid-life (see Chapter 4, section 4.3.4) appeared to be interrupted and complicated by his illness and subsequent medical boarding, which took place a few months after the coaching ended. The contrast between his idealised self (as a successful executive enjoying the respect and praises of his senior colleagues and family) versus his real self, losing power, having to step away and down, losing his *...clout...* was a difficult adjustment and caused him much anxiety. King (1980) referred to this as the involution of the crises of adolescence where the client was obliged to adjust to physical, sexual and biological changes (in reverse) as well as conflicts about dependency and independence, precipitating a crisis of identity (p. 156).

This client engaged with the coaching conscientiously, tackled the bridging work diligently and always came to his sessions with notes and thoughts scribbled in his journal. He did say that as an engineer he was used to things being controllable, defined or at least tackled with a thought out strategy. He found the murkiness of some of the discussions and bridging work difficult. At one stage when he was thinking of taking on additional work responsibilities being pushed his way, the researcher/coach challenged him about his enthusiasm to take these on without definition or resources. This led to a discussion of his motivation and revisiting the reasons for his “I’ll show them I can do it” mode of operating. In the last session, held off site and some time after the penultimate session, he said *I had to put up the white flag*, indicating his surrender and that he had finally had to *call it a day* due to the deterioration in his physical condition. He had made the difficult transition from an employed senior leader into a disability pensioner. Consequently much of the time in this final session was *...spent discussing what the transition meant for him (identity) and the trajectory going forward...*, as he put it, and considering how he would spend his time and manage himself in the future. There was a sense of bereavement and grieving in this last session not only about his

losses (of health, of his job and title and status, the perks, etcetera) and change in working circumstances but also about the formal ending of the coaching (Freud, 1940; Volkan & Zintl, 1993). The client's feedback on the coaching was that it was *...affirming and positive and that he had no idea it would turn out like this when we started six months ago. Many "gold nuggets" discovered along the way, a truly meaningful journey and has established a firm platform from which to lead and navigate the years (ahead). This has been a life changing and incredibly fulfilling journey. I have felt empowered to enjoy my journey and know that I am secure in what I want from life. Thank you. It is now up to me to keep the goals and learnings alive and active in my daily life...*

Researcher's experiences

The researcher's own father was ill for most of the researcher's life and passed away when the researcher was a pre-adolescent. In addition the researcher grew up with a special needs older sister (see Skrzypek et al., 2014); therefore the parallels and touchpoints were very strong, drawing the researcher/coach in emotionally and requiring him to think constantly about remaining in role and being most useful to the client, rather than becoming emotionally entangled. Heightened empathy for his situation and thoughts about his own father's illness and frailty, the impact of this on his boyhood and the thoughts of a young widow being left to bring up young children, including a disabled one on her own were very strong images for the researcher in his supervision sessions. The researcher was constantly reminded of the dangers of the coach coaching the self. None of this was ever revealed to the client. Nonetheless the strong positive transference and counter-transference and obvious chemistry between the researcher/coach and this client made this a very special bond, resulting in this being one of the most challenging yet rewarding and meaningful coaching assignments the researcher has undertaken in his career.

6.2.5 Case study four

This sixty three year old Human Resources Director had been a fellow student of the researcher and someone with whom he had collaborated over the years of his doctoral

studies. Following her retirement from a very successful senior executive HR role (a true “senior” in Gould’s (2006, p. 146 terms)) and her relocation with her husband to a coastal town, she approached the researcher for assistance with a dilemma and offered herself as “a case” in his research. This was a different assignment to the other cases in this study in that it was going to be brief, written and telephonic coaching but as the nature of the career dilemma was very much concerned with a role transition, the researcher decided to go ahead with the consent form and include it as a case. King (1980) (and others e.g Feldman, 2007; Roncaglia, 2006) have comprehensively described the anxiety and depression their patients/clients experienced when faced with retirement. Although some of these were patients who had sought analysis, in the researcher’s experience, these are common emotions even with coaching clients. This client’s dilemma was essentially around whether to continue with her doctoral studies now that she had more time on her hands or to take full advantage of the leisurely life style which the move to the coastal town offered her and her husband. Her guilt was caused by the tension between letting her academic supervisor and the participants in her study down or disappointing her husband who had retired earlier than she and was obliged to endure a wife continuing to work in a high powered role while being “retired” on his own for a number of years.

The brief coaching raised the conflict between id and superego (Freud, 1957; 1965), manifested as splits stemming from “work” and “leisure”, “selfishness” and “indulgence”, questioning her success in her corporate role and whether she could be retired, not complete her research yet still feel valuable and useful in society and especially in her new community. These issues of identity and particularly her self-worth were highlighted by her transition from a demanding, vital, full time executive role into the role of a retired person. Miller (1993) referred to this as the extent to which an individual is able to dispense with organisational position as a prop to their identity (p. 310). Was she entitled to enjoy the fruits of her labour for which she had worked all her life, and what was the self-admonishment about *...have I gone backwards in my abilities...?* The client was also faced with issues of failing health and mortality at this life transition from work to retirement (Gould, 2006): *...How much longer will we have*

our health to do the things we want to do?... While there was some discussion around these issues and how being retired did not mean giving up her research forever, she reported feeling relieved and having arrived at a greater sense of clarity after the few hours of coaching: *...The additional light-bulb moment came when I wondered if you had a sense of failure from this feedback (on the researcher's research chapters) and I then cross-examined myself on this question and realised I was probably projecting my own sense of failure (around her previous employment) onto you!! Prior to this I had not allowed myself to surface these feelings of rejection and failure about having left (her previous employers) and my role there...* Her projecting her feelings of having been a failure at her pre-retirement job (objectively untrue) into, and onto, the researcher relieved her of her anxiety until she realised her own fears and took back ownership of them. The researcher thought that her ego strength in managing the conflict between the forces of the id (hedonism, leisure, living the retired life, etcetera) and the superego (being responsible, doing her research, and the like), (Burns, 1991), was instrumental in this early reconciliation of her presenting dilemma. There were also defences of idealisation present, with the client saying *...I want to be like you* (the researcher/coach) (splitting her "badness, laziness" from the researcher's "competence, productivity on his research"). She reported finding the coaching very helpful. The brief coaching terminated with the client making a decision to suspend her research for the meantime.

Researcher's experiences

There was a great deal of resonance and identification with this case on the researcher's part. He had taken early retirement from his corporate job and faced many of the same dilemmas in relation to his post-retirement identity and role.

Initially flattered that this successful woman should seek his advice about her dilemma and a little concerned about whether he could assist her and how this unusual brief coaching would turn out, the researcher was both surprised and pleased that such a short intervention should have such a positive impact on an individual. While there was not much time to delve into anything in detail and or really to look below the surface,

this intervention highlighted issues of anxiety, identity, role, conflict, boundaries and authority and also demonstrated that coaching need not be long term to be perceived as useful. The coach contained the dilemma for this client and represented the “good object” so that she could explore the “good object” in herself. Despite its brevity, this experience of coaching tapped a certain amount of depth and was meaningful and helpful for this participant.

6.2.6 Case study five

This forty two year old white male client, a qualified attorney, now working in the financial services industry as a specialist financial market researcher, was directed to undertake coaching by a senior executive in the organisation by way of an ultimatum: *...to sort out the devil in you...* The researcher’s supervisor pointed out the significance of the “devil” – extreme projection of badness, the “worst” - and that the participant came into coaching demonised, being branded by authority (G-d) as evil. The participant’s interpretation of the reasons he was sent for coaching was that the team dynamics were problematic (a form of denial); he also commented extensively on his relationship with his immediate manager, whom he described as immature and vindictive. He told the coach that she had informed him that if there were to be retrenchments in their department, he would definitely be on the list, so strong was her desire to get rid of him. This lack of a secure base (Bowlby, 1970; Lazar, 2014) was thought by the researcher to contribute to his separation as well as his feelings of persecutory anxiety (Klein, 1997). He experienced her as depriving and frustrating, with the result that he would be unlikely to find the love and admiration he sought, despite constantly seeking it (Czander, 1993, p. 275).

His psychometric report highlighted his above average conceptual reasoning skills with a good capacity for dealing with complexity. Technically, he is highly rated in his role. On the personality side, he came across as low in restraint and somewhat insecure. He corroborated this by saying he held strong opinions and was not afraid to voice them, did not suffer fools nor back down easily (fight versus flight). His body language

is expressive and ...*gives him away*..., resulting in conflict with his manager and other colleagues especially when challenged on his professional views (...*second guessed*..., as he put it). There were times when he did not respect their views as he claimed that they had not done the in depth research that he undertook to arrive at his opinion; his irritation and anger was palpable. He may have been described as “excitable” and “sceptical” in Nelson and Hogan’s (2009, p. 11) description of “dark side” characteristics. His rebellious position turned into a symbolic struggle for obedience and control (Czander, 1993, p. 274). He took the criticism very personally. This may be an example of splitting (“they are incompetent, I am competent, they are out to get me and can’t be trusted”) - the paranoid-schizoid position. The researcher was also reminded of King’s (1980) assertion that the mid-life can be seen as a recapitulation of the struggles of puberty and adolescence, mentioned in Chapter 4.

In trying to understand the source of his anger and anxiety, he revealed in a later session that he was the victim of anti-Semitic bullying at the school where he described himself as a small, academically minded child and the only Jewish child in the school (persecutory anxiety). It seems these incidents were not dealt with appropriately and perhaps even ignored (Cilliers, 2012b). Discussions around the residual hurt and his subsequent defensive and self-protective behaviour when threatened helped explain his reactions to some extent. The ego controls action, perception, and contact with reality and inhibits the id through defence mechanisms. The ego is the part of the personality that experiences anxiety and uses defence mechanisms to control the level of anxiety. A major function of the ego is its capacity to develop healthy relationships with others (Freud, 1923; 1957).

Much time was spent discussing how to navigate the politics of corporate life; the client resisted what he thought were the coach’s attempts to “force” him to conform and toe the corporate line by backing down from confrontations with his line manager, for example. These were attempts at understanding his triggers by becoming more self-observing, exercising emotional self-control and implementing alternative forms of behaviour when he felt threatened or attacked, thereby building his ego strength

(Burns, 1991). He described how not only he but many of his colleagues were also troubled by the manager's style (collusive we-ness). On more than one occasion he said to the coach *...I am not a bad person...* (reminiscent of the devil referred to earlier, having projected the badness into and onto his manager, possibly as a defence against the persecutory anxiety he felt in relation to his manager) and *...I am not looking for trouble...* which was taken to mean, "I don't want to fight but I will protect myself against these bullies". He resisted a three way meeting with his line manager or with the senior executive of the team who had referred him for coaching. This turned out to be both a non-issue and a turning point as just before session five (out of ten) both of these others resigned from the organisation. Despite the discussion around leave taking and proper endings (see Pooley, 2004) and even though it was not he who was leaving, the client chose not to formally mark either of their exits from the organisation.

However, seeing this as an opportunity to turn the tables, the client used his reflection, his developing self-awareness and insight and his new relationship building skills to build a working alliance with the new executive who took over. The client even took on a self-appointed interim leadership role for the team that was left without a manager for a while, which was acknowledged and appreciated by the new executive (explained in a three-way meeting with the latter late in the coaching engagement where he also commented on the client's positive attitude) as the new executive went through the recruitment process for a new manager to replace the participant's previous manager.

With his nemesis gone, there was no-one to blame. Things took a turn for the better when, following an extended overseas business trip with the new executive and another senior manager with whom he had also had a difficult relationship and during which he made a concerted effort at networking and relationship building, he was promoted into a more senior role. The transition from being in a precarious role and on a fictitious retrenchment list to being promoted nine months later and feeling *...much happier...* in his role was remarkable. The discussion in the last two sessions centred around his authorising himself in his new role, taking and making the role (Reed & Bazalgette, 2006) and using his new insights to continue to work at being aware of his defensive

reactions, also working hard at controlling his emotions. This could also have been a move into the depressive position, being able to see both the good and bad in himself and others.

During the penultimate session attended by the new executive, the client had been drawing in his notebook; after the executive had left the researcher and client spoke about the black ink drawings and what their significance might be – a black shark, an astronaut in space, some stars and the moon. The juxtaposition of the shark in the depths of the sea and the astronaut in the universe or space might have represented the “there and then” and the “here and now”. The client denied that the shark represented his isolation or danger/being threatened but it did occur to the coach that the client had been cast in a “delinquent” role. The stars and moon and the weightless astronaut (although still connected to the earth in some way) may have represented hope and the future. In the final session, his newly appointed direct line manager attended for part of the time; she mentioned that she had observed the client’s frustration in larger strategic meetings and that she thought he did not choose well where to raise contentious strategic issues, referring to his need to *...dial it back down...*, indicating there was still work to be done.

The client’s future career path as a specialist or in a managerial role was also discussed, with the new manager declaring how difficult it was to manage a group of intelligent but opinionated professionals, suggesting something about the system domain defences and the basic assumption-ness of this team (Bion, 1961; Gould et al., 2006). It was at the point of reviewing the coaching journey and the role transition which took place that the client was approached to be a participant in this study to which he willingly agreed.

Researcher’s experiences

Despite the early working alliance and trust that was built up, the researcher/coach found this client a challenge in terms of his relation to authority. His (the researcher’s)

reactions ranged from admiration for the client's courage in standing up to authority, to dismay at his foolhardiness in the way he publicly tackled his superiors and colleagues.

It is also interesting to note that this client aroused guilt and anxiety in the researcher as his coach. He "accused" the coach of trying to make him a ...*corporate clone, compliant and obedient, something that I am not...* The researcher/coach felt that he was not meeting the client's needs and, at times, felt personally and professionally inadequate (projective identification, counter-transference). Did the researcher/coach hold the authority and "corporateness" projections for this client? Possibly, although the researcher/coach believes he also held the good, benign object for this client – someone who respected him, listened to and showed an interest in him and his career progress. There was also the belief that this client might influence the organisation positively (Huffington, 2008). Notwithstanding this participant's subsequent good performance ratings and promotion, the researcher is reminded of Roberts' (2005) comments that this anxiety, experienced by the researcher/coach, is a distinguishing feature of the reparative activities carried out by people in the helping profession, where their own most painful and conflicted past experiences and their experiences in the course of their work may threaten their capacity for helping (p. 117). This speaks of the researcher's choice for selecting this profession, highlights his own valence for certain kinds of defences and blind spots, and reinforces the need for ongoing supervision (Sonnenberg, 1997; Bernhardt & Korotov, 2010; Ward, 2007). Was my valence for holding "failure" preventing the client from further exploring "failure"? This will be discussed further in the next chapter under "recommendations". It also highlights the value of self as an instrument or tool (Lehman & Korotov, 2007) and the value of attending to the feelings evoked in the coach by the client; also of using this experience as data to understand the client and giving back the client's projections so that they are able to manage them for themselves. See also section 6.3.12 below.

While the client made good progress on one level in his coaching, which probably facilitated an awareness of the repetitive patterns of his emotional outbursts and the realisation that these were not serving him in his career, a deeper and more enduring

awareness and change did not take place. This left the researcher/coach feeling that he had failed his client and his chosen paradigm, despite the positive outcomes from the coaching in the form of positive feedback (from the client's managers and colleagues) and a promotion. The failure of coaching is of course not the case; the researcher needed to recognise and understand his own valence for needing to please, and perhaps his guilt at not fully meeting the client's needs. In addition, he needed to become aware of and understand how he (the researcher) was holding the projections (about corporations and authority) which he carried and enacted on behalf of this client and the transference relationships that influenced his thoughts, behaviours and feelings about his effectiveness as a coach.

Making the links between current and past behaviour is a lengthy and difficult process (Stapley, 2007), but once made, these are experienced with considerable relief, helping the client understand why they adopt certain forms of behaviour. While the recollection and link to being bullied at school was helpful in understanding some of his current defensive behaviour, this was not the complete picture. The deeper awareness, as pointed out by the researcher's academic supervisor in a review of the coaching essay, is related to the client's object relations and how he relates to objects in his mind formed in the first six years of life.

6.2.7 Case study six

This thirty four year old white male was referred for coaching by his organisation following his promotion to a senior role in this auditing company. His promotion followed an assessment centre report in which areas requiring "substantial" development were highlighted: "showing more curiosity in the ideas of others and convincing others to understand your ideas" and "remaining engaged and involved in discussions after presenting your own thoughts". Areas were identified as requiring "moderate" development: "building a noteworthy first impression and asking more probing questions to enhance and build relationships". An initial briefing was held with the client's line manager who provided some background to the client's history in the

company (he had joined in a clerical role when he was 17 years old, straight out of school) as well as his perception of the client's needs (having been an assessor in the assessment centre). After a chemistry session with the client, a coaching contract for six sessions was entered into and the client was invited to be a participant in this study. Initially somewhat resistant to coaching but curious about how it might work, this client soon engaged with the process, setting himself coaching goals along the lines of the issues identified in the assessment centre report. He added other goals: taking on the new role and delegating aspects of his previous one to free up his time to play a more strategic role in the organisation. He realised he now needed to think more broadly than his specific role in the organisation and to understand the systemic ripples of decisions he took (Huffington, 2007).

There was a palpable fear of betraying old loyalties (Amado & Elsner, 2007). Anxiety (oedipal or castration) about taking on the new role and establishing his position and credibility with new and existing clients soon surfaced, particularly because of his very good relationship with his predecessor who was going to be retiring. The latter had established sound relationships with staff and clients alike, for whom the participant, a much younger man, was now going to be responsible. The second issue causing some anxiety was his new role vis-à-vis his previous peers and his new management role over them. Taking up his authority and making the role his own became the dominant themes in the coaching. This participant also spoke about his initial reluctance to ask for help (see Cardona, 2014, p. 62), perhaps highlighting his performance anxiety and vulnerability and his possible embarrassment at having been appointed to a very senior role but not having all the answers (the so-called imposter syndrome (Kets de Vries, 2010; Western, 2013, p. 74)). This concern also became the main topic of discussion in a number of coaching sessions, leading to a positive outcome where he realised he had the authority to use the resources and specialists at his disposal. Despite his initial reluctance, this client used his journal extensively to reflect on his adjustment to his new role and made the most of every opportunity presented to him in between sessions to demonstrate new skills, pushing him out of his comfort zone. There was much material to work with and good work was done in building his ego strength. He reported

feeling more confident and more easily shed aspects of his previous role, with an increased number of successful interactions with difficult clients as he authorised himself in his new role. He wrote: ... *I wouldn't change anything in the sessions. I have really enjoyed the sessions and they do challenge me and make me think differently and consider things I have not thought of before. I already feel like I have gotten value from the sessions.*

Researcher's experiences

A humble and likeable character, there was immediate and good rapport with this client and a genuine desire (also expressed by his own line manager) to see him succeed in this new role. Transference, in the form of wanting to report back successes to win the coach's approval but also being sufficiently honest and courageous to report when things had not gone so well in the on the job application, characterised most of the coaching and inter-sessionary interactions. Fatherly counter-transference must have played a role too; there were many observed, and commented on, parallels between the relationship with the coach, the client's predecessor and mentor (and the inherent relationship equity) and his own Dad whom he had lost a few years previously. The client mentioned, on the basis of his success in journalling, that he had started a journal of sorts for each of his young children (still too young to write themselves) of their interaction which he said he wished his own Dad had done for him to describe his (own Dad's) background and personal history as an immigrant to South Africa. In his essay he expressed his surprise and pleasure at how much the coaching had helped him make sense of and adjust to his new role. What is noticeable is the absence of the "shadow side" (Dimitrov, 2008; Kets de Vries et al., 2010; Kilburg, 2004a), perhaps as a result of the researcher's over identification with this "nice" client, the "halo-effect" and his reluctance to probe more deeply for fear of undoing the positive rapport and feedback.

6.2.8 Case study seven

A forty eight year old white female who joined a national motor industry group when she left school twenty six years previously and having risen through the ranks of this organisation, mostly in sales, she was referred to coaching as part of her development. Initially quite anxious about what to expect in the contracted ten sessions of coaching, she formulated three goals: 1) empowering her managerial team to accept responsibility for their areas of operation; 2) emotional self-control especially when things were not going well and 3) to develop her strategic thinking ability to take advantage of future opportunities and anticipate change. These goals were endorsed by her manager in a three way meeting with him at session two. She enjoyed a long and supportive relationship with her manager whom it seems had acted as her guide, mentor and promoter in the organisation: *...He is a role model and understands the way I work....* In the researcher's mind, this relationship was bordering on dependence and may have been a substitute for a relationship she might not have had with her own father but there was no concrete evidence of this. Not letting him down, and wanting to prove herself to her manager, drove much of her behaviour and may explain why she became "emotional" when matters went wrong (fear of failure), resulting in her taking over rather than empowering her managers to deal with the day to day problems themselves. (This was later discovered to have been a strong theme for her in regard to her only son when he was at boarding school and who experienced a breakdown after taking on too much, academically and on the sports field, for which she blamed herself) (See Miller, 1993, p. 135).

Considering the person-role-system links (e.g. Brunning, 2007a), this client described the motor industry as a *...man's world...but thatI have got used to the swearing and I can easily go out for a drink with them. I am a bit of a mother hen to them....* This was corroborated in her 360 assessment feedback which was shared with her manager in the three-way session, with her approval. Delegation, emotional self-control and lifting her line of sight to be more strategic were her major development areas, according to him. Understanding where the need to "nurture" as opposed to "manage" and "lead" originated from (compensating for her perception of herself as a poor mother to her only son) helped this client change her behaviour and improve her professional

management and leadership skills, not being so involved in her staff's personal lives. Holding difficult discussions with members of her team around performance issues and holding a successful offsite strategic planning session, involving members of her team who each did presentations on their areas of the business, helped consolidate her role as the leader. She reported that her team was responding well to her new approach and she was finding higher levels of ownership and collaboration amongst them.

About two thirds of the way through the coaching contract (session seven out of ten), she was interviewed for, and appointed to take over, a larger and more complex branch of the organisation that was in trouble. She had applied for this role about a year previously and had been turned down as she did not have sufficient experience. This represented a major step up in her career and resulted in the extension of the coaching contract by an additional three sessions to help her make the transition. She was required to deal with some direct resistance to her appointment and subsequently an almost 100% turnover in staff at the new branch (perhaps due to her reputation as a "no-nonsense manager" and insistence on high standards of performance and or the fact that the members of the existing team, mostly men, did not want to report to a woman). This taking and making her role (Reed & Bazalgette, 2006) became the major focus of the last six sessions. Her appointment to this role coincided with her manager himself being promoted into another role; she reported not feeling as devastated and abandoned as she thought she might have been which indicated a growing confidence and independence, particularly as she faced the uncertainty and anxiety of a difficult new role. This was understood as separation distress or anxiety (Bowlby, 1970; Lazar, 2014) and can also be thought of as "failed dependency" (Miller, 1993, p. 304), likened to the predicament of an infant being abandoned. Her new manager came from a finance background and lacked the operational experience of her previous manager. In addition, his style was much more distant and hands off; hence, while initially disappointed and feeling quite alone (e.g. Klein 1997, p. 300) and vulnerable, the client soon realised she would need to make decisions for herself and find a way to develop a relationship with the new manager, keeping him informed of decisions she took without his input. She eventually hired an almost entirely new team; her early days in

the new dealership were spent consolidating and building this new team as well as dealing with legacy industrial relations issues.

In the coaching she developed self-insight and a more mature and balanced approach to leading. In her essay she wrote... *This has been such an incredible journey in my life.* She added: *Throughout my sessions of 1 and half hour x 10 sessions, I got to understand more about myself than I have ever been exposed to, there was an acceptance of confidentiality that I knew I could just let the emotions run and it was still the right thing to do, that we all experience failure, growth, happiness, frustrations as we are all human, it is the way that you portray yourself that is the most important as this is how you either can make or break yourself or someone else...* She also demonstrated a growing self-confidence and realisation that she could become more: *...Before I started with the coaching sessions, I was happy to just go with the flow, I had achieved what I wanted and that was to become a good (job title), I felt successful and had learnt from the best, as long as I was carrying on with the same way that I had been taught, I was fine. I now have a different outlook and see that with all the changes I have made within myself, I am now not happy with being just a (job title), I see bigger things for myself and perhaps in 3 years or so time, when (branch name) is at its best again, I will have further growth in mind...*

In the close out session, with both her previous and new managers present, the researcher/coach was afforded an opportunity to witness the interaction between all three of the players – praise from her previous manager of how far she had come, but the researcher also sensed some sadness and loss on his part at her growing independence. From her new manager, the sense of him feeling that he was the new comer, trying to play catch-up and preoccupied with his own role transition. It was agreed that on an interim basis, the client would look after both the entity she was leaving (containment until, and support after, a new manager was found) as well as establish herself in the new one. Again, she was repeating earlier behaviours of unrealistically taking on too much to please her bosses. As these entities were located some 150kms apart, this proved to be quite challenging, not only because of the

distance but also because she realised her focus needed to be on her new role. After some months of this arrangement which lacked a clear mandate and led to her being blamed for a situation she really had no control over, the client used her assertiveness skills to establish firmer boundaries and bring the dual role to an amicable end. She was able to focus solely on the new company for which she was now responsible (moving from the paranoid-schizoid to the depressive position).

Researcher's experiences

Strong positive transference feelings were evident from this client towards the coach, who in a way was idealised. He may also have become the transitional object for her when her longstanding manager was promoted, soon after the client herself was promoted to take over a more complex and dysfunctional branch. Certainly, the coaching served as a transitional space (Spero, 2007) as the client grappled with a new role and a distant, almost absent new manager. Feeling more in control, armed with some insight and some new skills, she wrote in her essay: *...I now walk into the office every day and cannot wait for challenges to face, as every challenge overcome is a new opportunity in life. Thank you (coach name) for making such a difference in my life, I know that you will always be here with me, in every decision I make...* While it was obviously pleasing that the coaching had made such a difference in the client's life and there was certainly evidence of growing confidence, and self-sufficiency, the researcher/coach was left feeling as if he too might have encouraged some sort of dependence and, as with the previous case, some "shadows" may have been neglected.

6.2.9 Case study eight

This thirty eight year old white male client worked as a researcher for a small, specialised non-governmental agency. It seems that he was the only one in the agency who took up the offer of executive coaching for the purpose of his development. After a chemistry session he contracted for eight sessions. He is a well-qualified, highly detailed and analytical individual who had experienced what might have been

described as life coaching three years previously. He described himself as having been in a rut in his role at the time, which he had occupied for eight years, with no opportunities for advancement (being a white male in a largely transformed government organisation) and labelled his performance as *...not where it should have been...* In describing his present situation to the researcher/coach, it seemed like not much had changed. He initially formulated eight separate goals in great detail including mind maps, some of which replicated his performance contract and included the writing of a science fiction novel and registering for a PhD. As a result the first few sessions were spent coming up with a shorter, more realistic set of coaching goals, finally settling on three: improving productivity; improving strategic thinking and subsequent action (which included addressing his leadership skills) and developing the skills needed to transition to a new environment (in the private sector). The coach and client agreed that the skills required for his transition into the private sector (although planned for some time in the future) would be the very ones that would help him lift his performance in his current role and be more outcome orientated. He described himself as having lost motivation and focus in his work and, indeed, he was experienced by the coach as floundering. He used the word *treacle* which aptly described the “stuckness”.

Then, early on in the coaching, the organisation experienced massive change and uncertainty due to the outcome of the municipal elections in the city and he was not sure that he would still have a job. During this time his wife’s mother and a great uncle passed away, which he described as the latest in a string of family bereavements that year; these had the effect of unnerving him and resulting in him losing focus as regards his work. Between sessions one and two, his job changed to that of a Programme Manager (and he would in time have two direct reports) in a newly restructured organisation; hence much time was spent trying to understand the nature of the new role and what was expected of him. It was a time of pain, turmoil and crisis for him. In email correspondence with the coach he described himself as feeling *...overwhelmed and daunted* and added *...but I can’t afford to show fear or uncertainty...* This highlighted his anxiety about his new role, especially as it required a steep learning curve to master new areas for which he would be responsible, while having to mask his

dis-ease. The focus of the next few sessions was placed on understanding what this role meant to him, its major purpose and how best to begin focussing on basic planning, prioritisation as well as self- and time- management skills, in order to achieve the outcomes expected from him in a performance contract that was in the process of being clarified. In the fourth meeting, to which his new manager was invited, it was clear that he admired and respected her (idealisation and splitting – “you have all the qualities I lack”, projecting his competence onto her and retaining for himself the incompetence). It was also clear that the two of them had not spent much time together discussing the new role or the performance expectations. The researcher/coach also sensed that she was impatient for him to step up into the role and deliver. It appeared as if the researcher/coach was more concerned about the forthcoming performance appraisal than the client was. The appointment of a young intern reporting to him represented an opportunity to demonstrate his managerial skills, but also to delegate routine aspects of his work so as to free himself up to focus on the work he was personally being held accountable for (and which he would be evaluated on in a few months’ time). However, his success was limited perhaps because he was being overprotective of the resource he could have used to assist him. Is this what he was seeking from his own manager as opposed to being left vulnerable and confused in his new role?

In an interesting parallel, he was planning to talk to his father, the retired headmaster of a prestigious boys’ school (at which he had been a pupil), in an annual custom during the year-end holidays where they each spoke about their respective years. When I asked in our last session if they had had the opportunity to talk this year, he said that they had not because there had not been an opportunity and that his father had seemed preoccupied with his own issues and self-focussed. Again there was the sense of a lonely, isolated boy trying to make meaning of the big world on his own. Although the client was reasonably positive in his final assessment of the coaching, he did say that if the coaching had come at a better time, he and the researcher might have been able to focus on performance enhancement as opposed to crisis management (resulting from the turmoil at work). In his essay he stated: ... *The initial coaching sessions became more ‘off-loading sessions’ dealing with the uncertainties of the here and now.*

Just being able to talk was very helpful in the context. My one criticism of coaching generally is the benefits never manifest immediately. ...There is this assumption, highlighted in the review form that things should have got noticeably better in the period in which the sessions took place. The benefits, in my experience take six months to a year to manifest and they are almost never explicit. He added rather pensively, and sadly (in the researcher/coach's view): The immediate benefits are around refocusing oneself, and in my experience just trying to do a little bit better each day with the hope that accumulatively things at work and life in general will become better.

Researcher's experiences

The researcher/coach experienced some frustration with the client primarily due to the lack of traction: there was a great deal of thinking and planning - prevarication - that took place but not that much action which translated into tangible outcomes. The researcher suspected that this reflected his own tendency to prevarication and that the client's manager felt the same way. It seemed that the focus in coaching reflected the fragmented approach in his work – some time spent on a range of topics such as leadership, networking, relationship building, self-management, basic managerial skills and so forth, but with no real mastery or impact (possible avoidance). On reflection, this had begun to feel more like a parallel process (Crowe, Oades, Deane, Ciarrochi & Williams, 2011), with the coaching mirroring the client's lived work experience and the researcher's reporting being unfocussed in these sessions to his (coaching) supervisor. After the client had completed a not so positive interim evaluation of the coaching after session five of eight, it was agreed that he would develop an agenda for each of the remaining three sessions and that he would dedicate more time to the in-between session bridging work, applying what he had learnt in the sessions and reflecting on what was working for him and what was not. This may have had the effect of the coach becoming the authoritarian object in the client's mind. While the client said he enjoyed and gained value from the readings and reflection guidelines provided, and claimed that he felt the coaching was valuable, the researcher/coach ended the engagement suspecting that there would, in time, be some sort of regression (a return to the womb)

or crisis with regard to his performance. Indeed, after a planned six month post coaching review, this participant requested referral to a counselling psychologist.

6.2.10 Case study nine

This forty six year old white Afrikaans male was an operations executive for a company which is a state owned enterprise (SOE). He was originally part of the executive team of this organisation who went through a psychometric process as part of their personal and team development. Each of them was then offered individual executive coaching. When he expressed his desire for career coaching to the company contracted to conduct the assessments and coaching, due to the fact that he was not sure he should remain with this employer, they referred him to the present researcher/coach as they believed there would be a conflict of interests if they were to undertake this sort of coaching with him. After an extended chemistry session, the client contracted for six coaching sessions to be funded by himself and to be held outside of his normal working hours at an off-site venue. As this appeared to be a classic case of career transition coaching, the client was approached to take part in the study, to which he agreed; a consent form was signed. Having been with his present organisation for nine years in a variety of different roles, each one successively more senior and complex and having initially been approached to join this organisation, he had not been actively seeking employment for almost eleven years. He acknowledged that he had never devised an overall career plan and that *...his career sort of happened by accident...* In addition, his age put him in the mid-life stage; his questioning of his current circumstances, especially work, is a typical feature of this stage of life (Gould, 2006; Kets de Vries, 1978; Levinson, 1988). He was married with three teenage children, each one at a different school. His wife was a stay at home mother who spent most of her day fetching and carrying the children between school, home and extra-murals; he described their life as *...hectic and grinding, and a fragile balance, with a lot of underlying stress keeping so many balls in the air...* In addition, he worked long hours and still travelled overseas for work although less frequently than in the past, placing the home making burden on his wife, resulting in guilt feelings. He did help out with morning lift schemes

for the children when he could and took one morning off in the week for himself to exercise at the gym. Despite all of this, he claimed he did not believe his work-home life was any more or less stressful than that of his peer group of colleagues and friends.

He set himself three coaching goals: 1) to make a career change; 2) to increase his health and fitness and 3) to create more family harmony. As there was satisfactory early progress on goals two and three, the focus of the coaching work was placed on goal one. The irony of the situation was that he really enjoyed his work – he believed all of his skills and talents were being used, that he was given a challenging and responsible role which he could perform with a great deal of autonomy, was able to tolerate high levels of stress and enjoyed a good relationship with his manager who up until the last coaching session had been unaware of his intention to seek alternative employment. The coaching work included starting with a review of his career to date and the main drivers of the various career choices and transitions he had made previously. He prided himself on the fact that although his tertiary education had been in the IT field, he now successfully managed the full spectrum of manufacturing operations for this organisation, with a large team of professional engineers reporting to him. He was also involved in liaising with cross cultural, global customers at the highest level and regularly utilised his advanced problem solving skills to the benefit of both the organisation and its few but important customers. He thrived on challenges, enjoyed the respect of his team (as evidenced by previous 360 degree feedback reports which he brought into the coaching sessions) and was clearly an asset to the organisation – a good person-role fit. His dissatisfaction was with the system – critical of the politically appointed board who run the organisation, he described them as out of touch and self-serving, imposing unrealistic rules on the day to day operations by which he felt *...hamstrung...* He expressed concern about the future viability of the organisation, fearing it would implode like many other South African SOE's. He spoke about being *...tainted...* if he remained out of the private sector too long. In his essay he described some of the hopelessness and despair: *...The country is falling and it is dragging your organisation down with it. You have to do something and it has to be drastic. The terminal problems must be escaped from. Leave for something better. Disappointingly*

the resonance is weak and no-one will follow. The horizons close in. The only choice is to desperately get off the falling organisation and find one that defies gravity...

