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Virtues and Values: A Transcendental Phenomenological Examination of Professional Coach Trainers' Use of Virtue Ethics as a Tool in Their Practice

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Virtues and Values: A Transcendental Phenomenological Examination of Professional

Coach Trainers' Use of Virtue Ethics as a Tool in their Practice

by

Julianne Schwietz

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Educational Doctorate

in

Educational Leadership

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Mankato, Minnesota

March 30, 2022

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Julianne E. Schwietz

This dissertation has been examined and approved by the following members of the

student's committee:

_____

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Committee Member
Dr. Nora Murphy Johnson

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Committee Member
Dr. Heidi Giebel

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my children, Ryan Manship and Lisa Alam, who have witnessed and supported my non-traditional educational journey throughout their lives. And to my three grandchildren, Sara Julianne, Samiul Taher, and Izaac Zakaria. May the experience of my completion of this terminal degree inspire, encourage, and strengthen your confidence in always reaching your best potential.

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Completing this doctoral degree has been my metaphorical mountain to climb. I have viewed it as an extraordinary opportunity to reach the summit of my education. Along the way, I have been assisted by so many for whom I am grateful.

For my loved ones—family, friends, and neighbors who were pulling for me like cheerleaders, I thank them for their support, playtime, listening, shoulders, patience, food, and belief in me.

My advisor, Dr. Bernadeia Johnson, took me under her wing after my former advisor made a career change. I am grateful for Dr. Johnson's dedicated support, humor, and consistent championing of me and my writing. I wish to thank my committee member, Nora Murphy Johnson, one of the world's best multi-tasking jugglers of life-enhancing projects, for sticking with me. I so appreciate her wisdom and loving patience in helping me see which paths to take. I met my committee member, Dr. Heidi Giebel, searching online for literature. She asked how she might help me and said "yes" immediately to my request to join my committee. I appreciate her depth of knowledge in philosophy and virtues and her selfless willingness to share who she is professionally and personally. Dr. Beatriz Desantiago-Fjelstad, stepped up to join my committee in the final climb to the top. I am thankful for her presence when most needed.

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Abstract

Society has grown out of touch with moral character and virtues. The effect of this
disregard for virtue is a departure in the collective of our societal moral values. As
individuals, without upholding virtuous ways of being, our character can regress and
therefore prevent us from reaching our best potential as individuals participating in
society. Professional coaches like this researcher are leaders who work with people in
every sector of society who are motivated to reach their best potential. Coaches' training
programs hold coaches to high standards of ethical conduct in their practice (Iordanou et
al., 2017; Whitworth et al., 1998; Williams & Anderson, 2006). This qualitative
transcendental phenomenological research explored with eight coach trainers their
experience in using virtues, virtue ethics/ethics in general, character, strengths, and
values as tools in their training practice. The results show (n=8) 0—use virtue ethics,
1—uses values only, 1—uses strengths only, 2—use virtues, ethics in general, character,
strengths, and values, 3—do explicit training on ethics in general, 4—use values and
strengths as tools, methods, theories, in their training. This study reveals a compelling
opportunity to bring virtue ethics into coach training to help close the gap in our societal
misunderstanding of virtues and values. The findings in this study are meant to inform
those in the field of coach training and those with influence as educational leaders in
business, churches, government, non-profits, and wherever there is a need for a greater
understanding of how virtue ethics impacts self-development and well-being.
Keywords: professional coach training, virtue ethics, virtue, values, educational
leadership, transcendental phenomenological methodology

Chapter I

Introduction

Background of the Problem

Virtues have fallen off the radar of American society, leaving us in moral trouble, or as Brooks (2020) writes:

America is having a moral convulsion. People feel disgusted by the state of society. Trust in institutions plummets. Moral indignation is widespread. Contempt for established power is intense. Social trust is the measure of the moral quality of a society—of whether the people and institutions in it are trustworthy, whether they keep their promises and work for the common good" (p. 1).

Current events spilling out of the news pages provide unfortunate examples of people's disregard for ethical behavior. In 2019, the college admission bribery scandal was a criminal deception to cheat the standards set in college admissions (Chappell & Kennedy, 2019). United States District Judge Nathanial Gorton described the conduct of those found guilty as "unconscionable, and egregious" (Garrison, 2020, para. #3).

It is not only criminal behavior that is in the news. In July 2021, a restaurant in Brewster, Massachusetts, closed for a "day of kindness" due to impatient customers' growing amount of vile treatment of its staff (Lati, 2021, para. #2). An "astronomical influx" of customers had been screaming at employees, dangling legal threats, and driving team members to tears, the owners wrote on Facebook (Apt Cape Cod, 2021). Abusive treatment, the restaurant's co-owner told the New York Times, has become "its own epidemic" (Vigdor, 2021, para. #9).

Kindness, patience, humility, courtesy, respect, integrity, and decent human interaction are virtuous ways of being that define one's character and civil society. These virtues are part of *Eudaimonia* or living well (Giebel, 2021; Hursthouse, 1999; Grant et al., 2018) and are prosocial (Biglan et al., 2020; Fowers et al., 2021; Gagné, 2003; Macintyre, 2007). When these traits that humanity once valued go unpracticed and ignored, it is a slippery slope for abusive behavior like rudeness, selfishness, nastiness, insulting, vulgar, and cruel behavior to become accepted and commonplace (Moody-Adams, 1994; Arendt, 1963). As individuals and as a society, we are culpable for the breakdown in our practices and ideologies of virtuous character that we require to respond to moral and ethical dilemmas at local and global levels (Walker, 2020).

Moody-Adams (1994) describes the "banality of wrongdoing" that begins when commonplace wrongdoing becomes routine because individuals are ignorant of their "potential to support and engage in morally culpable conduct" (p. 299). One cannot fall back on an excuse of ignorance to avoid being blamed for their immoral action or lack of action. This avoidance is considered to be culpable ignorance (Furman, 2018). Willful ignorance is culpable, as described below. It is also defined as affected, motivated and strategic ignorance (Moody-Adams, 1994; Wieland, 2017; Furman, 2018). Moody-Adams (1999) describe affected ignorance:

> Affected ignorance is a common accompaniment of wrongdoing. It is essentially a matter of choosing not to be informed of what we can and should know. Even our most deeply held convictions may be wrong. But it is also common for human beings to avoid or deny this possibility (p. 301).

"The main obstacle to moral progress in social practices is the tendency to widespread affective [willful] ignorance of what can and should already be known" (p. 180).

Examples of this kind of ignorance have escalated in education in 2021with attacks across the nation on school boards due to a lack of understanding and knowledge about Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Waxman, 2021; McTighe, 2021; Sawchuk, 2021). Concerns and questions are overtaken by rumors that spread either maliciously to gain power/control, as in political situations, or spread innocently/ignorantly by those who hear or read something and believe it without knowing the facts. Misleading information based on fear, misdirected anger, distrust, and willful ignorance can all too easily become believed lies or a "disruption to education" (McTighe, 2021, para. #2; Sawchuk, 2021, para. #32).

Carson (2010) identifies a breakdown in virtues in the title of his book, *Lying and Deception*, whereas Bennett (2001,1993) believes there is a breakdown with fractured families. In Callahan's (2004) book, *The Cheating Culture: Why More Americans Are Doing Wrong to Get Ahead,* the focus is on the rise of cheating in our culture. Newstead et al. (2018) note organizations today have been harmed by the lack of virtues like honesty, fairness, integrity, responsibility, and compassion. Peterson and Seligman (2004) noted that a 1999 survey of adults in the US cited "not learning values" as the most important problem facing today's youth (p. 5). Martin Seligman was the American Psychological Association president in 1998 when the field of mental health began to change from its history of only focusing on mental illness to identifying what makes

humanity flourish. Seligman stated, "There is a moral vacuum in religious and secular morality and in our politics" (2019, p. 21).

The literature shows a marked decrease in the attention paid to virtuous language over the twentieth century (Kesebir & Kesebir, 2012; Brooks, 2015). According to historian Dr. Gertrude Himmelfarb (Shirley, 2018), virtues ceased to be virtues and became "values" practically without notice. The use of the word "values" as being synonymous with "virtues:"

happened in the 1880s when Nietzsche* began to speak of values in its present sense keynoting the moral beliefs and attitudes of a society. He used the word [values] consciously and repeatedly to signify what he took to be the most momentous fact in human history. His transvaluation of values was to be the final revolution against the classical virtues and the Judeo Christian ones, indeed against the very idea of the virtue of a transcendent morality. When early in the 20th Century, shortly after Nietzsche's death, the sociologist, Max Weber, borrowed the word values. He had no such nihilistic intentions. He used the word matter-of-factly as if it were part of the accepted vocabulary and of no great moment. Perhaps for that reason, because it seemed so familiar and so unthreatening, it was all the more effective for it was absorbed gradually and unconsciously into the ethos of modern society as it was absorbed into the vocabulary. Values bring with them the assumptions that all moral ideas are subjective and relative, that they are mere customs and conventions, that they have a purely instrumental, utilitarian purpose. So long as morality was couched

in the language of virtue, it had affirmed resolute character… the word virtue

carried with it a sense of gravity and authority as values do not. (Shirley, 2018,

6:35). [*For more on Nietzsche, see Anderson (2021).]

Virtues are the vocabulary of our moral language. The less we use this

vocabulary, as with any language, as in substituting the subjective notion of "values" for

the ethical norm of "virtues," the more it fades (Vasalou, 2012). Kesiber and Kesiber

(2012):

In the absence of a shared moral lexicon, confusion about moral issues seems a

likely outcome, even if not outright moral depravity. We believe that a virtue-

salient culture would provide a more favorable ground for individuals and societal

flourishing than one where concepts of moral excellence are at the fringes of

public conversation (pp. 478, 479).

Annas (2015) points out that we have "little or no developed vocabulary for

describing the phenomenology of virtuous, as opposed to merely self-controlled activity"

(p. 284).

Passing on this language is becoming a thing of the past. Therefore, moral

development suffers in human development overall. Sockett & LePage (2002) find that

moral language is not used in classrooms because it is not in teachers' terminology. Their

research concludes that teachers are not prepared in teacher education to be moral leaders

in the classroom or with their peers or students' parents. The researchers do not blame the

teachers. Instead, they are emphatic that a moral vocabulary is taken over by behaviorist

language, developmental psychology, and normative language. In this regard, they posit

that teacher: must learn to use moral language to be in authentic relationships with their students, the parents, and one another and must learn their own morality. Intellectual development comes from the teacher's commitment to their morality.

This decline connects to a disregard for virtues in general. Have people forgotten what it means to choose to live virtuously? Do we no longer value virtues in society? Hitlin and Vaisey admit to a "gradual disengagement from morality" in sociology, "Indeed, our discipline has successfully neglected it [morality] for some time" (2010, p. 3).

The gradual decline in virtuous language shows up in how people were described in obituaries. Hume (2000) traces newspaper obituaries from 1818 to 1930 to reveal society's changing values. In years past, people were memorialized and described by character traits and virtues no longer held in esteem. For example, obituaries described the individual by their virtues such as being kind, generous, gallant, patient, gentle, or dutiful. The point is that over time, obituaries no longer mention or memorialize the virtuous traits of the deceased.

The effect of this disregard for virtue is a departure in the collective of our societal moral values. As individuals, without upholding virtuous ways of being, our character can regress and therefore prevent us from reaching our best potential as individuals participating in society. Emmons (2003) suggests that future research on human motivation may do well by including the language and constructs of virtue ethics.

Because society has grown out of touch with moral character and virtues, there is a need to bring virtue ethics into practice. It is time to reclaim virtues through educational

leadership that upholds and advances human ways of being through virtue ethics. Educational leadership extends beyond the walls of institutional learning. Human beings gain their epistemological knowledge through cultural norms, ways of knowing and being, and traditional forms of education. Anyone with influence over others (parents, teachers, organizational and governing leaders, professionals including therapists and coaches, and adults in general) are educators as we model human behavior. Thus, humanity must understand our learning process and how it shapes who we become. In this way, youth grow into leadership themselves as a natural course of education. Leaders have a moral imperative to be their best in developing others to do the same. Leaders can model by example and set expectations for those who work with them and those who benefit from their work (Vianello, Galliani & Haidt, 2010).

There is significant empirical research to support the study of virtue ethics for leaders. Cameron (2011) calls responsible leadership rare and synonymous with virtuous leadership. Linking these concepts creates a symbiotic relationship of benefits that includes accepting responsibility as a standard and virtues leading to desired ends.

Biglan et al. (2020) advocate well-being through developing an extensive network:

> There is a strong need to bring diverse disciplines together around a shared understanding of what humans need to thrive and how we can evolve societies that support their well-being (p. 3).
>
> Traditionally, we have published papers in academic journals and hoped that somehow our knowledge would affect actual policy and practice. However, it has

become clear that changing practice in society itself requires research and action.
In short, pursuing the well-being of every person needs to become the
foundational value for every sector of society (p. 8).

Professional coaches like this researcher are leaders who work with people in
every sector of society who are motivated to be or become their best selves to reach their
best potential as leaders, parents, citizens, and individuals (Whitworth et al., 1998;
Bartlett, 2007; Moore, 2013; Pagis, 2016). A goal in coaching is often to bring about a
client's self-assessed transformation and growth, which is a form of learning. Adult
learning theories--andragogy and transformational learning--link to coaching (Cox, 2015;
Ciporen, 2015; Williams & Anderson, 2006), as does self-determination theory (Iizuka,
2020).

Additionally, coaches are sought after to accompany those seeking their own best
knowing; therefore, coaches are positioned to offer identity support (Pagis, 2016) and an
awareness of how virtue ethics fit into self-understanding (Hardman et al., 2010).
Helping clients identify their values is a bedrock tool in coaching. Whitworth et al.
(1998) and van Dijk et al. (2012) argue that values are key to aligning virtues.

Problem Statement

Coaches' training and certification programs hold coaches to high standards of
ethical conduct in their practice (Iordanou et al., 2017; Whitworth et al., 1998; Williams
& Anderson, 2006). It is not known if coach training organizations utilize virtue ethics as
a tool in teaching coaches to use it in their practice. Is there a gap between the ethical
practice of a coach and how they are trained to hold their clients accountable for living

into their virtues? Is there a conflation of the terms values and virtues in coaching? Research on this topic has not yet been conducted with certified coach trainers from various training backgrounds.

Purpose of the Research

This qualitative transcendental phenomenological research explored with eight coach trainers their experience in using virtues, virtue ethics/ethics in general, character, strengths, and values as tools for coaches to use in their coaching relationships.

Research Questions

1. How do coach trainers describe the inclusion of virtues, virtue ethics/ethics in general, character, strengths, and values in their goal of educating coaches to assist their clients in reaching their best potential?

2. What conditions or circumstances have typically guided the coach trainer's inclusion of virtues, virtue ethics/ethics in general, character, strengths, and values in their training?

Significance of the Research

This research is significant because it will examine how coaches are trained to utilize values and virtues to move the coaching client in meaningful ways toward their best potential. It is important to study this topic to advance understanding of how coaches are trained to use virtue, understand virtue ethics/ethics in general, character, strengths, and values in their coaching. It is essential to understand the experience coach trainers have with using values and virtues in leading coaches to achieve higher, more ethical goals.

This study may be illuminating for broader audiences such as coaches training, leadership training, character education, teacher training, and more. The potential impact is creating a greater understanding of the elements involved in ethical self-development. This research adds to the existing knowledge of coaches' experience with coaching toward a more significant client potential.

Delimitations and Limitations

This study is limited to only professional coach educators/trainers whose training program is accredited through the International Coaching Federation (ICF) and who have been training for five or more years. Coaches are not included as subjects because the purpose is to understand what coaches are being educated to understand about using virtues as a tool toward reaching one's best potential in coaching. Clients are not included as subjects in this study. They have been excluded because the purpose is to understand the coach trainer's application of virtues/ethics as a coaching method or tool in helping coaches assist clients in realizing their best potential. The sample is limited by the parameters of the phenomenological study and includes 5-8 subjects. The researcher considered using the grounded theory method but selected phenomenological because the purpose of the research question is to understand the trainers' lived experiences.

A limitation within the phenomenological study is the limited or narrow results with a small sample. The results cannot be generalized for the entire population. Replicability may also be an issue. Another limitation is the lack of previous research studies on coach trainers' use of virtue ethics that aim to move the coaching client in meaningful ways toward their best potential. Finally, the biases of the researcher are

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potential limitations. As a certified coach, I realize my ways of knowing cannot be entirely separated from those of the coach trainers.

Definition of Key Terms

Andragogy

Andragogy is the process or means by which adults learn (Knowles, 1984). Andragogical theory posits that adults and children learn through different theoretical frameworks. Children learn through pedagogy, "the art and science of leading children" (Knowles, 1978, p. 10). While andragogy describes adult learning, the theory has impacted education at all levels.

Coaching

There are numerous ways to define coaching.

The International Coaches Federation (ICF) defines professional coaching as "partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential. The process of coaching often unlocks previously untapped sources of imagination, productivity, and leadership" (ICF website). (https://coachingfederation.org/about).

The coach and client relationship is designed around goals and action steps the client wants to achieve. The coach's role is to facilitate action with learning to create lasting change by "deepening the learning" (Whitworth et al., 1998, p. 5).

Coach Training/Coach Education

These terms are synonymous in this paper. ICF accredits coach training programs that meet the high standards set forth by ICF and ICF Coach Training to ensure quality training.

Banality of Wrongdoing

This term stems from the *Banality of Evil* thesis, originated by philosopher Hannah Arendt to describe how "most evil is committed by people who never make up their minds to be good or evil" (Maden, 2020).

The "banality of evil" is the idea that evil does not have the Satan-like, villainous appearance we might typically associate it with. Rather, evil is perpetuated when immoral principles become normalized over time by unthinking people. Evil becomes commonplace; it becomes the everyday. Ordinary people — going about their everyday lives — become complicit actors in systems that perpetuate evil. . . But do we ever take the time to truly challenge the principles we've inherited, to ensure they stand up to our own individual scrutiny? Are we even aware of our biases and learned behaviors? For Arendt, the answer to these questions is largely no — and it is precisely our tendency to adopt judgments without thinking that allows evil's banality to flourish (Maden, 2020).

Eudaimonia

Aristotelian virtue ethics is centered around *eudaimonia*, which is commonly translated as 'happiness' or 'flourishing.' Unlike our everyday concept of

happiness, *eudaimonia* is not a state of mind, nor is it the feeling of joy and pleasure. "It is instead a description of character;" Ryan et al. explain:

> In Aristotle's view, eudaimonia is the chief human good. He defined eudaimonia as a character of persons that entails living in accordance with reason and moderation and aiming toward excellence and the realization of a complete human life (Ryan et al., 2008, p. 143).