His dilemma was to wait it out while continuing to get on with the job and ...*see what happens...*, dodging the political interference, or to get himself ready to test the job market, explore what opportunities might exist for a middle aged, white male and then either to leave if the right opportunity was out there or, as he put it, to ... *make peace with his situation....*

...It is in my nature to seek the one big thing that will resolve all problems in one swoop. In this case it was to continue my career somewhere else. The decision was big, but it was easy to make. It is the type of decision that leaves you ecstatic and relieved in its aftermath. That is until things calm down and you realize that a decision without action is just a hollow decision. You know you must do something, or achieve something, but where do you start?...

He chose the latter route. Consequently the coaching sessions included an exploration of his values and interests, an assessment of his skills and skill gaps (also making use of a recent psychometric report which indicated a high functioning, well balanced individual, with exceptional problem solving and strategic leadership skills). This represented the de-construction of his career to date (see Guichard, 2005) including his past successes, notable achievements and disappointments (and what he had learned from them) as well as what and where his ideal next position might be (and what he definitely did not want to do). Inevitably, the coaching sessions included a mid-life review of his life to date, the kind of person he had become versus the person he had hoped he would be and also developing self-insight about what he wanted from the next phase of his life. Much of the work here centred on his family role and how he could be more involved to create the “harmony” goal he had set himself. Spending more time with his wife and children individually and together, and involving them more in decisions, for example about what type of family lap top to purchase and planning family

holidays together, were some of the early behaviour changes he was motivated to make.

To some extent, the researcher believes he found these aspects, exploring his identity (Who am I? Have my dreams and ambitions been fulfilled? What do I want? How am I going to go about achieving it? – Western's (2012) depth analysis), at least as valuable as, if not more so than, the "mechanics" of career coaching. His busy life style never afforded him the opportunity for self-reflection and insight about how his work and other roles had evolved during the various stages of his life. Discussions between the client and researcher included a session with a well-known, national "head hunter" who possessed current, relevant information about the South African and global job markets, who shared his experience of how to tackle seeking executive level employment and provided valuable input on the client's curriculum vitae (CV) which was in the process of being crafted. A seventh coaching session was added due to gaps and loss of momentum in the coaching process as a result of the client's absence on overseas business, and to round off the preparatory work. Now that his CV was ready, discussion turned to his job search strategy and how he might present himself to a potential employer (his brand and differentiators), including some role played interview questions.

Researcher's experiences

Evincing positive transference and counter-transference, this client is likeable because of his humility and solidity. The researcher/coach was excited about the prospect of working with him, not only because he represented a desired shift in the researcher's practice from corporate to private clients but also because the researcher wanted to "test" the career management and coaching offering he had been developing over the past few years. This client's expressed coaching needs matched exactly what the researcher declared he offered as part of his niched coaching specialisation; as a result, the latter experienced some performance anxiety to deliver on his promises. (The researcher's supervisor pointed out the "match" that then ensued between coach and client). The coaching work covered all six of Brunning's (2007b) coaching domains.

That a smart, successful business executive found the process worthwhile and valuable was affirming and rewarding for the researcher/coach. In the client's essay, he wrote: *...My original goal of finding a great job where I would be content soon changed to a goal of being content, regardless of where I would find myself. This was a profound realisation and it deeply changed my outlook on life, for the good. I also realised that I have a lot to be grateful for. My job is stimulating, exciting, rewarding and challenging. I have opportunities which few others have and the exposure I am getting is what I yearned for and worked for all my life...* In describing the coaching journey he wrote: *... By this time I had confidence in my knowledge of where I came from, who I was, what I wanted and what I could offer...* He continued: *... The next and last step in my coaching journey was to write an essay about the journey itself. This proved to be a dreaded, but valuable, exercise to bring matters to conclusion. What is written here is the culmination of a long, insightful and revealing journey into and out of my heart and soul ... a journey which most probably would not have been possible without coaching.....* Evident is the contrast between the despair and helplessness in his predicament, expressed in the opening section quoted earlier with the closing sentences of his essay: *Today I can clearly see the horizon and I marvel at what lies beyond. Like the old seafarers I want to sail towards the horizon with a little anxiety and a lot of excitement about the journey and the discoveries to be made!* While the passage of time during the nine month period of the coaching (which the client interestingly referred to as *...one average pregnancy later...* reflecting "pairing" perhaps) may have had something to do with the shift, it is highly probable that the timely coaching in preparation for a likely transition helped. It was somewhat frustrating for the researcher/coach to terminate after the seven coaching sessions as he was and is filled with curiosity and questions about what the client might find in the job market, how he was faring in his job search and whether or not he in fact made the transition and how it would work out for him, if he has done so. The researcher was left wondering whether this means that the "match" can only be "won" once the client is placed and flourishing in his next "big" role?

6.2.11 Case study ten

This forty nine year old white female was referred to coaching along with her three colleagues as part of a team development initiative. Her manager, the CIO for a particular national motor industry group, contracted for a combination of five sessions each of team and individual coaching; the client selected the researcher for her individual coach from an on line search of the coach profiles associated with this particular coaching vendor. The team was in the process of completing the successful implementation of a major, two year IT project. The project team would soon be disbanding and the respective players moving into different roles. As this represented a role transition, the client was approached early on in the coaching to become a participant in the research; she agreed and a consent form was signed. In our first meeting, as the client was sitting down (in a chair opposite the coach/researcher's in the corner of the room as opposed to the one intended for her, alongside the researcher's), her handbag strap became entangled in her belt. Later, in her essay the researcher/coach read about her description of herself as *a very private person* and her *dislike for individual sessions, not needing anyone to analyse her*. The researcher/coach wondered if her reluctance to open up and initial distrust was being demonstrated by her being metaphorically tied up and bound by her belt and strap, securing her personal items to herself and sitting opposite him, the better to protect herself.

Despite this, she used her first session to provide detailed information about herself and her previous traumas; the loss of her father about whom she spoke with great love and admiration, her young brother's early death due to cancer after a long, sad wait for a suitable organ donor and her divorce after her husband left her soon after his diagnosis with bi polar mood disorder, leaving her to bring up three young boys without much support. Significant losses, in the researcher's mind, not all of which had been fully mourned. Her current problem was related to the bullying she experienced from a female colleague she described as very masculine and who was in fact her equal on the project although everyone assumed that she (the client) reported to her. She claimed that while she respects this colleague's knowledge and tenacity and her role in making the project so successful and that *...deep down she has a good heart...*, the

bullying has had a devastating effect on her feelings of self-confidence and her ability to make her voice heard at work. This may indicate a move from the paranoid-schizoid to the depressive position. It was later discovered that there was a striking parallel with a humiliating incident at junior school which left the client extremely hurt (and which will be described later under Themes in section 6.3).

The creation of an atmosphere of acceptance allowed previously denied experiences to be brought into consciousness and explored. She described the in-fighting in the team, particularly the conflict between this colleague and another male colleague, and the impact on the perception of this team amongst those in the wider business. Ironically, it was she (the client) who spoke out and raised this in a team coaching session after her first individual coaching session, much to the surprise of the rest of the team and the facilitators. She also described her family role and, as a middle child, she was struck by the parallel pointed out between her role vis-à-vis her older sister and younger brother, and her two feuding colleagues. She also described her own middle son as being “the problematic” one, who reminded her very much of herself. She blamed herself for some of his problems and described her guilt and self-recrimination at not having been a good enough Mom to him and her other two sons, devoting too much time to her job. She had a partner now and he had two daughters of his own, a complex blended, reconstituted, domestic situation in which she (and her partner) hold down multiple, especially domestic, roles as “wife”, mom, step-mom, daughter to her widowed mother, sister (see Gouws, 1995). She set herself three coaching goals: 1) to be successful in her new (post-project) role - the training role, 2) to be successful in the continuous improvement role and 3) to improve her assertiveness and general communication skills in all levels of the business. The client engaged well in each session and did some reflection in between sessions. Her role transition from her project role to the role of heading up the training function, which included a continuous improvement function, had commenced during the coaching; accordingly the discussion centred on her understanding of this new role, obtaining clarity about expectations and deliverables and how she was going to take and make the role for herself. A sizeable component of the new role was the facilitation of a series

of workshops with business colleagues senior to herself who showed some resistance to attending these workshops. While she acknowledged that the timing was opportune, she expressed her extreme (performance) anxiety about not coming across well and fear of her bullying colleague embarrassing her in the sessions by contradicting her or shouting her down. Having an understanding of where this anxiety originated was helpful in her thinking through her new facilitation role and how she could come across with authority and credibility while preparing herself by, for example, agreeing an agenda with her co-facilitating colleagues and concurring on their respective roles upfront. These strategies proved successful and, with increasingly positive feedback from the delegates, she began experiencing growing satisfaction with the workshops, which helped boost her confidence. Moving into her new role, with a new title and into her own office (from the office she had shared with her bullying colleague), proved to be key (boundary) milestones in her establishing her independence and autonomy. Interestingly, towards the end of the five contracted individual coaching sessions, she also reported greater harmony in her home life, with everyone getting on much better. She wrote in her essay: ... *When setting up this goal, I entered the timeline for achieving this goal (being a more self-confident facilitator in meetings) as one month, and within one month this goal was achieved. My confidence grew and motivation to create more goals intensified. I know (sic) have goals for work and my personal life...* Networking and building relationships, with the IT team of which she was now a part, was identified as being a key task in order to be successful in her new role. Therefore some time was spent in the coaching sessions discussing what networking is and how to go about it, as well as what the enablers and detractors were for her. In a surprisingly short space of time she was evidencing some success in this area, with the result that in the team coaching sessions she volunteered to become the networking “champion” for her team. She commented on the value of the team and individual coaching combination: ... *I definitely see a relationship between individual and team coaching. Also identifying the very positive affect (sic) attending these 2 sessions has had on both my individual growth and the effectiveness in the team. There were opinions, facts, information that was (sic) raised in the team sessions, that (coach name) and I would expand on in our personal sessions...*

Researcher's experiences

Again, it is the researcher's belief that early positive transference and counter-transference feelings facilitated the rather remarkable progress made by this client in a relatively short period of time (five individual and five team coaching sessions over a six month period). There was a sense in the researcher that this might have been a flight into health (Frick, 1999) or a transference cure (Oremland, 1972) – a case of pseudo-success or premature improvement due to positive transference and including a combination of mechanisms of splitting, denial and projection. Oremland (1972), while suggesting that both are types of resistance, distinguishes between flight into health, which he views as repression and suppression, and transference cures which are less pernicious and more grounded and object related. Was she “getting better” in anticipation of the love and gratification from the “therapist”? The researcher/coach was at pains to point out that there might well be times when her confidence would dip in future (as one inevitably shifts back and forth between neurotic and healthy on the spectrum of life and needing, as a feature of the systems psychodynamic approach, which focuses not only on the positives but also the blockers to success (Pooley, 2004, p. 188)). He attempted to help her think through how she would manage herself and navigate these circumstances, but it felt like this was more his need than hers; possibly, as Frick (1999) suggested, this early cure is seen as a threat to the “analyst's” own wisdom and competence (p. 63). How would one know if this is or is not a flight into health? If there is regression after a period of time? Is some regression not “normal”? Are the symptoms destined to return? Frick (1999) suggests (perhaps reassuringly) that many flights into health do in fact represent positive, genuine expressions of emerging health and not self-deceptive pseudo-successes as once thought (p. 59).

The researcher believed that sufficient self-awareness and insight was developed even in the few sessions and that while there may have been some elements of a transference cure, the hope is that this improvement in her ego strength and her capacity for work and for love (Freud, 1923; 1957) will become enduring.

6.2.12 Case study eleven

This case of a fifty year old white Afrikaans woman working as a manager of a small team in the finance department of a national insurance company was originally not going to be included as one of the cases in this research, because this participant was the only one who failed to comply with the requirement to submit an essay on her coaching experience despite signing the consent form and promising several times to submit it. In fact the coaching experience was characterised by many postponed sessions and unanswered emails, the reason for which, she maintained was due to her workload. There was a polite and apologetic resistance (in an almost passive aggressive way – splitting and introjection). But on reflection there were many interesting features of this case and therefore despite the absence of an essay written by her on her coaching experience, it was decided to include this case.

She was referred for coaching by her manager who was based in a different city; in a three-way video conference meeting he explained that he wanted her to improve her networking and relationship building skills and also become more proactive in anticipating problems by forward planning and problem solving (describing her as too reactive). He also wanted her to be an ambassador for the department, representing them in this distant location. In the written coaching brief, her need for coaching was described as both developmental and performance related by this manager and the brief had been co-signed by the HR partner.

She was described as strong technically but that *...people walk all over her...* That the client seemed almost distant and passive in this session should have been a clue to the researcher that something was amiss. She declared in a later session that this manager had given her a very poor performance appraisal some months previously, which she considered to be most unfair. When asked if she had appealed or objected to the outcome she said she had not, as it would not have made any difference. When asked how he might support her in her coaching goals, her manager spoke about a leadership development programme. Evidently he was unwilling or unable to become

involved at a coaching level himself to assist her in her development. She described herself as an introvert who doesn't like speaking up in large forums, saying she doubted if her *...penny was worth it...* She said she was able to have her say in smaller meetings. She said *...networking comes very difficult for me (sic)...*; when this was probed it was partly a language issue but mostly a self-confidence one: *...I don't really like talking but I try my best...* she said in our first session. In fact the only time she becomes animated, she said, was when she was at home with her family watching her team play rugby on the television. She had described in the her pre-coaching questionnaire that the one outcome she would like from the coaching was to be more confident in herself and in her leadership role and that it would be like *... a dream come true...* if she achieved it. She did indicate that she knew that if she did not achieve her goal, her own *...development and her performance review would be negatively affected...*

Her own three coaching goals were: 1) to build her relationship building and networking skills (mainly with the managers in the internal sales team to whom she and her department provided a support service) and become more assertive; 2) to be more innovative in her leadership role by pre-empting issues that might arise and 3) to improve her delegation and performance management skills as regards her own staff. She had four direct reports (and one vacancy which she was not allowed to fill for financial reasons despite the heavy workload); two more senior people whom she considered to be competent, one of whom was "on loan" to her. The three of them spent most of their time checking and redoing the work of the other more junior two, where there was constant staff turnover due to the repetitive nature of the work and low levels of remuneration. She acknowledged that she spent a lot of her time (even after hours) doing the work her staff should be doing.

This was a classic case of working hard at the wrong things and not only not receiving any acknowledgement for her long hours but instead censure. She described some of her difficulties, particularly with more senior colleagues where she felt she was the *...the punching bag....* She was not very forthcoming when asked about any period in her life

during which she had felt like the punching bag – the researcher/coach suspected this might have been a theme in her life. In fact, there was a hypothesis about earlier abuse which was never confirmed. She had said that she divorced fifteen years previously and had then relocated with her three daughters. She had remarried. When she alluded to problems with her daughter who was in her pen-ultimate school year and how she was having to “coach” so many people, she began to cry. Her manager never formally responded to her written submission of her coaching goals after the three-way discussion with him and in fact, much to her relief, he was moved into another position a few sessions into the coaching. From an organisational context point of view, the researcher wondered if the systems domain of the competitive insurance industry where the aim is to limit liability, may have had some role to play in his hands off, distant approach.

The sense gained was of a woman who was overburdened, not coping and very much alone. We discussed her role and, as she described her difficulties at work, it became clearer that authorisation from above and below as well as, most importantly, her self-authorisation were lacking. Both direct reports on whom she depended the most left her department – one accepted a better job offer and the other took an internal transfer. Her manager was also moved to another role as mentioned and for a while she had to report to the next most senior person. The client and researcher worked on trying to understand her difficulties in managing her staff better and building relationships with her internal customers as well as on developing and analysing a network map and working through delegation, performance management and relationship building skills. She did report having some success, and was able to take a firmer line with underperforming subordinates and to find her voice at times in meetings with more senior colleagues.

Yet progress was limited and it did occur to the researcher/coach that there might be some past trauma so deeply buried that therapy might be indicated. It was during this period, when asked by the senior manager of the function where she saw herself in the department which was being restructured, that she asked to be relieved of her

managerial duties. It was almost as an aside that she said in session three: *...I offered my role...* almost as a sacrifice. The restructure of her department was being discussed at senior level and it was almost as if her fate was being decided without her direct input. She used the Afrikaans words *...keel vol...* to describe her situation, literally translated as “full to my throat” (meaning “I have had enough”, or “I have had it up to here”). It was at this point that she revealed to the coach/researcher that she was on a final written warning for poor performance, having let something slip at a time when there was high turnover in the department. A discussion then ensued about the outcome she would ideally like for herself in the restructure of her department and how she might achieve this. We discussed sending an email to the senior manager and she made notes about what she might say. Due to cancellations by herself, the next coaching session only took place six weeks later; it was only towards the end of this session that she informed the coach that she had made the decision to step down from her role. (The researcher was reminded of a common phenomenon in therapy and coaching where the client leaves divulging a bombshell to just before the session ends, showing possible avoidance but also flight and leaving (projecting) the bombshell for the coach to contain as the session ends). The client was asked to continue in her role for the next three months while her replacement as the manager of the department was recruited.

Her role transition was described as role relinquishment (Gouws, 1995) - a voluntary demotion. We discussed how she would inform her colleagues of her decision as she clearly felt a great deal of embarrassment, humiliation and shame about her stepping down (White, 2013). She was concerned that people would think she had been demoted for poor performance and that this was not her decision. The internal advertisement for her role would soon be displayed throughout the company and there were key colleagues whom she had not yet informed. A discussion ensued about how to communicate the news of her voluntary demotion at work and at home. Perhaps there was some avoidance, as mentioned above, of accepting the reality/denial of her changed identity from a manager to an accountant, perceived as a backwards move.

There was some discussion too about how she felt about her decision and how she might adjust to the new role. There was a sense that she was grieving the loss, appearing disinterested (in the coaching) and sad (Freud, 1940; Volkan & Zintl, 1993). Schlenker and Gutek (1987) describe the loss of professional role identification (as opposed to loss of employment). Although the role loss was not self-initiated in their study, they found that work role loss was associated with lower levels of self-esteem, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction, and higher levels of depression and self-reported intention to turn over. They also stated that the reassigned workers they interviewed showed a crisis reaction similar to that described in the literature about the reactions of the recently unemployed. Despite the lack of bridging work and the resistance the researcher was experiencing, this participant reported in a midway review of the coaching that she felt she was making progress with her assertiveness and relationship building skills and proceeded to give examples of where she had tried to use these skills, some quite successfully. A discussion about what might be holding her back was not fruitful, with her asking the coach to tell her what more he thought she needed to do (which was reflected back to her). She then said that she knew she needed to ... *work harder*... Helping this client develop insight was proving very difficult.

Her new manager had been appointed by session six and joined us for a short while in session seven, which was really only her third or fourth day in her role. The client was upset that a new structure for the department had not yet been communicated, that performance contracts had not yet been finalised and that to a large extent she was in the dark about her own role, yet having to help induct her new manager who, as an external appointee, knew very little about the industry or the role to which she was appointed. The client spoke well of how the coaching had helped her. The coach referred to the client having stepped down from her role, a fact it seemed that the client had not discussed with her new manager. After the manager had left the session, the coach apologised to the client about revealing this and the client responded by saying that she wanted to be transparent with her new manager and was pleased it had come up. But was she, and had her trust been betrayed? The remainder of that session was

then used to talk about how the client could position herself vis-à-vis her new manager and recommend a new structure, incorporating a role for herself that she wanted.

Four months then passed before the final session was held and once more, while the client's final evaluation of the coaching was positive, she had received another very poor performance review, this time from her new manager. As she had been waiting for me to come up to her floor for our last session in the office block where she worked, which was designed with a deep, central well, peering over the railing, I heard a colleague say to her jokingly, "don't jump". When the researcher commented on this to the participant before the session started, she said that there had been a concern that people might use the central well to commit suicide. During the session she also said: *...I don't want to create the depression...* and then corrected herself by saying *...impression...* She remarked that she was feeling low and sad, and worried about her reputation in the company. Perhaps she was experiencing grief, as suggested earlier. The coach proposed she might want to see a psychologist and added that he, as the researcher, could provide referrals if she felt this might be helpful. She never took this up. She did use the opportunity of her manager's presence in part of the final session to talk about the clarity she needed on the structure of the department, her new role and the need for a very clear performance contract, as well as making a request to her manager for regular performance feedback, to help sustain the positive changes she felt she had made but also to provide future guidance. Her manager then left the session and there was an opportunity to formally end the coaching. She began to cry when the session ended and, when asked about the tears, responded she couldn't really say. The coach suspected the loneliness of her role, the feeling of "abandonment" not only by her various managers but now by the coach too and the effect of the cumulative negative feedback were weighing heavily on her.

Researcher's experiences

Of the eleven cases presented, this is the one which was perhaps most clearly characterised by negative transference and counter-transference. The researcher/coach was surprised, given all her issues, that she didn't utilise her

coaching better. He too felt rejected (as she felt rejected by her manager and colleagues and possibly even too by her daughter) and perhaps he even felt angry, with thoughts of – “I am here to help you and you keep postponing sessions and do not respond to my emails or calls”. Whether this related to a lack of trust or of feeling too vulnerable to open up, for fear of what might come out, is difficult to say. It was helpful for the researcher to be reminded that negative or resistant behaviour is likely to be anxiety driven (Sandler, 2011). Despite this, in the end of coaching written evaluation she said she found our ...*discussions*... and ...*pointers*... useful and that she felt had made good progress towards her goals. She wrote: ...*Increased confidence in myself and my abilities. Confidence also had an effect on the performance of the team. It made me feel a more effective leader. Increased assertiveness*... She described the most significant impact of the coaching as: *To be more innovative in (my) leadership role. I find it much easier now to pre-empt issues that might arise. Being able to identify these issues has a great impact on day to day activities*...

The coach, though, was left feeling as if he had not been very successful in assisting her or encouraging her to seek additional help for herself. This was possibly due to his disappointment in her stepping down from her role and him introjecting her “failure”.

6.3 INTEGRATING THE CASES: THE RESEARCHER’S REFLECTIONS POST COACHING

Notwithstanding the differences in each of the eleven cases, there were a number of notable issues arising from the review of the cases which bear mentioning, particularly in the context of understanding the person-role-organisation/system conceptualisation (Roberts & Jarrett, 2007). The researcher reflected on the content of the cases he had written up after the coaching and after his initial interpretations of each case. What follows are these reflections on points of interest, which act as a kind of transition between the “raw” data of the cases and initial interpretations and the systems psychodynamic analysis of the ACIBART themes which will be dealt with in section 6.4.

6.3.1 The quality of the relationship between coach and client

Although covered extensively in the literature (e.g. Cilliers, 2005; Kahn, 2011; Kilburg, 2004a; Passmore, 2007; Wampold, 2001), the primacy of the influence of relationship and positive transference and counter-transference feelings on coaching outcomes was noticeable. The coach is inevitably the focus for projection and identification in the form of transference and the coach's own, sometimes ambivalent feelings of counter-transference towards certain participants were noticeable (after French, 1997). Further, the capacity of the researcher/coach to contain participants' anxiety and provide a psychologically safe environment (e.g. Sandler, 2011) strengthened the relationship (see later discussion on containment in section 6.5.4). Although there is no scientific, empirical evidence for this in the current study, anecdotally the researcher believes that the stronger the relationship, the more positive the coaching outcomes as reported by both client and coach. This could also be wish fulfilment on his part; and the difficulties of having the researcher as the coach will be discussed in Chapter Seven under the section on limitations. Not being a longitudinal study, it is difficult to comment on the durability of the positive impact once the coaching had ended but it is felt that in most cases, the number of sessions held with each client and the period of the coaching engagement were both of sufficient duration to test this hypothesis. The quality of the relationship with the client in terms of how safe and understood s/he feels (along with flexibility in approach and cautious offering of interventions) is what makes the difference (Roberts & Jarrett, 2007).

6.3.2 Value of goal setting

Despite the objections of many of the participants to having to set specific coaching goals early on in their sessions, goal setting in coaching proved to be valuable in guiding the discussions and providing outcomes to aim for and to measure progress against. The systems psychodynamic approach is sometimes criticised for its endless pursuit of insight at the expense of tangible results (Roberts & Jarrett, 2007) and owing to its focus on free association, the emphasis on goal setting may seem like an

anathema to the approach. Western (2012) in fact recommends tackling goal setting only in much later coaching sessions. While still regarded as “low” on directedness and structure in the sessions in terms of its distinguishing characteristics as a coaching approach (Roberts & Jarrett, 2007), the style of systems psychodynamic coaching adopted in this study easily and successfully incorporated goal setting, utilising all six streams of Passmore’s (2007) integrative model. In the study conducted by Evers, Brouwers and Tomic (2006), goal setting was found to be one of the variables that positively differentiated the group that had been coached from the control group. Terblanche et al. (2017) in their study of coaching for newly promoted managers also discuss the value of goal setting, admittedly in a different psychological paradigm.

6.3.3 Line manager support

In almost every case a three-way session (and sometimes more than one, the second usually nearly at the end of the coaching contract with at least one remaining individual session) was held between the client, his or her line manager and the coach. The purpose of these sessions was to obtain the line manager’s input into the coaching needs of the client and to achieve some form of alignment between the individual coaching needs and the wider, systemic context of the department and organisation. The purpose of the involvement of the line manager towards the end of coaching was to review progress, discuss the sustainability of the positive impact of coaching and to consider how ongoing development needs might be addressed with the support and involvement of the line manager. In many cases the client’s organisation was financing the coaching. In general, the line managers in these sessions were experienced as being supportive and willingly promoting the development of the participant (Hunt & Weintraub, 2007). However, in almost all the cases, the absence of day to day, on the ground support from a line manager during transition (where appropriate) was noticeable (see Gabarro, 2007; see also the case of Zoe in Sandler, 2011, p. 70; Sievers, 2009, p. 223; Terblanche et al., 2017). Some clients spoke explicitly about the lack of induction, needing input from their line managers and contrasting involved versus uninvolved line managers. A number of clients felt “dumped” or abandoned,

which may have resulted in an overdependence on the supportive (Burns, 1991) element of the coaching and on the coach, almost as a surrogate line manager, especially where the clients' personal resources were wanting (Spero, 2007). Commenting on the general decline in one-to-one support, secure attachments and containment observed in the workplace in general and speculating that this might be one of the reasons for the increased uptake in executive coaching, Roberts and Jarrett (2007), Scheepers (2012), Sievers (2009) and others emphasise that coaching is not a substitute for management within the organisation, and, the researcher adds, especially not at a time of transition. In career coaching, it may not always be appropriate to include the line manager. This issue was dealt with briefly in the section on Ethics in Chapter 5.

6.3.4 Duration of coaching

The duration of the coaching did not seem to influence the outcome. In this sample the length of coaching ranged from three to thirteen sessions, with an average of about nine sessions per participant. Notwithstanding the possibility of a transference cure (Oremland, 1972), even a few sessions seemed to be helpful to the clients and many of them mentioned the cathartic effect of just having someone to talk to. Iveson, George and Ratner in their 2012 book on *Brief Coaching* make the point that even two or three sessions of coaching can have an enormously creative impact (p. viii). Perhaps this challenges the systems psychodynamic paradigm which requires a good understanding of the client's personal history or life story (Gould, 2006; Western, 2012) for its impact, as well as time for a transference relationship to develop and insights to be gained; however, a few sessions (not necessarily a pure solutions focused approach) may prove helpful and did.

6.3.5 Loss and splitting

In many of the cases presented and analysed, the concept of loss was present, either in the form of loss of a previous role where the person felt competent and had familiar

networks, or loss of a previous position and consequent loss of status, in the two cases where the participants decided to step down from their roles and in the cases of the two participants who left their organisations. The shame and humiliation in the former cases was ultimately superseded by a sense of relief. Understanding the leaving process as well as the settling in process (Bridger, 2009) was a feature of many of the coaching discussions described above. It also became apparent that as participants gave up unhelpful, often long standing patterns of thinking and behaviour, which may have served them in the past, there was also a sense of loss until new patterns could become established and comfortable. This also applies, for example, to surrendering ideas about their identity e.g. *...I am used to 'mothering' my subordinates but now I am learning to be a more professional manager...* The participant who retired and the participant who was put on a disability pension also had to face loss of former identities and the slow acceptance of new ones (Volkan & Zintl, 2015). The coach and coaching as a transitional object/space will be discussed later in section 6.5.1. Splitting, the unconscious mental process which comes to the fore in complex situations such as transitions, is a defence mechanism by which multiple variables in difficult situations are reduced to a few black and white issues which deny aspects of reality, helping the individual to make choices to act (or not) (Amado & Elsner, 2007).

6.3.6 Reawakening old traumas, childhood and early dramas played out at work

Basic tenets of the systems psychodynamic approach to coaching are to help clients understand their work situation systemically, to assist them to surface unconscious thoughts, ideas and feelings through the use of both explicate and implicate (below the surface of consciousness) conversations (Lawrence, 2007) and to aid them with a more insightful and realistic grasp of both their inner world in their minds and the external world. Thereby they identify repetitive behavioural patterns from their past (Klein, 1997; Sandler, 2011) and use this insight to develop new, more adaptive ways of thinking and behaving. Faced with external and internal “disturbances” for which they were not really prepared, the participants had to deal with the recurrence of the development trajectory

between the paranoid-schizoid and the depressive positions (Armstrong, 2009, p.180). When, by means of the coaching, current thinking, feeling and behavioural patterns could be linked to past patterns, insight developed relatively quickly; the understanding of the origin of the pattern led to greater personal clarity and confidence, if not resourcefulness and creativity in dealing with the uncertainties and problems at work (and at home). In consequence, it is thought that the career transitions which are the subject of this study, reflect the cumulative life transitions experienced by each of the participants since birth.

6.3.7 Transitions expose gaps/deficiencies/vulnerabilities

Many of the participants reported that they felt vulnerable moving into a new role due to their lack of competence in certain aspects of the new role. In some cases the new skills required exposed deficiencies, gaps or weaknesses in the participants' skills sets of which they may not have been previously aware. Whether these were delegation skills, influencing skills or performance management skills, coaching about the new role (or the anticipation of the new role) made the participant aware of additional skills that were needed to be successful in the said role (Terblanche et al., 2017). The transition also highlighted self-doubt in many of the participants; this will be dealt with in section 6.4.1 below when the theme of anxiety is explored in more detail.

6.3.8 Spill over of positive (and negative) impact into other areas life

The spill over into home life when work difficulties are being experienced has been well documented. See for example Naik (2014) and Shongwe (2014). In this study certain participants reported feeling stressed at home, short tempered with their family and in some cases guilty about the time spent at work, to the neglect of the family.

In almost every case, the participants mentioned benefits they had experienced from coaching which could be generalised to their non-work lives. Many of the strategies and techniques learned in coaching were applied in the home setting with positive effect.

Also, that which the participants had learned about themselves in the process of self-discovery led to them behaving and relating differently at home. These benefits included improved communication, consultation, collaboration, greater transparency in discussing, for example, the impact of a change in work circumstances and, in one case, the application of journalling and documenting the participant's life story for his young children. Perhaps it is unsurprising that there should be this convergence of positive effects because generally, if the individual feels better about him or herself in one domain, one would expect this to be generalised to other domains.

6.3.9 Value of psychometric and 360 degree feedback reports

In many cases, additional input was available to the coach and client in the form of recent psychometric and 360 degree feedback reports and, in one case, an assessment centre report, which had been conducted as part of the participant's development and as an assessment of his suitability for promotion to directorship level. This input proved valuable to provide a context and a starting point for discussion and in most cases corroborated the participants' own stories. Even where the reports told a different story, this proved valuable in terms of identifying blind spots and providing a useful basis for discussion about differences in perception. In those cases where the participant was unaware of the impact they were having on the organisation, the 360 degree feedback was useful and, in some cases, provided an opportunity for the participant to relate differently to the respondents (if identified). See also section 6.5.6 below where the role of assessments is dealt with more fully.

6.3.10 Value of reflective practices and developing insight

While the coaching style adopted in this study could be described as flexible, practical and results focussed, a core feature of the coaching style and that which distinguishes the systems psychodynamic element, was to encourage the participants to become more reflective, to deepen their thinking about themselves in the pursuit of personal insight and self-awareness and to adopt the practice of journalling in a reflective, free

associating space. Many said the reflective practice and journaling had such a positive effect that they planned to continue with these practices beyond the end of coaching. By helping the clients tune in to their emotional state (Sandler, 2011) and, for instance, become more aware of what makes them anxious and what the source of this anxiety might be or of their response under pressure, they became more self-aware and were able to make behavioural changes. By helping participants acknowledge and accept what they experienced, for example, as disappointing or shameful aspects of themselves, they were able to gain confidence and grow, personally and professionally. In many of the cases described above, participants were able to shift their relationships with themselves. This is described as “working through” (the state of coming to terms with and accepting a psychic situation), one of the main tasks of the analytic procedure and of systems psychodynamic coaching (e.g. Klein, 1997, p. 231; Obholzer & Miller, 2004, p. 44).

6.3.11 Timing, “coachability” and readiness for coaching

A few of the participants mentioned that they felt the timing of the coaching intervention could have been better and that, had it come at a different time, the impact would have been more noticeable (interpreted as ambivalence and possibly resistance towards entering into coaching). A number of authors have written about coaching readiness or “coachability” in relation to the effectiveness of coaching (e.g. Bluckert, 2008; Rogers, 2012). Other participants embraced the opportunity for coaching, stating that it had come at exactly the right time; their positive assessments in their essays of the gains made from coaching are testimony of this. The participant who self-referred for career coaching was motivated and engaged in the coaching work, particularly as he was also self-funding the intervention. But even with him there were numerous cancellations, mainly due to his overseas business travel, and times where sessions could have been more effective had he done more work in between sessions (for example, work on updating his CV or any of the other career management exercises). This avoidance was interpreted as his reluctance, and perhaps inertia actually to face the prospect of leaving a job he really enjoyed, despite his dissatisfaction with his employing

organisation. The participants who felt they had been specifically referred to remedial coaching displayed more resistance; but even for most of them when they began to see the unhelpful nature of some of their patterns of thinking, feelings and behaviours and started to perceive the benefits of modifying these patterns, based on developing awareness and insight, the engagement and motivation was present. For most of the participants, the timing of the coaching seemed to be appropriate. More importantly their readiness and coachability was reflected in their willingness to explore troubling scenarios, and find reasons for and solutions to these problems.

6.3.12 The coach's personal reflections

In using himself as an instrument (Bell & Huffington, 2008; Pooley, 2004; Sandler, 2011), the coach became aware of the counter-transferential feelings, thoughts and behaviours aroused in him by the clients and the introjections he took on of, for example, the benevolent fatherly figure or the figure of authority or the expert career coach who must get the process "right". Approaching each new encounter with a client with a sense of hopefulness but also perhaps an over developed sense of responsibility for "the cure", knowing intellectually that any behaviour change is the client's responsibility and yet still feeling (perhaps excessively) accountable for achieving positive coaching outcomes. What drives his own performance anxiety and to what extent does this hamper or enhance his performance as a coach? As mentioned, the coach's own supervision as well as the discussions with his academic research supervisor were useful in helping him to understand the nature of the unconscious object relations and his valence for taking on certain roles or being triggered even by unspoken client expectations. He also became aware of the areas he might have avoided, such as the client's shadow side and what the significance of this avoidance might have been. Being able to discuss the counter-transference, projections and projective identification in supervision sessions was helpful and facilitated his being able to give back (surrender, relinquish and reflect back to the client) the projections and the projective identification once they were understood and acknowledged as normal unconscious manifestations and a part of systems psychodynamic coaching.

This aided the coach to re-authorise himself in, and return once again to, his role as researcher/coach and also assisted the clients to take back and own their own projections.

6.4 THEMES: AN OVERVIEW

The ACIBART model (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005; van Niekerk, 2011) as described in section 2.5 in Chapter 2 was used as the primary one for understanding the systems psychodynamics of career transitions; in other words, the ACIBART concepts (anxiety, conflict, identity, boundaries, authority, role, task) and other constructs were regarded as a useful way of analysing and categorising the themes that emerged from the research. Other relevant systems psychodynamic concepts such as containment and transitional space were also employed. In this section the various themes discerned from the data (coaching notes, email correspondence and client essays) are highlighted (verbatim quotes are in italics) and discussed. Interpretations are offered and working hypotheses suggested for each of the seven ACIBART and other constructs. By understanding how psychodynamic processes within people help shape the relationship between them (Hirschhorn, 1988), the researcher has attempted to understand how leaders cope with career transitions.

6.4.1 Theme One: Anxiety

Change, even when intellectually acknowledged as necessary or desirable, always arouses anxiety (Miller, 1991, p. xviii). Cilliers and Koortzen (2000), regard anxiety as the basis of all organisational behaviours within the work environment, while according to Hirschhorn (1988) feelings of anxiety are the fundamental roots of distorted or alienated relationships at work.

Anxiety, in the researcher's view, was the overriding overt and covert emotion of almost all of the participants (Bossons, Kourdi & Sartain, 2012). He worked from the assumption that anxiety would arise from any situation involving change, uncertainty,

real or threatened loss, the risk of criticism, rejection or failure, all of which are inherent in career/role transitions and in 21st century working life in general (Curtis, 2015; Diamond, 2009; Hirschhorn, 1988; Kets de Vries, 2001; Sandler, 2011; Sonnenberg, 1997). Klein (1997) referred to this as annihilation anxiety and it is a key feature of the paranoid-schizoid position. The different types of anxiety identified and the efforts to contain the anxiety in the form of defence mechanism are illustrated below:

6.4.1.1 *Fear of the future and the unknown*

The initial anxiety in the chemistry sessions and at the start of coaching, and the need for the creation of a safe psychological space for the building of trust or a working alliance is thought to be a common issue when clients enter coaching (e.g. Korotov, 2007; Pooley, 2004; Sandler, 2011; Shekshnia, 2007); it is not necessarily related to career transitions. The resistance this anxiety represents was understood and worked with in the coaching (Bell and Huffington, 2008).

Most of the participants expressed some initial concern, apprehension and anxiety about entering into a coaching relationship. Some entered coaching willingly even though all except two (who sought individual coaching for support with a career transition dilemma) had been referred by their organisations. Of those referred, some were for developmental and some for remedial coaching. The anxiety expressed related to a fear of the unknown (Cilliers, 2017; Curtis, 2015). One participant reflected his concerns and questions...*how coaching works and what will be required of me?* (Case six) while the concern aroused by disclosure and vulnerability was expressed by Case ten: ...*I am an extremely private person and do not need anyone to analyze my inner thoughts, fears, goals etc. There is always an element in these sessions where you have to express yourself, identify and analysis (sic) your feelings - I am sure I am one of many that do not enjoy these sessions.*

(Case six) continued: *Initially I was uncertain of what to expect and was indeed a bit nervous. The nervousness was quickly dispelled in our initial face to face meeting. I felt*

that the chemistry was there and I was asked by my coach if I had any uncertainties or questions. I was allowed to ask questions and I asked exactly how the sessions worked. The coach indicated how the sessions would work and how I would effectively “set the agenda”.

6.4.1.2 *Remorse, fear and not being good enough – performance anxiety*

There were participants who expressed doubts about whether they had made the right choice in accepting the new role (Case one): *I have these Sunday night regrets; I feel remorse and that I have made the wrong decision.* This could be seen as a flight response to the anxiety experienced in relation to the new role (Brill, 1995; Curtis, 2015). Another participant also newly appointed in her role (Case two) said: *I am filled with anxiety about not making it in my new role; I feel overwhelmed and like I’m drowning).* Hankering back to an idealised past also caused some anxiety for certain participants who had taken on new roles*caught between where I find myself now and what I knew I was capable of previously.* For this participant (Case one), her new matrix role was different to that of her previous line manager role where she exercised positional power; the transition may have highlighted her lack of interpersonal skills. The anxiety she felt was caused by feeling “at sea” and also being confused and surprised by her initial lack of effectiveness and impact in her new, different role, compared to her success in her previous role. The conflict between the actual and idealised self (Stapley, 2006) raises anxiety. Performance or anticipatory anxiety, often driven by unattainable perfection and high expectations of oneself (Czander, 1993) is a fear of being humiliated or rejected by others (Nicholson and Torrissi, 2006). The fear of being “ordinary” and of making a mistake, hence surfacing a flaw, could send people suffering from performance anxiety spiralling into collapse. Separation anxiety lies at the core of the human psyche and, probably because of its early developmental origin, is more critical than any other form of anxiety experienced by human beings (Amado & Elsner, 2007; Lazar, 2014). Separation from what was familiar, to the feared unknown, was a source of anxiety for many of the participants. See also transition anxiety below.

One participant (Case seven) expressed her feelings of inadequacy as doubt about her ability and listed the following questions in her mind as she took on a new role: *Have I done the right thing? Am I good enough for this? What is my Boss going to think? What are my colleagues going to think? Am I going to make a fool of myself? Am I still going to have a job?*

Another participant (Case one) said: *"I do not feel that I make a difference"* (in her new role). In other words, despite being formally authorised to take up her role (see later section 6.4.3 on Authority), she was consumed by feelings of inadequacy, fear of rejection and failure, and questioned her own worth and value (Czander, 1993; Gabriel & Carr, 2002; Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). The same participant spoke about her anxiety in meetings in the early stages of her new role where she was silent, unable to make a contribution because of her lack of familiarity with the subject matter and mentioned how the fact that she never spoke up made her feel increasingly anxious. Yet another participant (Case two) expressed her fear of not only failing in her new managerial role but also of being attacked by the hostile team she had inherited and whom she referred to as *...ganging up on me...* This could be understood as a form of persecutory anxiety, characteristic of the paranoid-schizoid position where the destruction of the self is feared (Huffington, et al., 2004). Perhaps she was being attacked because she was not the saviour the team had hoped for and their hopes and expectations of being rescued were not being met. Ongoing conflict between this new manager and the team she took over marred the relationship and was the cause of her eventual downfall. As she was not the first manager in this role to whom this had happened, a deeper analysis was conducted where it was interpreted that the manager became the container for the team's unhappiness. Operating in the fight/flight basic assumption mode (Obholzer & Miller, 2004), this team projected its unhappiness, and dissatisfaction onto the manager whose valence made her a natural container: Case two: *Growing up, I was always known as the sweet child - the one that tried to please others. This accommodating and kind nature stuck and seemed to be part of my character. I always established relationships easily and had good connections with colleagues in all my previous roles. This made this new situation all the more difficult*

as I strived to “make people like me” and belong in the group. The more she tried to be “nice”, the more they confronted, blamed and undermined her (Czander, 1993), making the situation intolerable and leading to her resignation. In Amado and Elsner’s (2007) language, she became a “scapegoat” (p. 174) and may have been the victim of what White (2013) has referred to as “mobbing”, especially as one attempts to enter and be accepted into a new group (p. 92/3).

A male participant (Case six), who took over the role of his senior, successful but now retiring predecessor, expressed the concern that because of his comparative youth and inexperience relative to his predecessor he might not be taken seriously by the longstanding clients of his organisation. These somewhat oedipal concerns - feeling inferior to his senior predecessor and concerned about betraying him and their longstanding relationship (Amado & Elsner, 2007) - resulted in (castration) anxiety for this new incumbent and may have resulted not only in feelings of not being good enough but also some guilt in wanting to make changes to the way things had been done previously. In addition, anxiety about the conflict between wanting to honour his respected predecessor by keeping things the same and realising that he may have a different approach or new ideas which could serve clients better.

Inevitable comparisons with previous incumbents in the role were made, leaving certain participants feeling somewhat threatened and insecure. Role (as will be seen later in section 6.4.4) is filled and moulded by the role holder or person who has a history of taking up different roles throughout their life, which Long (2006) refers to as the person’s role biography.

6.4.1.3 Other forms of anxiety

In this section other forms of anxiety which came up in the analysis are presented: anxiety about leaving, separation anxiety, loss and legacy; fragmentation anxiety; transition anxiety; persecutory anxiety; organisation anxiety and finally anxiety as a force for positive change.

- *Anxiety about leaving, separation anxiety, loss and legacy*

Primitive anxiety is thought to be contained by instilling in institutions the function to protect and defend their members by providing a safe haven and sense of belonging while protecting members from feelings of isolation and loneliness (Miller, 1993). The threat of becoming estranged from the institution, through processes such as retirement, retrenchment or institutional change, could trigger a flood of primitive anxiety (Naik, 2014). The mid-career participant (Case three), facing leaving the organisation due to ill health after a successful executive career, experienced panic attacks, sweating and nausea (not only associated with his medical diagnosis). He referred to these episodes as ...*meltowns*.... His sense of self and identity had been tied almost exclusively to his work role; the prospect of losing this in addition to the inescapable financial concerns and being able to provide for his family, including a disabled son, was a source of tremendous anxiety for him. In the context of this participant, the concept of legacy featured strongly in the coaching and he discussed his anxiety about leaving one, perhaps exacerbated as a function of his mid-life stage when the meaning of legacy deepens but also perhaps as a result of his thoughts of his premature mortality (Gould, 2006; Jaques, 1965). Images of the legacy flourish in mid-life transition (Levinson 1988, p. 218), defining to a large degree the ultimate value of the person's life. The lives of the mid-lifer's children, their personal satisfactions, accomplishments and contribution are an essential part of the legacy. For many, work is the most significant component of the life structure and the major source of the legacy, yet in the mid-life transition a person must move to a more realistic view of her occupational legacy – either an inflated view of her past successes or the depressing realisation that her previous successes were not so grand as she had imagined (Kets de Vries, 1978; Levinson, 1988, p.220). In consequence, the realisation that his cumulated achievements and skills could not provide a basis for further advancement due to his illness, falling short of his early dream, was a crucial turning point for this participant (Case three). He was forced to reduce his interest in work and invest himself

more in other aspects of life such as his family, his children and the church, which he found personally fulfilling.

Kets de Vries (1978) described retirement along with mid-career as one of the most critical points on the career cycle. The participant (Case four) who had recently retired from a long and successful corporate career expressed her anxiety about the conflict between her actual and idealised retirement – how she had thought she would spend her time and how she was spending it in reality. This, together with some guilt about a hedonistic first few months of retirement and ...*doing all the things I couldn't do while I was working*, raised feelings of anxiety and guilt about what she felt she should be doing. This was rationalised (a defence mechanism) by her saying: ... *I worked hard for this, why should I deny myself this time especially as I get older and I may not be able to do what I can now?* It is also interesting to note that despite an objectively successful career, this participant also expressed some doubt about the contribution she had made and whether she was ...*a failure?* The feelings of loss (including loss of self-worth and usefulness), rejection and abandonment brought about by (even voluntary) retirement (Corbett & Higgins, 2007; Critchley, 2002; Feldman, 2007; Levinson, 1988; Roncaglia, 2006; Sonnenberg, 1997) as well as the ability to sustain social and sexual roles, possibly aggravated by serious spousal health issues in this case and the first deaths in the peer group (Kets de Vries, 1978), provoked fear and anxiety, causing her to doubt herself and question her identity and role in the past, present and future. In this sense the transition resulted in anxious and questioning thoughts about an uncertain past and an unknown future.

Another participant (Case five) who was referred to coaching by an executive in the organisation to ... *sort out the devil in you...and tame your temper...* faced two types of transition over the duration of the coaching engagement: His immediate manager with whom he experienced a ...*hostile...* relationship in the initial stages of the coaching engagement had put him on a retrenchment list (an anticipated termination, itself stressful) not because his job was redundant but, one can assume, because their relationship had broken down irreparably: ...*you are on your own...* she said to him in

a particularly bad performance review. This could be viewed as a form of “psychological harassment” (Lhuillier, 2013, p. 41) or even bullying (White, 2013) on the part of this manager. He explained: *She is nasty and plays the man and not the ball...* . The second (actual) transition, in the final stages of coaching, interestingly was a promotion to a more senior role, after the line manager in question had left the organisation. Prior to the promotion, he described his anxiety in coming to work for someone *...who has no kind words for the foot soldiers and ... is very rude to me...* . Czander (1993) has stated that authority (and perceptions of power, one assumes) can have a profound effect on the psychic life of subordinates (p. 269). Transference, in this case negative and characterised by mutual hostility, is understood as the manifest mobilisation and (re-)enactment of latent, early childhood dramas (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005), usually in relation to parents or other significant early caregivers, shifted on to figures who come to occupy similar unconscious locations in later life. Such “parental” figures may become vilified and resented as the causes of all troubles; large amounts of aggression may be directed against them, often out of proportion between the strength of these feelings and any rational, objective explanation of the actions of others (Gabriel & Carr, 2002, p. 354). This client’s reaction is reminiscent of the rebelliousness of puberty and adolescence. While there may well have been counter-transference and defensive reactions (Schoonmaker, 1969) from this manager or even envy (as described by Obholzer, 1996), (the researcher never met her), one only seems to be able to understand the extent of the hostility between the two in these psychodynamic terms. His personality profile indicated a manager low on restraint while by his own admission he has *...strong opinions and is not afraid to voice them. I admit I have a temper and don’t back down and don’t suffer fools*. This is the picture of a manager on the brink of derailment (Bluckert, 2008). His personality profile also suggests he is insecure, doubts himself and is hesitant. Hence, when he is challenged in meetings, he experiences this as a personal attack and becomes aggressive and defensive. This self-defeating, regressive behaviour could also possibly be interpreted as a reaction to the feelings of entrapment at mid-career (Kets de Vries, 1978), expressed in terms of his obligations to his wife and children. Consequently the conflict between him and his manager and his colleagues spirals and he experiences it as “narcissistic mortification” (Czander,

1993, p. 272). In Gabarro's (2007) research he found that the key differentiator between successful and failed transitions was the new incumbent's relationship with key people and especially his new manager. According to Czander (1993), success or failure at work has little to do with reality and is a function of the subordinate's fantasised relationship with authority. He goes on to say that the fantasy of being loved, valued and admired at work, contained within the wished-for self-image, is exceedingly vulnerable in authority relations and that oedipal injuries result in feelings of shame, inferiority and worthlessness, manifesting in aggression and conflict in interactions (p. 272). This participant wrote in his essay: *... I think the nub of the issue revolves around my attitude to particular types of imposition of authority and how I deal with such situations. Specifically, it angers me when my opinions or thoughts are disregarded, or I am shown disrespect (in my opinion), through the imposition of power, rather than by addressing me with what I consider to be the basic human respect that all should be afforded. I suppose this comes from a deeply instilled sense that people should be respected or obeyed not because of their position or level of authority, but because of the person they are....*

Czander (1993) cites Gouldner (1954) who suggests that conflict increases in authority relationships when those in subordinate positions evade or rebel against perceived control and dominance while those in authority react by increasing *their* control and dominance, establishing new rules and regulations, to the point where the escalating (oedipal) conflict is repressed by creating bureaucratic institutional structures to ensure compliance. (See also the section on Conflict in section 6.4.2 below.) Compliance with any authority was a major theme in the coaching discussions with this participant who experienced anxiety in the conflict between what is required (to be a good organisational citizen) and what feels right for the individual. This concept of cognitive and emotional psychological autonomy (Amado & Elsner, 2007, p. 182) will be explored further in the Identity section 6.4.5 below.

Similarly, exercising authority can be an anxiety provoking experience (Stapley, 2006) and may stem from self-doubt (a weak ego as a result of a punitive superego). This will be explored further in the section on Authority in 6.4.3 below.

- *Fragmentation anxiety*

Amado and Elsner (2007) refer to a specific kind of anxiety experienced during transitions, termed fragmentation anxiety (p.173). Here the leader in trying to make sense of his/her new context, is situated between different opinions, analyses and choices, is identifying different and contradictory views, submerged under a continuous stream of information, thereby risking the loss of his/her sense of identity. The new leader has to “maintain his (sic) capacity to be alone in the midst of other people” (p.173). Gabarro (2007) who identified five distinct periods in the taking charge process, refers to this as the immersion period, a significant time of reflection and learning between bursts of activity where a greater understanding of the new situation is acquired. In this study this was evidenced by leaders saying it took time to understand the new context (“contextual empathy” (Amado & Elsner, 2007, p.173)) and role expectations. One participant (Case six) wrote: *“I need to regularly take time to stop and reflect and it is a challenge (for me) to be more regular (in my) journalling. I need to be more careful in managing my time. My colleagues have noticed a difference in that I am much more jealous (sic) with my time now.* Another participant (Case seven) described how she met individually with each member of the senior team she was going to inherit as part of her new managerial role and how each of them gave her a different view of the current situation in the organisation. She said she was obliged to sift through these opinions, form her own view and make some very difficult decisions about the future of that senior team and the business. She described the loneliness (Weinstock, 2011) of this time; even though she said she was aware of the life changing consequences of these decisions, she eventually had to give certain members ultimatums to make a decision about whether they were going to remain in the team or seek employment elsewhere.

Most participants noted that it took them a lot longer than they expected to get up to speed, supporting the findings of both Gabarro (2007) and Terblanche et al. (2017) who noted that the expectations that new managers should become effective sooner are very high as the pace of change increases. (Watkins' (2013) now well-known notion of the "first 90 days" suggests newly appointed leaders have three months to become effective in a new role). Amado and Elsner (2007) found that a realistic notion of the time it takes to carry out an initial diagnosis of the new situation was key to the new leader's success. This pressure to act rapidly also adds to the new person's feelings of anxiety and may be considered a form of persecutory anxiety. See also boundary management in section 6.4.6 below.

- *Transition anxiety*

Amado and Elsner (2007) refer to the "transition anxiety" (p. 170) a leader feels in a new role as a result of the deep feeling of unfamiliarity and strangeness they experience. They add that the new leader may experience the strangeness as a form of persecution, requiring him or her to conquer the new world. Another participant (Case eight) expressed the anxiety of being at sea and deracinated in a new role in an organisation which was facing grave uncertainty and momentous change thus: ... *Over the five-month period of the coaching my role description changed and I was given a nominal promotion in the organisation. I was now working in a work area which I had little to no experience in.... The initial coaching sessions became more 'off-loading sessions' dealing with the uncertainties of the here and now.* He said in one of his sessions that he felt *overwhelmed and daunted* (by the new role). Interestingly, this participant also said in an email to the researcher/coach in between coaching sessions ... *but I can't afford to show fear...* . Another (Case one) said: ...*I have to fake it until I make it...* which highlights the added pressure new incumbents feel early on in their role, not wanting to disappoint or let anyone down, or even let on about their vulnerability and uncertainty and confusion - especially to those who might have appointed them (as the chosen ones) to the role. The masquerade may also have led to feeling like an imposter, not quite living up to the expectations in the role. Amado

and Elsner (2007) state it is impossible for the new leader to remain indifferent to the fact of having been chosen. Moreover, leaders can acquire massive influence over their followers by placing themselves in the unconscious location of the position once occupied by powerful parental images (Gabriel & Carr, 2002).

- *Persecutory anxiety*

Persecutory anxiety (inherent in Klein's paranoid-schizoid position (Klein, 1997) was evident because participants feared being persecuted for not being good enough or inadequate. The fear of annihilation of the idealised object/self is defended against by using defences such as denial, splitting, projection and introjection (Czander, 1993). Fearing their own feelings of inadequacy, self-persecution and the consequent destructive impact, the researcher made the interpretation that the participants deny this fear by splitting it off and projecting it outwards. The "other" then becomes the persecutor.

Numerous examples of persecutory anxiety have already been mentioned, e.g. Case five in section 6.2.6 above.

- *Organisational anxiety*

It is relevant to note that the anxiety is also experienced by the organisation when there is a transition such as a leader leaving and a new leader appointed and, as a result, the members of that organisation are experiencing their own sense of loss and the disappearance of any sense of stability, mirroring the individual psyche (Amado & Elsner, 2007; Gabriel & Carr, 2002; Kets de Vries, 1991; Neumann, 2002). There may also be some apprehension about the new leader. Hence organisations themselves are systemic generators of anxiety (Gabriel & Carr, 2002), making unyielding demands on individuals and exacerbating anxieties which individuals may carry with them (and for which they may have an existing valence), over their self-worth, competence or ability to get on with others (as described above).

Issues around whether the new appointee is an insider or an outsider also affect the dynamics of the transition (Gabarro, 2007; White, 2013), with level of consultation about the appointee and individual expectations affecting how people might react. In one case, the participant (Case seven) faced an almost complete turnover in the existing senior team soon after she was appointed into her new role to lead them, demonstrating their own flight reactions to the anxiety generated about the prospect (or reality) of a new manager. Staff may also feel impatient about needed change (Gabarro, 2007) or idealise the past as a way to deal with their own anxiety, risk and uncertainty: “It was so much better when X was in charge”. The extent to which the new leader acknowledges what the existing team has accomplished in the past and the way s/he speaks of their past leader will also influence the way staff react to his/her appointment. This understanding of the team’s experience (of losing their previous leader and gaining a new one), and an acknowledgement of their current situation and previous accomplishments, became features of the coaching discussions for many participants in helping them contain and begin to build their new teams.

- *Anxiety as a force for positive change at an individual, team and organisational level*

Despite the pervasive nature of anxiety at work, Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) also assert that anxiety is not a disease, and might be the driving force or dynamo for creativity, innovation and coping ability, driving behaviour, thoughts, feelings, relationships and relatedness at an individual, team and organisational level. People with a positive image of the change may welcome it as a new opportunity (Amado & Elsner, 2007). Moving on (or renewal) does require a separation both for the individual and the organisation. The way the anxiety is experienced and dealt with will determine whether it is in fact a force for positive change or whether it becomes dysfunctional and immobilising (basic assumption behaviour). The positive impact of anxiety will be discussed further in section 6.5 below when the impact of systems psychodynamic executive coaching on career transitions is examined.

6.4.1.4 *Individual defences against anxiety*

Defence mechanisms develop as a reaction to the incapacitating anxiety experienced by a weak or weakened ego as regards the external world, moral anxiety in relation to the superego and the passions of the id. To deal with these painful and threatening anxieties, the ego provides energy for defence mechanisms (Gabriel & Carr, 2002; Kilburg, 2002a). The result is that these defences could distort organisational reality and task and may take up a lot of productive time, leading to off- and anti-task behaviour.

Klein (1952) believed that regression to infantile coping defences may occur when adults experience situations of extreme anxiety: Splitting, projection and projective identification are some of the more common immature defences. Splitting involves separating something or someone into opposites – good and the bad – possibly the basis for stereotypes later in life; projection and projective identification: unacceptable impulses/feelings being disowned, and projected onto or poured into the leader or the group just as the child pours unwanted feelings into the mother. Projective identification affects the object receiving the projection (Klein & Pritchard, 2006). Furthermore, when anxiety is provoked and there are insufficient or inadequate holding, containment and/or transitional objects, this will inevitably result in defence mechanisms automatically taking effect as a form of flight in the face of threat (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). When anxiety intrudes, rational procedures are distorted by irrational processes (Hirschhorn, 1988, p.3). Further examples of some of the defence mechanisms which manifested in the case studies are provided below:

- *Splitting, projection and projective identification*

The transition situation reinforces the tendency towards splitting (Amado & Elsner, 2007, p. 176). All the participants faced a higher level of complexity and a wide range of expectations held by multiple stakeholders. Some were obliged to overcome a lack

of knowledge about the organisation and/or department, possible skill gaps and how the organisation functions.

One of the issues highlighted for the participant whose role changed from that of a line manager to being more of a consultant in the matrix spoke about how she ... *writes people off if they don't meet my standards*. Her relatively under developed interpersonal skills were highlighted when she could no longer use her positional authority and had to mobilise more sophisticated influencing skills to get her work done. Bell and Huffington (2008) have referred to this as the primacy of lateral relationships over vertical ones, calling upon different skills from those in the traditional hierarchy. She was made particularly aware of her facial expressions such as the upward rolling of her eyes (in disdain and disapproval, possibly contempt and perhaps even superiority) when somebody said something she did not agree with or thought was foolish. Tact and diplomacy had been highlighted as development areas for her at the time of her appointment to her new role. She was aware of how this might (and in fact did) alienate her from her colleagues. Her behaviour could be regarded as a form of splitting and projection, pouring her own overwhelming feelings of incompetence (a characteristic she dislikes and feels uncomfortable with) into certain of her colleagues, behaving towards them as if they were incompetent while trying to retain the sense of coping and competence for herself (Bell & Huffington, 2008). Her own feelings of incompetence were perceived in the "other" (White, 2013, p. 32). By not perceiving her colleagues as complex entities i.e. she saw them as either all bad (especially the ones with whom she had difficult relationships) or all good (splitting) and her anxiety was somewhat paranoid (Case one - *...they add no value to me...*). This is the paranoid-schizoid position as described by Klein (1997) and Hirschhorn (1988, p. 3), made up of the triad of splitting, projection and introjection.

This behaviour also seemed to play a role in her personal life where her dismissing of others (potential suitors) acted as a shield to protect her from being hurt. In the workplace, it manifested in shallow and guarded relationships at best, and conflictual ones at worst, which hindered her adjustment to her new role. The words of Hirschhorn

(1988) are telling here; “when anxiety mobilises our behaviour, we experience other people not as they are but as we need them to be so they can play roles in our internal drama” (p. 49).

The participant (Case two) who felt she was always regarded as the *sweet child* may have projected her latent maliciousness (“bitchiness”) onto her team as the thought of herself being the cruel, expedient, nasty one was intolerable. When her team ganged up against and criticized her for being a poor leader, she reacted by taking on those projections from the team (projective identification) and introjected the feelings of incompetence, resulting in her being unable to find her voice as the leader of this difficult team and call them to order.

A similar example of another female participant (Case ten) who described herself as a retiring, shy, conflict avoidant person and who struggled with a bullying co-worker may have projected her own anger which was intolerable for herself, onto this co-worker and thereby have become the perfect victim, with the bullying reducing her to a manager who had lost her voice and her self-confidence (projective identification). Relating this back to a particularly humiliating early and public experience caused by her teacher when she was in junior school, forty five years ago, was a key moment of epiphany in the coaching (or what Kets de Vries (2013, p. 152) referred to as a tipping point in coaching). Her feelings of incompetence and worthlessness resonated with early childhood experiences (White, 2013).

- *Blame*

The participant (Case three) facing a severe, probably terminal illness blamed himself for contracting the illness, having been told by his neurologist that the condition was brought on by stress. Being an ambitious leader, he described how he *...drove...* himself to achieve in a previous role. This self-recrimination and self-blame, *...having brought this upon myself...*, in a distorted fashion way may have helped him deal with his anxiety about his illness (overwhelming guilt that had possibly been unconsciously substituted into a punishment that was this incurable illness); but the researcher

wonders what has happened to the anger at his previous boss or organisation for their role in “pushing” him beyond his limits to perform.

Issues about “good enough” mothering (Winnicott, 1965) were raised explicitly by two of the five female participants, claiming they felt they had neglected their maternal/family duties in favour of their careers and were feeling guilty about this. One of them (Case seven), whose only son had already left home at the time of the research, displaced this maternal role into her leadership role and by her own admission behaved like a ...*mother hen*..., nurturing her peers and staff members and becoming over-involved in their personal lives, rendering her efforts at performance managing her team, at best, benign. The splitting of self into “bad mother”, “good manager” has been noted by, for example, Naik (2014) as a way in which people alleviate anxiety. This may also be regarded as a form of reparation to the injured (Hirschhorn, 1988, p. 9; Sonnenberg, 1997, p. 466) in trying to restore a sense of personal wholeness in oneself.

- *Rationalisation*

Rationalisation as a defence mechanism was evidenced by the recently retired participant (Case four) who felt conflicted about her post retirement leisure time versus doing consulting work and furthering her studies: ...*I have worked hard for this and earned my retirement*... Then later in the coaching she reflected, ...*Who says I can't do BOTH all the things we love doing in (location) PLUS complete my (studies)?..*; and finally the realisation ... *I am not a failure*.

- *Pairing*

The researcher sat in as an observer on a team coaching session. A female participant (Case ten) who had also gone through individual coaching and who had been bullied by another female was present, as was the “bully”. A noticeable pairing basic assumption (Bion, 1961) between Case ten and a male colleague with whom the latter had been working, was observed. Case ten and the male colleague colluded against “the bully” who interestingly, but not surprisingly, was very quiet in the team coaching

session. The female participant had spoken previously in her individual sessions about the planning work she and the male colleague were engaged in to design and facilitate (give birth to) workshops, to launch the new computer system they had been working on for two years (gestation) to their colleagues in the business. This pairing basic assumption functioned to alleviate the anxiety about the bully but also possibly about the project coming to an end, with each of the project team members moving in to new or changed roles.

In attempting to understand the hostility between the male participant (Case five) and his female manager (mentioned above, who had prematurely placed him on the “retrenchment list”), it is possible that paranoid defences might have been at play, due possibly to depressive anxieties which became too great to bear (although there is no corroborating evidence for this). Definitely witnessed, however, were denial and projection, especially of aggression, and typical of paranoid defences, where the aggression is experienced as coming from outside in the form of persecution.

- *Regression*

Regression to an earlier role was noted in a number of the participants who experienced anxiety about their new roles. The new manager struggling to take up her role (Case two) regressed to the operational role, similar to what members of her team were meant to do. She occupied herself with the day to day tasks; in her words, *...I struggled to differentiate myself from the team....* and defaulted to her expertise and comfort zone. Another participant (Case eight) continued to occupy himself with the detail of his previous “researcher” role after he had been promoted into a programme managerial role. This was his comfort zone and while it alleviated his anxiety in some way (kept him “busy”) it also in some way exacerbated this emotion because he knew he was “off task” (see the later section 6.4.7 on task). This could also be perceived as a flight response, stepping out of one’s work role (Hirschhorn, 1988). Kernberg (1985b) highlights that regression in the leader may lead to organisational regression.

- *Suppression, anticipation and sublimation*

More adaptive and mature defences in contrast to the more primitive ones described above were adopted, such as suppression, anticipation and sublimation (Vaillant, 1977). At least two participants spoke about not being able to show their anxiety and confusion as they took up their new roles: One said: (Case eight)... *I am overwhelmed and daunted at the moment...but I can't afford to show fear or uncertainty....* Another (Case one) said *....I have to fake it until I make it....*The participant (Case two) who was struggling to find her authority in her managerial role submerged herself in her “work”, working excessive hours and over weekends. This was interpreted as a form of sublimation (avoiding of unconscious desires through work (Gabriel & Carr, 2002, p. 355)). It was almost as there was a sense that as long as she was “busy” and seen to be working “hard”, she might avoid the overwhelming anxiety of not performing in her managerial role. For some participants, this (conscious) suppression of anxiety and the (spoken and unspoken) anticipation that matters would improve indicated a form of resource generation in terms of mobilising psychological resources, flexibility, acquiring new skills and better adaptation to the role. Defensive behaviours stir simply a vague awareness of what an individual is protecting her- or himself against because the exact nature of the unacceptable feelings causing the anxiety rarely reaches consciousness (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2007). One of the purposes of executive coaching in the systems psychodynamic paradigm is to raise such consciousness by helping the leader recognise and better manage their defensive reactions, thereby heightening self-awareness. This will be dealt with further in the section on the impact of career transition coaching – see section 6.5.