> For Aristotle (and, in one way or another, for most all virtue ethics theorists),

'flourishing,' or living well, involves living a life in accordance with virtue (Eudaimonia, 2017).

Prosocial

"Denoting or exhibiting behavior that benefits one or more other people" (APA Dictionary of Psychology, n.d.)

Self-determination theory

SDT is a motivational theory that fits with learning virtue (Besser, 2020) and moral education (Curren, 2014). The theory posits that "all human beings have fundamental psychological needs to be competent, autonomous, and related to others" (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Virtue theory and SDT share the belief that "virtue is necessary for leading a good life," which points to a possible connection between the two theories in further research (Iizuka, 2020, p. 2323).

Tool

In coaches' training, the word "tool" is synonymous with a method, technique, process, exercises, and resource used by the coach as a facilitative behavior in an overall

strategy to engage the client in professional and personal growth (Richter et al., 2021; Ladegard & Gjerde, 2014; Pappas & Jerman, 2015; Whitworth et al., 1998).

Traits

"In psychology, traits are constellations of behaviors, motivations, and attitudes. These are relatively stable but not invariant in an individual" (McGrath, 2018, p. 1).

Transformational Learning

Mezirow's theory is defined as "the process of learning through critical self-reflection, which results in the reformulation of a 'meaning perspective' to allow a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative understanding of experience. Learning includes acting on these insights" (Pappas et al., 2015, p. xii).

Values

Hasa (2017) defines values and clarifies the difference between values and virtues:

Although most of us use words such as values, virtues, principles, morals, and ethics interchangeably, there are subtle differences between these words. The main difference between value and virtue is that **values are principles or standards of behavior** that help one to decide what is important in life, whereas **virtues are qualities that are universally or generally considered to be good and desirable.** Values of a person can be based on various elements such as his or her family and social background, culture, religion, and experience. Values may also change over time. Virtues have high moral value. A morally excellent person

has many virtues such as honesty, trustworthiness, patience, kindness, courage, etc. Virtues compel a person always to do the right thing no matter the cost (p.1).

Virtue

The basis of my use of the term virtues stems from Aristotle's (Taylor, 2006) definition in Book II of *Nicomachean Ethics*. Virtue, habit, and ethos are linked. "excellence of character results from habit…the word *ethike* is a slight modification of word *ethos* (habit)." Just as we become better at a skill, we are perfected in virtues through habit" (1103a). Additionally, virtues are defined in Positive Psychology as the core characteristics valued by moral philosophers and religious thinkers: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. These six broad categories of virtue emerge consistently from historical surveys, as detailed in Chapter 2 (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Newstead et al. (2018) define virtue more "coherently--as the human inclination to feel, think, and act in ways that express moral excellence and contribute to the common good" (p. 446).

Virtue Ethics

"Virtue ethics aims to specify what constitutes a good human life" (Taylor, 2006, p xxii). There are three major forms of normative ethics, a branch of philosophy. Virtue ethics emphasizes the virtues or moral character of the person. This emphasis is in contrast to the other two approaches. Deontology emphasizes duties or rules, and consequentialism emphasizes the consequences of actions. [Utilitarianism is a form of consequentialism. "The doctrine that the greatest happiness of the greatest number should be the guiding principle of conduct" (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989)]. Both of these

theories focus on what to *do*. Virtue ethics has a focus on how to *be*. It is about

understanding how to live a life of moral character by practicing virtues such as honesty,

kindness, and showing gratitude, for example. This way of being leads to eudaimonia, or

fulfillment/well-being. Just as the other two ethical theories aim to make the right ethical

choice when faced with a dilemma, virtue ethics contends that making ethical choices is

achieved by developing virtuous habits. (Hursthouse, 1999; Grant, Arjoon, & McGhee,

2018; Sommers, 2001; Haidt & Joseph, 2008; McGovern& Miller, 2008; Annas, 2015).

Hursthouse & Pettigrove (2018) explain further:

> Today, it is necessary to distinguish "virtue ethics" from "virtue theory," a term
>
> that includes accounts of virtue within the other approaches. Almost any modern
>
> version of virtue ethics still shows that its roots are in ancient Greek philosophy.
>
> (Section 1, Preliminaries, 2018).

Well-Being

"Subjective well-being is defined as people's positive evaluation of their lives,

including pleasant emotions, fulfillment, and life satisfaction" (Diener & Biswas-Diener,

2005, p. 125).

> "In recent years, a form of well-being in addition to subjective well-being has
>
> emerged . . . psychological well-being is thought to represent optimal human
>
> functioning. The Psychological Well-Being (PWB) Scale asses eight aspects of
>
> PWB. These are, meaning and purpose, supportive and rewarding relationships,
>
> engaged and interested, contribute to the well-being of others, competency, self-
>
> acceptance, optimism, being respected" (Diener, 2009, pp. 251-252).

Summary

Virtuous vocabulary has fallen out of usage (Kesebir & Kesebir, 2012; Vaselou, 2012), causing a lack of intentional use of moral language in education (Sockett & LaPage, 2002) as well as in society at large (Shirley, 2018). The effect of this disregard for virtue gets in the way of our being able to reach our best potential (Emmons, 2003). Because of this, there is a need for society to bring virtue ethics into practice through educational leadership that advances ethical ways of being through virtuous leadership (Cameron, 2011). Biglan et al. (2020) advocate the need for all society to pursue the well-being of every person in every sector of society.

Coaches are leaders who work with every sector of society (Whitworth et al., 1998). A goal in coaching is to bring about a change or perspective transformation in the client that supports them in growing their self-development (Mitchell, 2015). Helping clients identify their values is a bedrock tool in coaching.

Coaches' training and certification hold coaches to a high standard of ethical conduct in their practice (Williams & Anderson, 2005). It is not known if coaches are trained to use their understanding of virtue ethics as a tool in their practice.

Chapter two presents a review of the literature in preparation for the research. Chapter three describes the methodology, research design, and procedures of this phenomenological examination. Chapter four will detail the data analysis with a summary of the results. Chapter five concludes the dissertation with a discussion of the results, implications related to the theoretical framework and the literature, recommendations for further study, and a conclusion.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

Because society has grown out of touch with moral character and virtues, there is a need to bring virtue ethics into practice. It is time to reclaim virtues through educational leadership that upholds and advances human ways of being through virtue ethics. This chapter investigates the understanding and practice of virtuous character in search of more approaches that motivate people to raise the bar in the pursuit of being their best—defined as flourishing.

This review unveils the growing number of human sciences interested in cultivating an understanding of the advantages of living virtuously (Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2018). Biglan et al. (2020) assert that the collective documentation of research from these sciences validates what is needed for humanity to flourish. Character education, moral education, and virtue education are the subject of much research (Clement & Bollinger, 2016). The literature reviews areas related to morality and ethics topics through perspectives of virtue ethics/theories, virtue and character, the role of emotions in our well-being, and moral motivation.

Professional coaching shares the goal of assisting humanity in realizing our best potential (Ciporen, 2015; Whitworth et al., 1998; Stober & Grant, 2006). Coaching has been designed to include aspects of the theoretical framework in this paper. Coaches need to educate themselves through "theoretically based rationales and solid research support" (Spence 2007, p. 261). "Coaching offers intensive development, tailored to the

individual" (Palmer & Whybrow, 2008, p. 2), just as virtue ethics is about developing one's character.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework supporting this study's complexities integrates several theoretical frames that show their symbiotic relationship to virtuous living. These are virtue theories, including virtue ethics, neo-Aristotelian theories, the exemplarist theory, the broaden and build (positive emotions) theory, transformative learning theory, and self-determination theory.

The emphasis in this chapter is on virtue ethics, which includes virtues and character rather than the morality of right versus wrong. Overall, virtue ethics, focusing on character and virtues, is now included with deontology and utilitarianism as the three prime ethical approaches (Hursthouse, 1999, Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2018). Virtue ethics is about human nature and how a person wants to live (Grant et al., 2018). "Virtue ethics aims to specify what constitutes a good human life" (Taylor, 2006, p. xxii).

Hursthouse (1999) explains the three approaches within moral philosophy. Deontology is about duty and rules. Utilitarianism claims that an action is right if it promotes happiness for the greater good. Virtue ethics focuses on *being* and connects the practice of good habits with an individual's character traits. The other two methods also consider virtues in their theories. These should not be confused with virtue ethics. These theories stem from the relative lack of attention philosophers of deontology and utilitarianism give to virtues in their approaches (Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2018). It is important to note that moral theories explain what makes an action right or wrong and

outline what virtuous people ought to do in various situations. When moral theories are about duties, they primarily answer, "what should I do?" While knowing what to do is critical, having moral virtues makes us care to do the right thing. Virtues are characteristics that help us decide how to be or behave (Sommers & Sommers, 2001), which is the aim of this study.

The Exemplarist virtue theory (Zagzebski, 2010) is based on the emotion of admiration of an exemplar, which leads the person to emulate the virtues and character traits the exemplar displays. The concept of admiration dates back to Aristotle's use of *Kalan,* which translates to "the admirable" (Miller, 2011). The *Kalan* thus functions as the goal (*telos)* of the virtuous person, whose characteristic motivation is to act "for the sake of the admirable" *(E.N. III.7, III5b12-13; E.E. III.I2, 123oa28-29).* Moral motivation, which causes us to engage in the practice of ethical action, is at the heart of the exemplarist theory. We learn through imitation. Our emotion of admiration naturally draws us to good persons, defined as exemplars. Through our admiration, we are led to want to imitate that which we admire (Zagzebski, 1996). As we each develop morally, we become more capable of improving our imitation and becoming like those we admire. The traits that make a person morally good are virtues.

In addition to virtue theories, I include the broaden and build theory regarding positive emotions that inform the promotion of flourishing. The broaden and build theory is a perspective that comes out of Positive Psychology. Fredrickson's (2001) evidence shows that positive emotions cause an increase in positive thoughts and ideas about what we'd like to act upon or do at the moment. This *broadening* of our cognition *builds*

coping skills against negativity, thereby contributing to our overall well-being over the long term. (Fredrickson, 2001, Haidt, 2003, Vianello et al., 2010; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2018). "Put simply; the broaden-and-build theory states that positive emotions widen people's outlooks in ways that, little by little, reshape who they are" (Fredrickson et al. 2008).

The Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1991a) addresses what comes into play when a subject bumps up against a disorienting situation. Through self-reflection, the individual transforms their thoughts, feelings, and behavior in ways that advance their well-being.

Self-determination theory (SDT) is a motivational theory that fits with learning virtue (Besser, 2020; Iizuka, 2020; Ryan et al., 2008), moral education (Curren, 2014), and meaning-making (Bauer et al., 2019). SDT is also known as the study of intrinsic/extrinsic motivation (Iizuka, 2020). The theory posits that "all human beings have fundamental psychological needs to be competent, autonomous, and related to others" (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Virtue theory and SDT share the belief that "virtue is necessary for leading a good life," which points to a possible connection between the two theories in further research (Iizuka, 2020, p. 2323). "Both SDT and virtue theory are theories of a meaningful life. There is strong empirical support for SDT that also lends weight to virtue theory" (p. 2322).

Perspectives of Morality, Ethics, and Virtue Theories

This section begins with a broad review of the trajectory of morality, ethics, and virtue to contemporary virtue ethics.

Morality has been a topic of importance found in rules and law documents dating back to the first written words. As cultures developed, stories included virtues handed down as ways of being for people to practice toward excellence of self (Haidt & Joseph, 2008, MacIntyre, 2007).

Later, during the Classical period, ancient Greek philosophers Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics became known for their influential views on virtue and character. Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) was a student of Plato (428-347 B.C.). Like him, Aristotle saw virtues as the pathway to well-being. He wrote that humans acquire understanding through two kinds of virtues: ethical and intellectual. Ethical virtues are initially nurtured in childhood. With maturity and practice, these virtues develop the intellectual virtue of practical wisdom (*phronesis*). Aristotle regarded ethical and intellectual virtues as inseparable in developing social skills formed through habit to become our character traits. (Kraut, 2018, Annas, 2015).

The *Nicomachean Ethics (N.E. and E.N.)* and the *Eudemian Ethics* (*E.E.)* are two sources of Aristotle's texts on the virtues. Aristotle's (Taylor, 2006) definition of virtues, in Book II of *Nicomachean Ethics*, states that virtue, habit, and ethos (character) are linked. "Excellence of character results from habit…the word *ethike* is a slight modification of *ethos* (habit). Just as we become better at a skill, we are perfected in virtues through habit" (1103a). According to Aristotle, virtues and character lead the way in all aspects of one's private, professional, and political life by controlling our feelings and actions (Parry & Thorsrud, 2021; Miller, 2011). "Each virtue concerns the pursuit of an objective valued for its own sake (pleasure, life, wealth, or honor, for example), and

regulates that pursuit in the light of a higher norm" (p. 54). The classical tradition of moral thought stemming from Aristotle's articulation of the virtues, focusing on character, continued to be the traditional approach to Western ethical thinking through the period of Enlightenment (MacIntyre, 2007, Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2018, Haidt & Joseph, 2008).

Christian, Jewish, and Islamic thinkers adopted pieces of the Classical view of virtues into their religious definition of morality during the Medieval period (Haidt & Joseph, 2008, MacIntyre, 2007). The rise of Christianity eventually overtook the secular ideas of the Greeks. However, much of the stronghold of religion-based beliefs changed during the eighteenth century as new philosophies brought intellectual and human material advancements throughout Europe (Bristow, 2017).

Among them, normative ethics emerged with two moral theories. *Deontology*, upholding rules and duties, and *utilitarianism* has to do with the consequences of actions. The objective was to "… seek to detach moral judgment as much as possible from the messy world of social practices and specific behaviors" (Haidt & Joseph, 2008). Deontology and utilitarianism didn't include discussions of character, wisdom, happiness, and emotions that question what kind of person we should be/become. Instead, these ethics focused on actions and what we should do (Hursthouse, 1999, Haidt & Joseph, 2008).

Virtue Ethics

Fairly recently, Elizabeth Anscombe's work, *Modern Moral Philosophy* (1958), inspired renewed interest in developing a virtue theory with Aristotelian roots, in contrast

to the long-held deontology and utilitarianism (Taylor, 2006, Papouli, 2019). Aristotle described moral people as those who consciously choose their actions based on a wise judgment of what is good. In so doing, their virtuous character was strengthened and affirmed (McGovern & Miller, 2008.) From these Aristotelian roots, various forms of modern virtue ethics have been developed from *Nicomachean ethics* (Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2018; Taylor, 2006). One example is Neo-Aristotelianism, defined by Rosalind Hursthouse (1999, p. 8) as a "more general kind" of virtue ethic. Neo-Aristotelian virtues are considered to be secular. This non-religious perspective aligns with different religions and various cultural and ethnic heritages (Papouli, 2019).

It is agreed (Hursthouse, 1999, Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2018; Taylor, 2006; Haidt & Joseph, 2008; MacIntyre, 2007; Homiak, 2019; Bristow, 2017) that nearly all modern virtue ethics stem from three concepts of Greek philosophy. These are *arete,* meaning virtues or excellence; *phronesis,* which is practical or moral wisdom; and *eudaimonia*, translated as happiness or flourishing.

Aristotle (MacIntyre, 2007) believed there are two types of virtues. *Arete* (virtues) of character we gain through habit and practice. Intellectual virtues are obtained through learning. He regarded *phronesis* as the highest intellectual virtue and inseparable from the virtues of character. Cooke & Carr (2014) remind us that for Aristotle, the primary purpose of practical wisdom is the growth and development of virtues. This form of intellectual virtue is meant to help the individual reason how to be or behave with the right action. Having practical wisdom *(phronesis)* is only possible when one understands goodness by being good. (MacIntyre, 2007; Mitchell, 2015). In other words, to have

phronesis, a person must have an idea of eudaimonia (goodness) that creates a vision like an outline from which they will be motivated to develop or change their moral identity (Lapsley, 2019). "Once one knows the good, one must also desire it" (Mitchell, p. 161).

Annas (2011) aligns with the Greek concept of *eudaimonia* as it translates to happiness or flourishing in how we choose to live. As we grow and develop, our choices can help us in our life's unique circumstances. Therefore, happiness is not dependent on our wealth or even our health. Nor does it come from outside of us; it is self-directed. "In eudaimonism, your happiness is your happiness, which only you can achieve, since only you, and nobody else can live your life" (Annas, 2015, p. 288). This form of living well is not solitary, however. It involves taking part in something outside of oneself that makes us proud, causes self-respect, and requires the ability to be in harmony with others (Solomon, 1999).

In her introduction to *Intelligent Virtue,* Annas (2015) clarifies that her "account of virtue is not another ethical theory" (p. 1). She describes virtues as developmental, meaning that we develop virtues as learners and build toward being virtuous. Annas compares the development of virtues to the development of skills and states that as adults, we need to understand how virtues are developed to know what a virtue is. Like learning a skill, we work to understand what is being taught to put the expertise to use in our own way. We do not continue to rely on the teacher modeling for us. The same is valid with virtues. The more we practice these ways of being, the more they become part of our character. Zagzebski (2013) agrees in her assessment of how moral learning unfolds.

Hursthouse & Pettigrove (2018) provide recent insight on virtue ethics:

Following Plato and Aristotle, modern virtue ethics has always emphasized the importance of moral education, not as the inculcation of rules but as the training of character. There is now a growing movement towards virtues education, amongst both academics (Carr, 2019; Athanassoulis 2014; Curren 2015) and teachers in the classroom. One exciting thing about research in this area is its engagement with other academic disciplines, including psychology, educational theory, and theology (see Cline 2015; and Snow 2015) (Section 4, Future Directions).

Exemplarism

"That virtue we appreciate is as much ours as another's. We see so much only as we possess" Henry David Thoreau (Quotefancy.com, 2022).

In developing the exemplarist virtue theory, Zagzebski (2010) described moral theory as a complex domain that contains many theories created to simplify understanding and justify moral practice while giving us guidance that leads to improvement. Her interest is in explaining morality at a level that leads from the abstract to influence practice through the "imagination of ordinary people" (p.44), not just moral philosophers. Several authors have written about personal goodness with ordinary people in mind (Miller, 2018; Quinn, 2000; Brooks, 2015; Popov, 1997; Tuan, 2008; Haidt, 2006, 2012; Bennett, 1993). Zagzebski points out there are non-moral exemplars with natural talents (like musicians and artists) whose talents we cannot imitate. We can admire and emulate their virtuous acts like striving and humility.

In exemplarism, the emphasis is on the virtuous person, not the virtues themselves. Zagzebski (2013) explains it is good to start imitating character traits (the virtues) of someone slightly better than us at whatever we admire in them. Then, once we understand our moral motives and our actions' consequences, we imitate the exemplar's behaviors. There are many different ways a person can be good and admirable but not imitable. Zagzebski (2013) uses the example of admiring an explorer who went to the South Pole in 1912. Although she admired him, she had no interest in imitating him. Instead, she "wanted to be the kind of person who could do such a thing" (p. 201).