6.4.1.5 System defences: Anxiety and the external context

Anxieties are also stirred by the socio-political-economic context and the nature of the work itself, and the defences to which they give rise further exacerbate stress rather than alleviate it (Obholzer & Roberts, 2003). In the case of the researcher mentioned above (Case eight), his organisation was caught up in the midst of political change following a change in local government, where the very survival of the organisation (and his job) was threatened. Another participant (Case nine) who sought career transition

coaching privately (i.e. not through his organisation) for a possible career move, not because he was not enjoying his job but due to the disillusionment he felt about the politics, mis-management and impact of unwarranted external influences on the governance and, in his mind, the ethics of his organisation, wrote this piece in his coaching essay: *Feelings of gloom despite having much to be grateful for is perilous. Gradually the negative overpowers and the shelter of pessimism and cynicism becomes warm and comfortable. People close to you begin to resonate without understanding why. Misty horizons move in and myopia sets in. Where you search despair is found. The country is falling and it is dragging your organisation down with it. You have to do something and it has to be drastic. The terminal problems must be escaped from. Leave for something better. Disappointingly the resonance is weak and no-one will follow. The horizons close in. The only choice is to desperately get off the falling organisation and find one that defies gravity.* Although somewhat dramatic, this piece does describe his feelings of desperation and helplessness and reflects a dilemma where he finds his job very stimulating and rewarding but knows that in the long term, he is not one of the “inner circle” (or in the “men’s hut”) (Ritti & Funkhouser, 1987, p. 3) and that being associated with a company with dubious practices of governance, could jeopardise both his reputation/credibility and his future career prospects. His anxiety relates to the clash between his own and the company’s value system and the need to make short term sacrifices for longer term career gains. The purpose of the career coaching was to help him prepare himself for a venture into a tough job market after a long period of job stability, and to evaluate possible alternative job opportunities.

One should recognise that organisations can both be a source of anxiety, discontent and illusion, and also a source of creativity and excitement for individuals, interfering in the constant dynamic between the individual’s ego and other mental agencies such as id and superego; these drives could penetrate their unconscious lives very deeply (Gabriel & Carr, 2002). These authors also refer to “psychostructures” and how organisations are arenas where wider social dynamics are acted out, expressed in different cultural and social artefacts, the interpretations of which yield insights into

shared conscious and unconscious fantasies among organisational members (p. 356). In the case of the participant mentioned in the preceding paragraph, what he experienced in his organisation is a microcosm, reflecting what many, particularly white males, are feeling about the country as a whole – displaced, marginal and vulnerable.

Two of the female participants (Cases seven and ten) were employed in the motor industry, known for being somewhat chauvinistic, male dominated and perhaps prone to hypermasculinity (Czander, 1993, p. 217), holding to an outdated cultural model of the single male hero leader (Sher, 2013, p. 187) and where females are simply “tolerated” (Gould, et al., 2006; Carlock, 2007). In one participant’s (Case seven) words, ... *I have got used to the swearing...* . Another female participant (Case ten), in the same industry, speaking of her male colleagues said ...*they broke me down....* Being in the minority led to feelings of incompetence and being obliged to work so much harder than their male counterparts to prove themselves (hence their anxiety) (Naik, 2014). This sentiment was not expressed by the other female participants in the study presumably because they were working in less aggressively male dominated disciplines and industries.

Organisations also offer defences against anxieties, manifested in responses such as structures, rules, bureaucracy (Gabriel & Carr, 2002, p.256). The auditing industry is extremely structured and rule bound (its system domain – being that of organisations with a similar primary task (Obholzer & Roberts, 2003)). The participant (Case six) working in this industry relied on procedures and structures such as agendas drawn up before meetings and tight role definitions to help him contain his anxiety. In this case the rules and procedures worked productively for the individual but they could also be dysfunctional routines which might stunt creativity, blocking the expression of emotion or conflict, undermining the organisation’s rational and effective functioning, and may contribute to the individual and collective delusions.

6.4.1.6 *Anxiety: Discussion*

The centrality of anxiety as an overriding emotion in working life has already been referred to. All the participants in this study experienced it in one form or another in relation to their career transitions. The major types highlighted in the analysis of the data were:

- Anxiety in the form of fear of the future and the unknown
- Remorse and anxiety about not being good enough (performance anxiety)
- Anxiety about leaving, separation and loss
- Fragmentation anxiety
- Transition anxiety
- Persecutory anxiety
- Organisational anxiety.

According to Stapley (2006), conflict and subsequent anxiety are precipitated by two or more opposing drives or thoughts, evident in the extracts provided above as well as in the cases described earlier. The anxiety took the form of dominant thoughts around competence in a previous role versus feeling incompetent, useless or floundering in the current, new role, being a major source of anxiety in career transitions. Remorse about having made the move and perhaps taken on more than they could cope with as well as questioning whether taking on the new role was the right thing to have done was also a feature of the early discussions with those participants who had moved into new, more complex roles and may indicate a desire to flee to the security and familiarity of their previous role. See also the discussion on loss below. As participants began to understand the requirements of the new role, many of them experienced performance anxiety in the sense that their real selves did not match up to their ideal selves in terms of performance and competence. In some cases there was the sense amongst the workforce that the new appointee would be the “saviour” (Amado & Elsner, 2007, p. 180); the unrealistic hopes and expectations of both the reporting staff as well as the line manager and peers of the transitioning manager added to the performance anxiety of the individual. Coupled with this was the transition anxiety (Amado & Elsner, 2007) which many participants experienced as a deep sense of unfamiliarity with the

requirements of the new role and in some cases the broader organisational context. There was also evidence of fragmentation anxiety (Amado & Elsner, 2007) which participants described as having to listen to everyone's view and take in many inputs, dealing with the expectations of multiple stakeholders before being able to formulate their own stance and make a stand on the way forward. (Many participants mentioned the value of reflective time or space to make sense and meaning of their new situations.) Persecutory anxiety (Klein, 1997) in the form of a threat to annihilate the self, characteristic of the paranoid-schizoid position was also experienced by some participants. Three, in particular, experienced persecutory anxiety in the form of real and/or imagined attacks from colleagues. One participant (Case five) was reminded of how he had been bullied at school; this connection with his past helped him to some extent understand and begin to change his current behaviour. The researcher surmised that the vulnerability and the fear of being found wanting, especially at a time of transition (or in the latter case, threatened transition), will predispose those with a valence for persecutory anxiety and in an environment which could be considered hostile, to experience such an emotion. Anxiety about loss, separation and leaving was also evident (Amado & Elsner, 2007). This was discovered particularly in those participants who left their roles or organisations (one through ill health and the other through retirement) but also in those cases who chose voluntary resignation or demotion (or job relinquishment (Gouws (1995)) as a result of their difficult circumstances. Separation anxiety was complicated in some cases by shame about the change in status (having been, and perhaps perceived as having been, unsuccessful in a previous role). Bereavement and grieving for what was but can no longer be was evident in some cases (Miller, 1993).

Organisational anxiety was also evident in the discussions with the participants mainly in the form of anxiety about the uncertainty related to the appointment of a new manager and the changes this new person might bring about (as a kind of saviour) but also in the form of loss of the old and familiar (Amado & Elsner, 2007).

To cope with the overwhelming anxiety associated with, and possibly triggered by, the career transition, many of the participants employed defence mechanisms (Obholzer & Roberts, 2003). This resulted in a preoccupation with survival and off-task behaviour (Stapley, 2006) in the form of regression to tasks with which the participants were familiar and/or overcompensation in the form of working excessively long hours. The other major defence mechanisms observed were flight (as a basic assumption state – wanting to flee from the current role into a more familiar earlier role); splitting, projection and projective identification (this took many forms as discussed above; blame (and in particular, self-blame for one case’s medical condition); rationalisation (to justify for example a more hedonistic lifestyle after retirement); pairing (as a basic assumption, as protection from the bully and in the hope of creating functional IT/systems workshops) and suppression (not being able to show fear or anxiety publicly), anticipation (in the hope that if they continue to apply themselves, things will improve and sublimation (substitute or keep anxiety at bay by working “hard”).

6.4.1.7 Anxiety: Working hypothesis

Before formulating a working hypothesis about the role of anxiety in career transitions, the researcher lists the following conclusions which were drawn from the analysis of the data relating to anxiety:

- Transition results in people feeling more vulnerable, fragile and uncertain; it exacerbates anxiety especially about feelings of self-worth and competence
- Transition may highlight skill and competence deficiencies which heightens anxiety
- Performance anxiety is heightened during a transition and can result in primitive defence mechanisms being mobilised such as projection, splitting and projective identification leading to off task behaviour

- Regression to a former level of task performance is a common defence mechanism in transitions
- Despite the overwhelming anxiety experienced at a career transition, it is unwise to express it publicly with participants reporting having to repress anxiety as its not career promoting to display fear and incompetence; also one cannot disappoint those who have shown confidence by appointing her or him
- Most participants said they had underestimated the impact of the transition in the form of the external and internal work it required of them
- Anxiety constricts an individual's ability to think more broadly about issues they are struggling with (Gould, 2006) while career transition coaching was seen to offer a containing environment for the understanding and subsequent reduction of overwhelming anxiety
- Anxiety may also have a positive effect and mobilises resources for coping and adaptation to the new role

On the basis of these conclusions, the following working hypothesis about career transitions and anxiety was formulated: Career transitions are characterised by pervasive anxiety of various types. To alleviate this inherent anxiety for leaders in transition, reliance is placed both on conscious, but mostly unconscious, defence mechanisms. If the defences are primitive and basic their deployment may result in off task behaviour. Anxiety, if contained (Obholzer, 2005), i.e. not overwhelming can also have a positive, energising effect, mobilising leaders in transition to act as indicated above.

6.4.2 Theme two – Conflict

Conflict is regarded as a natural, human condition which often drives performance, creativity and progress (Gould et al., 2006). Cilliers & Koortzen (2005) interpret conflict as a split between differences which might, for example, manifest intrapersonally (within the individual between thoughts and feelings), intrapsychically (as the conflict between the id, ego and superego), interpersonally (the experience of differences between two or more team members), intra-group (differences between sub-groups or factions) and or inter-group (differences between one team or department and the larger organisation). Examples of each of these forms or levels of conflict, which were noticed in the data analysis and which manifested differently for each of the participants, will be elucidated below.

6.4.2.1 Intrapersonal conflict

Taking a role in an organisation unavoidably gives rise to an inner occurrence in which internalised object relationships to important relevant earlier persons are stimulated (Sievers & Beumer, 2006); these introjects, sometimes consciously but mostly unconsciously, collide with the reality of the organisation.

Intrapersonal conflict manifested in one of the participants (Case nine) in the form of his dilemma about remaining in an organisation because he really enjoyed his work but was wanting to leave because he knew there was no long term future there for him. He expressed his dilemma thus: *...My job is stimulating, exciting, rewarding and challenging. I have opportunities which few others have and the exposure I am getting is what I yearned for and worked for all my life. In stark contrast to this is the fact that I cannot envisage a positive future for my organisation, no matter how optimistic I am...* Another participant (Case two) said she needed the income the managerial role afforded her but was desperately struggling to establish herself in the role and was feeling very unhappy and anxious, working excessive hours, which was impacting on her already fragile health. A further example was observed in the participant (Case

three) who was diagnosed with a life threatening illness and whose condition deteriorated over the course of the coaching engagement. His work was a source of satisfaction for him from both a personal performance as well as a recognition point of view. Realising that he no longer had the strength to perform in his role, he had to deal with the conflict by making a decision to apply for an ill health disability pension. He wrote: *...Every day is a battle. I can't do this anymore....* And later: *...I had to put up the white flag....*, indicating that he had finally had to acknowledge he could no longer continue in his role.

6.4.2.2 *Intrapsychic conflict*

The conflict an individual experiences as a result of unacceptable feelings or desires (usually in the form of conflict between id, ego and superego) creates anxiety and leads to defensive reactions described earlier (Kets de Vries, 2006).

Intrapsychic conflict was noticed in the participant (Case four) who had retired and was triggered by this significant career transition. One part of her wanted to take full advantage of the leisure being retired offered her and her spouse (the id), but her superego was telling her she should do consulting work and complete her studies that she had embarked on a few years previously (super-ego). Highlighting the conflict between her ego ideal (see Gould, 2006) and the current reality: *My contract with (her employer) came to an end in February so I've been "fully" retired for almost three months now. It's been a bigger transition than I anticipated, but not for the reasons that I would have originally anticipated. I always saw myself "working" for at least another ten years and this year's goal was certainly to finish my (research), now that I have all this time on my hands. To the contrary, however, I have not touched my (research), for these three months nor have I been proactive in seeking further work.... I have been having an absolute ball in the freedom of being able to do exactly what I feel like doing, when I feel like doing it* It will be recalled that this participant also expressed her guilt at the possibility of isolating herself from her spouse (as she had done while she was in full time employment) in her research and consequently not being available

to him (he had retired some years before her and was anxious for them to be retired together).

Intrapsychic conflict also manifested in the participant (Case nine) who experienced dissonance between his own personal values and those of his employing organisation. While he enjoyed his role very much, as described above, he could not reconcile himself with the way in which the organisation conducted itself and chose to do business. The clash in basic values between his own view of his idealised self (and how he would like to conduct himself) and the reality of the organisational values, culture, ethics and conduct was a source of intrapsychic conflict for him; it precipitated his exploration of career transition coaching to help prepare him for his search for alternative employment.

6.4.2.3 *Interpersonal conflict*

Conflict between individuals manifested in a number of cases. The new-comer to the head office function and to an existing, intact work team (Case one) experienced conflict with a number of her colleagues. Whether as a result of the sibling rivalry between her and her peers for the manager's attention or because of her disdain for her colleagues who lacked operational experience, she clashed with a number of them. She protected herself by projecting the incompetence into her colleagues. The conflict between one participant (Case five) and his manager could perhaps be interpreted as a form of persecutory anxiety where, in the paranoid-schizoid position, he perceived her as all bad, projecting his badness onto her (and claiming on more than one occasion in the coaching *...I am not a bad person...*), possibly as a result of his early childhood experiences. Reflecting on his coaching journey, he wrote in his essay: *We discussed how this (an early experience of being bullied at school) may have contributed to my feelings of anger when I am confronted with similar experiences at work – that of someone using their power or authority when confronted with a disagreement, and my absolute unwillingness to back down in the face of such authority, which could be interpreted as defiance or a “problem with authority”.*

The interpersonal conflict described by the participant (Case ten) in relation to her bullying co-worker offers another example of interpersonal conflict. Whatever the bully's motivations were, this participant became the perfect container for her anger. She wrote: *During the 18-month period that we worked together, I was constantly bullied by the project manager. My self-confidence slowly disintegrated. In the beginning of the implementation, I would propose new suggestions for the new systems, new processes etc., but my ideas would be criticized, always in front of an audience. My feelings at that point were that of ineffectiveness, incompetence and uselessness. From here onwards, I made no suggestions, or contributed any ideas or suggestions, both (of) which I thought was detrimental to the project and my personal growth.* Interestingly, the conflict was brought to a head when, at the end of the project, and slowly finding her voice, this participant moved from the office shared with the “bully” into her own office as part of her taking on and making a new post-project role. Facing losing her “victim”, the bullying co-worker made life very difficult for this participant for a while until she could establish her independence. These behaviours of both bully and victim are consistent with those described in the literature (e.g. Cilliers, 2012b; White, 2013).

6.4.2.4 Intragroup conflict

Intragroup conflict was manifested as a form of sibling rivalry (or what Perini (2014) called “workplace envy”, p. 44) between members of the team vying for the manager's attention as described earlier (Case one). Another example was the conflict described by a participant (Case eleven) between the more senior and junior members of her department. The junior members were engaged in more repetitive work and there was a high turnover amongst them. The more senior members who had more tenure and experience were always having to “pick up the slack” on behalf of the junior members of the team, resulting in conflict between the two groups.

6.4.2.5 Intergroup conflict

The only examples of intergroup conflict could be the “testing” experienced by the participant (Case ten) in her new role as she set up the implementation workshops following the culmination of the IT project. Some of her business colleagues demonstrated resistance to attending and contributing to the workshops run by the legacy project team, claiming they were too busy. A second example was the conflict described by the participant (Case eleven) leading a small finance team which provided an information and support service to internal colleagues in the insurance industry who were more sales oriented. Perhaps as a result of the gender and seniority split (what Czander (1993, p. 320) has termed differences in status and prestige), the sales managers seemed to treat the finance team meant to support them with disdain and derision. In the words of her manager they ...*walk all over her*....and by implication, her department. Each group became the victim of the other’s projective fantasies (Czander, 1993, p. 334). It was this weakness (amongst others) that prompted her manager to seek coaching for her and which eventually resulted in her deciding to relinquish her role.

6.4.2.6 Conflict: Discussion

Conflict is an inherent if not desirable aspect of organisational life (Kilburg, 2002; Western, 2013). There is a link between anxiety and conflict – the higher the levels of anxiety, the greater the likelihood for conflict, while likewise, excessive conflict will exacerbate anxiety (Stapley, 2006). Kets de Vries and Korotov (2007) refer to the conflict triangle comprising hidden feelings, defensive behaviours and conflict, maintaining that every individual experiences conflict due to unacceptable feelings, wishes or ideas that create anxiety and lead to defensive reactions. In this study, conflict manifested at five different levels: intrapersonal, intrapsychic, interpersonal, intragroup and intergroup. At the first four levels the conflict may have been precipitated or at least exacerbated by the career transition.

Intrapersonal conflict arises when there is a clash between two opposing drives; the examples highlighted above illustrate the conflict between what the participants would

ideally have liked and the dawning reality of what is possible. In the examples provided the source of the anxiety experienced as a result of these personal dilemmas was conscious or made conscious through the coaching by understanding the nature of the predicaments and what was driving the needs. The intrapsychic conflict was also experienced as a clash between opposing forces (usually between the id and superego) but possibly at a deeper level. The anxiety aroused by these conflicts was dealt with by defence reactions notably splitting (into good and bad) and projection (of badness onto the other). Interpersonal conflict, also highlighted by actual or anticipated changes in role, manifested in the form of protecting or establishing boundaries (e.g. moving into a different office), while the anxiety aroused as a result of the interpersonal conflict was also defended against by adopting the paranoid-schizoid position, characterised by splitting and projection.

At its core, interpersonal conflict relates to the reactivation of childhood dramas and needs in the form of the transference relationship (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2007) and the realisation that these are unlikely to be met through current workplace relationships. Intragroup conflict manifested in the form of splits between the older staff members and the newcomer but also as they competed for the attention of the manager. When one part of a system uses identity, roles and tasks to differentiate itself from another part, a psychological boundary is shared by those parts; this might lead to organisational or even departmental fragmentation (Stapley, 2006). Intergroup conflict, while observed in this study, was not thought to relate to or be associated with a career transition but in the case of one participant (Case eleven), its existence was cause for concern about the competence and skills of the manager of one of the groups.

6.4.2.7 Conflict: Working hypothesis

Making or even contemplating a career or role transition led to conflict, or exacerbated conflict already present in a system. This conflict could be intrapersonal (where the conflict is turned inwards on the self), interpersonal or intragroup manifesting in conflict that is acted out between individuals, as well as intergroup conflict which manifests as

conflict between subsystems of a bigger system. Whatever the level of conflict, the anxiety this generated led to the use of defence mechanisms which might result in off-task behaviour and lead to fragmentation.

6.4.3 Theme three: Authority and power

Authority is the product of organisation and structure and derives from a shared task, externally sanctioned by the organisational structure and internally, in the mind of the leader (Sher, 2013). It is the energy relevant to the performance of the task (Hirschhorn, 1997). According to Stapley (2006), power and authority are notions impossible to escape. Thus authority to take-up the management or leadership role emanates from multiple sources: from above (the organisation and senior management), laterally (peers and colleagues), from below (direct reports, followers, see for example Eisold, 2004) and from within (self or personal authorisation) (Czander, 1993). Authority is exercised in the context of the sanction provided by the followership which can be given or withheld. If this withholding interferes with the achievement of the organisation's primary task, it is probably indicative of individual and systemic anxieties which need to be addressed (Sher, 2013). Power and resistance are complementary and interdependent (Western, 2013, p. 76) and power is fluid; it is not just at the top but everywhere.

6.4.3.1 The absence of authorisation

The instance (Case two) of the new manager promoted into a leadership role with a resistant team is a case in point and has been alluded to earlier. In this case self-authorisation and authorisation from below were absent (no or "boarding house followership" in Obholzer and Miller's (2004, p. 43) terms), with the lack of the two contributing to what can only be described as a negative spiral which eventually, after a particularly harsh and critical performance review by one of her managers, resulted in the resignation of this participant. Perhaps in Brunning's (2007a) terms, the situation was beyond salvation. This participant wrote in her essay: *...I felt like I was drowning*

and had absolutely no work life balance whatsoever. Adding to the pressure, I had inherited a difficult team who were specialists in the systems of the organisation and generally were put out by my presence as an outsider taking over. A few months passed and after an extremely difficult 360 process which highlighted my challenges as a manager, I requested leadership development coaching. Growing up, I was always known as the sweet child - the one that tried to please others. This accommodating and kind nature stuck and seemed to be part of my character. I always established relationships easily and had good connections with colleagues in all my previous roles. This made this new situation all the more difficult as I strived to “make people like me” and belong in the group... . White (2013) describes the difficulties of joining a new group, maintaining that new-comers are particularly vulnerable, and suggests that adults who struggle in this area may have had traumatic childhood or adolescent experiences in being harassed or rejected by a group.

Unfortunately the possible childhood origins of this difficulty were not explored with this participant due to the rather short term coaching contract. Referring to the excessive workload she and the team had to endure she said: *...I felt bad for the team and the excessive work that they had and subsequently took on more and more, which again contributed to a lower focus on actually managing the team... .* In White's (2013) terms, she retreated into submissiveness (p. 59) taking on the hard working role for the system. She realised too late the absence of self-authorisation and, as mentioned earlier, the researcher suspected that her own managers subtly encouraged her de-authorisation by allowing the team members to bring problematic issues directly to them instead of referring them back to their manager. Always having to be the “sweet child” as the way to gain approval de-authorized her too.

Bell and Huffington (2008) distinguish between the use of power and authority. While the effective leader needs both, power is located in the individual in terms of personality or position and the availability and deployment of resources (Sher, 2013), while authority is located in a role (Miller & Rice, 1975). Therefore being authorised in a role but not possessing resources (power) to carry out the role and by the same token,

having a powerful personality and access to resources but not being authorised (from above, the side or below), will result in a weak connection with the primary organisational process and hinder the objectives of the organisation from being achieved.

Many participants struggled to find the inner authority and act with confidence in their role and may have suffered from the imposter syndrome (Kets de Vries, 2010; Western, 2013, p. 74). Consequently, while positional power may authorise a leader to make decisions about resources (people and money), the backing from above, below and the side may not give him or her total authority; authority is always partial and in the process of negotiation with oneself and with a team of peers and/or followers. As Obholzer and Roberts (2003) have suggested, full authority is a myth. Good enough authority, at its best, is a state of mind arising from a continuous combination of authorisation sanctioned from above, below and within. According to Obholzer (1994), authority without power leads to a weakened and demoralised management; power without authority to an authoritarian regime. Taking up personal authority (taking up one's legitimate agency) is not the same as being authoritarian (implying coercion or abuse). How power is attained and used is the question (Western, 2013, p. 77).

6.4.3.2 Positive authorisation

A positive example of this is the leader (Case six) who had worked in the same branch of his organisation for seventeen years and was promoted following a transparent, rigorous process of assessment (by a development centre – see section 6.5.4 on assessments below), feedback and an outcome of being “promoted with the proviso of coaching” for needed competencies which were not at the acceptable level. As the obvious choice, his promotion was announced, his previous subordinates briefed and he was systematically introduced by his predecessor and previous manager (who was going to be retiring) to the important clients he would be taking over. On the surface, this was a “clean” appointment, done “by the book” (not surprising for the auditing industry) and the participant was the popular choice of many, not just his managers

and the HR Department. The only aspects that might have been lacking and which became the content of the coaching sessions were his self-authorisation and, because of his personality, the absence of feeling of being entitled to this promotion, which was effected purely on merit. As the coaching progressed the researcher/coach and participant examined what might be holding him back from feeling fully entitled to this role and taking up his authority. His anxiety related to his relative youth, inexperience at this level and the inevitable comparisons to the gravitas of his predecessor (and the possible oedipal issues mentioned above – how can I kill and supersede the very one who promoted me?). A metaphor of “trying on” the leader’s clothes but not yet permanently wearing them as his own came up in the coaching sessions. Interestingly, a shift occurred when, after a month in the new role, the participant moved from his previous desk in an open plan office to a private, corner office with two windows. He reported feeling that his colleagues were reacting differently towards him and he slowly began to feel comfortable in his new role. The change in spatial boundary assisted in his authorisation.

He also experienced three fortuitous opportunities to reinforce his new role and authority: He was required to lead a day long culture workshop to debrief the entire staff on the annual climate survey his company conducted. With the benefit of discussing in our coaching session how he would take up his leadership role on the day and voicing the concerns he had, he reported that the day (which had previously been conducted by his superior) was a great success with excellent participation and collaboration in a climate of honesty, facing difficult truths in the organisation. This was corroborated by his manager and by the participants at the workshop. Another opportunity was that of being asked to give the farewell speech to his predecessor at his farewell party (itself a rite of separation (Mayrhofer & Iellatchitch, 2005) and “proper ending” (Pooley, 2007, p. 126)) after a long and illustrious career. Thirdly, while attending an important client meeting at the client’s premises some distance away from his office and home, he was forced to stay overnight, again fortuitously at the same guest house where the senior board members of this organisation were overnighing. Although tempted to an early night because of a long day and an early start the next

morning, and not relishing the thought of socialising with these senior, important, and mostly older people, he reluctantly accepted the invitation they extended to him to eat dinner with them.

It turned out that, following an initial period of awkwardness and feeling threatened and intimidated by this group (perhaps feeling inferior to them), he settled into the evening and was able to interact with them. Having initially wanted to have an early night but knowing that “networking” and impression management (see DuBrin, 2011) were some of the skills he had identified as gaps and that were being worked on in our coaching, he found the energy and courage to accept the dinner invitation and turned it to his advantage in making an appropriate impact and raising his profile (also one of his coaching goals). This resonates with Amado and Elsner’s (2007) assertion in describing leaders confronting the role transition experience: “never say no to an opportunity” (p. 29) and with the point made by Mayrhofer and Iellatchitch (2005) that managing via meaning (p. 61) is an important element of the rite of passage in influencing “meaning” in a career transition. This experience or what could also be referred to as “transition moments” (Ulrich, 2000, p. 189) helped him gain acceptance into the “men’s hut” (Diamond, 2009, p. 3; Ritti & Funkhouser, 1987). He wrote in his essay:... *March was a month full of opportunity and I had many instances to put into practice what I had learnt in the coaching sessions so far. There is much to talk about as I had so many unexpected and unplanned opportunities to interact with high level clients and create great impressions. We talk about these experiences and some of the areas I thought I did not do so well. I do find it challenging sometimes to break the ice and find common ground especially with “older” people. I was also finally able to have a meeting with (a senior manager at head office) to discuss my role in (the client company) going forward. He was in agreement that my role will decrease and I need to train my successor to take over from me in time. This will however happen slowly over time. It is a great relief to have had this meeting. I met with 3 new clients this month and I thought the interactions were good. I had the opportunity to facilitate our office survey feedback day which is a whole day session with everyone in our office where we reflect on our survey results and workshop what to do differently going forward. I*

was surprised at the fact that I was given the bulk of the day to present and facilitate but it was yet another chance to put my coaching learnings into practice. This day was a great success and it was something I really enjoyed doing. I also had the opportunity to perform the farewell speech for my mentor which was emotional and tough but it was something I felt well placed to do. By taking up these leadership opportunities and executing them successfully, he not only built his credibility and authority as a new leader but also began to feel much more comfortable in his new role. He now owned “his own suit” and he felt good wearing it.

6.4.3.3 The fear of exercising power

A number of cases of newly appointed managers who struggled with their new role illustrates Hirschhorn’s point that people fear exercising power when they do not have a sufficiently good internal image of their character, when they feel they are fundamentally bad and undeserving (Hirschhorn, 1988, p. 36), perhaps being apprehensive that they would be unable to contain their anger and hurt others - and be hurt in return. Stapley (2006) added that accepting authority can be extremely anxiety provoking, bringing into play much defensive behaviour. In the case of the new manager mentioned above (Case two) her inherited team’s own use of power in undermining her and making her the container of their anger and frustration is also noteworthy. The participant (Case ten) who was bullied by a co-worker also struggled initially to take up her new role with authority. Nonetheless, having spoken about her feelings about being bullied and having linked this with her early childhood experience of being humiliated by a teacher, very early on in the coaching engagement she reported that she found her voice in the second of five team coaching sessions where she confronted her conflicting colleagues about the impact of their vocal and public disagreements/clashes on the rest of the business. Their shocked reaction at this normally quiet co-worker speaking out so vociferously, as well as the comments made by the facilitators of the team coaching, seemed to add to her growing confidence.

Participants' preoccupation with a search for role models, guidelines, systems and processes on how to be a "good leader" may serve as a defence against their feelings of inadequacy and performance anxiety (Brunning, 2007a). The "act" of reading, studying and discussing (in coaching sessions) "leadership" may serve as a means to compensate for the feelings of inadequacy (Stapley, 2006). This can be observed in the case (Case eight) mentioned above of the researcher being promoted to manager. Not only did he regress into his researcher's role but more than a full coaching session was spent examining the topic "leadership". The diversion into discussions such as "your personal experience of working for various leaders", "the qualities of the leaders you admire" and "the kind of leader you aspire to be" was thought to be useful and relevant. However, it came towards the end of the coaching engagement with little time (and not a great deal of motivation, in the mind of the researcher) to try it out. Consequently, it did feel as if this exercise served as a defence for this individual who was searching for confidence and self-authority to assume the role: i.e. he was avoiding actually facing the issues and conflicts in assuming the role and had not as yet found his leader's voice.

6.4.3.4 Formal and informal authorisation

Perhaps as a result of most participants having been recently appointed in their roles, most of them felt formally (from the organisation and senior management) and informally (being appreciated and valued for their competence, performance and expertise) authorised in their roles. Participants were granted "managerial authority", which Stapley (2006) describes as authority formally delegated to an individual by the organisation. In most cases, the extent and details of the authority are contained in a job description setting out the boundaries of the authority. Because one is dealing with career transitions, specifically in those cases where the participants were promoted into new roles, the formal authorisation of those appointments is an important and necessary but incomplete part of the picture. According to Czander (1993), formal authority is meaningless unless that authority can be effectively used; this is only possible if the job holder feels personally authorised and their authorisation is accepted

by other members of the organisation. The formal and informal authority, characterised by trust and respect, bestowed upon participants from above, laterally and below facilitates their ability to self-authorise (Hirschhorn, 1997), in that it empowers them to act, take-up and contribute to their management role.

A positive example of one of the participants (Case five) self-authorising came, interestingly, from the manager who was initially on the retrenchment list and then, following the resignation of his manager and the appointment of a new one, was promoted into a more senior role. In the hiatus after the initial manager left and before a new one was appointed, he stepped into the breach and played a key leadership role for his colleagues by holding daily and weekly meetings, checking on what issues or difficulties they had and providing updates to a more senior manager (who would ultimately become his new manager's manager) while generally providing a holding environment for the team during the gap. During coaching he had described his leadership roles outside of work (managing a sports team and a band) and it became clear that he possessed natural leadership abilities which had obviously been stifled under his previous manager. This may also be an example of reparation, working through the depressive position where the individual realises the person he has hated is also the person who may have contributed to his life in some way, now integrating the good and the bad (Hirschhorn, 1997, p. 205). This example also points to the crucial role of the line manager in helping newly appointed managers take up their leadership roles before, during and after a transition (e.g. Terblanche et al., 2017).

However, there were several experiences which participants brought to their coaching sessions, of being formally authorised to take up the role of manager but not feeling personally authorised. It is assumed that the dissonance caused by the formal and to some extent informal sanctioning of the newly promoted individual's authority and their inability to immediately self-authorise (Hirschhorn, 1997) caused tension and uncertainty, and hence anxiety, for those participants who felt they were not living up to their new roles. One manager of the participant (Case Two) struggling to take on her new managerial role told her in a meeting: "I need you to be bolder and make an

impact". This of course had the opposite effect of making her more ill at ease and unable to take up her leadership role. She remained the "sweet child". Why? The researcher assumed that this was so much part of her identity and had previously been effective for her as an interpersonal strategy and as an identity that it was difficult for her to take back the "badness". According to Hirschhorn (1997) enough authority is needed to ensure cooperative action, progress towards goals and encourage individuality, creativity and innovation. Where the participants' authority was not accepted, their ability to self-authorise was hindered because the organisational system's authority precedes self-authorisation (Hirschhorn, 1997). This experience of resistance from a part of the organisational system is understood as the system's attempt to undermine or not accept participants' formal authority. This was the situation with only one (Case two) out of the ten participants, though a number of them faced challenges from their new or inherited teams or from their peers in the form of initial resistance and conflict which the leaders were able to overcome.

6.4.3.5 Self-authorisation and line manager support

It was more common that participants slowly discovered their self-authorisation during the process of the coaching. A number of participants inherited teams or built new ones in their new leadership roles. It was surprising how many participants lacked formal management training and how many were obliged to struggle on their own without too much guidance from their own managers, as reported earlier. While it was a requirement that each of the participants' managers (except one participant who had self-referred for career coaching) sat in on at least one coaching session, many were distant and just expected the new appointee to get on with their new roles. There were two notable exceptions where the line managers of the participants were very engaged and supportive, providing guidance and feedback to the participants as they navigated their new roles. For one of these participants (Case seven), her line manager himself was promoted during the coaching, and at the time where she had been appointed to take over and move to a distant, much larger branch of the organisation. Her initial reaction was one of shock, sadness and fear at the thought of being abandoned by her

line manager at such a crucial stage as there was a degree of dependence (they had both started in the company on the same date many years ago and shared a birthday – a form of pairing). As we explored what her manager meant to her and what his loss might portend, she began to realise that she could be self-sufficient and, within a surprisingly short space of time, she established herself in her role. She experienced an almost 100% turnover in the staff reporting to her in the new branch but very soon had new incumbents lined up for the key roles. The reasons which she identified for the turnover were varied – some relating to the fact that the incumbent had thought they should have got the senior job, others possibly as a result of fear about what the change in leadership might mean for them and, for one, the reluctance to report to a female (in this male dominated motor industry).