The exemplarist theory differs from most virtue theories. Zagzebski (2013) believes a moral theory needs to include definitions of concepts from all three normative ethics theories (Kantian deontology, Utilitarianism, Aristotelian virtue theory). She defines these concepts as:

- A *virtue* is a trait we admire in an admirable person. It is a trait that makes the person paradigmatically good in a certain respect.
- A *right act* in some set of circumstances C is what the admirable person would take to be most favored by the balance of reasons in circumstances C.
- A *good outcome* is a state of affairs at which admirable person's aim.
- A *good life* (a desirable life, a life of well-being) is a life desired by admirable persons. (p. 202)

Zagzebski (2013), MacIntyre (2007), and Engelen et al. (2018) see narrative ethics and stories as critical to inspiring moral insight and attracting attention to the importance of ethical practice. Moral learning is mainly through stories and helps us

identify exemplars. The exemplarist theory provides a structure to learn—the narratives are the substance. Through the personal reflection of stories, we can also revise our views. Engelen et al. (2018) report that relatable stories about exemplars that produce an emotional response best promote prosocial behavior.

Van de Ven et al. (2019) further support admiration's role in inspiring people. Schindler et al. (2015) concur that those who admire others tend to seek higher standards for themselves. Schindler et al. (2013) see admiration as having to keep our values and ideals in mind as we choose how to behave in situations that require the use of the traits we most value. Additionally, internal motivation drives development toward the person we strive to become—our best self. Thrash and Elliot (2004) discussed that being *inspired by* often leads to being *inspired to* do or to be. Archer's (2019) findings substantiate the connection between admiration as an emotion and the resulting motivation. "On my account, admiration leads to a desire to promote the values we admire in the object of our admiration" (p. 148).

In the many disciplines interested in virtue ethics, debates in literature worldwide have recently increased regarding Zagzebski's (2010, 2013, 2017) exemplarist theory (Szutta, 2019; Vaccarezza, 2020; Vos, 2018; Marchetti, 2018). Kristjansson (2020) refers to the interest in moral exemplars as "the hottest ticket in town, with major contributions from within moral philosophy, moral psychology, moral education, and even popular trade books" (p. 350). In education, Vaccarezza (2020) suggests a return to the Greeks for direction. Watson (2019), Croce (2019), and Szutta (2019) share moral education concerns that teaching students to imitate others discourages intellectual character

development. Croce sees the possibility of indoctrination in classrooms, and Szutta

prefers to treat exemplarism as a moral education method, not as another ethical theory.

Tachibana (2019) argues that Aristotle believed that admiration came after imitation and

resulted from practicing virtue, not the other way around. Therefore, Tachibana debates

the empirical validity of the exemplarist theory. Kotsonis (2020) argues that socio-

cultural influences and agent identities (gender and age) are two limitations to the

exemplarist theory.

Several references advocate for exemplars and admiration. Van de Ven et al.

(2019) (psychology), Kristjansson (2017) (education), and Algo & Haidt (2009) (positive

psychology) claim that (the emotion) elevation is a form of admiration (Haidt, 2003). van

de Ven et al. (2019) found that those who felt motivated to better themselves were most

moved to do so after admiring another's behavior and judging it to be important.

Vos (2018), a theologian, and Kristjansson (2017), an education scholar, are

among many who argue for learning not only from the exemplar but from the "virtuous

qualities displayed by them" (Vos, p. 26).

In contrast to theories that posit exemplars in a role model approach, Hoyos-

Valdes (2018) finds role model education with exemplars to be "misguided and

misleading" (p. 66). Even family members and ordinary people we know from our

neighborhood can be greater motivators than those who stand out as exceptional

(Levinson, 2017). Hoyos-Valdes argues in favor of close friendships as role models who

help nurture virtue because of the knowledge friends have of the values and behaviors of

those they are closest to. In this way, friends become models to emulate. Additionally,

there is intrinsic value within oneself to be the person our admired friend sees in us. This "character friendship" (p. 68) provides ongoing practice of engagement in becoming or realizing our best potential. Hoyos-Valdes defends her position as unique because 1) friendship is part of human flourishing; 2) the role character friendship plays in various relationships; 3) forming reason through conversation; 4) it shows that we grow in our virtues throughout our lifetime (p. 79).

Kristjansson (2020) agrees with Hoyos-Valdes (2018) that the "raison d'etre of character friendship is mutual character development" (p.361). At the same time, Kristjansson is not opposed to role-model education based on admiration and emulation. He articulates the origin of the term "character friendship" thoroughly as Aristotle's definition of a kind of deep friendship and how that may be more influential in cultivating moral growth for oneself and the good of one's community than moral role modeling through emulating exemplars. Kristjansson (2020) employs Aristotle's (1915) definition of a character friend as "another self":

> When we wish to see our own face, we do so by looking into the mirror, in the
> same way when we wish to know ourselves, we can obtain that knowledge by
> looking at our friend. For the friend is, as we assert, a second self. (1213a15-23).

Virtue, Character, and Character Strengths

Virtue

"In Chinese philosophy, the word for 'virtue' (Chinese: Te) is sometimes translated as 'potency.' It is an apt image because virtue is a kind of power. It is one's potential. It is that which enables us to become who we really are" (Solomon, 1999, p.

69). Solomon argues that the virtues are helpful for our self-interest and those around us as well.

Virtue is not an external imposition. Virtues are internal values that become actions, and they are expressions of who we are and what we value. Values, in word alone, are meaningless until we act upon them. How we view the world decides what we value, which becomes the foundation for our virtues or vices (Solomon, 1999). Peterson & Seligman (2004) agree that values only become virtues when practiced until habitual becoming a trait of the person.

Virtues are a human capacity that enables a person to function well (Thompson et al., 2013).

Indeed, acquiring virtues is not an all-or-nothing way of growing our morality. We may have one virtue in a small amount on a continuum, and another we may possess nearly fully. Using reason gained as we mature and the desire to learn from our mistakes, the virtues most practiced become second nature (Athanassoulis, 2000, Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2018).

Crossan et al. (2013) found this to be true in testing a new non-linear model for ethical decision making (EDM) that includes personal reflection on virtues, values, and character strengths. The more a person puts it into practice, the more natural it becomes to train one's ways of being—versus doing. We don't need to consciously think about doing the right thing because it becomes internalized. Annas (2015) compares this phenomenon to being inflow. "…virtuous activity can be experienced as effortless and unimpeded since the virtuous person also responds to a situation in a way which is

intelligently selective while experiencing no conscious awareness of himself or his actions" (p. 284). Being virtuous is not easy, yet it can sound simple, like behaviors we've learned in childhood to care about and be kind to others by respecting what is important to them and be a good person by helping others who need it (Besser, 2020). Research completed by Berger & McGrath (2019) led to the image of virtue as an aspirational journey—not a destination where one ever arrives.

There are two parts to the general argument against the unity of virtues that Annas (2015) defends strongly. One is that we don't learn virtues one at a time. They cannot be separated into compartments. For example, if being kind is required, that action may also take being just. Secondly, our life circumstances determine which virtues we will want to put into practice. It is best to integrate the virtues as fits the life we are leading. Annas says whatever virtues are important for the situation is the right thing to do. This view is shared in Zagzebski's (2013) definition of the concepts necessary in a moral theory as "a *right act*" (p. 202).

Eriksen et al. (2019) designed and studied the "Ben Franklin's Discipline of Cultivating Virtues" assignment for students in undergraduate, adult education, and MBA classes. The purpose of the assignment was to provide an opportunity for students to practice four self-selected virtues over six weeks. The project included daily records of their behaviors, peer coaching, written reflections, and class discussions. Students could record their successes and failures as it worked best for them. After completing the assignment, students were surveyed about their self-perception of their understanding, reflection, and observation of their experience. Two of their questions stood out;

1) *Please describe how engaging in this assignment impacted your day-to-day life.*

Students reported that their increased ability to be conscious of their actions pushed them out of their comfort zones to become better people. In turn, their relationships improved because they were conscious of their actions toward the people around them.

2) *What did you learn about trying to be virtuous?* "

The insight most often articulated by students was that the process of becoming virtuous is really hard, and it takes consistent, focused energy to live out who they want to be on a day-to-day basis. Over time though, through deliberate practice, students found it became easier (p. 647-648).

Rosalind Hursthouse (1980) quotes Aristotle in Urmson (1973, p. 223) and explains the meaning of Aristotle's doctrine of the mean. *"Erete*, excellence of character, is a disposition in virtue of which we are well disposed in respect to feelings *(pathe)"* (1105b19f). Hursthouse explains that because feelings usually lead to actions, being well disposed in feelings means also being well disposed in actions:

> What it is to be well disposed in respect to feelings is, apparently, specified by saying that excellence of character is a disposition (concerned with feelings) which is in a mean. The thesis that virtue (excellence of character) is a disposition in a mean is Aristotle's doctrine of the mean" (Hursthouse, p. 57).

From Aristotle (Taylor, 2006):

Virtue, then, is a state concerned with choice, in a mean in relation to us, a mean

determined by reason, namely the reason by which the person of practical wisdom

would determine it. It is a mean between two vices, one of excess and the other of

deficiency; further, it is a mean in that some states fall short of and others exceed

what should be in feelings and in actions, but virtue finds and chooses the mean.

Therefore, virtue is a mean in its nature and according to the formula which says

what its essence is, but an extreme in point of value, in that it is the best (1107a35,

p. 10).

The Virtues Project lists 100 virtues that lead toward human flourishing. These

virtues connect to the Greek *Telos* as the ability of individuals to select which virtues are

most important to the development of their character. In their article, the moral part of a

person is one's character which is the apex of virtues an individual has (Newstead et al.,

2018).

As an example of a virtue, honesty has been discussed, taken apart, and analyzed

since Aristotelian arguments. To this day, it has value in various ways it is understood.

These include virtue ethics (Papouli, 2019); virtue epistemology (Zagzebski, 2000);

prosocial behavior (Thomson & Siegel, 2013); the cultivation of moral character

(Walker, 2020); education/life-long learning (Carr, 2007), and human value and

importance overall. There is some discussion (Carr, 2014) on how one comes into being

honest. It is not a trait or way of being that we have from our birth. It is learned. It

matters how a person thinks about their learning because (like being born into a belief

system or religion that one follows out of fear or obligation), being honest can be for the

wrong reasons and lead to vice rather than virtue. Zack's (2011) interpretation of

Aristotle's virtue theory agrees and adds that the repeated practice of being virtuous

forms our character as we become adults. The virtue becomes evident in us when we

enjoy being— "having the virtue" (honest, for example) and "doing the actions of the

virtue" (p. 14).

Virtues are excellences of character and excellences of thought. Excellence of

character is formed through habit (Ross, 1915; Miller, 2011, Hursthouse, 1999).

"Character is not something we have by nature. It is something that originates as a result

of free choices" (George, 2017. p. 271). Lawrenz (2021) quotes Aristotle from McKeon

(2009):

> None of the moral virtues comes to us by nature, for nothing that owes its being to
>
> nature can be changed through habit, e.g., the stone whose nature it is to fall
>
> cannot be trained by habit to rise. Neither by nature then nor contrary to nature are
>
> the virtues implanted in us. Rather we are naturally adapted to acquire them, but
>
> what matures them in us is habit (para.1,103a19).

Character

Defining character [and virtue] with consensus across fields of study has been

argued and discussed since the Ancient Greeks laid their foundations (Clement &

Bollinger, 2016). One less disputed point (Zagzebski, 2010) is that our character is

developed and impacted through interpersonal relationships. Mitchell (2015) finds:

> Character cannot be separated from the person. Virtue is an aid in this; it is the
>
> act of good character. Growing in the virtues, especially prudence (knowing what

to seek and what to avoid), forms good character. What is at stake is the integrity of the person (p. 149).

Our actions form our character; they can also change our character for the good or the bad. For example, the more we act badly, the more those actions become part of our character—the same with acting out of goodness. When we repeatedly act kindly in various circumstances, we become a kind people. The origin of the action of kindness is our character (Mitchell, 2015).

A person's character is the unique makeup of their moral traits that make them who they are. These are virtuous (and vicious) ways of being (Miller, 2018; Sommers & Sommers, 2001). Moral character is gained by bettering ourselves through life trials, overcoming our weaknesses, and gaining self-respect (Brooks, 2015). These ways of *being* are virtues of character (MacIntyre, 2007). Ways of acting are not virtue traits by themselves. Our attitudes, emotions, what we value, dispositions, beliefs, and mental states are all part of the fabric of our character (Goodwin et al., 2015; Mitchell, 2015). When it comes to educational leadership, Berkowitz (2020) teaches the concept of *being* by stating the importance of leading by example so others will emulate the character they see in you.

Character Strengths

In 1998, Martin Seligman launched the idea of positive psychology during his term as president of the American Psychological Association. Rather than continue to have therapy focus on pathology alone, in 1998, Seligman (2019) created an initiative to

study the effects of positive psychology to help people thrive and develop toward their potential.

While pop psychology is all about finding easy answers that will lead to living happily ever after, the serious goal of positive psychology is to help people lead a meaningful and fulfilling life. This involves emotions, spirit, and intellect in the need to understand the meaning of our existence through our experiences.

Strengths-based research was born out of the science of Positive Psychology. Because of that, psychologists are on the front line for the dissemination of new research (Biswas-Diener et al., 2011). Positive Psychology brought about new theories in the science of amplifying and nurturing strengths, character traits, and virtues (Sosik & Cameron, 2010). The research in prevention shows that virtues are human strengths that fight against pathology. Positive Psychology's critical nature and mission is building well-being (Waterman, 2013) by assisting humanity in reaching what is most important to them (Seligman, 2018). This mission led to the creation of The Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS). These character strengths are defined as positive qualities of one's thoughts, feelings, and actions, that, when practiced, lead to greater well-being, or flourishing (Peterson & Seligman, 2004); "they are distinguishable routes to displaying one or another of the virtues" (p.13). According to Ng & Tay (2020), the VIA-IS classification is currently the primary approach in psychological traits research. Since 2000, researchers have observed strengths in growing numbers (Biswas-Diener et al., 2011; Berger & McGrath, 2018; Miller, 2018). Peterson & Seligman, leaders of Positive Psychology and the classification authors, see character strengths as the basis of

human life. Therefore, they believed character classification was necessary to create a widely used terminology of beneficial characteristics (2004). The result is the VIA Classification (https://www.viacharacter.org/). They thought it was possible to grow and develop virtuous traits with the classification's help (2004). They intended to create a tool to establish a science around positive traits (McGrath, 2018). In the classification design, the positive psychology authors studied philosophical and religious traditions, including Confucianism and Taoism, Buddhism and Hinduism, Athenian philosophy, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, looking for similarities in virtues. Dahlsgaard (2005) and Peterson and Seligman (2004) found six core virtues that these traditions held in common: *courage* (emotional strengths), *justice and humanity* (social and community strengths), *temperance* (protective strengths), *wisdom* (cognitive strengths), and *transcendence* (spiritual strengths). The result was the discovery of a "convergence across time, place, and intellectual tradition about certain core virtues" (p. 210).

Within these six virtue categories are "24 Character Strengths," the virtuous traits that make up every person's personality in differing amounts. Individuals may take the VIA Survey to reveal their character strengths and learn how best to grow from them at https://www.viacharacter.org/. Peterson & Seligman (2004) define character strengths as trait-like qualities and positive psychological operations that are measurable and mirror good character and moral excellence.

There are much controversy and debate between philosophers (Miller, 2018; Harmon, 1999) and psychologists (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Ng & Tay, 2020; McGrath, 2018) about virtues, character, character strengths, the VIA, and traits, in

general. For example, (McGrath, 2018) points out that psychologists usually find the ties made between strengths and virtues helpful, whereas Miller, a philosopher, questions virtues and strengths.

Where Miller suggests the simultaneous existence of virtues and strengths raises "tricky philosophical questions," psychologists tend to accept their existence as useful constructs in person perception and description (McGrath, 2018).

Dahlsgaard et al (2005) reported:

Philosophers often refer to virtues as corrective, meaning that they counteract some difficulty inherent in the human condition, some temptation that needs to be resisted, or some motivation that needs to be rechanneled into something good (Yearley, 1990, p. 16).

"The ubiquitous virtues, we believe, are what allow the human-animal to struggle against and to triumph over what is darkest within us" (Dahlsgaard et al., 2005, p. 212).

The Role of Emotions and Prosocial Behavior

Broaden and Build Theory and Positive Emotions

Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory was one of Positive Psychology's groundbreaking studies (Seligman, 2019). Until then, positive emotions were not taken seriously as being worthy of empirical research. With psychology's emphasis on the cause of negative emotions like being mad, bad, and sad, emotions like happiness, gratitude, and joy seemed beside the point (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2018). Fredrickson's research in emotion science has shown that opening oneself to positive emotions improves our personal growth, well-being, and connection to others (Fredrickson, 2001).

According to research completed by Diessner et al. (2013) and Thomson and Siegel (2013), positive emotions also lead to prosocial behavior.

According to Amen (1998), our thoughts send electrical signals to our brain, influencing every cell in our body. Negative thoughts affect the limbic system and cause negative feelings like irritability, moodiness, and depression. However, we can teach ourselves to control thoughts in positive ways—to feel better. Myers (1992) points out that how we think about (internalize) a circumstance is far more important than the external circumstance. How we think about any given topic drives how we feel about it.

Emotions found in stories, metaphors, and pearls of wisdom passed through the ages are features of virtue ethics, moral education, and motivation theories (Haidt & Joseph, 2008). While studies on the effects of emotions have not been in abundance (Vianello et al. 2010), Algo & Haidt (2009) found that various positive emotions inspire distinct responses from one another in their series of studies.

Compassion, gratitude, and elevation are self-transcendent emotions unlike other positive emotions that concern the self. "Self-transcendent emotions shift attention towards the needs and concerns of others. Compassion arises out of appraisals of others' undeserved suffering; gratitude out of others' generosity; and elevation out of others' virtue" (Steller et al., 2017, p. 201) These emotions are considered prosocial.

A study with children, testing the impact of negative and positive stories about honesty on the child's decision to tell the truth, revealed that focusing on positive outcomes rather than negative consequences (such as the story of George Washington and the Cherry Tree, in which his father praises George for being honest), promotes

honest behavior in children. Stories that taught negative consequences (like The Boy Who Cried Wolf) did not lead to children fessing up to their lies. In this way, it is implied that a child's virtuous behavior may benefit from underscoring prosocial principles (Lee et al., 2014).

The need to learn virtues adds up to the essential need to pass along the learning through education. The aim should be toward improving character. Intellectual reasoning alone is not enough. We need to (emotionally) feel our way through understanding historical events like world wars and colonialism. Carr (2014) posits how to do this through art, poetry, movies, literature, and stories that move us emotionally to feel sympathy for human conditions that should not be repeated. These are universal concerns rather than specific situations that our human mind can categorize as not my concern. The argument that passing on virtues (of honesty and more) through character building is precisely the theme of today's contemporary educators of philosophy, psychology, theology, education, and more. Carr connects morally positive character and humanity— rather than teaching to "facts" that come from cognition instead of emotional engagement. MacIntyre (2007) describes virtues as impulses that cause us to act and feel certain ways because of the development of virtue within us.

Elevation. The term "elevation" (Algo and Haidt 2009; Haidt, 2003) means a warm, uplifting emotion we feel when witnessing moral goodness like kindness and compassion. Elevation has been found to have a positive, motivational effect different from happiness. Elevation motivates positive action in those who witness moral goodness in others, having the effect of inspiring the desire to improve ourselves or help others

(Oliver et al., 2012). This desire to help others connects to the broaden-and-build theory (Haidt, 2000; Fredrickson, 2001).

Admiration. Connecting to the Broaden and Build theory of positive emotions, Fredrickson (2018) and Shindler et al. (2015, 2013) found "Admiration for others self-expands by offering new experiences and perspective that make people embark on a long-term journey in pursuit of admired ideals" (p.307). The process of admiration-emulation may not take place in the admirable moment. Instead, the grounding of the admired aspiration is enduring (2015).

Kristjansson (2017) sees a redundancy in Zagzebski's (2010) definition of admiration and Algo and Haidt's (2003) definition of admiration as elevation. Kristjansson breaks elevation into two effects of the emotion; moral admiration of an *individual* one desires to emulate and moral awe—an intense feeling directed at *the ideal of moral goodness*, rather than the exemplar. This proposed hypothesis "could separate out whether it is the exemplar or the [transpersonal] ideal of exemplarity that motivates moral learning: namely, admiration/emulation or elevation" (p.30). Kristjansson posits that admiration in the form or elevation (awe) of an ideal lessens the concerns some have related to seeing exemplars as a hero or feeling inadequate in comparison.

Further, Kristjansson (2017) introduces the Chinese philosophy of Mengzi, a follower of Confucius, who, like Aristotle, was a virtue ethicist. Mengzi's view regarding admiration is described as that of awe directed at the transpersonal ideal, which corresponds closely with Maslow's (1970) research on the link between psychological well-being and "being" spiritual. Therefore, Kristjansson's suggested pathway through

exemplarity brings one straight to the admiration/awe of transpersonal ideals. Arguments concerning emotions in general and exemplarity are subjects of much study and research. We have much to learn about how emotions like awe can be nurtured using practical wisdom for our greatest benefit.

Inspiration. Thrash et al. (2014) explains that while inspiration entails emotion, it is far more complex. There are three core characteristics of the state of inspiration that Thrash and Elliot (2004) concluded make it unique. This concept is the *tripartite conceptualization* (2014, p. 496): *Transcendence* means that inspiration points us toward seeing better possibilities beyond our typical measure. *Evocation* means that inspiration is evoked or induced to be inspired by something outside of ourselves. *Motivation* (also *Approach Motivation* (2014) is to feel moved to make happen what we are inspired to do or be. As we have seen in the exemplary literature (Zagzebski, 2013), inspiration as a positive emotional state can cause the motivation to emulate an admired role model. This concept suggests that the emotions of elevation and admiration are brought on by inspiration. One of their (Thrash et al., 2004) studies included participants' written stories about a time they were inspired. Their finding showed broad examples in the written content—including the effect role models have upon "leading one to virtue or success" (p. 962). Thrash et al. (2014) explain that to be inspired *by* refers to "being awoken to the (perceived) intrinsic value of a […] person, action, or scene, whereas being inspired *to* refers to the motivation to actualize […] the inspired qualities" (p. 497). Being inspired *by* related to *Transcendence*, as in being positively influenced by a role model and developing a feeling of gratitude toward them; and being inspired *to* related to *Approach*

Motivation, fostering direction and purpose, as in feeling moved to pass on the inspired qualities to "a future self" (2004, p. 970). Thrash et al. noted that Bradley (1929) observed a beautiful contradiction within inspiration: Inspiration "is something which we cannot attribute to ourselves, it is given to us, and in it, we lose ourselves; that is the one aspect. It is something in which we find ourselves, and are at last our true self; that is the other aspect" (p. 231). Thrash & Elliot (2004) draw a connection to autonomy in self-determination theory in the way that an individual who is inspired to do so becomes motivated to find their true self. Further, the process of inspiration involves "illumination" (p. 971), which stimulates reaching for an idea or goal that was not yet fully in our awareness as an aspiration to seize.

Prosocial Behavior

"If people are good only because they fear punishment, and hope for reward, then we are a sorry lot indeed" Albert Einstein (Quotefancy, 2022).

The movement from helping ourselves to benefiting others is a highly valued prosocial behavior and a marker of well-being (Biglan et al., 2020; Thomson & Siegel, 2013; Diessner et al., 2013; Vianello et al., 2010; Algo & Haidt, 2009; Steller et al., 2017). Neuroscience teaches that the human brain moves from thought to feelings to action. Therefore, when humans interact with or notice people being virtuous, there is a domino effect. Seeing those positive actions also moves us to behave in positive ways that are considered prosocial behavior (Algo & Haidt, 2009, Thompson & Siegel, 2013, Vianello et al., 2010).

Studies indicate that people will choose prosocial values when free to select their own values rather than those handed down to them (Biglan et al., 2020; Gagné, 2003.) An example may be:

Biglan et al. argue that for societal well-being, it is necessary for every part of society to work together in "The Nurture Consilience" (2020, p. 2) to create a common understanding of the prosocial conditions that nurture well-being. Being prosocial includes values, attitudes, and ways of being that are good for those we are around. Being prosocial contributes to the well-being of others when we are kind, supportive, cooperative, show interest, and are appreciative and virtuous in our behaviors. Additionally, reinforcement through positive attention, praise, and approval of prosocial behavior in others are critical in improving human well-being overall (Biglan, 2015).

Motivation

Transformative Learning Theory

Several studies (McGonigal, 2005; Taylor, 1998; Cranton, 1994; Clark, 1993; Mezirow & Associates, 1990; Mezirow, 1991) define transformative learning as an adult education process and product of adult development. The focus is on the process an individual internalizes to transform information into true learning. This process also contributes to understanding how humans cope with life-changing circumstances that influence who they are or become. Clark (1993) asks:

What experiences in life have shaped who we are? Some predictable: leaving

home, raising kids, developing competence in a career. Some unpredictable

things: divorce, death, winning a national award, we can identify the effects on

our development on who we are as human beings (p.47).

In transformational learning theory, our meaning system consists of our beliefs,

values, and assumptions about how we see ourselves and fit into the world. This way of

thinking is our worldview, which can become difficult to change due to it being deeply

ingrained. The coach acts as a sounding board for the client so they are better able to see

their worldview and discern where change may be desired. When we find ourselves faced

with a situation that causes us to question our worldview, it is what Mezirow (2000) calls

a disorienting dilemma. Transformative learning is a process that moves the individual

through a perplexing situation. Typically, as we internalize information, it transfers to

learning. Being in a state of disorientation means to learn; we need a process to follow.

This process of learning helps us cope with life-changing circumstances.

Transformational learning is a form of psychological growth that helps us find meaning

through the process. Transformational learning is aimed at individual transformation, but

Mezirow defines it as "the social process of construing and appropriating a new or

revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience as a guide to action" (Mezirow,

1994a, p, 222-3). This explanation means it happens with others through a series of

interactive learning steps or stages.

In getting to the point of transformation, Clark (1993) says that the disorienting

dilemma causes the individual to do a personal reflection on their assumptions and

beliefs. This process can change how they develop new meaning and potentially

transform their lives. According to Cranton (1994), the transformative learning theory

lists processes and conditions of perspective transformation:

A. A disorienting dilemma

B. Identification of assumptions in the current knowledge/approach

C. Critical self-reflection of these assumptions – how they influence or limit

understanding

D. Critical communication with others as other ideas and approaches are

examined

E. Testing and application of new perspectives

An essential condition of transformative learning is critical communication with

others. Interaction helps individuals examine alternative perspectives to derive new

personal meaning from the disorienting dilemma. Maslow (1970) found that basic needs

are filled only by and through other human beings and that the need for community is

itself a basic need. Clark (1993) stated, "…human beings exist in relationship with the

world by our capacity for praxis, the reciprocal linkage of reflection and action" (p. 49).

Coaching works exceptionally well at assisting individuals in linking reflection and

action (Whitworth et al., 1998).

Moral Motivation and Moral Identity

Moral reasoning and emotion have often been the focus of understanding moral

motivation. More recently, identity has been recognized as important to moral motivation

to the degree the individual practices their moral values and chooses to commit to them

(Hardy & Carlo, 2005; Hertz & Krettenauer, 2016). According to Bock et al. (2021), the

qualities applicable to identity studies are based on virtue ethics through philosophical theories. The roots of identity theories begin with Aristotle carrying on to Aquinas, who added Christian virtues, which connect to benevolence, the foremost virtue of Confucianism. The six virtues that Peterson & Seligman (2004) identified (wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence) correspond with the Christian virtues Aquinas considered to be influential in leading toward a mature identity and moral life.

Taylor (1989) begins defining identity by saying the identity of self and morality are inseparable subject matters. "What answers the question who am I? for us is an understanding of what is of crucial importance to us" (p.27). Our identity includes our beliefs, cultural norms, ways of seeing the world through our lens of understanding, and what we are for or against. "Our identity is deeper and more many-sided than any of our possible articulations of it" (p.29).

Moral identity "is the degree to which one prioritizes—and defines oneself—in terms of moral goals, values, and commitments." Accordingly, there are three critical pieces involved in one's moral identity. These are reflection, commitment, and moral virtues (Bock et al., 2021, p. 4). Hardy & Carlo (2011) define moral identity as how important being a moral person is to one's identity.

In *Reconciling the Self and Morality*, Frimer & Walker (2009) noted that we are divided in our society between two simultaneous motivational systems: our self— interests and helping others in our communities. This division causes disorientation in

being clear about life choices in "how to live our lives, raise our children, and build a civil society" (p.1669).

Krettenauer's (2020) perspective aims to connect moral identity with self-determination theory mainly due to the impact of internal and external motivation for both. External moral identity motivation depends on how a person thinks others will see his actions. This thinking can lead to pretending to be moral while avoiding acting morally. Internal moral identity motivation is about a person keeping their self-ideal. Throughout development, an individual's internal moral identity motivation grows more critical so that their moral actions confirm their moral identity.

Self-determination Theory

When it comes to motivation theories, self-determination theory (SDT) is currently the "most widely researched and available" (Curren and Ryan, 2020, p. 297). SDT argues for the support of the Basic Psychological Needs Theory (BPNT), which points to three basic human needs for our well-being. These needs are autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these needs are met, we flourish. These needs are innate in the way that humans naturally aim for that which advances our positive development and flourishing while avoiding the opposite (Besser, 2020). Without realizing these needs, we face detriment in our "growth, integrity, thriving, and fulfillment of potential" (Curren and Ryan, p. 304).

The basic psychological need for *competence* is our ability to master an activity. To feel completely capable of doing our job or meeting a goal. The need for *relatedness*

is to feel a sense of belonging, connectedness, and support by important people in a position to provide encouragement and positive reinforcement (Curren and Ryan, 2020).

Autonomy and self-determination are synonymous with regard to human ability and striving for "self-regulation and integrity" (Deci and Ryan, 2012). When healthy, people naturally grow toward more autonomy. This growth involves having intrinsic motivation, which means doing things because we find enjoyment in them. We are motivated because we want to do it. An example of an intrinsically motivated goal is developing a meaningful relationship. Extrinsic motivation comes from outside of us; we are motivated to do something because of another force. For example, choosing to finish homework because it is required and because we want to avoid negative consequences that may be imposed upon us. People who tend to choose extrinsically motivated life goals more frequently than intrinsically motivated goals are reported to have "lower self-esteem and self-actualization and higher depression and anxiety." In additional studies, extrinsic pursuits negatively affected well-being (Deci and Ryan, 2012, p. 11). Intrinsic motives connect to our basic human need for autonomy in choosing what we desire. SDT posits that when people can choose their values freely rather than have them handed down or imposed upon them, they will typically select values that involve caring for others or prosocial values (Curren and Ryan, 2020).

There are elements of eudaimonia that agree with SDT's view of wellness (Ryan et al., 2008). According to Iizuka (2020):

> The connection between virtue theory and SDT. . . is not just superficial but rather embedded in the SDT framework. The hardcore of virtue theory was the shared

belief that virtue is necessary for leading a good life; this inherent relation
between virtue and a good life is also found in SDT. This implies the more
positive outcomes we obtain from SDT, the more likely that virtue theoretical
assumptions are shown to be on the right track (pp. 2022-2023).

Professional coaching has strong connections to the Basic Psychological Needs
Theory (BPNT). The co-active coaching model (Whitworth et al., 1998) begins with the
fundamental nature of a coaching relationship as an alliance between two equals. This
relationship meets the basic need for relatedness. The other two needs show up as
coaching *cornerstones*. "The client is naturally creative, resourceful, and whole" (p. 3).
To be naturally creative and resourceful is to be competent. To be whole is to be
autonomous or self-determining. Additionally, assisting clients to reach intrinsically
motivated goals is also foundational to the profession of coaching. In facilitating goal
setting, "Central to the [coaching] process is the principle of choice and self-
responsibility" (Campone, 2015, p. 62).

Professional Coaching

Coaching is a profession that helps adults transform their lives through a change
of one kind or another. The client seeks growth or development in their career, personal
pursuits, or spirituality in this process. Today, coaching is an unequal aid in opening the
mind and spirit to fulfillment (Williams & Anderson, 2005; Whitworth et al., 1998;
Hargrove, 1995). The coach's role is to facilitate the client's learning in their quest to find
their purpose, develop their strengths, and obtain their goals (Ciporen, 2015; Whitworth
et al., 1998; Palmer & Whybrow, 2008). Along the way, coaching assists the client in

changing their meaning perspectives so that they can make other choices regarding reaching their goal or dealing with a problematic situation (Cox, 2015). The relationship is most important in the coaching experience (Whitworth et al.)

The trusting relationship built between the coach and client helps the client find their way, become unstuck, and stay on course toward their own best self-interests (Whitworth et al.). "In general, people come to coaching because they want a better quality of life: more fulfillment, better balance, or a different process to accomplish their life desires" (p. 1). The trained coach is prepared to challenge the client on their quest toward fulfillment through encouragement and accountability that the client designs. "Fulfillment is about being fully alive. Fulfillment is the state of being the full expression of who we are" (p. 117). The coach's role in helping the client reach their potential is similar to the teacher using dialogue as the guiding principle. Vella (2000) refers to dialogue as "the guiding principle" in which the teacher takes on a new role that invites learners to be "Subjects" of their own learning. She writes, "Everything in your design moves toward dialogue as a plant moves toward the sunlight (p. 11).

Life coaching is the "crucible that contains all coaching since all coaching is best when it is a whole person approach" (Williams & Anderson, 2005, p. 3). To respond to different needs and intentions, a professional coach may specialize in a niche market instead of (or in addition to) more broadly as a life coach. These include the executive, business, health and wellness, healing, leadership, relationship, gender-specific, culture-specific (LGBT+), communication, parenting, networking, speaking, spiritual coaches, etc. Coaches work independently, as employees, on contract, for large corporations, non-

profit organizations, churches, small businesses, and solopreneurs (Williams & Anderson, 2005; O'Neil, 2000; Whitworth et al., 1998; Ciporen, 2015).

Theoretical roots exist in psychology—influenced by Jung, Adler, and Maslow (Williams & Anderson, 2005)—in education, management, social science, and philosophy. These theories, practices, assessments, inventories, and inquiries are tools in coaching borrowed from various fields and disciplines to help clients understand themselves more deeply and clearly (Whitworth et al., 1998; Williams & Anderson, 2005). For example, Dr. Malcolm Knowles's research developed six core adult learning principles of Andragogy (Knowles et al., 2020, p. 6).

1. Learners need to know; why, what, how

2. Self-concept of the learner; As autonomous and self-directing

3. Prior experience of the learner; Resources, mental models

4. Readiness to learn; Life-related, developmental task

5. Orientation to learning; Problem-centered, contextual

6. Motivation to learn; Intrinsic value, personal payoff

Hargrove (1995) asserts, "Transformational coaching shows people how to transform or stretch their visions, values, and abilities" (p. 23). In the work of changing our meaning systems, finding new perspectives, and getting out of the way of ourselves, the coach becomes an advocate for our best self. Mezirow (1991) reminds us that meaning exists within ourselves—not in books and external forms. Individuals have their own best answers—what will bring them fulfillment—within themselves.

Meaning-making cannot be separated out of transformational learning or coaching. These motivators are woven together like threads of the same cloth, which clothes us as we grow toward our potential. Meaning "systems," in Mezirow's (1991) view, are created through habitual expectations that come out of the way we grow up, the culture in which we live, and previous learning (p.26). They become a "frame of reference" for interpreting what happens to us, around us, and what is likely to happen next in our world.

There are many ethical responsibilities associated with helping humans develop to their potential. This statement is especially true when working with vulnerable people because of life-changing circumstances that have altered their way of looking at life issues (Miller & Harvey, 2001). For this reason, the coach and client cooperatively design an alliance in which choices in the coaching journey need to remain the client's (Garlo, 2006; Krigbaum, 2006; Whitworth et al., 1998; Hargrove, 1995). This alliance is necessary because transformational learning experiences have the potential to bring about significant changes in the personal lives of clients.

Krigbaum (2006) wrote about a crucial link in coaching, "Ethics and competence are symbiotic twins. True coaching competence cannot exist without the understanding and use of coaching ethics. Coaching ethics cannot be palpably manifested without competence in coaching skills" (pp. 79, 80). In the mastery of coaching, good coaches are also ethical coaches. This mastery happens through promises a coach makes to the profession and the client. These include (Whitworth et al., 1998):

- Trusting that the client is completely capable, as being creative, resourceful, and whole

- Being curious about the client's whole life, not just the issue at hand

- Allowing the agenda to come from the client

- Designing an alliance that grants power to the coaching relationship – not to the coach

A coach fulfills these promises through listening, intuition, curiosity, self-management, and calling the client to action and learning (Whitworth et al.).