Stabilising a team is a key requirement of a new manager; in her case, when it was clear that she was not going to gain the support of certain of the team members whom she had taken over, she quite quickly precipitated a discussion about alternatives and took charge by making plans to find alternative incumbents. Her new manager was much more hands off (he himself having very recently come from a specialist role in the organisation, an affirmative action appointee and, in his own way, struggling to adapt to his new senior role in general management) and was a disappointment to her *...I get no acknowledgement or feedback from him and I just have to make my own decisions...* compared to the involvement of her previous manager. She said: *I need to give him a chance like I am expecting the new (xxx) branch employees to give me a chance.* Her remarking on this parallel process (Carroll & Gilbert, 2011, p. 44) indicated to the researcher that she had accepted the reality of the loss of her previous manager, saw it as her role to build a new relationship with her new manager but was, in the meantime, establishing herself as the leader of this newly formed team. It is not insignificant that at this point she requested three additional coaching sessions to assist her to settle better into her new role. For the researcher, this was suggestive of his role as a transitional object and of the systems psychodynamic coaching being a transitional, reflective space for her (e.g. White, 2013, p.127). Reed and Bazalgette (2006) described this as the person-in-role turning adverse conditions into positive ones

(p. 46). Therefore, while the formal authorisation from above was present, the self-authorisation took some time to develop. This was the case for most participants.

The researcher participant (Case eight) who the present researcher thought may have sublimated his anxiety about his new role into studying leadership as described above, also struggled to self-authorise and embrace his leadership role. The uncertain socio-political context faced by the organisation would have likely also preoccupied his own manager who, while respected and admired by the participant, did not provide much guidance other than making her expectations of him known. One example of the absence of self-authorisation was the fact that the participant, who faced a very demanding workload in his new role and had no direct reporting staff, was responsible for the recruitment and management of graduate trainees or interns. While requiring more guidance than the value they may initially be able to add, these trainees were well qualified and had just graduated from respected academic institutions. But instead of trying to delegate some of the appropriate work to the graduates to ease his work-load, he found himself managing the graduates to assist colleagues of his who had already identified how the graduates might assist them. The lack of proactivity in looking after his own self-interests and expediency was thought by the present researcher to stem from his lack of confidence and consequent reluctance to fully take on the leadership role.

6.4.3.6 The struggle to self-authorise

How does one understand this failure to self-authorise, especially when it seems that the formal and informal organisational authorisation is present?

The nature of one's relationships with figures in one's inner psychic world, especially past authority figures, influences one's ability to self-authorise, which Haslebo (2000) describes as confirming authority from within oneself or the right to exist. The importance of a person's' past experiences and unconscious memories of past relationships with authority, and especially their relationships with parents and other

loved ones, which are then triggered in their current lives in relation to authority figures in their present life (e.g. Long, 2006), has been referred to earlier. It is thought that the participants introjected projections and aspects of their experiences with these early authority figures, forming internal objects or mental pictures (Reed & Bazalgette, 2006) which form part of their identity and are drawn upon and triggered as they engage with authority figures from their present world (Czander, 1993). Their reaction (transference) to these in-the-mind authority figures determined to what extent and how the participants take up their leadership and managerial roles. The inability to exercise authority competently is theorised to stem from an undermining and devaluing of the self (generally, but in this research specifically in relation to their new roles vis-à-vis these in-the-mind authority figures). This self-doubt may have inhibited or prevented external self-authorisation (Stapley, 2006).

The researcher participant (Case eight) who struggled to self-authorise in his new role described his family of origin in one of our coaching sessions. His father (now retired) had been a commanding headmaster of a prestigious boys' school at which the participant himself was a pupil. Having his father as the principal of his school must have raised many issues for the boy and while it was never overtly mentioned, given the retiring, introvert personality of this participant, being thrust into this new role might have reawakened earlier anxieties about his "presence" (see Goldsmith et al., 2012) and impact at school, vis-à-vis the other boys. He confirmed to the researcher/coach that he took ...*a very low profile at school*... but, intriguingly excelled at drama at school, suggesting that he could be public/known/open in another role or as another persona, but not as himself. Again, while there was no concrete evidence for this, the researcher wondered if he might have felt that he had disappointed his father and was not good enough. Perhaps he was lacking in "ontological security", which Amado and Elsner (2007) describe as that deep sense of one's own identity which is potentially helpful to any person who has to deal with difficult situations that are characterised by ambiguity and uncertainty. They regard this sense as key to the successful negotiation of and adjustment to the paradoxes inherent in a transition (p. 182). The researcher wonders

if the coaching he carried out helped develop ontological security, or at least compensated for its absence.

Thoughtful, respectful and empathic management is thought to provide a “mirroring” environment (Czander, 1993) for the subordinate and their tasks, a kind of emotional space and safety blanket that allows them to be open, experiment and make mistakes, feeling sufficiently safe and secure to take up their new management roles without fear of censure or repercussion (Hirschhorn, 1997). In a way it builds the self-esteem, self-confidence and self-identify which enables the new manager to self-authorise and take up the role of manager or leader. In many cases where the participants’ own line managers provided this kind of support, greater self-authorisation was evident, as described above in the cases of participants (Case three; Case six; Case seven; Case ten).

Obholzer (1996) suggests that in order to understand issues of authority and self-authorisation one has to take into account the development of the individual’s “inner psychic world” (p. 54) and the interrelatedness of its many inhabitants. This psychic world is based on one’s early experiences of containment within the holding environment (notably the mother), which will impact one’s ability to contain and self-contain. Hence the individual’s ability to maintain a mature stance (including, inter alia, the capacity to contain or bear distress, transferences and projections), as opposed to blaming others when things go wrong (the paranoid-schizoid position), stems from one’s own experience of being “contained” in the holding environment during one’s development. Having introjected and identified with one’s “container”, making that process part of one’s inner life, then enables one to serve as a “container” for self and others when necessary. He adds that an essential feature of containment is “good enough” communication, or what Bion referred to as reverie, characterised by intense connectedness at a face to face level, the capacity to listen, take in and react in response (in Obholzer, 1996, p. 54). He contrasts this with the experience of a container that itself is so filled with anxiety that it is incapable of taking in and “metabolising” the child’s anxiety, which consequently spills over into the child. Successful containment

also requires becoming aware of the projections one carries and enacts on behalf of others and the transference relationships that influence one's thoughts, behaviours and feelings.

It is hypothesised that for those participants who lacked confidence in their personal authority and struggled to self-authorise, the problem lies with their self-identity, based on their experiences of being held and contained during their upbringing; on their consequent family-in-mind and authority-relations-in-mind and on how their current organisational systems are holding and containing them in the present (Czander, 1993).

6.4.3.7 Authority and power: Discussion

Being authorised in one's role, especially a new or changed role, is a key element of successful adaptation in a career transition, but while being authorised from above and laterally (both formally and informally) as well as from below is important, it is not sufficient. What seemed to make the real difference in the cases analysed is self-authorisation, with many participants feeling like imposters and struggling to self-authorise in their roles. Being thought to relate to one's childhood experiences of being contained, those participants who were more self-confident and self-assured found it easier to take up their leadership/management roles with authority. Where the line manager of the participant was able to create an empathic, thoughtful, safe, containing environment for the participant which encouraged rational risk taking and experimentation, self-authorisation was enhanced. Career transition coaching, it is assumed, fulfilled a similar role (see section 6.5 below).

6.4.3.8 Authority and power: Working hypothesis

The researcher considered the following key points from the analysis before formulating the working hypothesis about authority and power:

- The imposter syndrome and “fake it till you make it”
- Taking up personal authority is still difficult, even in the presence of formal authority and being authorised from above and laterally, but positive opportunities to be the leader help
- Difficult and almost impossible to self-authorise when self-image is poor
- Reading, studying, going on courses to be a good leader may be a defence against taking up the leadership role – avoidance, off-task?
- Self-authorisation is key – feeling as if the individual deserves this role (the right to exist) and can make a go of it
- Lack of formal training and support and guidance from the line manager
- Reparation for earlier harmful thoughts and even behaviours is thought to influence the ability to self authorise.

As emphasised earlier, to do the work required in one’s role, one needs to be authorised. While formal and informal authorisation from above is usually (but not always) present at a time of career transition because of the timing (of appointments and announcements), authorisation from the sides and below is not always present. Subtle de-authorisation from above was also noticed in some cases. De-authorisation is experienced as self-doubt, incompetence and performance anxiety. Self-authorisation in particular seems to be a differentiator and this, together with line manager support, is thought by the present researcher to enhance adjustment to a new or changed role.

6.4.4 Theme four: Role

Sievers and Beumer (2006) maintain that a tension develops between the formal role (as defined, for example, in a job description or a performance contract) and the individual's role assumption or "role-in-the-mind", imbued with transference phenomena and the re-enactment of painful childhood experiences and conflicts (p. 75). Participants taking on (or contemplating) a new role comprised the key focus of this research. Amado and Elsner (2007) argue that while transitions in life in general are quite normal, taking on a new role is one of the most pronounced ones because of its complexity and the many issues it involves. Because of the salience of role in this study, it is worth recapping some of the major theoretical ideas about role before proceeding to discuss its manifestation in this research.

Reed and Bazalgette (2006) suggest that role, rather than representing a prescriptive job description, is based on a person's lived experience of the dynamic, complex interaction of feelings, ideas and motivations aroused in working in, and to, the aims of a system (p.45). While every participant had some sort of job description, the enactment of the role was different and perceived differently by the "others" in the system. Mayrhofer and Iellatchitch (2005) describe career transitions as a rite of passage. In most of the cases studied in this research this required leaving an "old" role, experiencing the consequent loss and regret that accompanies this process, while at the same time adjusting to and taking on a new role. Hence an understanding of role and personal identity (see section 6.4.5), which is bound up with role and which is considered to be a reflection of it (e.g. Newton et al., 2006; Scheepers, 2012), is crucial.

The role a leader takes up in an organisation can be thought of as the way in which they manage themselves in relation to the tasks they are required to carry out, the system in which they work and the context in which their organisation exists (Bell & Huffington, 2008). Krantz and Maltz (1997) maintain that role is where the person and the system meet (p. 139). The classic triangle of person- role- and system which describes how the individual derives relatedness and authority through his or her role

in the system or organisation, assists one to understand the mediating function of a person's role in relation to the primary task of the organisation but also indicates how it is possible for these elements to become "uncoupled", leading to organisational dysfunction (Huffington, 2008, p. 18). Indeed, the way the role is defined in the context of the primary task of the organisation is central to the concept of containment (Obholzer, 2002).

As described in the previous section, Triest (2002) asserts that taking a role in an organisation inevitably produces an inner drama in which internalised past figures, related in some way to the role-in-the-mind in the organisation-in-the-mind, are brought back to life and influence the perception of self in role and the way authority is taken up in the role (see also Kahn, 2014). Triest (2002) distinguishes between the formal role (as defined by the organisation, devoid of the persona and derived from the organisation's primary task, similar to a job description) and the informal one (that which the individual takes, driven by mostly unconscious needs and in response to the basic assumption group; its aim is to balance tensions, reduce anxieties and gratify instinctual and emotional needs, often in line with an individual's valence). The informal role also reflects the roles that individuals take on which serve to fill the gaps of authority (i.e. in the absence of, or with little, line manager input) and tasks abandoned. He goes on to say that the individual is thus assigned a two-fold role – a formal role is given or assigned by the organisation whereas the individual is "called" to fulfil the informal role and the inherent tension between the two is the primary source of the drama, hence the anxiety of role (p. 210). Roberts and Jarrett (2006) and Krantz and Maltz (1997) described this as the role which is "given" and the role which is "taken" which is, more often than not, *not* one and the same. They also discuss the influence of the system in terms of expectations of the role (p. 20).

Reed and Bazalgette (2006), describe the role as taken as the psychological role – the role as internalised by the individual and the manner in which s/he develops it and adapts to it, on the basis of his or her interpretation of the role. The sociological role on the other hand is the role as seen and experienced on the basis of the expectations

and intentions of others in the system, those people such as colleagues and subordinates who have a set of ideas in their minds of how the role incumbent should behave. Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) describe role as the boundary around task, describing what needs to be done in order to perform. To assume a role suggests being authorised to do so and understanding the boundaries of what will be rewarded and what will not. Obholzer and Roberts (2003) differentiate between the following types of roles: 1) the normative role (the objective job description and content, the overt (Kahn, 2014) or given role (Roberts & Jarrett (2007)), 2) the phenomenological role (the role which the individual fulfils as seen by others and how that influences his or her behaviour) and 3) the existential role (the role as perceived by the incumbent and how he or she perceives his or her performance, the taken role (Roberts & Jarrett, 2007)). Incongruence between these different aspects of role creates anxiety and substandard performance (Newton et al., 2006). It is also argued that one's role can be perceived as a reflection of, or equated with, one's identity (Newton et al., 2006), further reinforcing how the ACIBART constructs are not discrete but are connected and interlinked.

Another perspective is that of role expectations and role conflict (Bion, 1961; Cilliers & Koortzen, 2003). Role conflict takes place when the individual is confronted by different and opposing role expectations and particularly when others are critical of how the incumbent has taken up the role. This could result in the person feeling pressured to conform to the sociological role. He or she may become anxious and reluctant to take up his or her role in the system (Triest, 2002), as described in the case (Case two) of the newly appointed manager described above. While role conflict is widespread, according to Bion (1961), it is more important to consider how these conflicts influence behaviour, as they lead to anxiety or inner tension and frustration, which elicits the use of defences.

Roles and skills help people feel that they are worthy and are confident that they can contain and direct their aggression; this is why the design of task appropriate roles is so important (Hirschhorn, 1988, p. 37). The formal role includes the duties to be

performed, parameters for task completion, the required interaction between people and processes, as well as indicators of successful performance in role. Hence role clarity is crucial for both the role incumbent and those who work with the individual, because misperceptions about role are common, result in further misperception and confusion pertaining to authority and boundaries and lead to anxiety (Triest, 2002).

In many of the cases in this study, the new role was not adequately defined to start with, adding to the confusion and anxiety the participants experienced. Many had to go through a process to obtain clarity on the formal role through discussion and negotiation with the system. Even once the formal role clarity was obtained, the taking and making of the (informal) role was one of the main topics of discussion in the coaching sessions.

6.4.4.1 Entry into role

Entry into role is a key concept, especially with career transitions. (Although one enters a role, this section on role entry could also be discussed under Boundaries or Task or Identity in the ACIBART model.) Entry into the system and role will affect clarity of and attachment to task and thus task performance (Czander, 1993). Following Sievers (2009), it is a basic premise of this study that exploring the entry process sheds light on forces that might create task confusion, weaken task commitment and lead to task evasion, resulting in early challenges almost to the point of creating a crisis for the individual, and possible regression. Armstrong (2005) adds that an emotional connection to the organisation-in-the-mind, or what Amado and Elsner (2007) have referred to as psychological resonance, may reduce the regressive pull while a lack of connection could increase it. As Stapley (2006) has stated, the idealised self-image is extremely vulnerable at entry (i.e. during a transition) and it has already been pointed out that the challenges and difficulties the participants faced at entry into their management roles impacted negatively on their idealised selves, evoking feelings of inadequacy and imminent failure. This could result in a negative transference connection with the organisational system (and specifically its 'sentient system' (Krantz & Maltz, 1997, p. 142), as a result of the anxiety and uncertainty experienced by the

individual but also of the feelings of guilt (at having been the chosen one), and lead to feelings of isolation, exclusion, anger and frustration. This was evident in the case of the newly promoted manager (Case two) who inherited the difficult team described above. This sets up a vicious cycle of using defences and the subsequent poor task performance, as discussed in theme one above in section 6.4.1 on anxiety.

On the other hand, gaining membership of, and feeling psychologically included in, the sentient system of management in the organisational system is likely to lead to a more positive transference connection to the organisation which would have strengthened the more vulnerable self on entry, by relying on the sentient system's protection of the idealised self (Czander, 1993). Positive group membership may facilitate the challenging entry process into the management role, serving as a positive sense of community, soothing any narcissistic wounds and bolstering task performance (Stapley, 2006; Obholzer & Roberts, 2003). This issue will be explored further in section 6.4.5 on Identity below.

The newly promoted senior manager (Case six) not only had solid authorisation (both externally and from within) but, being the popular choice for appointment to this role, also experienced his managers' and the sentient system's protection (as described above). The opportunities he was alert to and took up to bolster his authority and credibility in his role and the positive feedback which ensued, helped build his confidence in the taking and making of his role. The female manager (Case seven) who was promoted to a bigger branch of her organisation did not experience as many positive opportunities for bolstering her role, and in a way faced the rejection of certain members of the existing team she took over, who left just prior to and at the time of her appointment. She was also at that time working under a new manager who was unable to offer her the containment she required. But she was seen to be taking and making the role for herself despite these deficiencies. She seemed to be propelled by the thought that she must be adequate if the executive management had chosen her for this role. Positive feedback she picked up about her potential to turn the branch around,

which had apparently been discussed in an executive meeting and had been leaked back to her, enhanced this.

The other female manager (Case ten) in the same industry but in a very different role (having just come off the IT project role into a new training and continuous improvement role), also experienced the support of her line manager and began to experience positive feedback not only from her IT colleagues but also from leaders in the business, for both her project and early post-project roles. This, coupled with her growing insight about her nemesis, the co-worker bully, and her own strengths helped with a more positive transference towards the organisation and her ability to take up her new role. The female manager in the insurance industry (Case eleven) did not experience the same external support and feedback in her role and in fact experienced the organisation as quite hostile, making decisions about her future without her input after she had offered to stand down from her managerial role. These two examples illustrate the connection between role and identity.

6.4.4.2 Valence and the taking and making of role

The concept of valence (Sievers & Beumer, 2006) is central to taking up a formal and informal role. Valence is described as a person's tendency or predisposition to fulfil particular kinds of roles in a group or system. It is considered an unconscious dynamic that is activated in order to regulate anxiety, and it influences both formal and informal roles. Hence to avoid role confusion and conflict, a comprehensive understanding of the formal role is crucial (Hirschhorn, 1988). Moreover, understanding how one's informal role is triggered and activated and how it subsequently shapes one's formal or overt role is helpful to taking up one's role effectively (Triest, 2002).

The female IT manager described above (Case ten) who had just come off her project role and was looking to establish herself in her new permanent, line manager role told the researcher in one of the coaching sessions that she and her middle son were very much alike in temperament, and did not take criticism well. In terms of birth order

(Sherwin-White, 2014), she was also the middle child. She sadly lost her older brother (himself a young man) to cancer after a long battle with the illness. When it was pointed out that she might be playing a buffering role between her older female colleague who bullied her and her younger male colleague who, like her, just wanted to get on with the work, there was a moment of reflection and insight. In one of the team coaching sessions she had highlighted the impact of the public arguments between the two of them had, not only on their credibility as a team but also on their ability to get on with their tasks. She was taking on a psychological role, perhaps familiar from her past, of trying to hold together this psychological family (the “empathic mediator” (Naik, 2014, p. 222)), where the workplace was replicating the family of origin (Sonnenberg, 1997). It should also be noted that in the absence of the authority of their common manager to contain this situation, she stepped into this breach. She moreover explained in one of her sessions that in a life coaching session she attended many years ago she realised her “life’s purpose” was to help others achieve their potential. Her valence for helping others manifested in her focussing more on the training and development aspect of her new role than on the more business oriented aspect related to project savings and benefits.

6.4.4.3 Stepping out of role (off- and anti-task behaviour)

Anxiety about work can lead people to step out of their work roles, creating a surreal world in which challenges might be met with fantasies of omnipotence, dependence or defensive denial (Hirschhorn, 1988).

There were a number of examples where managers in transition stepped out of their managerial roles and defaulted to former roles as a result of the anxiety and confusion attached to their new roles. In the case of the newly promoted manager (Case two), she spent most of her time on the operational and technical aspects of the role instead of the leadership role she had been appointed to. This former role offered her comfort and security and a sense of competence while her managerial role was frightening and

alienating for her. This flight into a comfort zone gave her a sense of being busy while avoiding the real role assigned to her by the organisation.

Where collaboration in a work setting is required and people depend on one another to do effective work, the anxiety of stepping out of role may trigger an anxiety chain through which people deploy collective fantasies to deny the risks. These fantasies may be filled with violence where people punish themselves for their own failings and imagine others are their persecutors (Hirschhorn, 1988). The manager (Case two) described herself as being frightened of the gang (her team) and vigilant to the next attack. A similar emotion was evident in the manager (Case eleven) who decided to step down from her managerial role almost being at the mercy of her team; not only was there high turnover but she also described her role as having to constantly redo and correct their work (as opposed to leading the team).

Another participant (Case eight) also defaulted to his previous researcher role where he felt more comfortable than with the new, uncertain role of a leader to which he had recently been appointed.

Campbell and Groenbaek (2006) state that in the systems psychodynamic stance, organisational roles are influenced by a double reality: the biography or personal history of the individual holders and the actual organisation of which the role is a part. The working hypothesis is that individuals perform their roles on the basis of experiences with relevant persons from previous relationships. Simultaneously, institutions and the specific roles they offer in their drama at work mobilise in role holders transferences, which enact various childhood dramas (Triest, 2002; Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005). Therefore, managing oneself effectively in an organisational role requires a deep understanding of this systemic interrelatedness.

6.4.4.4 Oedipal struggles and the taking of a role

The hierarchical nature of work can be equated with the family structure; the struggles between superiors and subordinates are regarded as oedipal struggles. The castration anxiety which subordinates experience in relation to leaders keeps their aggressive instincts towards leaders at bay (Czander, 1993). But perhaps not in all cases? From a psychodynamic perspective, all employees want to be favoured children of the superiors and also desire to replace the leader. However, murderous wishes towards the leader are defended against through reaction formation, which often manifests itself by espousing values of equality to taper primitive feelings of envy and jealousy (Czander, 1993).

The manager (Case five) who was in conflict with his immediate manager told the story in one of his later coaching sessions about how, as the only Jewish child at a Government school, he was subjected to anti-Semitic bullying. It sounded as if this was quite traumatic for this small (in stature) child yet not particularly well handled by the school or his family which Cilliers (2012b) has described as avoidance or denial by others. It must have affected his self-esteem and self-image and left him wounded and the researcher assumed contributed to his difficulty in dealing with authority figures and his aggressive behaviour at work as a form of defence. He also mentioned in another session how he suspected that his own toddler son was being bullied by a friend and explained to me how he *...took on...* the friend's mother, perhaps an overreaction in protecting his son and doing what had not been done for him by his family when he had been bullied. He stated in more than a few sessions how he was *...not a bad person...* in a heartfelt plea to be acknowledged as a decent human being (and not the devil he was portrayed to be), despite his difficulties at work. He wrote: *...With respect to the reference to discussing early life experiences, an example is my experience in primary school of being bullied, particularly in an anti-Semitic way, being a small, academic child and the only Jew at a rather conservative government school. We discussed how this may have contributed to my feelings of anger when I am confronted with similar experiences at work – that of someone using their power or authority when confronted with a disagreement, and my absolute unwillingness to back down in the face of such authority, which could be interpreted as defiance or a “problem with authority”.* He

added in a later section of his essay: *The issues arise when a person in a position of power takes a different position to me about (a technical aspect of his work) and I refuse to back down merely because he or she happens to be in that position of power. In asserting my view in an insensitive manner, especially to someone who feels defensive for any reason, or who is also assertive, an unhealthy dynamic is created...* . This refusal to back down may be interpreted as a result of the conflict between the participant's inner world (where, because he has done the research, he is convinced this recommendation is the right one) and outer one (where his recommendation is questioned or criticised by his manager and colleagues). In consequence, he tends to dig his heels in and hold on rigidly to his boundaries as they provide him with some degree of comfort, well-being and protection (Miller, 1993, p. 4). This participant developed insight into his difficulties at work during the course of the coaching but qualified this by stating: *...Still, this presents a continual challenge to me – to remain in control of my emotions and my temper and to respond in a manner which is helpful to myself...* Since this essay was written a few weeks after the final coaching session, the participant demonstrated insight into his problem and reported a positive shift in relationships, probably indicating a move from the paranoid-schizoid to the depressive position. This will be discussed further in the section on containment and the impact of the coaching in section 6.5 below.

6.4.4.5 Gender and role

Two of the female participants (Cases seven and ten) who worked in the male dominated motor industry spoke about having to *make it in a man's world*. For females taking up a managerial role in a system that values and promotes masculinity, this results in feelings of anxiety and inadequacy which negatively affected their self-identity, making them vulnerable to defensive behaviours and projections from the organisational system (Czander, 1993); they reacted by overcompensating (appearing to be tough...*I have got used to the swearing...*), seeking approval from their managers and colleagues and, for one in particular, engaging in off task behaviour by mothering and nurturing her subordinates. In this case it is thought that by retreating or

withdrawing from the boundary, she was seduced too far into the system by becoming overinvolved in the emotional lives of subordinates and “mothering” them (Huffington et al., 2004). This was compounded by her feelings of not having lived up to the expectations of being a good enough mother to her son because of her work commitments and her stating *...I have been a better mother to my staff than I was to my son....* This could be interpreted as reparative behaviour for the guilt she felt as a mother. This need is transferred to the management role, in which participants find themselves nurturing subordinates (Czander, 1993). It is also possible that her all male staff seduced her into this role in order to confirm their own and the organisational system’s perception that “women will fail as managers in this man’s world”, compounding the participant’s initial sense of inadequacy and incompetence.

6.4.4.6 Role confusion

Initial uncertainty and a lack of clarity in terms of their normative role, and resulting anxiety about role (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005), is to be expected when a manager changes role; it requires time and effort to make sense of and fully understand the complexity of role as given and taken and then to perform in it. The ambivalence felt about the new role and the tendency to experience remorse or regret about taking on the role and some regression to an earlier role as a result of this anxiety have been described above. One participant (Case eight) described the process as *...walking through treacle...* The uncertainty seems to induce self-doubt about one’s ability and competence and evokes early feelings of helplessness in some of the participants. One participant said in her essay, *...it’s been a difficult year for me ...the transition to my new position was not what I expected...I struggled to become known in my new position...* . This participant (Case one) had been very successful in her previous role and had even won a “xxx manager of the year” award from the company. Moving to a head office role where she was not absolutely certain of what was expected from her, was unknown in this part of the organisation and had to find and mobilise a different skill set in order to be successful, caused a great deal of anxiety for her. The realisation that what made her successful in her previous role might in fact derail her in the new role was quite a

shock. This manifested in her prematurely applying for other roles (flight) and experiencing conflict with her colleagues (fight): *...I struggle to interact with my colleagues....* She also began to experience the politics of a head office environment and realised she had come from a more protected environment where she did not require political savvy to navigate her way. Moreover, the new role highlighted difficult aspects of her personality that might have been better hidden in her previous role such as her overt demonstration of disdain and scorn, and, even contempt for others. When this was thought about and discussed in the coaching sessions there was what she referred to as an *...aha moment... I write people off when they don't suit my expectations...* when she realised that this was a defence or shield against her own feelings of vulnerability and insecurity. (This is another example of Kets de Vries' (2013, p. 152) "tipping points" in coaching). She wrote in her essay: *...coaching made me realise I needed to go deeper into what triggers my reactions and understand my underlying issues, specifically me putting up shields...* It is possible that behind her vaunted academic success and previous career status, there was a lonely, vulnerable child who struggled to connect with the world. Her career transition and new role stirred up old wounds for her.

6.4.4.7 Sibling rivalry in role

This participant (Case one) worked alongside two peers at the same level but she and their direct manager were the only ones in the team who had worked their way up the ranks, in the trenches, as it were, to reach the present role of consultant and advisor. She identified the fact that her two colleagues did not have her basic experience as a source of conflict between herself and them, with her projecting her feeling of superiority and they, through projective identification, feeling 'less than' because of this lack of hands on experience. In a particularly negative interaction between herself and one of these colleagues on which she reported in one of the coaching sessions, there was criticism from this colleague concerning how she had gone about resolving a problem in the business; he had taken it upon himself to inform their mutual boss about the transgression. The difference between the psychological and sociological roles was

brought into sharp contrast in this altercation, but behind it lay the split feelings of protection and competitiveness, superiority and inferiority, the favoured one and the despised one (in the eyes of the mother). In understanding the drama of taking on a role and the family-in-the-mind, the sibling rivalry between them and the vying for the manager's (parent's) attention helped her and the researcher to understand some of her difficulties (Czander, 1993; Mitchell, 2008; Sherwin-White, 2014; Yanai-Malach, 2014).

To make matters worse after she had confided in the third colleague about the unfortunate altercation, this colleague did not take her side and divulged the information she had shared in confidence to another party, leaving the participant feeling betrayed and even more isolated. The attempted pairing between them had failed, so that the participant said to the researcher/coach that she should henceforth just keep to herself and not share anything with her colleagues; a retreat into the "me-ness" basic assumption, an escape into her own fantasy and inner safe, comfortable and good world, whilst denying the presence of the disturbing or bad reality of the group (and identified individual) (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002; Smit & Cilliers, 2006). Another female participant (Case ten) also described how she becomes ...*very quiet*... when she is emotional at work (and particularly in relation to her bullying colleague). She remarked that everyone notices this and they know they should just leave her alone.

6.4.4.8 Line manager support and organisational context in taking on a new role

A feature of many of the participants' experiences and stories was the limited presence of a containing line manager to help the individual with (nominal) role clarity. While it is understood that the ability to tolerate ambiguity and not knowing is a feature of senior leadership roles in modern organisations, and that it is expected that a senior leader is self-sufficient and manages her/himself into his role, the lack of time invested by the transitioning individual's line manager, in helping the new incumbent understand the role and the organisational context was noticeable. Many but not all of the participants reported feeling "dumped" into their new role and left to "sink or swim". The

incongruence and ambivalence within and between the normative, existential, and phenomenological roles indicates high levels of role anxiety for participants and arises from the internal conflict and ambivalence which the participants experience (Newton et al., 2006).

Many of the participants took on new roles in organisations already undergoing some form of change so that negotiating their organisational role was even more difficult, particularly during a shift in strategy, structure, or operating process, because their role was subject to continuous modification and/or transformation as circumstances within the organisation altered. This cumulative change prevented certain participants from taking up their roles and contributed to poor performance in the case of the participant who had previously been a researcher (Case eight) but who found it hard to take on and stay in his new managerial role, which led to poor task performance (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005). The added stress of a distant line manager, who herself was probably struggling with the organisational and wider political changes, and the participant's perception of a lack of closeness to those occupying positions of authority (Czander, 1993; Neumann, 2002, p. 54), for example, senior management within the organisation-in-the-mind, may also have contributed to the delay or absence in him taking up his authority.

The lack of clarity in terms of a mandate or direction further adds to the struggle in taking up one's role (Krantz & Maltz, 1997). Krantz and Maltz (1997) add that role conflict and personal dilemmas arising from the conflict between the role incumbent's behaviour and style (the psychological role) as well as the role expectations (the sociological role) will make functioning in the role challenging. One participant (Case seven) said, when talking about her new manager's hands off approach, *...I just need to get on with it and make my own decisions and take the consequences...* . This can also be regarded as a form of boundary management, by making the role her own in the absence of adequate boundary management by her manager (Czander, 1993). In some way, the career transition coaching was thought to be a substitute for the line manager role and its containing value will be discussed later.

6.4.4.9 *Role: Discussion*

The employee, whether a shop floor worker or the managing director, is an entire person who brings with him or her to work not only skills, talents and expertise but also emotional needs and a complete range of feelings (de Board, 2005), giving meaning to the concept of the person-role-system triangle. Having a work role enables a person to maintain status and self-respect (Sofer, 1972, cited in de Board, 2005, p.108). The distinction and, more often than not, conflict between formal role and role-in-the-mind is significant especially during times of transition. The formal role includes a description of the tasks or duties to be performed, parameters for task completion, the required interaction between people and processes, as well as indicators of successful performance in role. The person's work role represents not only a prescriptive job description but more importantly her or his lived experience of the dynamic, complex interaction of feelings, ideas and motivations aroused in working in, and towards the aims of, a system. This lived experience is frequently a revival, in a modified form, of earlier problems of relationships which have remained unresolved, producing an inner drama with important figures from the past. The drama is often exacerbated by the conflict between the role as given and the role as taken and the anxiety which is aroused as a result of this conflict. Changing roles during a career transition means giving up one for another, which implies loss (of the former role and all that went with it) and adjustment (to a new, unfamiliar role), including a liminal period of being "in between". Adults who are in professional roles expect to feel competent, so that when they feel incompetent, they feel ashamed and anxious (Hirschhorn, 1997).

Evident in almost all the cases analysed is the lack of clarity around the formal role that the participants took on. In addition to the lack of clarity, the initial anxiety experienced by the participants due to their feelings of incompetence and unfamiliarity with the roles – some feelings of remorse about taking on the new role and hankering back to earlier roles - was also noteworthy. The lack of self-authorisation in role has been commented on earlier. Positive entry and the early creation of psychological resonance was also

experienced by some participants; consequently, despite some initial challenges these participants were able to establish themselves in their roles quite early on. Positive group membership and positive organisational transference for the newly promoted manager in the auditing firm (Case six) eased his challenging entry process. Positive performance feedback and the easing of narcissistic wounds facilitated the new manager's (Case seven) entry into role, despite an almost complete turnover of staff in the team she inherited. Perhaps the fact that she could then select almost every member of her new team herself aided this process. Where the organisation and or new team was experienced as hostile in contrast (Cases two and eleven) the role was in fact abandoned.

Understanding valence and grasping how one's informal role is triggered and activated and how it subsequently shapes one's formal or overt role, was helpful in taking up one's role effectively. Thus in the case of the IT manager (Case ten) it was observed how she had played the mediating role with her sparring colleagues (a re-enactment of her familial role in being the middle child) and chose to focus on the training and development aspect of her new role because of her "life purpose" - probably a form of wish fulfilment for guidance and mentoring in her own life. Reparative urges for earlier shortfalls were observed in the way certain participants took up their roles; the female manager (Case seven) "mothered" her male colleagues because she felt she had not been a good enough mother to her own son. The manager facing a career transition due to his ill-health was at great pains to ensure his family was cared for and that he left a memorable legacy, perhaps as a result of his guilt in bringing his illness upon himself (according to him) and thereby altering his family's expectations for a normal life.

There were examples where participants regressively stepped out of their roles and engaged in off-task behaviour as a result of the anxiety they experienced in their new management roles. The instances of the newly promoted (Case two) and existing managers (Case eleven) struggling to establish themselves in their leadership roles reverting to the operational work are noted here.

Oedipal struggles in the form of difficulty dealing with authority were evident in the case of the manager (Case five) who was in a conflictual relationship with his manager and took criticism very personally. His past dramas were playing out in the way he took up his role. Similarly, sibling rivalry was evident in the newly promoted manager (Case one) vying against her two colleagues for the attention of the manager.

Role and gender issues were emphasised to some extent at the role transition, especially in male dominated industries (for example for the two female participants (Cases seven and ten) in the motor industry). It was as if the system was testing them about whether they could make it in a man's world.