Summary

Beginning with the subject of morality, history takes us back to the ancient Greek philosophers who continue to be known for their writing on goodness, virtue, and character. Modern philosophers and psychologists carry on the study of these aspects, revealing that nearly all virtue ethics stem from three elements of Greek philosophy. These are virtues, moral wisdom, and flourishing.

The essence of virtue is drawn from the noted studies of virtue ethics. These are: Virtues are a kind of power that helps us become who we are. Virtues contribute to our well-being. Virtue, habit, and character are linked. Virtues are developmental. No one is born virtuous. Virtues are learned and practiced as a skill, like learning to play the piano. Virtues are internal values that become action when practiced and become a character trait. Values and virtues are not synonymous. Lived values can become virtues. Virtues are admired in others and emulated to become a practiced virtue in the admirer.

Character cannot be separated from the person. Our actions form our character, for the good or the bad. Character strengths research stems from Positive Psychology and is defined as positive qualities of how we think, feel, and act. When practiced, these lead to being virtuous. The VIA Character Strengths tool is widely used globally as a way for individuals to identify and grow their character strengths. Virtue, virtue ethics, and character lead humanity to find our best potential. Other motivational factors contribute to our well-being, as well.

As part of emotion science, the broaden and build theory finds that positive emotions affect the brain in such a way as to enlarge our capacity to think more broadly. For example, this capacity contrasts negative emotions that close down our ability to stretch the imagination. Positive emotions are found to increase personal growth and advance flourishing.

Transformational learning theory connects to our well-being through self-reflection, leading to perspective change. Studies show that human beings often experience growth as we process and discern new meaning even through significant loss.

When it comes to motivation, our self-identity and our morality are not separable. This connection is because our identity involves our norms, beliefs, and epistemology as our unique worldview. How we identify our morality has to do with how we prioritize our values, commitments, moral (what we deem to be good and bad) decisions, and ways of being. As we grow, our moral identity becomes more important.

Self-determination theory explores need satisfaction with intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Three basic human needs, identified by Basic Psychological Needs Theory

(BPNT), are critical to fulfilling our potential. These are autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When a person can choose the values they want to live into, they are far more successful than when these are imposed upon them—being intrinsically motivated means having a desire for the activity because the person finds it enjoyable. Extrinsic motivation comes from an outside source with potential threats or punishment if the activity is not done. When our basic needs are met, studies show that individuals will choose goals that advance their well-being while also being prosocial, thereby supporting humanity in our collective aim to thrive.

A commonality between these areas of review is the human goal of realizing our best potential. All avenues point in the direction of being virtuous. Virtues are defined as one's potential. The profession of personal coaching is in service of championing humanity toward this highest goal. Coaching has been designed to include aspects of andragogy (adult learning theory), transformative learning theory, self-determination, motivation theories, and leadership (Ladegard & Gjerde, 2014). Coaches are also trained and certified to follow ethical standards in their relationship with their work and clients. How are coaches trained to use virtues, virtue ethics, character, and values as a tool, method, technique, or exercise with clients who strive to be their best? This question is what will be explored in this study. The methodology is outlined next in chapter III.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

This research examines the phenomena of coach trainers' use of virtues, virtue ethics/ethics in general, character, strengths, and values as tools in educating coaches on how to help their clients realize their best potential.

This chapter describes the research methodology for this qualitative, transcendental phenomenological study that examines the lived experiences of coach trainers' use of tools in their practice. This research method emphasizes the unfolding of the essence of experience, thereby constructing a description of how coach trainers incorporate their understanding of virtue ethics in their goal of helping coaches lead their clients to their best potential. The rationale for using a qualitative method and phenomenology is addressed here. The role of the researcher, the study participants, data collection procedures, and data analysis are included in this chapter.

Design and Rationale

Qualitative research is appropriate when a study involves communicating meaning to a problem or question. This method is used when an issue or group needs to be explored, explained, understood, interpreted, or described rather than measured or compared, as in quantitative research. Phenomenological studies are qualitative specifically because they seek to understand the lived experiences and meaning of those with a shared experience of a phenomenon (Creswell& Poth, 2018). This study aims to explore with coaches their understanding and use of virtues and values as a means of

ethical transformative self-development in individuals engaged in coaching relationships. Therefore, a qualitative transcendental phenomenology study is an applicable approach.

Phenomenological Approach

Phenomenological research conducted by van Coller-Peter & van der Walt (2020) suggests that coaching raises awareness of the importance of integrity. "Growing in the virtues, especially prudence (knowing what to seek and what to avoid) forms good character. What is at stake is the integrity of the person" (Mitchell, 2015). This research is designed to reveal how coach trainers use virtues, virtue ethics/ethics in general, strengths, character, and or values as tools when educating coaches on how to shepherd clients toward their best potential.

The meaning of phenomena has to do with the way things appear to us. It is one's personal point of view that matters because we find meaning in our own experiences. What appears in consciousness is the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). When one is having an experience and is aware of it, this makes the experience conscious (Smith, 2018). A conscious experience is one "we live through or perform," not simply observe (Smith, Section 5, Phenomenology and Ontology, Epistemology, Logic, Ethics). Further, a subject's descriptive experience is viewed as entirely significant, valid, and their own (Schmitt, 1967).

Phenomenology is a method and a philosophy influenced by Descartes and later, in the 20th Century, by Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre (Moustakas, 1994; Smith, 2018). Moustakas (1994) especially recognizes Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), a

German philosopher, he credits for pioneering this approach. Through his effort to live into Husserl's thinking, coupled with his manner of learning from his direct experiences, Moustakas is very much aligned with a human science guided by Husserl's method of transcendental phenomenology, as described herein.

The Role of the Researcher

Transcendental phenomenology requires deep listening, being open, and accepting of the perspectives of those sharing their experiences (Moustakas, 1994). This manner of being is echoed in the skills the coach uses, listening, curiosity, and self-management (Whitworth et al., 1998). As a trained and certified coach, this researcher brings assumptions and epistemological knowledge about coaching methods with her into the study. The need and commitment to recognize, acknowledge, and set aside any biases were critically important while interviewing, collecting, organizing, and analyzing data. An important aspect of ethical responsibility in helping others achieve their full potential is for the coach to keep her personal beliefs and customs to herself, to not impose them upon the client (O'Hearne, M. & Hamrick, C., 2006).

The researcher was trained in 2003 and certified as a CPCC (Certified Professional Co-Active Coach), in 2004, through the Co-Active Training Institute. She is a member of the International Coaching Federation (ICF). Her Bachelor of Arts degree, from St. Catherine University, in St. Paul, Minnesota, is in Speech Communication. Her Master of Arts degree, from St. Mary's University, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, is in Human Development, focused on adult learning and coaching. The subject of her master's thesis was *Human Development Coaching*. The Abstract:

In this paper, the writer discusses links between spiritual development, transformative learning, and positive psychology as resources to coaching. Her position is that the essence of human development is realized in self-fulfillment, which is manifested as spiritual joy, and the key to unlocking this joy is in the will. She explores the important role that disorienting dilemmas have as barriers, and stepping-stones, to fulfillment. She concludes by defining human development coaching as a hybrid form of dialogue that assists humanity in reaching its best potential (Schwietz, 2006).

The role of the researcher in this study is an objective, etic view; to remain non-judgmental and open-minded. The role of a coach requires much the same as that of the researcher, that is, to be a deep listener and ask probing questions of the participants that lead to greater levels of understanding their thoughts, feelings, perspectives, and knowledge. A priority of the researcher is to maintain ethical practices and protect participating subjects and their data. The researcher has no direct relationship with the participants that represent a conflict of interest or may cause a bias in the study.

Subjects/Participants

Moustakas participant selection essential criteria include:

The research participant has experienced the phenomenon, is intensely interested in understanding its nature and meanings, is willing to participate in the lengthy interview and (perhaps a follow-up interview), grants the investigator the right to tape-record, possibly videotape the interview, and publish the data in a dissertation and other publications (1994, p. 107).

Participants were located using an online database of certified coach trainers listed on the International Coaching Federation (ICF) website. "ICF accredits coaching education organizations that meet the high standards set forth by ICF and ICF Coaching Education" (https://apps.coachingfederation.org/eweb/DynamicPage.aspx?webcode=ESS). As suggested for phenomenological studies, the anticipated number of participants for this study was between five and eight (Creswell & Poth, 2018); eight were selected.

The sample was drawn from a population of twenty coach trainers who have been training for at least five years. All participants are fluent in English. No age or gender requirements were made. The target population was professional trainers with a college degree and a training focus on working with clients motivated to reach their best potential. The purposive sample was used to select trainers located in the United States and who define their coaching specialty (categories in ICF search service) as "coaching other coaches," "leadership," "life vision and enhancement," "personal/organizational," and "spirituality." Trainers in these groups were contacted if they used any of the following keywords in the description of their training: virtues, ethics, values, character, strengths, positive psychology, transformational, best self, potential, emotions, moral, exemplar, admiration, flourishing, self-determination, human capacity, positive qualities, adult learning, and intrinsic motivation.

The participants were contacted in November 2021 by email (Appendix A.) and asked to participate in a semi-structured interview. Participants were limited to eight people. Each person was asked to electronically sign an informed consent form to interview (Appendix B.). Eligibility to participate as outlined in the recruitment email,

the informed consent form and verified when setting the interview. To reach the

minimum number of study participants, one or two follow-up recruitment emails were

sent to several potential participants. To achieve eight subjects, alternative recruitment

continued within the organizations that met the stated criteria above (allowing for more

than one trainer per organization). Participants were selected based on the order they

responded affirmatively to the invitation. Table 1 lists the descriptors of each participant.

Table 1

Participant Profiles

Pseudonyms	*Years Training*	*Where Trained as a Coach (All are ICF Certified Trainers)*	*Niche(s)*	*Highest Ed Level*
Adeline	6	American Coaching Academy	Any and all, Christian-based	DCC
Gordan	20	Myers Briggs/Core Strengths	Any and all, Leadership	MBA
Lawrence	10	Mentor Coach and Co-active Training Institute	Any and all, the ICF model	Ph.D. Social Psychology
Meryl	17/10	Gallup and College or Executive Coaching	Strengths-based Leadership Development	MBA
Peter	6	American Coaching Academy	Any and all, Christian-based	DRS
Tarina	21	Family Business	Any and all, Narrative	MA Organizational Development
Valerie	0 Training 8 Mentoring	Co-active Training Institute	Whole Body Leadership	MA, Ph.D. pending Positive Org Psychology
Xavier	10	Coach University and Coachville Graduate School of Coaching	Any and all, Coaching Psychology, Leadership	Psy.D. Industrial Org

Data Collection Procedures

Data was collected through open-ended, semi-structured questions in an interview with selected coach trainers. (Appendix C). Potential participants were contacted via email invitation (Appendix A) in early November 2021.

Upon an email response with interest in participating, each was requested to sign electronically, scan, and return an Informed Consent Form (Appendix B) before the interview was scheduled. Individual, forty-five (45) to sixty (60) minute interviews were then scheduled at mutually agreed upon times between November 15 and November 26, 2021.

The interviews were conducted and recorded using Zoom. Each conversation was audio and video recorded at the request and permission of the subjects.

The interviews were recorded to ensure the accuracy of the participant's statements when reviewing the conversation afterward. The recordings were used for data analysis purposes only. Automated transcription was used. Later, this researcher edited the transcripts for spelling and verbal errors made through Zoom.

Permission was received from each participant to contact them later with clarifying questions. Additionally, each participant received a copy of the transcript of their interview for verification of accuracy. The total time commitment for the participants was approximately one hour. A $300 cash card was awarded to one participant through a drawing among these professional subjects as an incentive to participate.

When preparing to engage in transcendental phenomenological research, it is critical to grasp the process in full; to identify the key ingredients as well as the steps to take in using them. The key components are bulleted below as described in Moustakas' conceptual framework (p.p. 25-41).

Table 2

Conceptual Framework

Moustakas (1994) Transcendental Phenomenological Framework
● Intentionality: the act of being present in the situation Intentional experiences are noetic – Noema and Noesis
● Intuition: the beginning place in deriving knowledge of human experiences, free of everyday sense impressions and the natural attitude
● Engage in "epoche process."

● Two central questions:
    1) What are their experiences?
    2) In what context or situations did they experience it?

"Intentionality refers to consciousness, the internal experience of being conscious of something; thus, the act of consciousness and standing of consciousness are intentionally related" (Husserl, 1931, p.p. 243-244, as cited in Moustakas, p. 28). Within intentionality, there is the noetic: noema and the noesis. The noema phase is *textural*—the *what* of the experience. The noesis is *structural*—the *how* of the experience. The relationship of texture and structure is about the appearance and the hidden coming together (Moustakas, 1994). "Noema is *that* which is experienced, the *what* of the experience. Noesis is *how* the what is experienced, the experiencing or act of experiencing" (Ihde, 1977, p. 43, as cited in Moustakas, p. 69). The noesis helps provide

meaning to whatever is perceived. These meanings need to be drawn out in the reflective and repetitive process of reviewing the perceptions during reduction. "How the stories are apprehended and understood in the perceptual, conceptual and interpretive analysis corresponds to the noetic" (Conklin, 2007, p. 7). It is where these connect that the phenomenological essence materializes.

Transcendental phenomenology is also referred to as psychological phenomenology (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Transcendental means to view the phenomenon "as if for the first time... in a fresh and open way" (Moustakas, p. 34). To do this, the researcher engaged in preparation for the research in a process called *epoche*. *Epoche* is a Greek word that means "to refrain from judgment, to abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33). This process makes the transcendental method unique from other models of human science research. Epoche is a state of mind in which the researcher actively practices emptying her mind of preconceived notions regarding what she knows, thinks, judges, has a concern about, or imagines. The idea is to acknowledge these everyday and ordinary thoughts to create a clear headspace, called *bracketing*, to investigate the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Research Questions

In phenomenological research, the questions grow out of intense interest in a particular problem or topic. The researcher's excitement and curiosity inspire the search (Moustakas, 1994, p. 104). Two research questions formulated in preparation for the methodology led this study.

1. How do coach trainers describe the inclusion of virtues, virtue ethics/ethics in general, character, strengths, and values as tools in their goal of educating coaches to assist their clients in reaching their best potential?

2. What conditions or circumstances have typically guided the coach trainer's inclusion of virtues, virtue ethics/ethics in general, character, strengths, and values as tools in their training?

Data Analysis

Once the data was collected using the outlined framework above, the data analysis followed with transcendental phenomenological *reduction*. The reduction in the organization of the data was a matter of seeking out the participants' details described of the experience to unveil more and more of the "what" (essential nature) of the phenomenon. This process is the textural dimension of the phenomenon. Meaning is contained in the descriptions provided by the subjects of the study. Therefore, the emphasis is on finding the meaning (Moustakas, 1994). Engaging in the epoche process is especially important in data analysis when describing and classifying codes into themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Table 3

Method for Data Analysis

A.   Transcendental Phenomenological Reduction
Bracketing (as part of the epoche process)
Horizontalizing – horizons
Clustering the horizons into themes
Organizing horizons and themes into *textural* descriptions
Composite textural descriptions
B.   Imaginative Variation – seek out *structural* descriptions
Composite structural descriptions
C.   Synthesis – unveil the essence

Through epoché, I created a clear headspace, or bracket, where the phenomenon was situated (Conklin, 2007). Moustakas clarifies that this process begins with the interviews.

In *horizontalizing*, every statement is initially treated as having equal value. Later, statements irrelevant to the topic and question and those that are repetitive or overlapping are deleted, leaving only the Horizons (the textural meanings and invariant constituents of the phenomenon) (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97).

The idea of horizontalizing is to continually seek new ways of looking at the phenomenon through fresh perspectives. In this process, I sought a greater depth of knowledge of the experience. These horizontal statements were then clustered into textural themes or units of meaning (Conklin, 2007).

Composite textural descriptions were created with the themes or meaning units that most reflected the central descriptions universal to all the participants (Conklin, 2007).

The step after reduction is *Imaginative Variation.* In this step, "the world disappears, existence no longer is central. Anything whatever becomes possible. The thrust is away from facts and measurable entities and toward meanings and essences" Moustakas, 2007, p. 98). The goal in this reflective phase was to glean structural descriptions that speak to the "what" of the experience; how did it come to be what it is?

In the same way, as textural descriptions were gathered from all participants' statements, structural descriptions were composed. Again, this "represents the core, most fundamental and essential structures that have explanatory power for what has been experienced" (Conklin, 2007, p. 22).

The final step in delineating the data is synthesis. This step is when the descriptions of "how" and "what" are brought together in a blended articulation of the "essence" of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994, Conklin, 2007). This final statement was crafted by repeating the textural-structural description process for each participant and then blending them into an all-inclusive description of the group experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Summary

In describing the transcendental phenomenological method, Conklin (2007) commented:

From counselors to managers, from professors to physicians, who would not

benefit from more excellent knowledge of the experiences of those they serve? In

this interest, this method has broad application to many professional and personal

relations. It has the potential to reveal new facets of those we serve and who serve

us while ultimately contributing to potentially greater productivity and happiness

(p.p. 3-4).

This chapter has outlined and defined the methodology used in this transcendental

phenomenological study. Chapter 4 will transition to the research findings.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

This qualitative transcendental phenomenological research aimed to explore with five-eight coach trainers their experience in using virtues, virtue ethics/ethics in general, character, strengths, and values as tools for coaches to use in their coaching relationships. The problem statement that led to this study is that it was not known if coach trainers use virtue ethics as a tool in teaching coaches to use virtue ethics with their own clients in reaching their best potential. I questioned if there was a gap between the ethical practice of how a coach is trained to be highly ethical and how they may hold their own clients accountable for living into their virtues.

Finally, I examined if there was a conflation of the terms values and virtues in coaching. This chapter describes the finding of this study as a result of the data analysis of interviews with eight coach trainers.

Since the transcripts provided through the Zoom recording were riddled with errors, it was necessary to rewrite them by listening to the audio recording from start to finish making corrections in nearly every sentence. This process provided the opportunity for focused and concentrated listening, leading to greater insight into the feelings, facts, and ideas expressed in each interview.

(Figure 1 is the order of the data analysis.)

Figure 1

Data Analysis Flowchart
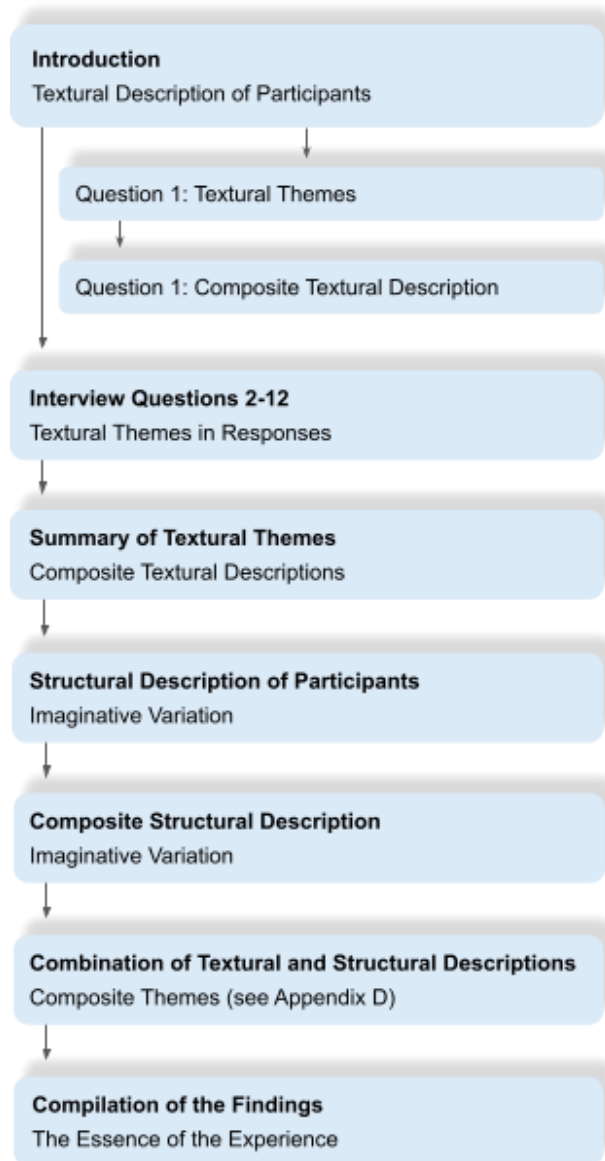
Textural Description of Participants

The findings begin with an introduction to each participant in a textural

description below. (See Table 2, *Participant Profiles,* in Chapter III.)

Adeline has been training coaches for six years. She has a doctorate in Christian counseling (DCC) and a career in IT, in which she implemented an internal coaching program. Her coach training program sees ethics as an umbrella that covers virtues, values, strengths, and character. She said,

> We stress them all. But I think the most time spent probably is going to be the greatest on ethical guidelines. We teach coaching from a holistic Christian understanding (non-denominational); what would Jesus do in a particular situation? So that establishes ethics, values, strengths, etc. I don't know how you can avoid values and character and virtues because that is what comes up in coaching.

The International Coaching Federation (ICF) credential is a framework that Adeline refers to as the gold standard. "We want that stamp of excellence on the program and on our graduates. We want our coaches always to remember that you are accountable; you need to adhere to the code of ethics."

Gordan has been training coaches for twenty years. His career launched out of his facilitation work using the Myers Briggs Type Indicator, then moved into using the Strengths Deployment Inventory (A Core Strengths tool) that uncovers motives that drive behavior and are measured in the strengths inventory. He said:

> This tool is based on a theory of relationship intelligence. It exists for people to use their own greater self-awareness and awareness of others to improve and help gain greater control of the outcomes of their relationships. So, if you can improve those relationships, then the premise is that the quality of the work you are

producing in collaboration with people will be better. Everybody's best self gets expressed when they have feelings of belonging, which puts someone on a path to being their best self.

Lawrence has been training coaches for ten years. He holds a Ph.D. in social psychology and is a well-being researcher. He said:

One of my cautionary notes is, please never believe in a single academic or coaching model as if it is the monolithic truth. These are useful frameworks, but they're human-created. We put our own categorical lens on them because it's a helpful reduction of a complex phenomenon.

In talking about how coaching methods align with the development of the trainee's best self, he added:

All coach training, if it's reasonable coach training, is transformative. In part, that is because it is a conversation technology which means it's equipping people with better communication skills. So much of our meaning and belongingness, what it means in the best possible way to be human, has to do with relationships. And so, we are giving people the technology to improve those relationships. It just makes life richer.

Meryl has been an ICF certified coach trainer for ten years. She holds an MBA degree. Trained initially through Gallup, her career has been in leadership development and strengths-based development, using the strengthsfinder assessment now known as Clifton Strengths. She said, "Really, the foundation of what I do is to help people be the best version of themselves." Her career fits her as she describes "strategic" as being her

number one strength. She added:

> I am always thinking about what the most efficient way is to get from point A to
> point B. And to me, this common language of strengths allows for at least one
> version of that level of efficiency. It helps coaches understand people better,
> understand themselves better.

Peter has been training coaches for six years. He has a doctorate in religious
studies (DRS) and has taught in Bible colleges for many years. Peter also had a career in
the automotive sector and currently runs three businesses, familiarizing him with
corporate America and the secular world. One of the reasons he loves coaching is
because of how efficient coaching is. "Coming from the counseling background and the
length of time it can take to see change or bring understanding, coaching is like a laser.
It's so efficient." He adds:

> We are educating people to be leaders. But if you don't have an ethical standard
> to begin with, then how do you, what do you base your leadership on? And so
> when you take the Christian base out of it, then what is your plumb line? If it's
> left up to the individual, that can move all over the place. Setting a foundation
> gives people safety and security, and so it develops self-confidence in leadership."

Tarina has been training coaches for 21 years. She holds a master's degree in
organizational development. All the training in her organization is based on narrative.
She said, "Story helps reveal what's keeping a person captive, or the story that could

liberate them. When we tell stories about our lives and how we live our lives, we also say what is important to us." This unique method comes out of her conviction that it helps people see themselves from the hidden perspective of their own story. She added:

> It rings true for them because they are defining their values—what matters to them in who they are. Values are the turning point for so many people. When I can get behind and understand what drives me, I have the motivation to change. That's transformational.

Valerie is an MCC-level coach with a background in IT executive coaching. She is a nutritionist and currently working toward completing a Ph.D. in positive organizational psychology. She said:

> My research and my work are all in leadership vitality. My goal is to help my leaders understand how they can be fulfilled human beings and leaders at the same time. I do a real deep dive with my clients with everything from sleep to hydration to nutrition. I dive deep into the whole human. Those who come to me know I am going to get under the hood of their life. She adds that she takes the ICF Code of Ethics to the next level to include conflicts of interest and issues of trust.

Xavier has been training coaches for ten years. With a background in educational psychology and counseling and a doctorate in industrial/organizational psychology, his approach to coach training is under the positive psychology umbrella. When creating the program he teaches, he applied his training and sought out best practices literature and conversation with experts in evaluating coach psychology training programs. He said:

I would say that while ethics is the cornerstone of coaching, strengths are absolutely another cornerstone. By looking at character strengths, virtues, and values and looking at ourselves through these lenses, it's different. No one has invited most of us to do that before. You begin to learn and apply through peer and buddy coaching. And you do evolve. It's transformational.

Textural Theme I

The data in this section represents the responses to interview question 1 (Q1) and the resulting themes. Q1 is set apart from questions 2-12 by finding textural and composite themes within the definitions of keywords.

Topic: Defining Keywords

In Q1, participants were asked to define virtues, virtue ethics/ethics in general, character, and values. One-half of the participants prefaced their definitions with phrases that articulated their confidence or possible lack of confidence in their response.

Virtues: "Hmm, that's a meaty one."

"I'm going to preface this by saying you are treading on an area that I talk a lot about where I often sidestep definitions with the people I coach because I think there's a difference between how researchers and practitioners think. Obviously, for researchers, it's important to operationalize, define, and measure. It's less important for practitioners to make the fine distinctions like this is a strength. Well, actually not a strength, a talent, or skill."

"By and large, psychologists have shied away from taking this type of virtue lens because it does seem so fully the domain of philosophy or religion. Positive psychology is an interesting exception to that where you do find a little more lead between the frameworks."

Ethics: "These are tough questions. It's interesting to be able to articulate."

"You know, virtue ethics are something I haven't spent much time learning or teaching."

Character: "These are interesting layers."

Strengths: "That's an easy one. This is my wheelhouse."

Values: "Hmm. Maybe values… I don't think I've ever been asked this question before."

"I haven't done a lot of research in this area at all."

"I so desperately want to get into a dictionary."

The definitions provided by the participants were then categorized into themes as shown in Table 4. (See Appendix E: Thematic Organization of Participants' Definitions for all definitions provided by participants.) These themes were later incorporated into the combination of textural and structural descriptions.

Table 4

Textural Themes for Defined Words

Keywords Defined	Themes
Virtues	Virtues are in Alignment with Life
	Virtues are Characteristics/Qualities
	Virtues are What is "Good"
	Virtues are Moral
	Virtues are Based in Philosophy
Ethics/Virtue Ethics	Ethics are Guidelines
	Ethics are an Internal Compass
	Ethics are Based in Philosophy
Character	Character is Personality
	Character is Being Virtuous
	Character is Behavioral
Strengths	Strengths are Natural Behaviors at which a Person Excels
Values	Values and Virtues are Conflated Terms
	Values are Demonstrated Convictions
	Values are One's Guiding Principles

Composite Textural Description of Definition Statements

The composite textural descriptions summarize these themes.

The participants came with various experiences using each of these words in their

work. As we talked about each word, they often became aware they defined them

alike. *Virtue* is the only word defined as meaning "what is good." *Ethics* was defined most commonly as "guidelines." *Character* was defined as "behavioral." It was also defined as meaning "virtuous." As one commented, "Character, as we use it in the English language, is largely overlapping. I think we use a virtuous person and a person with strong character as largely interchangeable linguistically." *Strengths* were defined most consistently as "natural behaviors at which a person excels." *Values* were split in how they were defined.

More than one participant pointed out that a conflation between values and virtues became clear: "values and virtues have been used interchangeably." Additionally, "guiding principles" was a strong theme in defining values, which mirrors "guidelines" in *ethics*. Coming across throughout the conversations was the theme in values defined as "demonstrated convictions." *Values* were defined as being core to an understanding of who we are and essential as a tool in coaching.

Textural Themes II

The data in this section represents the responses to interview questions 2 - 12 and the resulting themes.

Topic: The Inclusion of Virtues, etc., as Training Tools

In Interview Q2. Participants were asked to describe how they use and, or include virtues, virtue ethics/ethics, strengths, character, and or values—as a tool that helps coaches understand how to assist clients in reaching their best potential. Three consistent

themes were identified in the data; *Coaching Begins with Values, The Process of Coaching is About Conversations, and The Process of Coaching Includes the Use of Tools.*

Theme 1: Coach Training Begins with Values. The data showed 100% agreement among the participants that their training sessions begin with values. Their responses uphold the strength of this theme among them.

"I try to get people to understand the importance of articulating core values and how important it is to understand what guides us." –Valerie.

"The first class that every person has to take is figuring out their own values." –Tarina.

"Our foundational course includes an entire piece on values." –Lawrence.

"My preference would be to start with a values-based tool." –Gordan

Theme 2: The Process of Coach Training is About Conversations. Participants talked about how the process of coaching is about the conversations and language. Their responses mention conversations, language, articulation, and discussions as somewhat synonymous in the process of coaching.

"We teach ethics through the coaching conversations." –Adeline.

"It allows them to create a common language… to give the client a kind of guideline." –Meryl.

"It is an articulation. It's bringing the language to clarity." –Valerie.

"Through the coaching conversation, it surfaced that their values were being compromised." –Peter.

"It's not just in the abstract. We're doing practice around the conversation. I'm doing demonstrations of it in coaching." –Lawrence.

"We have vignette discussions of what's ethical and what's not." –Xavier

Theme 3: The Process of Coach Training Includes the Use of Tools. Participants described the different ways they utilize tools in their coaching. As indicated in the quotes, there are no specific tools trainers use; instead, they were able to identify different tools used in their individual training.

"We use several assessments and games to help them [trainees]\identify strengths and values that are within them. All of these tools help the coaches so they can use them with their clients." –Adeline.

"Assessments help coaches understand their own perspectives as a coach, but then also when they're coaching their clients." –Meryl.

"The starting point is what's in your field of perspective. I want to know that first using any tool in my bag." –Gordan.

"We use something called the 'Floor Plan' that helps them get to values right away. These are ten ways of being that [the trainee] can choose." –Tarina.

"We encourage them to have VIA [and other assessments] as a part of their kick-off package." –Xavier.

Topic: Holding Clients to a Standard

In Interview Q3, it was stated that coaches certified through ICF are held to a very high ethical standard. Participants were then asked how they train coaches to hold clients to a standard of ethics in their own lives to help them see how they need to be virtuous to reach their best potential. One theme surfaced: *Ethical Considerations in Training.*

Theme 1: Ethical Considerations in Training. Participants talked about the ways they train coaches around ethical considerations. According to the participants, training coaches to hold clients to a standard of virtue ethics (different from ethical practices) is outside of their approaches.

"We set the standard through demonstration of integrity, character, ethical adherence as a coach, teaching values, and an ethics exercise as an activation." –Adeline.

> Definitely, I've thought about it. In my foundational sequence of courses (basic coach training), ethics is one of the things I hit multiple times. We don't do what you are talking about until our advanced course, which is optional and by invitation. It's a pretty advanced issue. Does it get in the way of the agenda (hijack it)? What is the coach's role?

> We talk in large part about positive psychology coaching as being a more explicit emphasis on well-being. Often, we think that ethics is a hand-in-glove issue with well-being. We do not say, 'I'm here to teach you how to be a better person.' We would say that if you work with me, I work with positive psychology, there is going to be well-being conversation." –Lawrence.

"We help the people going through our program to understand that the ICF Code of Ethics should be part of their intake process, so they fully understand what coaching is and is not." –Peter

"No. I don't think I've ever done anything that's explicit that talks about how we help the client identify their own ethical awareness, thereby influencing their being their best self." –Meryl.

"I just don't find that is something I need to train my clients on. They would not have reached this level of leadership without having that moral compass." –Valerie.

"I don't use the word ethics. A lot of people would define ethics differently. I have to be ok with my clients' choices when it comes to how they define their best selves. I can help them sort through how to articulate their choices." –Tarina.

"We don't do a lot with ethics. When we get into workplace coaching, we have one course with discussions about what's happening with ethical leadership and deterioration. What are the opportunities in your role as a coach?" –Xavier.

"I don't explicitly talk about ethics. Ethics is a system of beliefs and virtues defined by a particular culture. I do not define it. I'm cautious about injecting a belief system I have on someone else." –Gordan.

Topic: Identifying Most Frequently Used Method(s) and Conditions or Circumstances Guiding Tools/Method(s) Inclusion

Interviews Q3b and Q4 are combined in this data. Participants were asked which tools or methods they use most frequently; virtues, virtue ethics/ethics in general, strengths, character, or values. Table 3 contains the responses to Q3b.

Participants were then asked what conditions or circumstances typically guided their inclusion of the tools/methods they most frequently use. Four themes were identified within the methods used. *Loyalty To My Tools/Methods*; *Help Clients Understand What They Live By; Ethical Standards Set Expectations,* and *Decisions Are Research-Based.*

Table 5

Most Frequent use of Tools/Methods and Resulting Themes

Number of Participants (n=8)	*Most Frequent Use of These Tools/Methods*	*Does Explicit Training on Ethics*	*Themes resulting from Conditions or Circumstances Guiding Tools/Method(s) Inclusion*
0	Virtue ethics	N/A	N/A
1	Values and Strengths	Yes	Theme 1: Loyalty to My Tools/Methods Theme 4: Decisions are Research-Based
3	Values and Strengths	No	Theme 1: Loyalty to My Tools/Methods Theme 4: Decisions are Research-Based
1	Values	No	Theme 1: Loyalty to My Tools/Methods
1	Strengths	No	Theme 1: Loyalty to My Tools/Methods
2	All; virtues, ethics, strengths, character, and values. Mostly ethics	Yes	Theme 1: Loyalty to My Tools/Methods Theme 2: Understanding What They Live By Theme 3: Ethical Standards Sets Expectations

Theme 1: Loyalty to My Tools/Methods. All the participants' responses fit under the theme *Loyalty to My Tools/Methods*, meaning they are tried and true and work well for them.

Meryl uses Strengths most frequently. She said:

I've used Clifton Strengths in my training pretty exclusively. When a certain set of talents come into play from the strengths assessment, that's a clue to me that I need to poke a little bit and uncover some of their values.

Tarina uses Values most frequently. "Values are in the background of everything we do. It is such an internal piece of us that if we continue to ignore it, it will throw us off and disrupt so many things it can make us sick."

Gordan uses Values and Strengths most frequently. "The Strengths Deployment Inventory is based on a theory of relationship intelligence. This tool helps people with greater self-awareness and of others to improve and help gain greater control of the outcomes of their relationships."

Valerie uses Values and Strengths most frequently. "Defining core values, principles, and strengths are always included." –Valerie

Theme 2: Help Trainees Understand What They Live By. This participant explained that by using All of the tools/methods, he could help his trainees get unstuck.

Peter uses All the tools/methods most frequently. "Oftentimes, the reason an individual is stuck is that there's a clash in ethics—values, virtues, internal things that are going on. Understanding these as what they live by helps the client process through the conflict."

Theme 3: Ethical Standards Set Expectations. This participant described the benefit of having ethical standards to set expectations.

Adeline uses All the methods most frequently.

Professionals, like in the medical field or therapists, have ethical standards that have to be maintained. It creates an expectation. If I know somebody is abiding by the ICF Code of Ethics, then I have an expectation about how they're going to be in that coaching relationship.

Theme 4: Decisions Are Research-Based. Two of the participants make training decisions based on current research.

Xavier uses Values and Strengths most frequently.

When we created the program, we had extensive training and some research in positive psychology tenants. A mentor sent me tons of research and had published information on what it takes to create a good program. We used a lot of those guidelines, talked with experts, did an analysis of best practices literature, and ultimately came to see coaching psychology as a subset of positive psychology. Therefore, we'd naturally weave in strengths, virtues, and more.

Lawrence uses Values and Strengths most frequently.

They are always heavily included. Decisions were largely research-based. The quality of research on the health and happiness link is ironclad. This is like A+ research, especially for social sciences. While the research on strengths is average, as compared, there is enough evidence that suggests that strengths are a useful area of study because they are a delivery mechanism for our values.

Topic: Method Alignment with Coaches' Best Self

In Interview Q5, participants were asked to describe how their training tools/methods align with the development of their coaches' best selves. Three themes were discussed. *Christian Values Lead to Living Virtuously, Goal Setting Tools/technology Help Lead the Way,* and *Coach Training is a Transformative Process.*

Theme 1: Christian Values Lead to Living Virtuously. This quote is about how following Christian values lead to living virtuously as a way of developing one's best self.