The role transitions for the two participants whose roles altered substantially (Case three and Case four) and who had to face completely new roles – one as a boarded pensioner and one as a normal retiree - highlighted the major shift in identity (“who am I now without my job?”) and role required.

6.4.4.10 Role: Working hypothesis

The taking and making of a role is brought into sharp focus at the time of transition, precipitates many questions and concerns, reminiscent of the past, and influences the way a new manager/leader adjusts to his new role. The difference in the way in which the role is expected to be performed and the way the role holder chooses to take up the role is a source of conflict and anxiety. The line manager could play a facilitating role in integrating the incongruence between the psychological and sociological roles. In his absence, the coach is thought to play a positive, supportive role in the adjustment to the new role.

6.4.5 Theme five: Identity

Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) perceive identity as the “fingerprint” (p. 52) of the individual and team and refer to the characteristics that make the team, its individual members, their task, climate and culture different and unique. Identity, in their view, is influenced by the personality and style of the individuals and leader, the team’s and individuals’ experience of leadership and how leadership is allowed to be taken up by the team members. The sense of self is thus influenced by significant others and the status the individual feels s/he is accorded in the group. Although linked with role (e.g. role identity), core identity is far more than the sum of a leader’s work role and responsibilities; it is complex and multi-faceted (Scheepers, 2012). A blurring of role and sense of self (identity) tends to occur and often there is a lack of integration between the real self and the public self, which leads to anxiety. Work has always provided a core identity (Miller, 2002) and as a result it stands to reason that identity may well shift in a career transition. Pooley (2004, p.176) similarly raises questions of identity in relation to an individual taking up a new role: “Will I be valued?”; “What do I bring to this role?”; “What sort of person do I need to be?”

Identification is another concept related to identity and can be considered to be a phenomenon of bonding which Freud referred to as the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person, the process by which relationships are formed and a basic force of group life (Freud (1922) cited in de Board, 2005). Sievers (2009, p. 2) refers to the ritualistic behaviour the new entrant displays which, he claims, serves as a defence against the anxiety of self-fragmentation. This anxiety arises due to the ambivalent feelings and feared loss of individuality which are linked to the personal meaning of assuming membership in a (new) group and having to submit to the organisational or professional culture. Diamond (2009) referred to another ritualistic behaviour, that of gaining entry into the “men’s hut” as the first problem of the new member, where, in order to gain access to the organisational secrets, s/he needs to assimilate the values of the team/organisational culture (learn the ropes), become

socialised and prove s/he is deserving of membership (see also also Ritti & Funkhouser, 1987; Sievers, 2009).

The fear of losing identity was expressed by one participant (Case five) who was afraid of losing his individuality and projected this fear and anger onto the researcher/coach by accusing the latter of trying to make him a ...*corporate clone, compliant and obedient, something that I am not...* . His struggle with authority figures, possibly as a result of his early experience of being bullied, manifested as an attachment to an identity that he believed protected him and which he found difficult to let go of. It was only as he gained insight into his behaviour and after he experienced a more supportive working environment (when his previous manager left) that he was able to re-imagine his identity and begin to assume the characteristics of a good leader. The conflict between what is required (to be a good organisational citizen) and what feels right for the individual (authenticity) resulted in anxiety for this individual. He later described his dilemma as trying to achieve a balance between being *charming* and *authentic*, Amado and Elsner, (2007, p. 182) regard the idea of cognitive and emotional psychological autonomy as being key to the new leader's success. They also refer to the concept of ontological security, the deep sense of one's own identity which is potentially helpful to anyone who has to deal with difficult situations. It is hypothesised that those participants such as Cases six, seven, and nine who possessed reasonably good ontological security and sense of self, struggled less in their transitions.

The leader (Case three) who was forced to take a disability pension due to ill health had to deal with a new role and identity as a disabled person. Since he had been an ambitious person and having enjoyed a successful corporate career, this transition was particularly painful. He spoke about his Dad as a role model for him and described him as a conscientious and hard worker who had provided for his family. This was contrasted with a man in mid-career who was facing life as a disability pensioner, not at all sure about how he was going to provide for his family. The story he related during one of the coaching sessions, which has already been referred to, where in a board meeting, he had attempted to help the tea lady move a large jug of water to make way

on the counter for other refreshments is relevant here. His strength failed him and the jug crashed down on a tray of drinking glasses, loudly smashing them in the middle of the meeting. This striking incident of public physical disempowerment was particularly difficult for him and led to overwhelming feelings of impotence, disconnection and uselessness. He said...*I can't do this anymore...* and in another session ...*I have had to put up the white flag...* surrendering and acknowledging that the end of his life as a corporate executive had come. In one of the coaching sessions, with pride, this participant also showed the researcher a wooden pen he had been given as gift with the head of a rhinoceros chiselled into the top of the pen. In South Africa the rhino is an endangered and vulnerable mammal.

The retired executive also faced the adjustment from a busy corporate role to that of a retired person, a new identity. While she relished the idea of a hedonistic life, doing all the things she had not been able to do while working and making the most of her new location, the transition in role seemed to be swathed in remorse and sadness about whether she had been successful in her corporate career, and also guilt about the psychological role of a retired person versus the expectation that she would complete her post-graduate studies and do *useful* work. Her identity as a person of worth was caught up with her role as a corporate executive while her identity as a retiree had not yet been formulated. The split between *retired* and *useful* is also an interesting one.

According to Stapley (2006), people are never alone in their minds; they are always linked to many others, especially the family, in a state of relatedness which affects their thoughts and behaviours. Like Freud (1922) before them, both Czander (1993) and Reed and Bazalgette (2006) reinforced this by asserting that an individual's sense of identity as a valuable and competent human being develops from the nature of their childhood relationship with parents, other care givers and subsequent family-in-the-mind.

This participant (Case one) highlighted that she was concerned about being ...*only monosyllabic...* with her manager's manager (an executive in the organisation). In

attempting to make herself known in the organisation this participant identified building a relationship with the executive heading up her department as a strategy. But she described how when she was in this executive's presence, she found herself becoming monosyllabic, unable to make conversation. While she had a good (if not somewhat collusive) relationship with her immediate manager, one can only assume that this difficulty was related to her "in-the-mind" authority figures (Stapley, 2006) as well as that her fragile identity in relation to authority figures was a key component in the development of self-doubt, preventing internal and external self-authorisation.

6.4.5.1 Identity: Discussion

The core identity provided by one's work and occupation tends to define individuals; thus, during times of transition, identity will undergo some modification as individuals question what is required of them and how they construct a new or changed identity in relation to their new role. It seems that this sense of identity becomes particularly fragile for certain participants when faced with a career transition. Almost all of the participants in this study reported feeling uncertain, insecure, confused and vulnerable during this transition.

Where the change in identity was quite dramatic, such as in the case of the retiree (Case four) and the disability pensioner (Case three), the adjustment to a new identity was more difficult. Also, where the identity of the individual was in conflict with what was required to be successful in the new role - such as the newly promoted manager (Case two) - and the manager who stepped down from her role (Case eleven), the adjustment to the initial new role was unsuccessful. A person consumed with self-doubt and shame will not, cannot, adequately harness the power of their personality in role (Lazar, 2014). Their subsequent adjustment to the roles they then respectively selected for themselves is another matter. Jonsson (2012) asserted, in her study of employees who were demoted, that if the organisation wants to retain these employees, it probably needs to accord some special attention to helping them adapt to their new circumstances and deal with the loss of status. In both cases in the present study, only

one or two coaching sessions were available to deal with this transition, which was probably insufficient, despite the positive reports from both participants. It appears that a certain amount of fluidity and flexibility in core identity is necessary in order to cope with the changing demands of the new world of work and to make a successful adjustment during a career transition, without compromising core identity, congruence and authenticity.

6.4.5.2 Identity: Working hypothesis

Identity is vulnerable at the time of transition and particularly as leaders enter a new role and team and/or organisation. The consequent anxiety which leaders in transition experience has a profound impact on how they view themselves and create a changed identity for themselves, experience their new environments and take up their new roles.

6.4.6 Theme six: Boundaries and boundary management

The importance of the concept of boundary in open systems has been written about at length (e.g. Armstrong, 2005; Czander, 1993; de Board, 2005; Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002; Neumann, 2002). Krantz and Maltz (1997) attest to "boundary" as perhaps the most powerful conceptual tool at one's disposal for discerning the impact of differences in role relatedness (i.e. authority, tasks and subsystem relations) (p. 140). According to Czander (1993), the main purpose of the boundary is to protect the integrity of the technological core of the organisation (where the conversion of inputs into outputs occurs) (p. 204).

Hirschhorn (1988) maintains that organisations can only function effectively when their managers draw and maintain appropriate boundaries; at these boundaries particular responsibilities and authorisations begin and end, creating a more controllable world of work. Violations of a boundary are considered expressions of conflicts. Boundaries create anxiety because they are where the risk of working and deciding is located and where aggression needs to be mobilised in protecting them. This results in individuals

retreating from boundaries and possibly injuring their co-workers by not occupying task appropriate roles nor mastering task appropriate skills. Mayrhofer and Iellatchitch (2005) maintain that boundary crossing is linked with uncertainty and may fail because individuals are not prepared for letting go of the old or for accepting a transitory phase of being in between, a liminal status where one belongs neither to the old or the new context. Hirschhorn (1988) also speaks of another vital boundary, referred to as the psychological boundary. He argues that when people are faced with uncertainty, risk and anxiety they create and sustain psychological boundaries that violate pragmatic task boundaries simply to alleviate this anxiety (also in Stapley, 2006). They replace the focussed and task-appropriate mobilisation of aggression at the boundary with the diffuse and displaced expression of hostility and discontent (Hirschhorn, 1988, p. 36). These boundaries are crucial to understanding because they determine who belongs to the group or system and who does not.

To some extent a manager or leader in transition faces a special kind of boundary. In this study, all the participants who were promoted into new roles were promoted internally within the same organisation; hence while some were new in their roles, they did not face the boundary of entry into a new organisation, but did encounter other boundaries. Entry (as discussed above) into a leadership position in a new branch or taking on a new team implies crossing, and then regulating, perhaps more than one boundary (Lawrence, 2000), leaving the “old” and entering the “new” with its inherent issues of separation and loss and re-attachment. Mayrhofer and Iellatchitch (2005) referred to this as rites of passage including rites of separation, rites of transition and rites of incorporation from outside to inside – not just being accepted but being accepted as the leader, understanding and mastering the new environment and role, making a difference and adding value as was noticed in both Cases one and two described above. Boundary crossing stimulates individuals’ anxieties and consequently fills boundary management with unconscious and defensive behaviours (Hirschhorn, 1988). In this study the researcher sought to explore the conscious and unconscious experiences of the entering object (Czander, 1993, p. 216) and how crossing the boundary in a career transition was reminiscent of, and aroused feelings and meanings

from, previous boundaries crossed in life, the most primal of which is undoubtedly exiting the womb.

Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) have defined three types of boundary – time, task and territory. Time boundaries include issues such as working hours, starting and ending time of meetings and times for different types of tasks. Task boundary, considered to be most crucial, defines the work to be done, performance standards and outputs required. Task boundary confusion will lead to off- or anti-task behaviour, whereas clarity about the primary task leads to task performance. The initial lack of task boundary definition, resulting in diffuse task descriptions and discussion has been described above. It resulted in many of the participants experiencing role conflict and stress and consequently anxiety about their new roles, due to the complexity and confusion, not really understanding what was expected of them. Territory or spatial boundaries refer to the physical location in which the work takes place, whether one works, for instance, in the privacy of one's own office or in a shared, open plan office as was evident in the cases of Cases six and ten – the newly promoted managers who moved offices.

6.4.6.1 Facing or retreating from a boundary

The participant (Case seven), who was promoted to taking over a bigger branch which was languishing, was faced with a number of potential resignations from the existing management team, the reasons for which were discussed earlier. As this promotion came towards the end of her coaching, and although there were the initial fears and doubts about what she *...had let herself in for...* she quickly found her authorisation (and resisted the impulse to retreat from the boundary); she created a psychological boundary of “in and out” by hearing out these managers about their concerns but then confronting them to make a decision about whether they were going to stay and be part of the new team, or whether they would leave of their own accord. This appropriately drawn boundary may have been perceived as “violent” and shocking by the staff who in some way carried the blame and shame of this languishing branch. She spoke about

having ...*to literally sit on my hands*... - in a way fearing her own aggression and possible retaliation (Hirschhorn, 1988) about the rapid creation of this new boundary. Consequently, despite staying at and not retreating from the boundary, managing it mobilised (productive) aggression for this participant and the fear of hurting others as well as the fear that she herself might be hurt. This may also illustrate the point made by Hirschhorn (1988) that when people enter into new relationships, face new tasks or establish new settings, they are more aware of the choices they face and are more in tune with the dynamics of their own feelings of anxiety and aggression than when they are reproducing old relationships (p. 38), an assertion which has resonance with Ulrich's (2000) transition moment concept referred to earlier. And perhaps what distinguishes this case from the next one is the fact that in the opinion of the researcher, she appeared more self-authorized and "entitled" than the next case.

The inability of the busy former "researcher" participant (Case eight) to utilise to his benefit the interns whom he had appointed, instead, facilitating their deployment for his colleagues' own benefit, may be an example of a manager retreating from a boundary for fear of the consequences of his own aggression, uncertain about his entitlements and worried about the anger and aggression of others. Risk and uncertainty (Hirschhorn, 1988, p. 37) are the common denominators in this case.

The newly promoted manager (Case six) was seen to be managing all three boundaries - time, task and territory - as part of his adjustment to his new role as described above, by insisting that his new staff book time in his diary rather than constantly interrupt him with queries (...*I am jealous (sic) of my time and they (his staff) must respect it*...), by ensuring that he systematically delegated the responsibilities of his old role, slowly took on the tasks of his new role and physically located himself in his own, new, corner office.

The new manager (Case two) struggling with her new team appeared to fail in establishing and managing any of the time, task or territory boundaries. She complained of having no work life balance and found herself working late every night

and over weekends. Moreover, as a result of the enormous anxiety she felt, she was consumed with off and anti-task behaviour, regression to a specialist role (*...taking comfort in the operational aspects...*) rather than taking up the role of the manager and leader of the team. She was also located at a desk in the open plan office where the rest of her team sat. No wonder she commented that she struggled to differentiate herself from the team and realised she had made the mistake of wanting to be their friend (violating another boundary) rather than taking up her authority as their manager.

6.4.6.2 Goals and boundaries

The manager (Case three) who faced medical boarding set specific goals for himself in the coaching and, while initially resistant, used the goals to manage the boundary between his functional role as a senior executive of the organisation and his impending and perhaps inevitable decline into disability. In the essay he wrote after the coaching, he said: *...This was the initial, resistant start. "Oh no, more goals and objectives to focus on, in addition to my already taxing Performance Contract". Darn! I thought this was going to be fun and enjoyable. In fact, the overall journey (in retrospect) was incredibly fulfilling and over the early stages of the coaching, while wanting to resist setting goals, the goals became necessary in order for me to make progress in my life. I needed to nail the jelly to the wall and identify them and quantify them...And then later: ... After the "chemistry session" and session 1, I set out to write down 4 goals for myself. I desperately wanted these goals to be meaningful. I fundamentally wanted these goals to serve as a beacon for me to navigate life more effectively and ultimately to make me happier and more fulfilled. I believe that the ongoing success of the 4 goals I set myself is because I set the goals through "selfish eyes" to help me restore balance and address what I needed in my life. I did not set goals to please my boss or someone at (the company), I set MY GOALS.*

For the newly retired manager (Case four), managing the boundaries between being retired and working/studying proved difficult, perhaps because she was conflicted over her new role, as discussed above.

The manager (Case nine) who sought career transition coaching managed the boundary between his efforts at preparing himself to obtain new employment and his loyalty to his current organisation, and even more to his immediate manager, by ensuring our coaching sessions were held outside of his normal working hours, using his private email address for correspondence, doing the coaching bridging work in his own time, and so forth. On the day that he was ready to inform his manager that he would be starting the process of looking for alternative employment, he reported (in our final session together) feeling extremely anxious and *...emotionally drained...but also relieved that I have put it on the table....* This is an example of having to manage the boundary, in this case between his own career needs and aspirations and his ongoing loyalty to his current employer and direct manager (and his inherent job satisfaction, which made his decision to seek alternative employment so much more difficult): *... The peculiar situation in which I find myself today is one where I know that I must put in a best effort to leave a rewarding and fulfilling job in an effort to secure a better alternative in the long-term...*

6.4.6.3 Spatial/territory boundaries

Two of the participants who took up new roles during the course of the coaching also physically moved offices in keeping with their new status. This change in spatial boundary had very interesting symbolic effects on their taking up of their roles. When the female participant (Case ten) who was bullied by her female colleague on the project announced to her team that with her appointment into a post-project, managerial role she would be moving out of the common office they had shared as a project team, she was greeted with stunned silence and, in her words *...given the cold shoulder....* The researcher assumed that this act of physically moving away and establishing a space for herself in her own right, in her new role, made her no longer dependent on the bully and took away the latter's outlet onto a convenient and compliant victim.

The second example is the participant (Case six) who was promoted into a senior managerial role which entitled him to have his own corner office. He had been working in an open plan office in close proximity to his colleagues. When asked how his colleagues and reporting staff had reacted to his move (which eventually took him a month to make), he said that they seemed to treat him differently and he had noticed that they hesitated at his door before entering or speaking to him whereas previously they would have just walked up to his desk and engaged him. In trying to establish a new spatial boundary to free himself from constant interruptions from his staff, he used the office move to re-inforce new rules of engagement to give himself the time and space he needed to focus on his new role. These symbolic representations of (spatial) boundaries and the way they are created and managed can, and do, create a feeling state that will influence expectations (Czander, 1993).

6.4.6.4 Taking authority for boundaries

Another view of boundary understanding and management is offered by Lawrence (2000) who uses the term “maieutic”, denoting the enabling of individuals or groups in the client system to get in touch with their conscious and unconscious feelings and bring them to the surface (p. 200). Although he employs the term in relation to consultancy, this process is thought to apply equally to systems psychodynamic coaching. He asserts that the consultant’s (and in the view of this researcher, the coach’s) work is akin to midwifery – encouraging the discovery of unconscious and repressed meanings and allowing these to be born into the world of the conscious. He adds that consultancy is also about the death of meaning in the sense that individuals and systems can replace meanings that are more to do with defences against anxiety than with constructive alternatives (Lawrence, 2000, p. 200). The issue of the value of the coaching intervention for helping managers with career transitions will be addressed later in section 6.5 in this chapter but for the moment the point is made that participants who were able to access, understand and manage (Lawrence (2000) uses the term “take authority for” (p. 201)) the boundary between their inner worlds and the

realities of the external environment were better able to make the adjustment to their new roles.

For example, the female participant (Case seven), who understood and realised that a possible reason for her adopting a mothering and nurturing role with her male subordinates in her team might have been due to her reparative needs relating to her feelings of not having been a good enough mother to her son, enabled her slowly to adopt a more professional and distant managerial approach and resist the need to become over-involved in the personal lives of her direct reports.

Perhaps another example of her (Case seven) managing herself in her role by defining her own action structures was when she decided to give up the *'loco parentis'* role she had been requested to fulfil for the branch she had just left while also trying to establish herself in the new branch to which she had been promoted. Case six also had to make a firm decision to give up the responsibilities of his previous role as he “made” his new role for himself – management of role is also management of boundaries and relates to developing one’s own authority (Sievers & Beumer 2006, p. 70). Understandably there was some conflict and anxiety around these decisions and also a number of questions about Identity (who am I now?). These examples have been used here to once again illustrate the overlap between all seven of the ACIBART constructs in the participants’ struggles to adjust to their career transitions.

Another example of managing the boundary between her inner, perhaps unconscious, world and the reality of her external environment was the link a participant (Case ten) made between the deep hurt and humiliation she had felt 45 years previously, and subsequently repressed, when her primary school teachers mocked and belittled her after she froze and was unable to deliver her prepared speech to her class resulting in her fear of group facilitation. Events, feelings, thoughts, and patterns of behaviour that are outside of the conscious awareness of leaders can significantly influence what they decide and how they act (Kilburg, 2004a). She wrote in her essay: ... *What was really quite remarkable is that (the coach) was able to possibly identify the first occurrence*

(in grade one) when I experienced these feelings of being humiliated and demeaned in a group environment, and why these meetings had such a negative impact on me in my current position. This helped me (my) identity (identify) and accept the situation and now I am able to move forward in regards self confidence in meeting environments. I have held many successful meetings since these coaching sessions were initiated. As (With) each successful meeting my self-confidence is growing. I am receiving very positive feedback from the participants of the meetings which again is improving my self-confidence.

6.4.6.5 Boundaries and boundary management: Discussion

As can be observed in the examples from the participants provided above, boundary management is a key task of successful transition into a new role. Identifying or creating and managing appropriate boundaries of task, time and territory, as well as the psychological boundaries relating to in-group members and outsiders and the boundary between inner thoughts and feelings and the external reality, is thought to be particularly important during the time of transition into a new role. Of particular significance is the crossing of the boundary from the old role into the new one and also being able to tolerate the “not knowing” of the in between phase. Those participants who successfully identified and managed the various boundaries seemed to be more successful in their adaptation to their new roles.

6.4.6.6 Boundaries and boundary management: Working hypothesis

Identifying and managing the multiple boundaries s/he faces during a career transition is a key role of the manager/leader. During career transition, and especially when entering a new role, there are multiple boundaries to be managed. Not least of these is the boundary between the inner world of the manager/leader and the external reality of his or her situation. Avoiding or moving away from boundaries leads to anxiety and off-task behaviour and hinders adjustment into a new role. Conversely, effective boundary management was seen to aid adjustment.

6.4.7 Theme seven: Task

While the role links the individual to the system, the individual must take up a role so that tasks can be performed in order to ensure the organisation fulfils its objectives (Gould, 2007). The system has a primary task, the organisation being regarded primarily as an instrument for task performance, the definition of which determines the dominant import-conversion-export system (Obholzer & Miller, 2004; Miller & Rice, 1975). According to Lawrence (2000) most people have a good understanding of the stated primary task of their organisation, which he calls the normative primary task – it is what they consciously and rationally know has to be performed if the enterprise is to survive as an institution (p. 128, 202). But alongside the normative task, other tasks will be pursued which might be conscious or unconscious and which he refers to as the existential and phenomenal primary tasks. The existential primary task is the one people say and believe they are carrying out, and it refers to the meaning they place on their own behaviour in their systemic roles, their perception of the purpose of their activity. If the normative primary task has been internalised the chances are that the individual will take up a role in the system of activity. However, if the individual is more concerned with self-survival than with institutional survival, the existential primary task will be salient. The phenomenal task is the unconscious primary task that is being pursued by people in the system and relates to the basic assumption mental activity described earlier (in the thesis) which is used as a defence against anxiety. The phenomenal primary task is the unconscious task that is being pursued and is more difficult to discern. If it is salient it may represent the mental world of the psychotic (Lawrence, 2000, p. 129) or what Bion (1975) referred to as the basic assumption states. The greater the congruence between these three types of task being performed, the more likely it is that high calibre work will be produced; the more dissimilar they are, the more indicative this will be of anxiety and likelihood of dysfunction as a result of off-task and anti-task behaviour (Newton et al., 2006). By holding these three versions of the primary task in mind, it is possible to generate hypotheses about conscious and unconscious behaviour of people within and at the boundary.

In order to be able to perform the normative task and be productive, individuals need to feel contained and psychologically safe (Stapley, 2006). Engaging with the primary task of the organisation, and the collaboration with others this requires, evokes anxiety because the responsibilities inherent in the tasks arouse symbolic meanings which resonate with deeply entrenched early experiences, prior relationships and subsequent feelings for the individual (Sher, 2013). These in turn give rise to defences enacted to protect the individual from these fantasies and anxieties. Clarity of task is essential for individuals to have an understanding and context for taking on roles; as noted earlier, one might either take a role by facing the real work it represents or one may violate it by crossing a boundary (either real differences between people and situations, or as representing a difference between reality and fantasy), thereby escaping the risks such work poses. This creates and sustains an anxiety chain through which we hurt our co-workers (social defences) (Hirschhorn, 1988, p. 55).

Lhuillier (2013) has spoken of the loneliness and ambiguity of work (p. 34); it appears that both are highlighted and exaggerated during a career transition (see also Weinstock, 2011). Ambiguity is inherent in organisational life (Czander, 1993) and, it seems, is exacerbated at the time of a career transition in the form of, inter alia, lack of clarity about role and task. In some cases formal job descriptions with agreed performance contracts and an understanding of how performance was to be appraised (itself a form of structure and containment) were lacking creating anxiety for the participants and leading to off task behaviour. For instance, the “researcher” promoted to manager (Case eight) who, owing to the absence of clear performance guidelines plus his own anxiety about fulfilling a leadership role, regressed to a former role and manifested avoidance by, for example, including in his goals enrolling for a PhD and writing a science fiction novel when in fact his focus needed to be on improving his performance.

The manager (Case six) promoted into a senior position had the benefit of two senior managers guiding him, one of whom had occupied the role previously and was about to retire. Not only was there greater clarity about this role and its inherent tasks, as it

was a natural transition in an established career path, but the participant as a new incumbent also made it his focus during the coaching to develop strategies to understand what was required of him, to explore how he could use the handover period to improve his understanding of the role and to ask questions, all the while, honouring his predecessor. Clearly having this kind of handover is not always ideal but, in this case, because of the relationship between the two and the congruence between role as given and role as taken, it worked well. The new manager settled into his role quickly and with effective task behaviour, other than perhaps carrying a few of his legacy responsibilities for too long. He wrote in his essay: ... *In February I have had more of a chance to start feeling my new role and start going through the process of identifying my new role and what that entails as well as delegating a lot of my previous roles and duties. This is an exciting challenge as I start to grasp my new role and I have made significant progress in this. I also reflect with my coach on some of the client meetings that I have had in the past month. It has been great meeting new clients and getting to know them and also using the occasion to create a great impression. I also had a great session with my direct report (meaning his direct manager, the managing director) in my office. This session was very important in my new role identification as we spend the time working through what is expected of me in the office going forward and I am able to ask questions. I quickly realize that I am taking on many duties and it will take time to learn and master them all. I am however relieved to rather know what awaits and where I need to aim. This is better than stressing about the unknown... .* Where there is clarity about task definition and boundary, effective task performance is facilitated, enhancing confidence and authority, enabling the individual to work on task with an understanding of how their tasks contribute to the overall purpose of the organisation. This also enables them to motivate subordinates and colleagues better as well as obtain support from senior management (Czander, 1993).

6.4.7.1 Task: Discussion

As with role, clarity around task was often lacking, with leaders having to discern for themselves what needed to be done in their new roles. While to some extent this is to

be expected at a senior level, the absence of the manager/leader's own line manager input and support was again noticeable, and many of the participants experienced anxiety due to the lack of clarity about task in their new roles and the loneliness they felt. Assisting participants with the meta-skills required to obtain clarity around task from their line managers and the broader system, and to negotiate performance contracts in their roles was a key feature of the coaching. Where there was lack of clarity about task, anxiety was exacerbated, leading to off-task behaviour and defences, mainly in the form of regression to the tasks of earlier roles. Clarity around task and feelings of competence relative to tasks (and consequent early confidence) enhanced adjustment to the new role.

6.4.7.2 Task: Working hypothesis

The tentative working hypothesis thus developed is: Inadequate task definition results in individuals using primitive defence behaviours (such as regression, denial, projection, splitting, projective identification), characteristic of Klein's paranoid-schizoid position (Klein, 1997), and resultant diversions from task and consequent uncontained, free-floating anxiety (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2003). The extent to which there is clarity about task definition and task boundary, together with the presence of some form of containment (see below) will influence task performance such as on-task, off-task and anti-task behaviours, allowing managers and leaders to remain in role rather than step out of and away from it.

In the next section the impact of the (primarily) systems psychodynamic coaching with the managers/leaders in transition will be explored.

6.5 THE USEFULNESS OF SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMIC COACHING FOR CAREER TRANSITIONS

In this section the concepts of change and transition are briefly recalled and then related to the experience of managers and leaders in transition. Next, the concept of

containment as a key component of the career transition coaching and the coach as an instrument and as a transitional object is examined, and its application and impact in this study described. The value of the 360 degree assessment and psychometric feedback used as inputs to the coaching is elaborated on, while finally the usefulness and value of career transition coaching as a transitional space for the eleven managers and leaders in transition in this study is described.

6.5.1 Change and transition

Bridges (2003) distinguishes between change and transition: change is situational while transition on the other hand is “psychological” – a process individuals go through as they internalise and come to terms with the details of the new situation that the change brings about (p. 3). He, like Bridger (in Spero, 2007) and Vansina and Schruijer (2013), describes transition as a three stage process: transition starts with an ending that has to be made in order to let go, relinquish, disengage, “disidentify” (Spero, 2007, p. 220) and leave the old situation behind, with loss and bereavement being the feelings one experiences during letting go and once one has done so. Secondly, there is the neutral zone where one is “in limbo”, learning to cope with the instability of the changing conditions, taking stock, “working through”, creating and discovering new ways of thinking. This is both a dangerous and opportune time and is the core of the transition process where, being insecure, one has to resist the temptation to hasten or abandon the transition. Finally, the new beginning, incorporation as one develops a tentative new identity, different and more adaptive ways of thinking and acting, new relationships and hopefully a new sense of passion and purpose. Of course, the stages do not have clear boundaries nor are they linear or sequential - people slip backwards and forwards between them.

Periods of change in a system place considerable strain on the ability of its members to contain their anxieties (Peltier, 2011). Paraphrasing Sandler (2011), while human beings want change they often fear and resist the transition change requires. She describes one of the reasons individuals enter executive coaching as being to assist

them navigate the transition or shift into a new role as rapidly and as effectively as possible to accelerate their performance in the new context (p. 8). Despite being somewhat simplistic, Bridge's (2003) model of transition provides a useful framework to consider the impact of the career transition coaching intervention. The experience of working with the eleven participants of this study, each one of them facing some form of career transition, certainly resonates with his model. Each one of them navigated these three stages during the course of their transitions.

A systems psychodynamic approach to coaching is insight based and organisationally focussed. It aims to bring about (behavioural, goal directed) change by helping the client develop insight into their behaviour, motivation and emotion and to surface what may not at first be within their conscious awareness. And the context is always the person in their role in the organisation – how a leader finds and takes up his or her leadership in the specific context of the organisation in question. However, as Gould (2007) has said, coaching senior leaders, especially those in mid- to late-career should include the exploration of deep emotional concerns that many experience about the conjunction of their work, personal and family legacies if coaching is to have any serious and enduring transformative potential (p. 156). The question of how to improve the performance of the organisation is fundamentally then a question of how to enhance the performance of the individuals within it. The coach and coachee are working with emotional intelligence, looking for the blocks and blind spots that prevent leaders from managing the reality of their organisations, creating distortions and impeding development (Bell & Huffington, 2008, p.101). As Hirschhorn (1997) has said, we bring more of ourselves to our work, expect more of ourselves and have more expected of us. The facts that life is demanding for senior leaders and their tenure becoming shorter (Bell & Huffington, 2008) were vividly demonstrated through the recounted experiences of the participants in this study.

Coaching managers and leaders who faced a career transition provided an ideal opportunity to explore how they found and took up their leadership roles in the specific context of the organisations in which they work. The concept of the "organisation-in-

the-mind” (Hutton, Bazalgette & Reed, 1997) in the person-role-system triangle referred to earlier is particularly relevant here.

The process of executive coaching has already been covered in Chapter 4. In this section the concept of containment, the coach as an instrument and transitional object and the value of career transition coaching for the participants will be discussed.

6.5.2 Containment and the coach as container

The premise is that negative or resistant behaviour may be anxiety driven, even if this does not appear to be obviously the case, and that the coach plays a role in recognising, understanding and containing the anxiety which clients experience by, amongst other things, offering structure, demonstrating empathy and providing affirmation (Neumann, 2002; Sandler, 2011). As it is such a central concept in systems psychodynamic coaching and is especially relevant in coaching for career transitions, the particular understanding of the term containment will be reiterated here:

The psychological concept of containment emanates from the work of Winnicott (1965) and Bion (1985) on the role of the mother in soothing, comforting and providing emotional receptivity to the psychological needs of the infant (particularly when its emotional world is filled with fears of fragmentation, rage, dread of loss of love or retribution for its aggression and greed), by attending to its distress while remaining calm herself and not being overwhelmed by the infant’s anxiety. Containment, in psychoanalytic terms, refers to the capacity which Bion (1985) called reverie, where the mother is able to convey back to the infant the sense that the anxieties of the child are bearable and have meaning. In the presence of a containing mother, the infant is able to have feelings accepted, modified and made more bearable in a process of emotional exchange with her (Sonnenberg, 1997). Eventually the infant internalises the capacity to manage emotionally, which allows the individual eventually to nurture himself and ultimately to nurture others.

Although used interchangeably with containment, holding refers to an environment that is experienced as containing) where significant others are able to accept and consider intense feelings without feeling compelled to act out a retaliatory response (Huffington, et al., 2004, p. 225).

Containment has been applied not only in the psychotherapeutic milieu but also by coaches and, notably for this study, by managers and leaders. The similarities of the infant to the uncontained leader in transition and the containing relationship provided by coaching are striking. Containment has been described as the facilitation of a “good enough holding environment” for members of the system to act as a container for its members’ emotions and aspects experienced as bad, unwanted and anxiety provoking (Diamond & Allcorn, 2009). According to Cytrynbaum and Noumair (2004), in the absence of containment, individuals will experience distress and anxiety (or what Huffington et al. (2004, p. 224) have called “catastrophic survival anxiety”), and resort to primitive defences to allay the anxiety. In the cases and ACIBART analysis described earlier in this chapter, there were many examples provided of leaders in transition who lacked a containing environment. There were only a few examples where the line managers of the participants provided a containing or holding environment for the managers in transition reporting to them (Case three; Case six; Case seven – first manager; Case ten). The participants themselves referred to the containing nature of the coach and their experience of containment in the coaching; these will be elucidated in section 6.5.5 below

6.5.3 Coach as systems psychodynamic instrument

Reference has already been made to the coach as instrument in the researcher’s personal reflections on the coaching in sections 3.4.5.6 and 6.3.12 above.