> There is also the Christian aspect of our program. We don't model ourselves after a societal norm; we model ourselves after Jesus Christ. We are not that, but we strive for that by asking what would Jesus do in a particular situation? It is the biblical perspective (not denominational) where all these principles are demonstrated in Scripture. That establishes ethics, values, strengths, et cetera, And there's the standard right there. Jesus never acted inappropriately; that means complete honesty, complete integrity, and transparency for the benefit of the individual. –Peter

Theme 2: Goal Setting Tools/Technology Help Lead the Way. Participants talked about the use of goals in training coaches. Their responses show that goal setting challenges people to understand themselves, find fulfillment, and consciously decide who they will be at their best.

"When we use goal-setting tools, we challenge people to understand themselves and say, 'this is who I am.' This same type of thinking helps clients find who they are to be their best selves." –Adeline

"My goal is to help my leaders understand how they can be fulfilled human beings and leaders at the same time. There is eudaimonic happiness, which I consider to be fulfillment. We are fulfilled human beings when we are nourished at that core level." –Valerie

"It's continually building awareness in each session with different tools and techniques of their choice to become who they want to be. It reinforces the best self through conscious decisions, not unconsciously." –Tarina

Theme 3: Coach Training is a Transformative Process. Transformation was a subject that came up often in the interview process. In response to this question of how to help people be their best, the participants discussed a shift in perspectives on the impact coaching makes on the conversational technology of coaching and relationships.

> That [transformation] is the foundation of what I do, help people be the best version of themselves. People are hard on themselves. To be able to identify the things they think are negative qualities or annoying or burdensome and to reframe them to see them as superpowers. Let's identify how to shift to the most virtuous expression of your strengths. –Meryl

People who come through this program say, 'This was the most impactful year of my life.' Really, looking at their character strengths, virtues, and values is different. Then you apply what you learned, do peer and buddy coaching, and you evolve. It is transformational. –Xavier

Coaching is so transformative because it is a conversational technology that equips people with better communication skills. So much of our meaning and belongingness connect to what it means in the best possible way to be human and has to do with relationships. And we're giving people the technology to improve those relationships. When people listen better, when they're more open and more authentic, when they're more present—some of the hallmark features of the good coach—I think it has a downstream effect upon better relationships, more trust, more open-mindedness, better conflict resolution, and the things that ultimately virtues are for, I mean, that's why humans have virtue. –Lawrence

Experiencing greater feelings of belonging puts someone on a path to being their best self. If I can lower the walls to belonging, I'm putting that person in the web of the context of all their relationships to be their best self. –Gordan

Topic: Difference Between Using Your Methods/Tools and Not Using Them

In Interview Q6, participants were asked if they have trained without using the tools/methods they most frequently use, and if so, what is the difference they experienced. One theme overwhelmingly emerged: *The Quality of the Work Suffers.*

Theme 1: The Quality of the Work Suffers. The participants shared the strength of their commitment to the methods they use by stating how their work would suffer without them.

> My observation is that there is a qualitative difference. I think people who understand behavior tend to do really well with adapting and becoming coaches. But I can tell you from my own experience I'm a better coach today, having taught and learned these things than I ever was going through my initial programs. Coaching becomes very model-centric unless we're looking at some of these deeper issues. –Xavier

"We have never coached outside of integrating those realms either when we're coaching people or within our program because all of those are intrinsic to who we are, and they are intrinsic to our program." –Adeline

> I've been doing this for almost 20 years. It very much feels like flying blind; without the strengths assessment, there is a lot more guesswork. Putting a framework around it creates a common language to build understanding. –Meryl

> I don't know how you can avoid values and character and virtues because that's what comes up in coaching. So, it's being able just to know what that is, recognize that, and help the client understand, and then help them determine what they're going to do with that. So, I can't imagine it not being part of it, really. –Peter

I would say without this; there's reactivity in leadership that if you don't understand your core values, you may not be as responsive of a leader as you want to be because you're not aware of when your core values are stepped on.

–Valerie

I look at it as transactional coaching versus transformational coaching. And when you do transactional coaching, you're just trying to get from A to B. But if I can understand what drives me, it is transformational. Then I have the motivation and desire to change. That's more transformational, not transactional. –Tarina

I'm a big believer in vocabulary. I think when people don't have a sophisticated vocabulary for a thing; then I can't have a sophisticated conversation around that thing. I think that's how people often treat things like values or strengths. I don't think they're always very reflective about them, and I think they conflate exactly the terms like they think a value is a strength, is a virtue, is personality, is a skill or talent, and they use them interchangeably. It's like missing one level of sophistication. –Lawrence

It feels more cognitive than visceral. And so when we're dealing at the level of values, if I cross a value, you're going to have some visceral internal reaction. When I use other tools, it almost feels like it's still up in my head that it's less visceral. When it feels visceral to you, I don't have to talk you into why this matters. If it's cognitive, it's in your head, and we can have a debate about it. –Gordan

Topic: Benefits of Methods

In Interview Q7, participants were asked about their benefits in doing things the way they do (use of tools/methods) and what they wish more people knew about their methods. The theme of *Deep Pride and Belief in Training Methods* shine through in their responses.

Theme 1: Deep Pride and Belief in the Training Methods. Participants in this study are very clear about the benefits of training as they do. Their responses also clarify why they feel *Deep Pride and Belief in* [their] *Training Methods.*

> By illuminating our principles and core values, and strengths, what we are doing is we're giving light to the greatness that we are in ourselves. And so, I think firmly that the sciences are showing how important it is to really focus on that side of ourselves and really illuminate those things and grow in that direction. Science is here, and now, we've got to help other people see the wisdom of what a lot of us researchers already know. –Valerie

> Our methodology is to teach, train, and equip. We teach people about coaching from a Biblical perspective, from an ICF core competency in the ICF code of ethics. We train them with goal-setting models, assessments, and different tools that they can use. Afterward, we send them a zip file that is chock full of coaching tools and resources. I call it 'business in a box.' –Peter

I have a background in pedagogy or andragogy. I'm constantly thinking it's far more important how we learn than what the content is. When people leave the program, I want them to think that was the best learning experience I've ever had. I didn't know learning could be like that. And I also want them to know this stuff forever. Like, 'this profoundly changed my emotions and relationships. It taught me to think for myself and know my own capacity.' I would also want them to know it's vital to know how we go about training strengths. The real learning is memorizing the vocabulary of the VIA or Gallup Strengths if you are going to use them. And then to build the skill of how to debrief the assessment.

 –Lawrence

I wish more people knew why they should use strengths in coaching. The strengths-based approach and Gallup's language, in particular, are designed to be highlighted in a positive way. I like the positivity aspect of it. One thing I do the most in my coach training is help coaches understand how their strengths intersect. There is a bit of analysis that is required to use it to its full potential.

–Meryl

I feel like our job as coaches is to protect this field. And the best way that we can protect it is to trust it immensely, which means when somebody is struggling when we think that we have the answer, what they really need as a coach are better skills. They need to ask better questions and trust the process. This isn't about them, this is about the journey that this person needs to go on and how you

adhere to and protect them. It is about your ability as a coach to build the skills at the highest level to work with anybody in any situation. The other thing I say is 'we claim you for life. This is your place to always come home to; this is a place of belonging.' –Tarina

The thing we hear back the most is that we really felt cared about, and you wanted us to be successful. And that is true. We genuinely fall in love with every person. We stay in touch with them. They understand social media. We take all the scaries out of a website and creating an LLC and how you manage payments. We talk about everything so that when they leave, there's no stone that hasn't been overturned, no information they've not been given. We really do want great, competent Christian coaches out there because we feel they've got something to offer that every coach may not. It is extremely in-depth but very practical. We always like to take things that are complex and simplify them. –Adeline

Looking at a person more deeply than just coaching the problem they bring to you is important, as well as being able to understand that through adult learning principles, through education, through the lens of psychology. And what is it to be at my best? What is it that drives me forward? It might be emotional intelligence or lack thereof; it might be a need or a value that's being denied. I laugh with some of my dearest friends who are MBA coaches. I'll say, 'You should be a psychologist. You know all of this; you just don't know you are doing it. You don't know what to call it.' And I'll call out a random theory and be like, 'Did

you know you just did that?' And they will say, 'I just know it works.' Levels of understanding these things in coaching differ. I think it would be good for the public and for coaches to truly understand the differences and distinctions in coaching at different levels –Xavier

Wow. This question made me smile. I just had a big shift in body language. That was a very visceral moment. I remembered someone I was coaching. He kept talking to a peer about coaching, and the peer finally asked him what he does exactly? And this guy says, 'You know, I honestly don't really know. All I know is that it works. –Gordan

Topic: Barriers in Training Coaches

In Interview Q8, participants were asked if there were barriers they bumped up against their training. The theme of *Deep Pride and Belief in Training Methods* shine through in their responses. Two themes, *There is Skepticism About Strengths Versus Weaknesses* and *Initial Resistance Can Be a Barrier,* are explained.

Theme 1: There is Skepticism About Strengths Versus Weaknesses. The coach trainers explain that it is a barrier to coaching when people believe it is better to improve upon their weaknesses rather than build on their strengths.

A very weakness focus mindset. We are used to our entire lives focusing on what's broken, fixing what's broken. It's very intuitive for us to go in that direction. And it's not always the wrong approach, but the strength-based development approach is very different. And it's really a shift in focus to what's

Stuckness will eventually happen. It's most frustrating when it happens early on. It indicates that there's no openness and that it could be the client is just not ready. They think they are, but they're not. I guess it's when they're not open, whether they know they're not open or not. It's stuckness from ego protection.

–Gordan

Topic: Personal and Professional Impacts of Coach Training

In Interview Q9, participants were asked to talk about the impact coach training has had upon them personally and professionally. The two themes, *Training Others, Strengthens My Best Self,* and *Training Others is a Source of Fulfillment,* reveal the positive impacts they experience.

Theme 1: Training Others Strengthens My Best Self. The discussions below give insight into the effect of reciprocity in coach training. It is not only the trainee whose best self is affected positively.

It reinforces our own virtues, values, ethics, strengths keeps them at the forefront of our minds. And it reminds us that we have to live by what we teach outside of the program. You can't teach it and not be living it. So, there's much greater accountability as an instructor. –Adeline

"It is what makes me want to get up in the morning. I think it's important work. And I love it." –Tarina

It is my bread and butter, so definitely, it has affected my approach and the training. I think to me; it's just sort of an efficient conversation. My number one [Gallup] strength is Strategic, and I am always thinking about what is the most efficient way to get from point A to point B. And to me, this common language allows for at least one version of that level of efficiency. –Meryl

The ethics and the best practices that I have found in coaching are around serving what's best for my clients. That's just who I am, and I don't know that anyone trained me to be that way or taught me to be that way. It's just like if I'm really in service of another human being, these are the things that I need to do in order to do that. It's just foundationally what I believe in my spiritual practice and in who I am as a person. –Valerie

Really understanding the mechanisms of the clockwork of strengths–has made me more open to other people, more accepting of their particular work style of not even just work style, but just relational style or way of being. And I think that's been helpful to me personally and as a coach. It just makes me both a better coach and trainer. –Lawrence

It definitely has helped tremendously. Once I really began to learn positive psychology and the distinctions of coaching psychology, I think it absolutely helped me in a lot of ways to understand myself and my own evolution into my 50s, into the death of my parents, into things of that nature, understanding we

change and evolve. I think looking at it through the strengths and values and needs–even have been very positive in my life and allowing those transitions. Embracing them without fighting them a little bit. –Xavier

The first time I sat in a class on this, I thought, oh my gosh, is this what I've been doing too? Oh, my goodness. I saw I needed to stop doing that. Or the ability to catch yourself in the moment. It shows what I've learned for myself and how I can help someone apply this thing I've learned about myself. –Gordan

Theme 2: Training is a source of Fulfillment. Fulfillment is an outcome of well-being. The participants share how they are fulfilled in the process of assisting others in their journey toward well-being.

The impact to us is just the change we see in the coaches the graduates from the program. You see them step up a little bit and realize, okay, there's a real responsibility I have here to make sure that my conduct lines up with how I've been taught. And that's just really exciting because that means we're impacting people's lives for the Kingdom, but also for the better. That's very fulfilling. –Peter

"Helping the coaches realize the fun comes about when none of you is involved with the conversation. Then the entire focus is on the client and supporting them. That's where the fulfillment comes in." –Adeline

Topic: Is Coaching Leadership?

In Interview Q10, participants provided their view of coaching as a leadership role. The coach trainers talked about the role coaches have as leaders today. The overwhelming theme of *To Coach is To Lead* was declared.

Theme 1: To Coach is To Lead. Seven of the eight participants vigorously agreed *To Coach is To Lead.* The eighth participant points out that how leadership is defined makes a difference in his response.

> Companies are realizing now that the old command and control style of management isn't flying anymore. But if they want real productivity, increased results, the bottom line affected, then they need coach managers. They feel they are competent leaders themselves. –Peter

> Absolutely. Within our home church, we are senior leadership, and before we got into coaching, it was always that top-down, bottom-up type of models and giving advice and direction and counsel and all of those kinds of things. So, we have completely switched over to using the coaching model of asking questions. And, using those questions to help those who are underneath our direct authority and those who are part of the leadership team to figure out their own solutions and things that they need to do so that they feel empowered so then they feel more a part of the team and not just being a follower. –Adeline

> "The only true definition of leadership is that you have followers. If I'm coaching someone and they're not following me, then I'm not leading them." –Gordan

Absolutely, yes. I do a lot of work with leaders on how I can help leaders in businesses be better coaches. I find some of the most effective leaders are better coaches and when we talk about coaching, and in the vein of leadership, it's much more about, can you ask more than you tell? Can you listen more than you speak? Can you really explore without judging what someone's experience is? Can you empower them to come up with an answer as opposed to you driving a solution? So absolutely, I think coaching is a critical skill in leadership. I think it's vastly, grossly under-taught in leadership development programs. And so, it's been pretty transformative to watch people come into their own as a coach, so to speak, not a professional coach, but a leader coach. –Meryl

Leadership, for me, is owning your capacity to inspire others. I think you can be a leader in every aspect of your life, and it does not mean that you're managing people. I do believe I'm a leader. Not only because I get to lead teams and help lead my client towards their best self. But I do see that I own my capacity for inspiration, and I take that very seriously. I love transformational work. If I'm able to inspire somebody at that moment, then I'm going to; I do see myself as a leader for sure. –Valerie

I totally view it as a form of leadership. If we showed up as coaches in leadership roles, we would be better at developing individuals because we won't come from the assumptions that I already know what you need. Also, we'd be better listeners because I wouldn't half-listen to what you said. I would listen to understand. And

then I would come from a place of curiosity about what is important about you. I understand that we are in a space where if you say something or need something, I'm not going to hesitate to contribute if I believe that I can. And leaders have to create those environments for that to happen. And the best skill set to do such a thing is coaching. –Tarina

In coaching, there is expertise. I am an expert in the process of coaching. I have expertise in leadership. I have expertise in human behaviors. It's who I am in the world. So I do think that coaches are leaders. We're looked to as subject matter experts, as process experts. We teach all the time. There is a huge demand, and all the literature says it, command and control are out, laissez-faire, out. It is to coach, collaborate, and engage, or you're out. And we've actually seen a number of our client companies who have dismissed terminated leaders who could not embrace that imagery of coaching. –Xavier

I'm comfortable arguing both sides because it's a definitional game. Fundamentally, leadership isn't the best metaphor for the coach-client relationship. But if you look at leadership competencies, it's about motivating people, and certainly, coaches do that. A lot of what coaches do is help people create a clear vision and execute; yes, in that respect, and no, the nature of our relationship is also fundamentally different from that of leadership. –Lawrence

Topic: Learning Theories and Practices

In Interview Q11, participants were asked to name learning theories they use in helping coaches understand how to shepherd clients to their best potential. They were

explicitly asked about their use of the learning theories in the framework of this study. (Virtue theory, exemplarist theory, transformational learning, broaden and build, and self-determination theory.)

Theme 1: Tools/Methods of the Trade Are Selected by the Trainer.

Table 6

Use of Learning Theories or Practices Listed by Trainer

Theory or Practice (T/P) Listed by Participants as One They Use (n=8)	Number of Participants Using T/P	Theory or Practice (T/P) Listed by Participants as One They Use (n=8)	Number of Participants Using T/P
Behavioral change, change theory	1	Mentoring and supervision frameworks	1
Belief Systems	2	Metacognitive reflection	1
The Bible	2	Neuroscience of new habits	1
Broaden and Build	4	Pedagogic and andragogy techniques	1
Character Strengths (VIA and others)	4	PERMA + 4	1
Conflict Transformation (not resolution or management)	2	Positive Psychology research, principals	5
Consulting with other educators	3	Self-determination Theory	8
Emotion	3	Simon Sinek's Golden Circle	1
Energy work	1	Study habits and research design habits	1
Flipped classroom	1	Theories of psychology and educational psychology	3
Gallup Strengths	1	Transformational learning	8
Heuristics	1	Well-being	2
Learning theory (how we learn)	2		
Influenced By: Dewey and Montessori, Steiner, John Hattie-what make for effective education.	1	Influenced By: Tim Scudder's, ABCD model, William Revelle, and Kurt Lewin's field theory Learning anticipation guides.	1

Note: It is possible that some participants use theories or practices listed by others in

Table 6, but they did not name them at the time they were interviewed. This may

significantly change the results in Table 6.

Topic: Passion and Concerns

Interview Q12 was the final question. Participants were asked if there were anything else they would like me to know or understand about their experience. Most of the participants talked about their *Passion for Their Work* as coach trainers. Two shared *Concerns About the Field of Coaching.*

Theme 1: Passion for Their Work. When talking about their work, the passion they feel for it comes through in enthusiasm in the form of enjoyment, continual improvement, and knowing they are meeting needs.

I am a huge fan of coaching. When I started coaching 23 years ago, in 1999, no one knew what it was. It's been really interesting to have that bird's eye perspective over time. I see ICF has been wonderful. I think there are still opportunities to grow and evolve as we emerge into this full-fledged profession. So I am excited about research like yours or mine. I think we're on the right track. –Xavier

"I love the word virtue because it's not overused. Some of these words are so overused that everybody assumes they understand them. And then there's no meaning to that." –Tarina

I love the passion of coaching. Bodies like the ICF are good, they exist, and they are clawing their way to improve all the time. I like that the British Psychological Society just approved a new division in coaching psychology. I think coaching psychology is an area of particular promise because it's so heavily ensconced in academic rigor. –Lawrence

It is a privilege to develop other coaches. It's probably one of our favorite things to do, and one of the reasons is how efficient coaching is. Coming from the counseling and the ministry background and the length of time it can take to see change or to bring understanding, coaching is just like a laser. It's so efficient. Seeing the transformation in their personal belief systems, in their comfort, their self-confidence enables them to move on. And then from there, as we follow through with individuals that caught the continual transformation we're seeing as they grow a Business and their confidence increases, their level of faith increases in what God has called them to do. So, it's that ripple effect that we see. –Adeline

One of the things I think is really important with training coaches is giving them some tools to be able to leverage some of these conversations, especially when you're getting into using the strengths and virtues; it can be a bit abstract or esoteric. I like to provide a lot of tools for them to be able to say, okay, even if I don't fully get it yet, here's a little script, a coaching guide, or a resource guide that I can utilize to support me while I'm still practicing, still learning. –Meryl

One hundred percent of the time, coaches who come to our training have not been coaching but mentoring, giving advice, counseling. People all think they're coaches. And then they come through the program, and they go, okay, I've been doing this all wrong. To see this change is fulfilling. –Peter

Theme 2: Concerns About the Field of Coaching. The concerns on the mind of these participants have to do with upholding the integrity of the profession of coaching.