Counter-transference is regarded as an analytic instrument; the internalisation of the therapeutic relationship is a central ingredient in facilitating positive psychological change – the client’s experience of the relationship, not merely the insight into

unconscious conflicts presumed to accompany the coach's interpretations is what is "therapeutic" (with the clear understanding that coaching is not therapy but that clients can experience therapeutic change from coaching) (Bell & Huffington, 2008; Pooley, 2004; Sandler, 2011; Skogstad, 2004).

Suspecting that the alienating behaviour of the female participant (Case one) whose non-verbal behaviour (the rolling of her eyes) might have had something to do with her not being able to perceive good and bad in the same object (in systems psychodynamic terms, not moving from the paranoid-schizoid position to the depressive position), the researcher offered an interpretation about how hard it is to accept that no-one is all good or all bad and that whole objects contain both good and bad parts. The reaction from the participant was immediate and alarming to the researcher/coach. She burst into tears and took some time to contain herself. It was as if a button had been pressed. The researcher theorises that it was a moment of key insight (a tipping point, to use Kets de Vries' (2013) term) to the participant concerning how she puts up a shield and dismisses people before she gives them a chance (especially in her personal life where, with sadness, in an earlier session, she had confided in the coach that she has no romantic interest). Her culture frowns upon that she is not yet married, and one can only imagine the pressure she feels and the reality that she and others may feel there is something wrong with her. The researcher/coach was left feeling shocked and bewildered at the power of the interpretation and the immediate impact it had, and it also took a few minutes for him to contain himself.

Another example of the coach as an instrument is in the case of the manager (Case eleven) who kept on cancelling appointments, failed to return calls or respond to emails. When the researcher/coach expressed his frustration at her lack of responsiveness and expressed his curiosity about whether others in her circle at work might be experiencing the same frustration she immediately apologised and again blamed her heavy workload. She lacked the insight to recognise this as a pattern and was reluctant to consider along with her coach what this behaviour might mean.

6.5.4 The role of containment in supporting managers and leaders in transition

This holding environment reinforces the individual's own emerging capacity to be open to the emotional impact of a new experience without being disrupted by it. It is in fact crucial to thinking (Dartington, 1996). By coaches being sensitive to emotional data and creating a safe, containing environment, leaders can take risks and allow themselves to work with their authentic responses. Pooley (2004) suggests that a secure base is essential in coaching because it provides containment which clients can experience physically (e.g. the availability of a suitable space) and emotionally (referring to a non-judgmental, reliable, consistent, open, and respectful attitude). She goes on to warn that insecurely attached clients could nevertheless seek coaching as a substitute for secure attachments which are unavailable in many organisations, and could thus foster their dependency on coaches. The lack of involvement of some of the new appointee participants' own managers in the transition has been referred to earlier. Other descriptors of what it means to provide a containing or holding environment are: accepting, mirroring and coach characteristics such as reciprocity, mutuality, intentional, appropriate and limited self-disclosure, personal engagement, authenticity, realness, openness, transparency and egalitarianism (Knight, 2009, p. 75). These highlight the well-known fact of the importance of relationship over method in coaching (e.g. Cilliers, 2005; Kilburg, 2004b; Wampold, 2001).

The containment space provided by the researcher/coach for managers and leaders in transition to reflect and engage allowed for awareness of behaviour, emotions and context (Menzies, 1985) and consequently for the generation of resources such as increased self-confidence and a more positive and resourceful way in which problems were perceived and handled. This reduced anxiety levels, enabling participants to remain in role and ultimately to take up their new management and leadership roles more effectively (Reed & Bazalgette, 2006). The positive impact of performance anxiety was experienced when participants experienced their holding environment and were

able to self-contain the anxiety. Evidence by way of examples is provided in section 6.5.5 below.

A second premise therefore is that hopefully leaders in turn internalise this capacity for containment and thus manage the responses of their staff (*and particularly staff taking up new roles and those thereby affected – addition mine*) more helpfully and productively (Obholzer & Miller, 2004; Armstrong, 2005; Huffington, 2007; Bell & Huffington, 2008).

6.5.5 The impact of containment on the participants: some examples from the coaching

One participant (Case ten) in describing her apprehension at entering into the coaching relationship and her subsequent feeling more at ease, wrote: *...However, this was definitely the first of this type of session where I was pleasantly surprised. The individual coaching session with (coach), where I experienced a feeling of complete ease and contentment, was possibly the beginning of my vision that coaching may actual (sic) improve my work performance both as a team player and individual growth. My feelings changed from apprehension to that of trust, safety and confidence...*

A different participant (Case seven) wrote: *From the day of the assessment until the actual first meeting with my Coach, the anxious feeling of the unknown sets in, I knew that my job was secure but now wasn't sure how secure anymore, the frightening feeling of insecurity – was I doing the right thing? The whole process seemed like a never ending tunnel and I couldn't see any light. As I went through the different sessions with my Coach, a type of calming sets in and it seems that every challenge you face is a learning curve to better your ability in life. I have learnt not to be scared to take chances, those chances being to grow the business more effectively. To not be scared to make decisions, when they are good decisions, to be proud of what I have done and when not so good, accept responsibility and learn by the mishaps.Throughout my sessions of 1 and half hour x 10 sessions, I got to understand more*

about myself than I have ever been exposed to, there was an acceptance of confidentiality that I knew I could just let the emotions run and it was still the right thing to do, that we all experience failure, growth, happiness, frustrations as we are all human, it is the way that you portray yourself that is the most important as this is how you either can make or break yourself or someone else....

Another participant (Case four), perhaps misunderstanding the brief about the non-prescriptive nature of the essay, provided the coach with very specific feedback: ... *These were the aspects which touched me and helped me so much: Empathy: You demonstrated profound understanding, from both a content and an emotional perspective, of where I am at. You truly stepped into my shoes. This gave me a feeling of genuine care and respect for who I am as a person. Accurate reflection: You reflected back to me, briefly in your own words, to check your understanding of my current situation, again from both a content and an emotional perspective. This helped me feel that "here is someone who is standing next to me and who is here for me". Suddenly I didn't feel so alone any more. Non-judgemental: At no time did any "judgement" come through, either to give me advice to continue with my ... (her studies)... or to tell me that my emotions were silly. You "simply" surrounded me with understanding and acceptance – exactly what I needed. Objectivity: You managed to get that difficult balance right of showing empathy yet keeping that measured distance to allow your responses to be completely objective, rather than at any time "siding with me", saying something which you may have thought I wanted to hear at that time. At no time did you "advise" me. You posed some excellent questions, but very cleverly and not directly: In the way you phrased things, it caused me to ask myself if I would regret giving up on (her studies) when reflecting back in two, five or ten years' time. I also asked myself why I was thinking that this is an "all or nothing" decision. In other words, who says I can't enjoy the (retired to location) life AND do my PhD at the same time? Have I gone backwards in my abilities? No! I have always been able to multi-skill and work very efficiently when I focus and put my mind and energy onto things. Self-disclosure: The honest sharing of your own journey was done with humility and no pretences. This allowed me to be more honest with myself and was the catalyst to me*

realizing that I am still a professional, irrespective of whether or not I am still contributing to (previous employer). Professional role model: The combination of all of the above inspires me. Your integrity, your perseverance, your professionalism, your competence.

Interpreting her misunderstanding of the essay brief systems psychodynamically, it is thought that the client demonstrated idealisation and splitting - good coach - floundering coachee. The above extract also demonstrates the power of providing a containing environment for the coachee.

Finally another participant (Case six) wrote: *Initially I was uncertain of what to expect and was indeed a bit nervous. The nervousness was quickly dispelled in our initial face to face meeting. I felt that the chemistry was there and I was asked by my coach if I had any uncertainties or questions. I was allowed to ask questions and I asked exactly how the sessions worked. The coach indicated how the sessions would work and how I would effectively "set the agenda". I was immediately at ease with the coach and felt comfortable being open and honest about my challenges and feelings. From our initial meeting, I felt like this could be a valuable experience. Before the first meeting I was approaching this as something that I "had to do" as it was a requirement from my firm. It quickly became apparent that there was value to be derived from these sessions and I could develop as a person and as a professional.*

The above extracts demonstrate the value of providing a containing and holding environment for a coachee in transition, in developing trust and creating a safe space for the coachee to be vulnerable and tell his or her story (Kilburg, 2004a, p. 259) and how this forms the basis for the later work in the coaching engagement. It was particularly important for those participants who felt "dumped in the deep end" and who experienced little containment from their direct manager or the organisation as a whole during their early days in the role.

6.5.6 The role of psychometric and 360 degree feedback

As mentioned in section 6.3.9, in many cases, some form of psychometric feedback conducted by third parties as part of the coaching engagement was available to the participant as well as the researcher/coach. A number of the participants had been through a leadership assessment battery or development centre which included cognitive and personality assessments, measures of affective behaviour adjustment and wellbeing, plus 360 degree feedbacks. Although not based on the systems psychodynamic paradigm, the assessments which were conducted as part of the selection and placement of the individual into a new role proved valuable to highlight areas of strength and development areas as well as possible derailers (e.g. Foxcroft & Roodt, 2001; Huffington, 2007; Kwiatkowski, 2007; Loh & Kay, 2005; Lombardo, Ruderman & McCauley, 1988; Nelson & Hogan, 2009; Spero, 2007; Thach, 2002). The 360 feedback was not always directly relevant as it may have been conducted using respondents when they were in a previous role, but nevertheless provided useful input about the participants' behaviour. In one case (Case six) the input from an in-house development centre was used to make a conditional appointment, providing a focus and positive incentive for the coaching. In other cases, the 360 degree assessment input came later in the coaching engagement but still proved valuable in corroborating needed or actual behavioural change. In all cases this feedback (psychometric and 360), where it was available, provided valuable input into the discussion about coaching goals, along with input from the participant's manager and the participant's own view of their coaching needs and how old issues might emerge in the new transition. In one case (Case one) the 360 degree assessment was completed towards the end of the coaching engagement because the participant was initially too new in the role for it to be conducted at the beginning of the coaching. The feedback was valuable in identifying areas that were still problematic (e.g. being rated poorly at giving feedback to colleagues) and providing input into an ongoing development plan, post coaching, for this participant with her line manager.

6.5.7 Coaching as a transitional space: The value of “working through”

Coaching is often used as a way to support individuals in making the transition from one career boundary to another and dealing with the anxiety and challenges of separation, being “in between” and integrating into the new state (e.g. Donaldson-Feilder & Panchal, 2011; du Toit, 2015; Louis, 1982; Mayrhofer & Iellatchitch, 2005; Spero, 2007; Talbott, 2013). Du Toit (2015) suggests that coaching may therefore be perceived as a rite of passage in managing the cycle of change. Spero (2007) describes coaching as a transitional space, resonating with the mother-infant experience of dependence and independence, attachment and separation described by Winnicott (1971, cited in Grolnick, Barkin & Muensterberger, 1978). Like the proverbial transitional object (Barkin, 1978) of the teddy bear, Spero (2007) suggests that this transitional space gives the leader the “cover” (p.219) to explore, question, make mistakes, try things out and learn about himself (herself), a space where he (she) is able to feel safe and unthreatened. Amado (2013) submits that transitional spaces may play an important role in the release from psychic imprisonment. Bridger (2009) proposes that the therapy (*coaching - addition the researcher's*) relationship becomes the temporary or transitional institution, which is itself used as an instrument for enabling the patient (*client, participant – addition mine*) to develop his (her) insights, understanding and personal resources (p. 62).

The journals the participants were encouraged to acquire and use for the duration of the coaching and beyond, which many did, may be thought of as transitional transference objects (Greenson, 1978). The transitional space came to refer to the conditions provided to enable human beings to work through the tensions of moving from the past to a future that is only partly known and largely imagined (Vansina & Schruijer, 2013). Vansina and Schruijer (2013) proceed to describe four minimum conditions which enable transitional change: 1) creating a climate of safety (containment); 2) the time and space for reflection; 3) the presence of the time dimension to enable the individual to work through the tensions inherent in the past, present and future and finally 4) the provision of a good enough cover or vehicle for the

person to reveal their inner feelings, fears and the like (p. 135). Coaching represented a transitional phenomenon, acted as a bridge between the old and the new and provided the transitional space for collaborative exchange (Winnicott, 1971, cited in French, 1997) and an essential aid to adaptation (Rose, 1978). Containment (described and illustrated above), working through and reflection were the dominant coaching processes which the participants remarked on and found useful. The extracts that follow illustrate the role and usefulness of the coaching process as experienced by the participants and in general, the benefits they obtained from the coaching. The headings utilised to capture this feedback are: the role of the coach; coaching outcomes; readiness and timing; coaching application; negative aspects of coaching; impact beyond the work role; summary of the benefits and the issue of overly positive feedback:

- *The role of the coach*

- *My coach was a great fit for me, as he was kind and caring – he offered the support that I needed and the kindness that I was seeking from my colleagues but struggling to attain. (Case two)*
- *After a particularly emotional encounter with a Senior staff member, I made the decision that I couldn't possibly continue within the role and would resign. My coach assisted me with thinking through all of the ramifications of various options and had some excellent advice, coming from a similar background. My coaching sessions became much more positive and I was so excited to embark on the new journey. Although the coaching brief was for leadership development, I think I learnt much more about myself during these four months with regards to moving out of my comfort zone and exploring other avenues. Before coaching I felt stuck in a rut and unable to find purpose and direction in my career. The biggest feeling that came with my transition into my own practice was the relief. I no longer had to pretend to be something that I wasn't. I could build and grow the business at my own pace and no longer had the negativity to deal with. Since embarking on my own, I also no longer*

have the Sunday dread feeling. I am extremely satisfied with what I have achieved in the last two years and my coaching sessions were the biggest stepping stone in aligning my strengths and development areas with my aspirations. (Case two)

- *Coaching outcomes*

- *My main accomplishment was the realisation that I could realise my dream of embarking on my own. I also felt much more confident as a result of the sessions and feel that I can still probably use some of the skills assimilated if my business grows to a point where I hire people. (Case two)*

- *Being coached is like standing in front of a mirror, but a mirror with a difference. It reflects you in ways in which you have not seen yourself, or have not wanted to see yourself, for a long time. My original goal of finding a great job where I would be content soon changed to a goal of being content, regardless of where I would find myself. This was a profound realisation and it deeply changed my outlook on life, for the good. I also realised that I have a lot to be grateful for. My job is stimulating, exciting, rewarding and challenging. I have opportunities which few others have and the exposure I am getting is what I yearned for and worked for all my life. (Case nine)*

- *The peculiar situation in which I find myself today is one where I know that I must put in a best effort to leave a rewarding and fulfilling job in an effort to secure a better alternative in the long-term. (Case nine)*

- *One average pregnancy period later, feelings of optimism despite many things to feel gloomy about is glorious and triumphant. Positive thinking overcame pessimism and cynicism. Optimism resonates with people without them even realising it. Today I can clearly see the horizon and I marvel at what lies beyond. Like the old seafarers I want to sail towards the horizon with a little anxiety and a lot of excitement about the journey and the discoveries to be made! (Case nine)*

- *The coaching that I went through helped me to think more about this issue, practical methods of how to deal with these feelings as well as exploring to some extent the reasons for my reaction. With regards the latter, this was a difficult process for me. The direction the coaching took was to steer away from any deep analytical work, and rather to work on practical techniques to deal with the issues. However, there was a level of self-reflection to the coaching in terms of confronting or finding out the reasons for the possible fragility of my ego, which I found challenging. In this regard, I would observe that the coaching brought up issues of personal development, but I am not certain that the context was well established for such an exercise. In other words, in thinking about the reasons for the unsatisfactory behaviour, the coaching was not really the right forum to explore this further, and this could be considered a criticism in a way, in the sense that this subject was broached but not sufficiently explored (Case five)*

- *What the coaching therefore helped with, was in assisting me to become more pragmatic and more conscious that such an approach was not helpful or constructive for me. It increased my self-consciousness of how my own behaviour could negatively impact my future and how to improve these dynamics by choosing how to respond in an appropriate manner. (Case five)*

- *I found the coaching challenging, at times difficult, but rewarding. I experienced positive results and I have had good feedback from many individuals. I was promoted to head of a team towards the end of my coaching, and I am of the opinion that this promotion was made in part possible by the effort that others observed in me to make constructive changes to the way I interacted with others and dealt with conflict. (Case five)*

- *This amazing journey of coaching is being continued to ensure ongoing progress across the areas shown in the wheel of life. Time and a constant awareness of the 4 goals are needed to ensure the changes “stick” and evolve as my circumstances change. These 4 goals are universal and form a common denominator in my life.*

CONCLUSION:

This has been a life changing journey thus far. Thank you to my Coach, (name) It is now up to me to keep the goals and learnings alive and active in my daily life. One year later, I can say with confidence that the goals are part of life and serve as a guiding light in the complexity and chaotic lifestyles we lead. (Case three)

- *Throughout my sessions of 1 and half hour x 10 sessions, I got to understand more about myself than I have ever been exposed to, there was an acceptance of confidentiality that I knew I could just let the emotions run and it was still the right thing to do, that we all experience failure, growth, happiness, frustrations as we are all human, it is the way that you portray yourself that is the most important as this is how you either can make or break yourself or someone else. How my personal life has affected the behaviour of who I am at the office, and just by changing my outlook on that – What a difference it has made to my confidence. (Case seven)*
- *Overall I am really happy with my coaching experience. It does require time investment and regular reflection and it is challenging to find that time in a busy corporate schedule. I have learnt that stopping to be every now and then really is a good thing. The coaching experience is a positive experience and not one to be afraid of. I am glad I have had the opportunity to do it. (Case six)*
- Readiness and timing
 - *I was in the right frame of mind (open minded, was ready to accept and take on whatever was given to me) when I started the session and have realised now that if the timing was not right it could have been a total waste of time, which has also helped me understand why I hadn't been given the opportunities that my colleagues had been given sooner, and therefore, immediately started working on my opportunity to grow areas. One extremely important thing that has to be mentioned is, you need to be open to criticism, you need to have an open mind to who you are*

and you need to WANT something so badly to be able to get through any of this positively. This is your opportunity and only YOU can make the changes that need to take place. (Case seven)

- Coaching application
 - *During my sessions with my coach, I was given an opportunity to move (branches), to head up a (branch), that firstly was a much bigger (branch), and secondly a (branch), that had really gone through bad times. This made me realise that I must be doing something right for (the Company) to put trust in me to get the (branch), back on track. It was a great opportunity for me as I could then put my NEW KNOWLEDGE of 1) Asking questions (What would you do? Why? Actually getting the person to resolve the issue without them even realising it, and then praising them for the ideas and give them confidence) 2) listening instead of taking over the conversation – Sit on my hands, 3) Growing people and instead of doing things myself allow people to make mistakes (who is the monkey) into practice on a team that did not know me. Still feeling a bit dependant on my sessions with the Coach, I requested an extra 3 sessions which have made such an exceptional positive difference in my confidence. Before I started with the coaching sessions, I was happy to just go with the flow, I had achieved what I wanted and that was to become a Good (job title), I felt successful and had learnt from the best, as long as I was carrying on with the same way that I had been taught, I was fine. I now have a different outlook and see that with all the changes I have made within myself, I am now not happy with being just a good (job title), I see bigger things for myself and perhaps in 3 years or so time, when (branch) is at its best again, I will have further growth in mind. (Case seven)*

Change is a scary thing and I am sure that there is not one person that can say it is not. It is the way that you accept the change which makes the difference, only you can be the judge of where you want to be in life, so don't wait for others to make the change, take control and make that change yourself, you will be amazed to see how

this one thing in life can make such a positive impact on your future, not only business but personally too.

I now walk into the office everyday and cannot wait for challenges to face, as every challenge overcome is a new opportunity in life.

Thank you (coach name) for making such a difference in my life, (Case seven)

- *As the weeks progressed and my coach and I discussed the goals by documenting my progress I was able to see (...incomplete) and what I had achieved. (Case one)*

2016 was a difficult year in my life and the transition to the new position was not what I expected. I felt I did not make a difference, it required many sessions with my coach to discuss how when you move up the corporate ladder that my technical skills would become less important and my relationship building would be more important. (Case one)

I went into 2017 having a 360 feedback from my manager and a number of colleagues. It was very positive and touched on some areas that initially did not seem to me as an areas of development however once unpacked with my coach I could identify with real examples how this was still a development area. (Case one)

- *The coaching at this point made me realise that I needed to go deeper into what triggers some of my reactions, understand my underlying issues, specifically me putting up shields, what triggers the type of interaction with the person.*

What my coaching has taught me is that I am evolving all the time based on my experiences, being aware of myself and of others, being empathetic and seeking to understand the other person. (Case one)

I think post my experience with coaching, this is an ongoing process and journalling will be the key to me unravelling and making sense of my outcomes I want to continue to focus on. I also know that I would like to continue having a coach to support my development and progress going forward. (Case one)

- *One of the helpful aspects of the session was to re-engage practices that had gone to seed such as the making of lists, the writing of a journal and the reading of management/leadership/self-help books and articles. This uncovering old unused practices was important. It also highlighted the approach of the coach which was to propose tools and approaches rather than a ready-made plan in approaching current and future problems. In what was a very fluid situation this approach was appreciated. (Case eight)*

Overall I found the experience of opening-up myself to a stranger very cathartic. It crystallised my challenges and allowed me to talk things through.

- *Negative Aspects of Coaching*

- *The crises experienced during the first three months of the Coaching altered the nature and focus of the sessions. I feel the sessions would have been far more focused on the issues of leadership, performance and initiating a job search if these issues were not going on. I feel as though I came across as being particularly clueless, not know what I was doing or wanted. I looked at the notes of what I said was to be doing in the (Company name) at the being (beginning?) of the sessions and compared what I was doing at the end of the sessions and they were completely different.*

Due to the delays and uncertainty the leadership/management sessions were somewhat rushed and I would have liked to focus on this more, but the pragmatism to focus on the immediate was appreciated. I just felt like I had a taste of this aspect

of the coaching. In hindsight, I should have like to have had another two sessions on management and done a bit more reading.

My one criticism of coaching generally is the benefits never manifest immediately. There is this assumption, highlighted in the review form that things should have got noticeably better in the period in which the sessions took place. The benefits, in my experience take six month to a year to manifest and they are almost never explicit. The immediate benefits are around refocusing oneself, and in my experience just trying to (be?) a little bit better each day with the hope that accumulatively things at work and life in general will become better. (Case eight)

- Impact beyond the work role
 - Sometimes the focus on several seemingly unconnected, yet fused contexts in the participant's life, offers the opportunity to integrate the underlying meaning present in all contexts (Brunning, 2007a; Kilburg, 2004).
 - *...How my personal life has affected the behaviour of who I am at the office, and just by changing my outlook on that – What a difference it has made to my confidence. Change is a scary thing and I am sure that there is not one person that can say it is not. It is the way that you accept the change which makes the difference, only you can be the judge of where you want to be in life, so don't wait for others to make the change, take control and make that change yourself, you will be amazed to see how this one thing in life can make such a positive impact on your future, not only business but personally too. (Case seven)*

This extract illustrates how some of the benefits of the coaching (increased confidence, greater optimism, resilience, self-reliance, action orientation) influenced this participant's performance not only at work but also affected her behaviour in her private life.

Another participant who was in a reconstituted family with three of her own children and two step children of her new partner, having been a single mother for some time reflected...*There are many other areas that (my coach) and I covered in the individual coaching sessions, and many of the ideas, suggestions, thoughts, and philosophies that I will apply in both my work and personal environments.* She reported improved family relationships, stating that they were working together well as a family now, following the coaching. It was almost like there was a convergence of things going well for her. (Case ten)

- Summary of the benefits of the systems psychodynamic coaching which were reported by the participants:
 - The ability to talk and be open and honest with the coach who created a confidential, safe and trusting environment (cathartic benefit)
 - Offering kindness and support in harsh times
 - Acting as a thinking partner in helping clients figure out a way forward
 - Opportunity to learn about oneself and develop insight and awareness – seeing oneself in a different light
 - Learning to understand the other
 - Helping participants get “unstuck”
 - A sense of relief and a feeling of authenticity – not having to pretend to be someone they are not
 - A sense of optimism, coaching as a guiding light

- A challenging but rewarding experience
- Experiencing positive results and good feedback as a result of the coaching
- Developed and enhanced people management skills
- Can see new horizons and feel more ambitious
- Able to take control and seize opportunities
- Improved family relationships
- *The question of overly positive feedback*

Did the participants provide this mostly positive feedback despite being asked to be completely honest with the coach/researcher in order not to displease him and to “demonstrate” their progress and “wellness”? While this remains a possibility, the researcher feels it is not probable as a) there were many different opportunities for feedbacks (interim and final coaching evaluations, vendor intervention and request for independent feedback, their essays); b) they or their companies were paying for the coaching so there was a commercial relationship (value for money) and c) the relationship was time bound (the clients might not see the coach again after the culmination of the coaching) leading the researcher to believe that there was no need to give false positive feedback. In some cases the feedback was corroborated by the line manager of the coachee and by the objective fact of a promotion during or soon after the coaching. In five cases participants voluntarily extended the number of coaching sessions causing the coach/researcher to believe they were deriving value from the coaching. The researcher concluded that while there may have been some transference of wanting to please the researcher/coach, to appear to be coping and functional in his research and a very limited flight into health, most of the participants legitimately benefitted from the coaching as described above.

6.5.8 The impact of systems psychodynamic coaching for career transitions:

Systems psychodynamic executive coaching plays a psychologically supportive role for leaders/managers in transition and appears to facilitate their adjustment to a new role. It apparently assists both with the development of personal insight and awareness on one level, and self- and people management skills and networking skills (a psycho-educational impact) on another, and yields benefits beyond the realm of work. This type of coaching is particularly beneficial when there is a distant or absent line manager (but this could also be a drawback in that the relationship with the coach may be strengthened, at the expense of the relationship with the line manager). It is suggested that the usefulness of systems psychodynamic coaching is enhanced because the coachee is particularly receptive and open to coaching as an intervention at the time of transition (perhaps due to their vulnerability in the transition moment?). This vulnerability may also have been exacerbated by the fact that for some participants the career transition coincided (not surprisingly) with many of the existential questions raised by intersecting with the mid-life transition.

A working hypothesis about the role of systems psychodynamic executive coaching for career transitions follows:

Systems psychodynamic coaching applied around the time of a career transition appears to be helpful and supportive for managers and leaders and facilitates their adaptation and adjustment to their new role.

6.6 INTEGRATION

Based on the descriptions of eleven participants and the thematic analysis of the various data gathered about their experiences, the following factors emerged:

The below the surface, unconscious dynamics associated with taking on a new role manifested mainly as anxiety and, in particular, performance, persecutory, transitional

and fragmentation anxiety. Leaders who are in transition and taking on a new role are particularly vulnerable; their situation seems to activate old feelings of not being good enough as well as anxiety related to the fear of the future and the unknown as well as fear of failure. Some experienced remorse and wondered if they had been over-ambitious in taking on the new role. Persecutory anxiety seemed to have been behind the decision of two of the participants to step down and away from their roles. Both expressed relief, so that while the declared original coaching goals of adjustment to their new roles had not been achieved, they felt more congruent and satisfied with their choices. For most participants the anxiety was eventually used as a positive force and assisted them in taking the steps (behavioural and internal) necessary to make a successful adjustment to their changed roles.

Anxiety was managed by way of defence mechanisms, most notably regression to an earlier form of competence. Splitting, projection and projective identification, characteristic of the paranoid-schizoid state, were also noticed and manifested as projecting the unwanted, undesirable parts of the self into, and onto, the other. The splitting into good and bad, competent and incompetent was a frequent feature. Blaming was also used as a defence mechanism mainly about not having been good enough (as a mother or a healthy, functional executive, for instance).

Conflict seemed to be highlighted during transition; both intra- and interpersonally. Intrapersonal conflict manifested mainly as dilemmas for certain participants about personal choices they needed to make. Interpersonal conflict occurred, for example, as a result of feelings of sibling rivalry and relationships with authority.

Taking and making the new role was brought into sharp focus at the time of transition and was a major feature of every coaching discussion, producing an inner drama in which internalised past figures, related in some way to the role-in-the-mind in the organisation-in-the-mind, were brought back to life. In consequence, they influenced the perception of self in role and the way authority was taken up in the role (the

psychological role). For some participants, the absence of authority to discharge their work role (Lawrence, 2007, p. 105) resulted in less effective role behaviour.

The conflict between the nominal role (as given), the psychological role (as taken) and the sociological role (as perceived by others) caused anxiety for some participants and resulted in the use of defence mechanisms such as idealisation (of past roles) and regression (as described earlier).

Identity and perceptions of self in a new role also presented a challenge for many participants, especially where there was a major change in role, for instance from being employed to being retired or to being disabled. In some cases the realisation that skills which might have been effective in the past, but were no longer serving the person in their new role, served as an incentive to examine their identity and to identify and build new skills.

Boundary issues especially about crossing boundaries into new roles and departments (and leaving old roles behind) raised issues of change and loss for some participants. Almost all participants realized that new boundaries needed to be identified and managed in their new roles if they were to (re-)attach, belong and adapt successfully. Insecurely attached clients might have sought coaching as a substitute for secure attachments which were unavailable in many of their organisations, and possibly fostered dependency on the coach.

At a task level, task confusion was seen to lead to task evasion in the new role. Understanding the operation of the self-protective defence mechanisms helped some participants identify their off- and anti-task behaviour. At a rational, above the surface level, understanding what was expected of them in their new role, adopting behavioural skills such as self-management, people management and networking helped them to reduce anxiety and uncertainty. The active presence of a containing line manager aided the process of adjustment to the new role; almost all participants said this took longer than they had initially thought it would.

Every one of the eleven participants commented positively on the value of the coaching. The major value seemed to be the cathartic support offered by a trusted other in a safe environment where they felt secure in talking about their difficulties and fears. The systems psychodynamic approach to career transition coaching, together with its depth approach, appeared particularly useful in helping the participants develop personal awareness, identify patterns and link these to their past. Career transitions are thus thought to represent all past transitions (as an object); hence repressed anxieties from these previous transitions (starting with birth but including, for instance, all life stage transitions such as adolescence, leaving school, one's first job, marriage, childbirth, death of parents, etc.) are resurfaced. In a way, humans are constantly in some form of transition and the thoughts, feelings and behaviours associated with career transitions are not new. For some participants the opportunity to explore these with a systems psychodynamically trained career coach was the first occasion to examine, not just the current career transition, but all previous ones. The "coaching space" became a "transitional space" where the participants could safely do the work required to make the adjustment both at an overt behavioural level by not only, for example, strategising follow up options for a workplace dilemma but also at a deeper, below the surface level (intrapsychically). For instance, they were developing psychodynamic insight (Kilburg, 2004a, p. 249) and insight, as commonly understood (Schafer, 2003, p. 4) into the way they cope with transitions in general. This served as the basis for "working through" and the adoption of more productive behaviours fostering beneficial change: ego strength increased for most participants as they grew in maturity and became more resourceful, coping better with their changed circumstances.

6.7 RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The general aim of this research, as described in Chapter 1, was to describe the systems psychodynamic experiences of leaders facing a career transition and to ascertain the usefulness of executive coaching, specifically in the systems psychodynamic paradigm and as an intervention to assist leaders in career transitions

to deal with the people related and organisational issues they encountered. Based on this aim, the following research hypothesis was formulated:

The systems psychodynamic exploration of managers and leaders who went through (or contemplated) a career transition revealed, in the analysis of eleven cases, that they experienced this as anxiety provoking and destabilising. Both consciously and unconsciously, the career transition seemed to precipitate uncertainty, insecurity and vulnerability, much of it reminiscent of incidents and experiences from their earlier lives. Defence mechanisms in the form of splitting, regression and projection as well as blame and idealisation were employed to deal with the anxiety and uncertainty. The way roles were thought about and taken up, and identities reformulated, as a result of the career transitions became much of the content of the coaching discussions. The systems psychodynamic coaching played a containing and transitioning role for all of the participants, who claimed it assisted them in their adjustment to their new roles both at a conscious, practical level but also at the level of increased intrapsychic awareness. To some extent, the containment offered by the coaching acted as a replacement for the absence of an active, engaged and supportive line manager. Managers and leaders experiencing a career transition appear to be particularly vulnerable and resort to the use of defence mechanisms which may result in off- and anti-task behaviour if not brought into awareness. Career transitions may represent, in the individual and the organisational unconscious, the recurrence and resurfacing of suppressed psychic experiences of all previous life boundary crossings and transitions. Systems psychodynamic career coaching, because of its below the surface focus, seems to have an ameliorating effect on the loneliness, vulnerability and anxiety experienced at times of career transition and appears to aid the development and exercising of one's authority, the management of boundaries and role and the development of competence in and adjustment to a new role.

6.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter the findings based on the qualitative analysis of the various data from eleven cases of managers/leaders in transition were presented. First, each case was discussed in terms of the circumstances of each of the participants and the specific career transition dilemma they faced. Basic interpretations were offered, referring also to the transference and counter-transference phenomena. On the basis of the analysis of the cases and the researcher's reflections, a number of topics were identified. Subsequently, the ACIBART model was applied to the data; seven themes were identified relating to the ACIBART constructs, revealing below the surface phenomena. On the basis of each theme, a working hypothesis was proposed. Finally the nature and impact of systems psychodynamic coaching on leaders experiencing career transition was discussed, culminating in the proposing of an integrated research hypothesis for the study.

In the next Chapter the conclusions and contributions of the study will be presented based on the original aims put forward in Chapter 1. The limitations of the research and the recommendations for various stakeholders and for future research will be provided.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter covers the conclusions reached by the researcher, based on the research aims outlined in Chapter 1 and on results from the literature review (Chapters 2, 3 and 4), the research method reported in Chapter 5 and the actual qualitative, empirical research conducted and reported on in Chapter 6. It addresses the contributions the research makes as well as the limitations and shortcomings identified by the researcher. Finally, recommendations for various stakeholders are offered and further allied research topics proposed in the field of systems psychodynamic coaching for managers and leaders experiencing a career transition.

7.2 CONCLUSIONS

In this section the conclusions are drawn based on the specific research objectives as well as the overall general aim of the research proffered in Chapter 1. The general research aim will be briefly restated. Detailed reference will first be made to the two specific literature research aims, after which the three empirical aims are reviewed. Finally, the overall, general research aim is revisited. The aim relating to the formulation of recommendations will be dealt with in a separate section, 7.4.

7.2.1 The general research aim of this study

The general aim of this research was to describe the systems psychodynamic experiences of leaders facing a career transition and to ascertain the value of executive coaching, specifically in terms of the said paradigm and as an intervention to assist leaders undergoing career transitions to deal with the people related and organisational issues they faced.

Because the specific research aims cumulatively contribute to the overall or general research aim of this study, the specific research aims will be addressed first and conclusions drawn from them; subsequently they will be aggregated and integrated into the general research aim in section 7.2.6 below.

7.2.2 Specific literature research aim 1

The first specific literature aim was to conduct a theoretical investigation into systems psychodynamics, specifically using the systems psychodynamic ACIBART (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005; van Niekerk, 2011) model, and to theoretically investigate systems psychodynamic executive coaching. This was addressed in Chapters 2 and 3.

Systems psychodynamics, in particular the ACIBART model, provided the researcher with a framework for understanding the conscious and unconscious experiences of managers and leaders in transition. An individual brings with him or her to the work situation unfulfilled and often unconscious, unresolved family needs. It was concluded that the systems psychodynamic stance, with its focus on below the surface phenomena, was particularly well suited to the study of managers and leaders in transition. Not only did the ACIBART constructs of anxiety, conflict, identity, boundaries, authority, role and task provide a highly relevant framework for understanding the thoughts, feeling and behaviours of such leaders in transition, but their interwovenness also added depth and gravitas to the study. Similarly, the other psychoanalytic and systems psychodynamic concepts such as object relations and in-the-mind phenomena, the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, attachment and loss, holding and containment, transitional objects and the transitional space all provided rich and, in the view of this researcher, relevant theoretical foundations for the study of leaders in transition.

He concluded that since the leader or manager is particularly vulnerable at the time of transition (as a result of the sense of loss of ontological security, unfamiliarity and the consequent transition anxiety), these unresolved dramas tend to be re-awakened,

unconsciously reactivating primitive fears of abandonment and helplessness, and result in the manager or leader feeling anxious and conflicted as they tried to take up their authority and make meaning of their new roles and tasks. In coaching these leaders in transition, it was noticeable that they made use of defence mechanisms such as regression, projection, projective identification, splitting and others in order to manage the often overwhelming levels of anxiety, which resulted in off- and anti-task behaviour.

7.2.3 Specific literature research aim 2

The second specific literature research aim was formulated to conceptualise the phenomenon of a career transition, to attempt to understand, from a theoretical point of view, what the leader/manager in transition experiences and to explore the notion of career transition coaching. This was dealt with in Chapter 4.

There is a dynamic interplay between the unconscious psyche and the conscious reality of present workplace relationships which makes for depth and richness in understanding people at work from the systems psychodynamic stance (Lawrence, 2000). The new VUCA (Horney, Passmore & O'Shea, 2010) world of work is characterised by greater volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, with multiple occupational changes (reflecting mobility or "churn") which are part of a modern, complex career (Bridger, 2009; du Toit, 2015; Mayrhofer & Iellatchitch, 2005; Rasmussen, 2008; Spero, 2007). In a more fluid and unpredictable career landscape, role holders need to cultivate the ability to be continually flexible, gain greater autonomy and be able to re-invent themselves at each crossroads (Gilmour, 2009; Siltala, 2003 in Mersky, 2008; Sonnenberg, 1997). Employability becomes central, so that leaders need to acquire the skills to be able to manage their own careers (Coetzee, 2014) - "one has to make oneself" (Sennett, 1996 in Mersky, 2008, p. 101). Previously, careers were regarded as hierarchical, linear and progressive (Hassard, Morris & McCann, 2011). In the new conception of work, however, "career" belongs to the person and not the organisation (p 240). The protean career, the career of the 21st century, is one

driven by the individual, not the organisation, and will be re-invented periodically (Hall 2013, p. 245). The “boundaryless career”, defined as a sequence of job opportunities that transcend the boundaries of a single employment setting, is becoming more the norm than the exception (Sullivan, 2013, p. 272), characterised as being discontinuous and by independence from traditional organisational careers. People increasingly will pursue ‘self-managed’ careers – ones which are developed across a range of employing organisations. Adding to this situation are the individual’s life story (Brunning, 2007a; Western, 2012), the particular life stage s/he is in, the lens through which the individual at each life stage will view his/her career and the specific career transition he/she faces (Gould, 2007).

It was against this backdrop that the notion of career transitions was investigated. It was concluded that at least three concurrent intersecting, and in some cases, colliding contextual changes needed to be considered: 1) At a macro level, the changing nature of organisations and the changing idea of a career in the new, post-modern economy; 2) the life stage of the individual which brings with it its own questions and challenges (Gould, 2007) and 3) the particular nature of the career or role transition the person faces, together with his or her appraisal of it (Sullivan, 2013). All these factors will determine how the individual assimilates, adjusts and deals with the change. ‘The transition can be an opportunity for growth or deterioration’ (Schlossberg, 1984, p. 59). Based on the above and the findings of Amado and Elsner (2007), this researcher concluded that however one understands career transitions, senior leader transitions constitute a critical time for both an organisation and the individual in transition; their transitions must be considered in the broader context of the individual’s life and career stage and the macro organisational context.

Career coaching, a relatively new specialisation in the coaching field, has as its primary goals: to improve leaders’ adjustment to the current realities of their roles and organisational contexts; to raise their level of performance and to enhance their reputation within their current or a future organisation. From a theoretical perspective, the researcher concluded that systems psychodynamic coaching, placing its focus on

deep and often covert behaviour facilitated the managerial discourse (Western, 2012) where the coach focuses on supporting the manager/leader to take up their role more effectively to improve personal and organisational output. By providing a containing environment, focussing on the conscious as well as unconscious elements, the systems psychodynamically trained coach helps the leader/manager in transition to develop personal awareness and insight, a psycho-educational process. It was concluded that the coach acts as a container for the client's anxieties and projections and uses the transference and counter-transference feelings to understand the feelings, thoughts, ideas, and behaviours the client is enacting, as well as to help the latter recognise the interrelationship of the past with its continuous presence and reverberation in current behaviour. This understanding, and the capacity to tolerate and understand the ambiguities and anxieties in the transitional space provided by coaching, helps the client work through, move on, adjust and modify her or his thinking, feelings and behaviour in relation to the career transition.

7.2.4 The third research aim - specific empirical aims

The third research aim had three empirical sub-aims and was stated as follows: To conduct an empirical investigation into the challenges of career transitions in order

- to describe and understand the leaders' conscious and unconscious psychological and behavioural dynamics during a career transition
- to formulate working hypotheses to act as a guide in understanding and interpreting the experience of leaders who face a career transition and
- to describe the coaching experience and to understand the usefulness of career transition coaching for the leaders from a systems psychodynamic stance.

These three empirical research aims were elucidated in Chapter 6, being based on the research design which was described in Chapter 5.

Eleven cases of managers and leaders in various types of transition were described; the data from field notes, coaching reports, email correspondence and the participants' own essays were analysed from a systems psychodynamic perspective. Their exploration of the underlying systems psychodynamic manifestations as managers and leaders facing career transitions revealed complex dynamics. The findings reported in Chapter 6 yielded rich and meaningful material, worthy of interpretation, which added depth to and wisdom about the research topic. The descriptive and explorative study displayed trustworthiness; the researcher concluded that the hermeneutic nature of the research helped uncover the covert, unconscious, below-the-surface dynamics. These dynamics and behaviours, for example the anxieties, conflicts, identity, boundary, authority, role and task issues of participants, their personal developmental or life- and career-stage and the dynamics of the organisational systems of which they were part, all interact, mutually influencing one another. The researcher further concluded that these three elements (the intrapsychic dynamics, the individual's life and career stage and the wider (meso-level) organisational context) all shaped how managers and leaders in this study found, made and took up their changed roles.

Each of the specific empirical aims will now be examined in turn:

7.2.4.1 Specific empirical research aim 1

This aim was stated as – to describe and understand the leaders' conscious and unconscious psychological and behavioural dynamics during a career transition.

This first aim was based on research literature aim one, described above, and was formulated in order to describe and understand the actual lived experience of managers and leaders in transition. While each participant's experience was unique, a number of premises emerged from the description of the cases. At a conscious level, the following post coaching premises were identified and formulated following the analysis of the cases:

- the primacy of the coaching relationship or coaching alliance in effecting adjustment
- the value of 360 degree feedback and psychometric reports as an input into the coaching process
- the usefulness of goal setting in focusing the coaching efforts and tracking progress
- (the absence of) line manager support as a limiting factor, conversely, the advantages of receiving such support
- the vulnerability experienced during transition and the exposure of gaps in skills and competencies
- the overall timing of career transition coaching and
- the impact of “coachability” and readiness for/receptiveness to coaching

All these factors played a part in the manager/leader’s adjustment to the new role. The duration of coaching, both in terms of the number of sessions and the period over which coaching took place, seemed to make no difference to the outcome. Having stated this, longer coaching contracts in terms of the number of sessions, enabled coach and client to work at greater depth. At a deeper, unconscious level, the experience of being in transition (relating to separation, loss and re-attachment) appeared to awaken old, childhood traumas in some participants. Reflective practice and journalling in between sessions helped the participants think through these connections and work through the issues, resulting in greater awareness and ultimate adjustment.

The ACIBART concepts and other constructs became a useful, a priori method (Ryan & Barnard, 2003) of analysing and categorising the themes that emerged from the research. Those participants who entered into new roles initially felt vulnerable and experienced their (psychological) roles as ambiguous and confusing. The researcher

concluded that this experience triggered old feelings of anxiety and questions around identity and self-worth which were not always obvious to them. The participants shared their experiences of free-floating, performance and transition anxiety. The mostly unconscious defensive behaviours generated to deal with the anxiety resulted in off- and anti-task behaviour, mainly in the form of regression to tasks of previous roles where the participants felt more competent. Projection and splitting were also utilised, characteristic of the paranoid-schizoid position where destructiveness, intolerance of loss and separation and conflict, mainly at the intra- and inter-personal levels, and blaming of others were evident. Some participants struggled to self-authorise in their roles; consequently the researcher concluded that the involvement of the individual's line manager and the support provided through systems psychodynamic executive coaching was helpful in facilitating the development of autonomy and authority, as well as the shift (albeit modest in some cases) from the paranoid-schizoid to the depressive position. In the depressive position, participants were more able to develop self-awareness and deal with the unknown of the new role in a more productive, integrated manner.

7.2.4.2 Specific empirical research aim 2

The second empirical research aim was stated thus – to formulate working hypotheses to act as a guide in understanding and interpreting the experience of leaders who face a career transition.

During the course of the data analysis, a number of working hypotheses relating to the ACIBART model were formulated and the following conclusions reached:

- Transitions and anxiety: Career transitions are characterised by pervasive anxiety of various types. To alleviate this inherent anxiety, reliance is placed both on conscious but mostly on unconscious defence mechanisms. Anxiety, if contained (Obholzer, 2005) may also have a positive, energising effect, mobilising leaders in transition to act in adjusting to their new role.

- Transitions and conflict: Making or even contemplating a career or role transition might lead to conflict or exacerbate conflict already present in a system. This could take the form of intrapersonal, interpersonal, intragroup and or intergroup conflict. Whatever the level of conflict, the anxiety this generated led to the use of defence mechanisms which resulted in off-task behaviour and led to fragmentation.
- Transitions, power and authority: To do the work required of one's role, one needs to be authorised. While formal and informal authorisation from above was usually (but not always) present at the time of career transition, because of the timing (of appointments and announcements), authorisation from the sides and below was not always present. Subtle de-authorisation from above was also noticed in some cases. Self-authorisation in particular seemed to be a differentiator; this, together with line manager support, is thought to enhance adjustment to a new or changed role.
- Transitions and role: The taking and making of a role is brought into sharp focus at the time of transition; this gives rise to many questions and concerns, reminiscent of the past, which influenced the way a new manager/leader adjusted to his/her new role. Initial role confusion was a common theme amongst all the participants. The line managers of some of the participants could have played a facilitating role in integrating the incongruence between the psychological and sociological roles. In his/her absence, the coach is thought to have played a positive, supportive, containing role in the adjustment to the new position.
- Transitions and identity: Identity was vulnerable at the time of transition, particularly as leaders entered a new role, team and or organisation. The consequent anxiety had a profound impact on how they viewed themselves, fashioned a changed identity for themselves, experienced their new environments and took up their new roles.
- Transitions and boundaries: Identifying and managing multiple boundaries is a key role of the manager/leader. During career transition and especially when entering a

new role, there were multiple boundaries to be managed. Not least of these was the boundary between the inner world of the manager/leader and the external reality of his or her situation. Avoiding or moving away from boundaries led to anxiety and off-task behaviour and hindered adjustment into the new role. Conversely, good/strong boundary management was seen to aid adjustment.

- Transitions and task: Inadequate task definition resulted in anxiety and individual's using primitive defence behaviours (such as regression, projection, splitting, denial, and the like) characteristic of Klein's paranoid-schizoid position (Klein, 1997), resultant diversions from task and uncontained, free-floating anxiety (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2003). The extent to which there was clarity about task definition and task boundary and the presence of some form of containment influenced task performance and allowed managers and leaders to remain in role rather than step out of and away from it.

The conclusion thus reached on the basis of all the working hypotheses is that below-the-surface, unconscious phenomena were activated at the time of a career or role transition. The managers/leaders in transition experienced anxiety in various forms, in particular transition anxiety. Conflict at various levels was aroused both internally and in relation to other individuals and teams. Since identity is particularly vulnerable at transition, much of the coaching work (see 7.2.4.3 below) revolved around the formation of a changed personal identity. Taking and making of the new role was found to be largely dependent on the extent to which the manager/leader was authorised (particularly by the self but also from above, laterally and from below), as well as on the manager/leader's ability to identify and manage appropriate boundaries. The organisational context of the individual, as well as understanding his/her particular life stage from a developmental point of view (mainly mid-life), added to the depth of understanding of and by these participants. At a behavioural level, these unconscious dynamics manifested as self-doubt and incompetence. The understanding and performance of role appropriate tasks and the avoidance or minimisation of anti- and

off-task behaviour as a result of the deployment of defence mechanisms were also key features of the manager's/leader's adjustment to the new role.

7.2.4.3 Specific empirical research aim 3

The third empirical research aim was stated as: to describe the coaching experience and to understand the usefulness of career transition coaching for the leaders/managers from a systems psychodynamic stance.

This research aim was fulfilled through the said coaching of eleven clients which took place over a 39 month period between April 2014 and June 2017. While techniques from a number of coaching modalities were employed from the cognitive, behavioural and humanistic traditions, the main focus of the coaching was rooted in the systems psychodynamic one, focusing on the intrapsychic, below-the-surface experience of the leaders and managers in transition. In keeping with the literature (e.g. Cilliers, 2005; Kahn, 2011; Kilburg, 2004a; Passmore, 2007; Wampold, 2001), the quality of the coaching relationship and the ability of the coach to create a containing and holding space and collaborative partnership for the manager/leader in transition was more important than the type of coaching utilised. The coach acted as a transitional object and the coaching as a transitional space to support individuals making the transition from one career boundary to another and dealing with the challenges of separation, being "in between" and integration into the new state (e.g. Barkin, 1978; Donaldson-Feilder & Panchal, 2011; du Toit, 2015; Louis, 1982; Mayrhofer & Iellatchitch, 2005; Spero, 2007; Talbott, 2013). Furthermore, the transference and counter-transference processes at work in the coaching enabled the coach to use himself as instrument, thereby helping to broaden and deepen the participants' and his own insights and awareness. The coaching experience, as reported by the researcher/coach, the participants themselves and, in some cases, by their line managers (as reported in Chapter 6 of this study), provided sufficient evidence of the trustworthiness of systems psychodynamic coaching and its usefulness in supporting managers and leaders in transition and facilitating their adjustment. Almost all the participants reported a

reduction in anxiety, a sense of relief and an increase in their self-confidence and coping. They reported having gained greater insight and self-awareness during the course of the coaching together with improved interpersonal relationships. For most of them, there was a sense of optimism and hopefulness about success in the new role.

7.2.5 Specific empirical research aim 4

The fourth research aim was stated as follows:

To formulate recommendations for the various stakeholders involved in career transitions and to propose ideas for further research into career transitions and career transition executive coaching.

This aim will be dealt with in section 7.4, Recommendations, below.

7.2.6 The general research aim revisited

The general aim of this research was stated above.

Sonnenberg (1997) asserts that work has a unique societal importance and value and a corresponding individual emotional investment of a particular intensity, which renders it a particularly potent activity in relation to personal development (p. 468).

Interpreting the experiences of managers and leaders in transition from a systems psychodynamic perspective enhanced understanding of the unconscious psychological and behavioural dynamics at work during career transition. Dealing with such a transition represents a particular opportunity for the individual to face many dilemmas normally present in day to day work but highlighted or possibly intensified during a career transition, particularly at mid-life, as elucidated in Chapter 6, Findings. The researcher concluded that the research was successful in describing the in-depth personal, organisational and systems psychodynamic experiences of the participants

in the sample. The research was able to reveal both the overt and the covert, below-the-surface patterns and issues that the managers and leaders in transition were facing. Exploring these with a systems psychodynamically informed career coach provided a unique opportunity for the satisfaction or modification of some of the leaders' deeper psychic needs and drives (Sonnenberg, 1997), and resulted in greater personal balance and equilibrium, personal growth and development through increased insight. Accordingly, increased creativity, achievement and productivity in the workplace ensued. As a result of the research efforts to ensure trustworthiness, and notwithstanding the limitations described in section 7.3 below, the researcher concluded that the data could be transferred/generalised to other managers and leaders in transition in similar organisational situations.

7.2.7 The contribution of this research

Based on the strength of the conclusions drawn above, the contribution of this research to the field of industrial/organisational and consulting psychology, specifically the area of career psychology, role and career transition and executive/career coaching from a systems psychodynamic perspective, is thought to be the following:

Research

No South African studies from a systems psychodynamic perspective of managers and leaders in transition could be found. Indeed, very little international literature specifically addressing the topic of career transitions from this paradigm and the application of systems psychodynamic executive coaching was discovered.

The unique contribution of this study therefore lies in the explication, using the said paradigm, of the in depth, unconscious as well as the conscious thoughts, emotions and behavioural dynamics and experiences evident when managers and leaders face a career transition. The systems psychodynamic perspective deepens the level of analysis to reveal a richness and depth that may not be possible in other paradigms, such as the humanistic or positive psychology paradigms (e.g. the GROW model or

behavioural-cognitive coaching). This study is thus thought to provide a unique addition to the growing body of knowledge and research in the systems psychodynamic paradigm within the field of industrial/organisational and consulting psychology.

For the individual in transition

Using this depth approach helps one gain a better understanding of the experience of managers and leaders in transition in terms of their identity, tasks, roles and relationships. Exploring career transitions from a systems psychodynamic stance highlighted career transition as an object in Kleinian terms (Klein, 1997) which is thought to represent the recurrence of previously suppressed reactions to earlier transitions, reflecting the individual's valenced patterns in dealing with transitions. The individual in transition is thus enabled to learn about him or herself and his/her unique reaction to being in transition. Although the roots of systems psychodynamics can be traced back to the 1800s and the field has been supported by a solid body of knowledge and research since the mid 1900s, it has mostly espoused a group orientation. This study will add to the body of knowledge about systems psychodynamics as it pertains to individuals.

For the organisational system

This research has implications for the roles of the line manager of the transitioning employee, the coach and consultant working with career transition, the HR department and the organisation as a whole. These will be covered more fully in section 7.4 below, relating to recommendations. This research will, it is hoped, stimulate discussion about the management of, and support required for, leaders in transition and the wider impact of transition on an organisation, as well as the latter's containing role and its ability to focus on its primary task and meet its organisational objectives. Anxiety constricts an individual's ability to think more broadly about issues they are struggling with (Gould, 2006) while career transition coaching was perceived to offer a containing environment for the understanding and subsequent reduction of overwhelming anxiety. This study highlighted the importance of attending to leaders in transition. It also drew attention to the opportunity the transitional window represents for good attachment and quicker and

greater functionality in role, from both an individual and an organisational perspective. It is possible that the manager/leader in transition acts out the transitional experience and bigger systemic change anxiety of the department or organisation at large. The organisational system, with an improved understanding of the transition phenomena, could aid the leader's adjustment to his/her new role sooner and more effectively.

For consulting psychologists and executive/leadership coaches

Consulting psychologists can play a psycho-educational role for both the organisation and its individual leaders, in understanding the phenomenon of transition within the context of the individual's life stage together with the value of providing support (in the form of containment, acting as a transitional object, a thinking partner, providing a transitional space, and so on.) for transitioning leaders from a systems psychodynamic perspective. This research similarly makes a contribution to the training of coaches not only in terms of the general systems psychodynamic approach to coaching and career transition coaching in particular but also specifically to the training and development of a reflective systems psychodynamic practitioner and the use of journaling in assisting coaching clients in obtaining awareness and ultimate adjustment (especially in relation to career transitions).

7.3 LIMITATIONS

Amado and Elsner (2007), based on their researched experience, write about their reluctance to put forward universal courses of action because of the uniqueness of each leader's context (organisation), personality and consequent behaviour. This has been referred to in Chapter 6. Notwithstanding the danger of generalisations, a number of limitations of this study need to be mentioned:

7.3.1 Limitations of the literature review

While there is an extensive and growing body of literature on systems psychodynamics in general, the literature relating to the application of this paradigm to the understanding

of the experience of leaders in transition, and this type of executive career coaching, is meagre and in the case of the latter, non-existent. The researcher thus supplemented the literature review with literature from fields such as attachment theory, separation and loss as well as change management. The systems psychodynamic perspective, with its emphasis on revealing the more covert aspects of leaders' experience in transition, also poses a challenge in that interpretations and conclusions gleaned from working below the surface are by their nature subjective, tentative and open to interpretation, based on the valence of the interpreter.

AS Gabriel (1999, p. 36) averred: "At the heart of most charges levelled against psychoanalysis lies a concern about the psychoanalyst's use of his/her patients' utterances as research material on which theoretical arguments are based. This material is easily presented as at best unreliable, at worst tampered with, contaminated or even fabricated".

While the researcher did call on and use, especially in the coaching itself, the contributions of other paradigms or schools of psychology, the analysis of the data was undertaken from a systems psychodynamic perspective which might have excluded other perspectives or ideas about the experience of leaders in transition.

7.3.2 Limitations of the empirical research

The nature of the career transition of each of the participants was unique; in one case the participant was contemplating a career change and was wanting to prepare for it but had not actually experienced it. The term career or role transition has been used to describe the experience of all the participants but the actual nature and circumstances of each transition were very different. This may have affected the transferability of the findings and conclusions. Because the researcher was working with largely unconscious processes in understanding the anxiety aroused for leaders in transition, it could be said that these are universal individual and organisational dynamics at play. This could be an area of future research, particularly outside of a Western paradigm.

The researcher's role as both researcher and coach makes it impossible for him not to be subjective; the impact of his own valences in both the interpretation and the actual execution of the coaching, and in particular the risk of anticipating and imposing these, although it is the coach's business to discover them, have been referred to in the explication of the cases in Chapter 6. Struwig and Cilliers (2012), reporting on a methodologically similar study where the researcher and consultant was one and the same person, stated that the qualitative research instrument had very human limitations. Therefore, they declared, it was difficult, if not impossible, to comment on how the levels of knowledge, insight and experiences of the consultant/researcher, as well as his unconscious processes, influenced the consultation and research processes (p. 9). To some extent the potential negative impact of this was ameliorated by the current researcher's own weekly supervision (see Haslebo, 2000) and his self-knowledge, awareness and insight, paying close attention to his inner experiences, proclivities and biases, and being alert to counter-transferential experiences (in other words, applying his overall reflexivity (Wilson & MacLean, 2011)) . On the other hand, the researcher's own experience of transition and the use of the "third eye" may have been helpful as a form of triangulation.

Although the number of participants for an in depth, qualitative study was more than acceptable (Lindegger, 2002) and the participants were mixed with regard to gender, their homogeneity with regards to race and culture, and to some extent age, means that the transferability of the findings and conclusions is limited.

While case studies have their limitations (Lindegger, 2002), they often generate hypotheses that may be more rigorously tested by other research methods. Working hypotheses are not absolute truths, are useful only until proven differently (Amado, 1995) and need to be verified. In this respect Borwick (2006) observed that one is always in "a state of getting closer to the truth but never arriving" (p. 10).

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The fourth research aim was stated as follows:

To formulate recommendations for the various stakeholders involved in career transitions and to propose ideas for further research into career transitions and career transition executive coaching.

In this section recommendations for the individual in transition, organisations, including executive search and placement organisations, human resources and consulting personnel and line managers of transitioning managers and leaders will be made. Recommendations for further research will also be provided.

7.4.1 Individual recommendations

In the new world of work career is separate from the organisation - the individual is the custodian of his or her own career and needs to develop the meta-skills or competencies of sound career planning and management. These meta-competencies include proactivity, openness to change, optimism, valuing self-awareness and adaptability, which are thought to stimulate a sense of autonomy and psychologically energise people in the management of their careers.

Concepts such as career self-directedness, employability and career self-management are relevant in the new conceptualisation of a career. Self-esteem, emotional intelligence, proteanism (the ability to do many things), flexibility, autonomy and overall career resilience need to be developed (Coetzee, 2014; Savickas et al., 2009; Sonnenberg, 1997; Sullivan, 2011). These meta-capacities or competencies are thought to be even more important in an environment of changing contexts and shifting roles when managers and leaders encounter more frequent career transitions, career uncertainty, and events of unemployment/underemployment in an unstable business world (Coetzee, 2014).

Managers and leaders in transition are thus encouraged to develop self-awareness and self-knowledge (including accepting one's limitations), usually gained through coaching (of a systems psychodynamic nature, it is argued) and personal reflection and journalling. Having an adequate support system and a realistic notion of the time necessary to adapt to a new role are also thought to be important. The ability to accept chaos, tolerate ambiguity/uncertainty and be in limbo for a while, coupled with the ability also to seek clarity (particularly about task and role), gain membership, firm up on expectations and ultimately plot a decisive way forward, add to the picture of how managers and leaders can successfully navigate a career transition (developed from the recommendations of Amado and Elsner, 2007).

Managers and leaders in transition are encouraged to seek professional coaching, especially in the systems psychodynamic stance. The role played by this kind of executive coaching, particularly containment of anxiety and the provision of a transitional space in supporting leaders and managers through that transition, is thought to facilitate the learning and acquisition of the meta competencies described above. It also helps to develop insight and awareness (which are useful beyond the transition) as well as to shorten the negative and, in some cases, destructive impact of the transitional period, hastening and aiding adjustment to the new role.

7.4.2 Organisational recommendations

Any organisational change, especially if it concerns changes in key personnel, brings with it a sense of anxiety and uncertainty (and possibly some excitement and a sense of anticipation) amongst staff. Change may also raise suspicions and feed the rumour mill. Not only is the organisation itself filled with anxiety but this emotion is generated amongst employees as well. In the researcher's personal experience and also from input gleaned in this study, due consideration is not always given to endings and beginnings, especially as they relate to people leaving and joining organisations or departments and taking on new roles. If handled well, these transitional events or rites of passage represent an opportunity for appropriate openness and transparency in the

organisation, paving the way for a smoother transition (leaving and joining) through sound communication, preparing employees for the change, building trust and enhancing relationships. While the human resources concept and practice of “on boarding” is not within the scope of this study, the process should start with sound “on boarding” practices. Providing support to a joining or (in some circumstances) leaving manager in the form of career transition coaching, especially from a systems psychodynamic perspective, has proved to be helpful in shortening and enhancing the adjustment to a new role; organisations would be well advised to support its use.

Many organisations are already providing retirement coaching or counselling or outplacement services and retrenchment counselling to employees for known, planned transitions. This kind of support is less common when managers and leaders take on new roles. Consulting psychologists and human resource departments would do well to understand the experience of leaders and managers in transition, especially from a systems psychodynamic perspective, so that they are more aware of the issues and dynamics inherent in transition and are able to offer the appropriate support.

Adjustment will be aided by ensuring line managers are skilled in this area and have or acquire an understanding of the conscious, overt and practical issues (including processes and procedures, for example those related to performance contracting and role clarification, together with time frames and milestones) as well as of the unconscious processes (experiences of anxiety, loss and separation and the use of defences as well as the resultant role confusion and ambiguity) which are at play during transition. The organisation similarly needs to be aware of and skilled in managing these processes, and also promote and sponsor the supporting of leaders new to their departments/sections.

Discussions at various organisational levels about the policies, practices and ownership of, and the various custodian roles in, the placement, induction, on-boarding and transitional coaching of and for managers and leaders needs to take place, and appropriate policies and practices adopted and implemented. By understanding and

customising the below-the-surface themes identified in this study, the relevant role players will be able to identify the human relations factors necessary to act as appropriate containers for leaders in transition, in addition to other affected staff. As early as 1978 when he wrote his article on the mid-career conundrum, Kets de Vries (1978) was advocating the use of counselling for managers and leaders in transition. Career coaching, especially from the systems psychodynamic perspective, could play a major role, particularly in surfacing unconscious dynamics aroused during transition, thereby supporting managers and leaders as they work through these challenges and come to grips with the nature of modern careers in the new world of work. This early, leveraged intervention (when a manager or leader is relatively new in role) is thought to have a positive, compound effect in terms of subsequent engagement, embeddedness, work based relationships, succession and overall performance. To paraphrase Sonnenberg (1997): When the workplace is consumed by feelings of precariousness and instability (as might be experienced during a career transition), the longings for satisfaction of the more deep-rooted needs for love and acceptance, for stability and permanence, are correspondingly stronger – the craving not for universal love but to be loved alone (Auden, 1940). The warnings of Kilburg (2004a) should, however, be heeded: Diagnostic acumen and professional judgment are central to determining whether the shadow realm of psychodynamics should be entered.

Consulting psychologists, coaches and HR personnel have a responsibility to assist employees at all levels of the organisation to understand the changing nature of career planning and management in the new world of work, as well as to aid them in developing the meta- competencies they need to manage their careers more effectively.

A psychologist consulting to a system where there are managers and leaders in transition would be well advised to be aware of the conscious and unconscious dynamics inherent in career transitions, and to adopt a systems psychodynamic approach to understanding and ameliorating the negative impact of transition at the individual, team and organisational levels. Furthermore, the role of such psychologists

in training the line managers of recently transitioned or transitioning managers/leaders in basic systems psychodynamic principles and coaching is important. It should assist the line managers to gain a clearer understanding of the experience of their employees in transition. The former should be able to better assist their staff in making the adjustment to the new role and taking up their new roles sooner and more productively, as well as understanding the more systemic implications for the team, department and organisation as a whole.

Organisations responsible for the recruitment and placement of managers and leaders into key roles in client organisations will, at intervals, conduct a superficial post-placement follow up after the start date, but often lack an in depth understanding of the transitional dynamics described in this study. This knowledge and awareness would help them prepare the new incumbent as well as the receiving organisation to settle in and take up the role more effectively.

This knowledge, understanding and practice on the part of all these organisational role players is thought to play a major part in ensuring adjustment to role, building relationships and facilitating the achievement of organisational objectives.

7.4.3 Recommendations for future research

Further general exploratory and descriptive research into the systems psychodynamics of career transitions needs to be undertaken. Specifically, the issue of authority (and de-authorisation) in taking up and “making” organisational roles is thought to be particularly relevant and crucial to the success of role adjustment and performance. The factors that contribute to being authorised or de-authorised in taking up a role are also worth investigating in more depth.

The working hypotheses generated in this study could be subject to testing and verification in future research.

Additional research to examine the impact of age, generational factors and career/life/developmental stage on managers and leaders in career transition would be useful, while, in the South African context, it would be crucial to understand the influence of race and gender factors on career transitions, especially from an affirmative action and preferential placement point of view.

Involving consulting psychologists and the human resources function (as custodians of the careers and career transition field) in future research, particularly in more longitudinal type studies relating to the provision (or not) of career coaching, line manager involvement, as well as the long term impact on retention, embeddedness and engagement of managers and leaders and their performance, is advised.

Research into the training and ongoing development of systems psychodynamically informed coaches and consultants, and especially the knowledge and skill required to carry out career coaching/consulting work from this perspective, is recommended because the area of career transitions is thought to be a specialised and crucial area (of leverage) which has not had the benefit of specific research attention in the past.

The importance of understanding the socio-economic and cultural context of leaders in career transition was emphasised in this study and the lack of cultural diversity amongst the participants (especially in the South African context) was highlighted. This and the question of the transferability of systems psychodynamic executive coaching to cross cultural career transitions remain unanswered and should be a topic for future research.

7.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The starting point for this chapter was a review of the two literature research aims and the four empirical research aims introduced in Chapter 1. The conclusions of this study were elucidated on the basis of these aims: information was presented about how these aims were achieved in the study. The literature and empirical limitations of the study

were discussed and recommendations for both individuals and organisations as well as future research furnished.

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APPENDIX

Appendix: Systems Psychodynamic Career Transition Coaching Process

(adapted from Hazen & Steckler, 2014; Koortzen & Oosthuizen, 2010; Pooley, 2007)

Phase 1: Contracting and Assessment – establishing the basis for a working relationship

Session 1

- Contracting with the client including ethics and confidentiality
- The nature of the research project
- Systems psychodynamic coaching explained
- Establishing the career transition need
- Background information – role and family history
- Psychometrics or 360 degree assessment report, if these are available

Session 2

- Coaching goals and behavioural indices
- Meeting with line manager (or in a subsequent session if client not yet ready. Omit if not appropriate)
- Understanding role requirements and client's adaptation
- Dealing with change and expectations
- Understanding where the client is for example on Bridge's (2003) continuum of change

Phase 2: Mid stage of coaching – engagement and exploration

Sessions 3, 4, 5, and 6

- Exploring client's experience at work
- Discussion of emerging themes and issues (conscious and unconscious)
- Collaboratively formulating and refining working hypotheses
- Client testing hypotheses at work (and possibly outside of work)

- Practical issues of adjustment
- Client supported to find, make and take up role
- Feedback and progress review

Phase 3: End stage – termination and evaluation

Sessions 7 and 8

- Client testing hypotheses at work and reporting back
- Evaluating progress against goals
- Enabling and inhibiting factors to adjustment
- Second line manager meeting, if appropriate
- Sustaining the change and disengaging
- Essay and evaluation
- Coaching termination