I have a concern about coach training; it's so variable. I want people to be transparent about stuff. If I'm a pastor and I do faith-based coaching, awesome, great! I do empirically-based coaching; awesome, great! But I think there is a whole range in the middle that includes a lot of people that would hang out a shingle as being aligned with neuroscience, for example, and lack what I would think of as freshmen university levels of knowledge about neuroscience. This points to a lot of lack of sophistication. –Lawrence

You know you're educating people to be leaders. But if you don't have an ethical standard to begin with, then what do you base your leadership on? What's ethical to you might not be ethical to me, but when you set a standard, okay, you're going to educate leadership based on scriptural principles, you've set a plumb line. When you don't have a foundation, a plumb line, to govern your life by that is outside of yourself, then everything is dependent upon you, and you change according to circumstance, situations, emotions, everything else. –Peter

Table 7

Summary Table of Textural Themes in Topics

Topics (Interview Questions 2-12)	Textural Themes Within each Topic
The Inclusion of Virtues, etc., as Training Tools	● Coach Training Begins with Values ● The Process of Coach Training is About Conversations and Language ● The Process of Coaching Includes the Use of Tools/Methods
Holding Clients To a Standard	● Ethical Considerations in Training
Identifying Most Frequently Used Tools/Methods & Conditions or Circumstances Guiding Tools/Method Inclusion	● Loyalty To My Tools/Methods ● Help Trainees Understand What They Live By ● Ethical Standards Set Expectations
Method Alignment of Coaches' Best Self	● Goal Setting Tools/Technology Help Lead the Way ● Coach Training is a Transformative Process
Difference Between Using Your Tools/Method and Not Using Them	● The Quality of Work Suffers
Benefits of Selected Tools/Methods	● Deep Pride and Belief in the Training Tools/Methods
Barriers In Training Coaches	● There is Skepticism About Strengths Versus Weaknesses ● Initial Resistance Can Be a Barrier
Personal and Professional Impacts of Coach Training	● Training Others Strengthens My Best Self ● Training Others is a Source of Fulfillment
Is Coaching Leadership?	● To Coach is To Lead
Learning Theories and Practices	● Tools/Methods of the Trade are Selected by the Trainer
Passion and Concerns	● Passion For Their Work ● Concerns About the Field of Coaching

Composite Textural Description

The data in this section moves into the composite textural descriptions. These descriptions summarize the themes identified in the participants' experience as what is most prominent and common between them.

Coach Training Begins with Values. Identifying core values stands out as foundational among the methods these trainers use in their work to help new coaches get started. A coach must learn to recognize and name their values to pass along this learning to clients. Coaches learn to understand how their values motivate them, trigger them, and can help or hinder them in reaching one's best potential. Additionally, values can conflict within an individual and others' values. A coach must realize what they value is not more significant than their client's choice of values. Coaches must first know themselves before they can coach anyone else. This knowledge will alleviate the potential for the coach to inadvertently place their values, epistemologies, biases, and beliefs on the client.

Two elements are indivisible to *The Process of Coaching is about Conversations* and *Includes the Use of Tools.* "Conversational technology means it is equipping people with better communication skills." Language, articulation, vocabulary, communication, discussion, asking questions, getting clarity, and terminology are all descriptors used to discuss this framework. The *Tools of the Trade are selected by the trainer.* These include assessments, games, activations, demonstrations, modeling, and techniques that help coaches learn. Trainees grow to identify strengths, patterns, values, and perspectives to do the same with their clients.

When it comes to *Ethical Considerations,* coach trainers appreciate the ICF code of ethics and view these as guiding principles that create a standard for the coaching profession. Using ethics/virtue ethics as a teaching tool or method of training coaches to

hold clients to a standard of ethics in their own lives as a way of reaching their best potential is not done. In two cases, Christian values are taught as a way of following guiding principles modeled by the life of Jesus Christ. In one other, training virtue ethics is incorporated in an advanced class focused on well-being. Trainers have a strong ethic around holding the client's agenda inviolable. They are concerned that a standard of ethics they have might not align with the client's ethical views or purpose in coming to coach. Therefore, they are unwilling to risk a possible infringement in the relationship agreement.

A powerful *Loyalty* to the participants' training methods is attributed to their years of experience using these proven methods. When it comes to how these methods align with the development of a coach's virtuous character or best self, they also include *Christian Values Lead to Living Virtuously, Help Trainees Understand What They Live By*, *Ethical Standards Set Expectations,* and *Decisions Are Research-Based. Goal Setting Tools and Technologies Help Lead the Way* is another theme and is part of the framework critical to this work.

Coach Training is a Transformative Process. From the beginning and extending well beyond their training, the evolution in the learning and growth is visible, "visceral," tangible, palpable. "When people listen better, they become more open, authentic, and present. These are some of the hallmark features of the good coach." Witnessing transformation is not only a goal of coach trainers, but the process also defines what they do and why they do it. There is *Deep Pride and Belief In the Training Methods* used in

their programs. These methods equip coaches with the best learning experience possible, even though each training program differs. "In general, coaches take a kind of capacity building and resource-rich approach." However, *The Quality of the Work Suffers* when they are not using what they know and are committed to teaching. "These are all intrinsic to who we are and to our program. We've never coached outside of integrating these realms."

Two barriers are experienced in coach training. The theme *There is Skepticism about Strengths Versus Weakness* describes the common thinking that it is better to work on strengthening weaknesses than to increase and understand one's strengths. The other theme, *Initial Resistance Can Be a Barrier* stems from not fully trusting the process.

The most significant impact trainers experience in their own personal and professional learning is found in the themes *Training Others Strengthens My Best Self,* and *Training Others Is a Source of Fulfillment.* Although this work focuses on the trainee, the coach/trainer benefits from the giving/receiving nature that occurs in the synergy of this relationship. It is rewarding for the trainer to recognize that trainees are completing the lessons prepared to coach with skills at the highest level. *To Coach is to Lead.* Coaching is a form of leadership that brings out the best in the leader and the follower. "Through the lens of leadership competencies, motivating people and helping people create a clear vision describes leadership." At the same time, there is a healthy respect for upholding the client's agenda without "leading" the client toward the coach's perspective. A wide array of *Learning Theories*, influential people, and practices are used

to support a trainer's personal learning, growth, and development and provide course content.

In every respect, trainers proclaim *Passion for Their Work* and devotion to their chosen profession. As coaches, they share a common vigor for their work and are committed to doing their best. *Concerns About the Field of Coaching* for coach training follow the passion expressed for this work. If it were not for their affinity between who they are and what they do, the concerns would not exist.

Structural Descriptions

The next step in the process of data analysis is Imaginative Variation. It involves "moving away from the manifest facts and toward meanings and essences. Imaginative structural descriptions are written for each participant and access the underlying factions that account for what each has experienced" (Conklin, 2007, p. 21).

Her work as a Christian counselor and teacher led Adeline to coaching. Her strong will to lead others toward God's plan for them caused her to seek a more efficient way of reaching people than counseling and mentoring had done. Coaching changed her life and that of those who work with her significantly. Adeline is gifted with the ability to lovingly challenge and inspire others through her depth of coaching knowledge and strong faith in God's plan. Her adherence to the ICF Code of ethics speaks to her highest regard for integrity in all she does. Adeline's background in the business world makes her work in designing coaching programs seem easy, like receiving a gift. Seeing the personal transformation in her trainees fuels her passion for building the Kingdom through the good work of coaching.

Relationships underscore the nature of who Gordan is and what motivates him in life. Relationships are not just important between people but also between concepts and how things are connected. Finding and making the connection is what drives Gordan to be his best. From an early age, he was interested in understanding the Myers-Briggs type indicator and how it affects his sense of self. That ability to understand the connections led to a desire to pass along the learning. Gordan is a natural teacher who found himself coaching as a result of working relationships with those who sought him out. For Gordan, finding and working with the best tool to uncover motives that drive behavior provides an entire workshop to help build strong relationships.

Lawrence was born with a silver psychology spoon in his mouth. I picture him as a child, sitting under the dining table while the world of positive psychology was being built above him. His immersion into all things psychological grew him into the person he is today. His passion for learning theory, uncovering the edges of the unknown, and pulling slowly, patiently, into deeper layers, compels him forward in his work as a well-being researcher and coach trainer. Knowing all he does about the field makes him both unruffled at some questions others may wring their hands over, as well as feeling concerned for the field of coach training. His vision into the future may be sharper than most, while his sense of humor tampers the edge.

Meryl is in the right career. She is the epitome of strength. Her confidence as she speaks about her work is to the point and accurate. This manner of being has been honed over the twenty years she has been studying and working with Clifton Strengths. Being a coach trainer gives her the outlet to use her strengths in the best way possible. Using this tool to its full potential is an expertise that helps others achieve the same.   Meryl has been speaking the language of strengths forever. This experience gives her an advantage in hearing where others are not understanding and seeing the direction to take the conversation next. Her work fits her like custom-made shoes that will keep her moving forward while guiding others along the way.

Peter's career has been spent with one foot firmly in the secular work world and the other in church leadership. Being able to relate to people from where they are coming from attracts Christians/believers to his work as a coach and trainer and those who pick up on his ability to empathize and comfortably open people to sharing at a deep level. Peter's mission in life is to help people reach their potential. His strong faith is the "plumb line" that sets the standard for how to be his best. His theology connects well with the excellence expected in the ICF code of ethics to equip others to become Biblically based and ICF proficient life coaches.

Tarina is a believer. She is faithful to the method of coach training she has been raised to understand and teach. Her love for this work is not unlike that of a mother. She feels strongly protective of her people and of the field of coaching in general. If one of her flock gets lost along the way of learning to coach, that is not the time to jump in with the answers. This is when she is at her best, when she can help that coach learn better

skills, ask better questions and get out of the way of their learning. Her passion is in helping coaches build skills at the highest level to work with anybody in any situation. She loves her people and lets them know they have found a forever home within her company.

It would be nourishment if one word were to sum up what drives Valerie. As a nutritionist, she has expertise in whole-body health. Couple that with coaching stressed-out leaders to return to a place of vitality, and the recipe is underway. Valerie holds her clients in high regard and in a position of high expectations for finding fulfillment through their commitment to the process. She plans to be on the path with her clients for the long haul. Like a marathon runner or perhaps the Ever-Ready Battery Bunny, Valerie doesn't quit. She believes the more you give, the more you receive. It is in her nature to nurture.

Xavier and the field of coaching grew up together. Before most people knew what coaching was, Xavier moved from a background in clinical psychology into the profession in which he proudly trains other coaches. He is an academic at heart. Continually seeking new research, advice from peers in the field, and keeping up with the literature, his goal is to design the best training possible. Xavier credits training coaches for making him a better coach today. He has witnessed the evolution coaches go through in learning about themselves. For him, it has also been transformational. Looking into the future, Xavier sees more room for growth in the industry and is excited about the research that will advance the profession.

Composite Structural Description

Following the structural descriptions above, a composite structural description is written to blend the structural themes of each participant into one statement that is common to all of them. "It endeavors to apprehend those elements which are foundational to the experience" (Conklin, 2007, p. 24).

The participants in this study are instructional architects who design transformative learning and guidance in the process of comprehension. Their work is built upon a foundation of personal values lived out between them. These are challenge, love, inspiration, faithfulness, integrity, humor, connection, belonging, learning, and depth of understanding. This position requires using many tools, technologies, and learning theories for the architects to provide continuous program improvement and development. They have expertise in the methods each has chosen to hone. Their mission is to help others reach their best potential, to find fulfillment, build better coaching skills, and pass along the learning.

Self-development is also crucial and is a natural part of who the architects are in how they work. They know they need to have keen awareness of their own strengths, character traits, values, and perspectives to develop others. Clifton's Strengths in each of the four domains—strategic thinking, relationship building, influencing, and executing—show up in them. The top ten strengths between them include strategic, learner, intellection, positivity, developer, connectedness, activator, maximizer, belief, and achiever. VIA Character Strength's six types of strengths—wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence—are clearly visible in who these architects are as

well. The top ten traits that shine through the brightest include fairness, honesty, humor, kindness, leadership, perspective, perseverance, humanity, social Intelligence, and judgment. The combination of their strengths, education, business acumen, and sincere interest in people's development is a recipe for success.

This work has a high level of self-satisfaction that often feels more like receiving than giving of themselves. Those familiar with the meaning of eudaimonia would call this sense of satisfaction a form of flourishing. Even without knowing the term, the trainers are happy and living life well, which involves living a life in accordance with virtue (Eudaimonia, 2017).

Synthesis—Unveiling the Essence

The final step in delineating the data is synthesis. This step is when the descriptions of "how" and "what" are brought together in a blended articulation of the "essence" of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994, Conklin, 2007). Creating this final statement results from drawing the composite textural and structural themes together into one illustration.

Training coaches is a reflective practice, like the image a mirror provides when standing in front of it. The trainer is the coach in the mirror. The coach is the individual who has chosen this profession. There is no division between who this person is in the world and who they are on the job. As Adeline stated, "Coach training reinforces our own virtues, values, ethics, strengths. We are reminded that we must live by what we teach. You cannot teach it and not be living it." Victoria agrees completely. "I would say that's who I am in my personal life; that is who I am as a coach."

When training coaches, the starting point is for the coach to learn who they are, what motivates them, what triggers them to react negatively at times, and what feels most satisfying. To get at this understanding, training sessions begin with an in-depth look into the mirror to discover their values, those things that matter most to them. The trainers know first-hand the critical nature of learning this practice of beginning with values for themselves so it can confidently be passed along in coaching with the client.

Values noticeable among the trainers include love, inspiration, faithfulness, integrity, humor, connection, belonging, learning, depth of understanding, and challenge. Training a coach to clarify their values, perspectives and beliefs will reduce the potential for confusing themselves with who the client is and what they believe, perceive, and value. A golden rule in coaching is to allow the client their own reflection in the mirror. To not let oneself overshadow the client's reality.

Many tools, methods, techniques, technologies, frameworks, and learning theories are incorporated into training programs. These include assessments, especially strengths/talents, conversations, demonstrations, and research. Lawrence commented:

> Conversational technology means it is equipping people with better communication skills. When people listen better, when they're more open and more authentic, when they're more present, some of the hallmark features of the good coach, it has a downstream effect upon better relationships—more trust, more open-mindedness, better conflict resolution, and the things that ultimately virtues are for. I mean, that is why humans have virtue.

Tools of the trade are selected by the trainer. Not everyone uses the same methods or learning theories in their training. The tools/methods are dependent on the kind of coach training being done. Those under the umbrella of positive psychology, for example, focus on research, academics, and coaching psychology. Most trainers use a framework that helps identify strengths, such as Clifton Strengths or the VIA Character Strengths assessments. All of them have established ways of getting "under the hood" of who a person is through values identifiers of assorted kinds. Trainers are loyal and faithful to their methods. They take deep pride and believe fully in the methods they employ. Without the tools they have chosen, they feel the quality of their work suffers. Meryl said:

> It is very rare that I work without the assessment [Clifton Strengths], but every now and then, when I do, the patterns they express are so clear to me in terms of they must have this strength or that strength. It is very obvious as a trained professional in this space, and so it makes me feel like I am flying blind when I don't use it.

Coaching is tool-centric. Coach training without a toolbox might be like being a roofer without a ladder. In training, the tools facilitate building better skills, guiding others, following standards of ethics, setting expectations, continual improvement, being business savvy, being mission-driven, passing along the learning, teaching the language/vocabulary, nurturing, and forestalling or breaking down barriers.

The methods and frameworks used in training coaches are unique to coaching. Peter pointed out that those who think they have been coaching before coming to training for certification have not been coaching at all:

> One hundred percent of the time, coaches who come to our training have not been coaching but mentoring, giving advice, and counseling. People all think they're coaches. And then they come through the program, and they go, 'okay, I've been doing this all wrong.'

The process of training and coaching "is transformative," according to Xavier,

> By looking at ourselves through these lenses, it's different. No one really has invited most of us to do that before. Then you begin to apply and learn. You work with other people and peer coaching and buddy coaching and things of that nature. You do evolve.

Transformation is not only a goal the trainer aims for with the coaches. Transformation defines what a coach does and why they do it. "It has been pretty transformational to watch people come into their own as a coach," Meryl noted. Adeline said, "You see the graduates of the program step up a little bit. That is really exciting because it means we are impacting people's lives for the Kingdom, but also for the better." Transformation fuels passion. It is a motivational driver and brings out the best potential [in coaches and the trainer].

Strengthening the best self applies to both trainer and coach. Gordan said, "It is showing what I've learned for me and how I can help someone apply this thing I've learned about myself." The benefit to the trainer is in the give and take of the

relationship. Valerie noted, "I'm just somebody who believes the more you give, the more you receive." Fulfillment in this work comes through in the sense of self-satisfaction, of a happiness called eudaimonia, which means a form of flourishing, to be living life well, which is in accordance with virtue (Eudaimonia, 2017). Lawrence pointed out:

> Knowing strengths and really understanding the mechanism has made me more open to people and more accepting of their particular work style, relational style, or way of being. I think it has been helpful to me personally and as a coach.

It can be argued that coaches are leaders, depending on the definition of a leader. There is a healthy respect for upholding a client's agenda without "leading" the client toward the coach's perspective or plan. That said, leaders must be able to listen more than speak, ask more than tell. Meryl sees coaching as a critical skill in leadership:

"I think it is vastly, grossly, under-taught in leadership development programs." Valerie views leadership as "owning your capacity to inspire others." Tarina adds that coming from a place of curiosity is needed so that people will not hesitate to speak up when they need something. "Leaders have to create those environments for that to happen, and the best skill set to do such a thing is coaching." Xavier pointed out that there is expertise in the process of coaching. "I have expertise in leadership and in human behaviors. It's who I am in the world, so I do think coaches are leaders."

Coach trainers are devoted to the profession and their trainees. They have the vigor for the work and a conviction in doing their best for the sake of the relationships as well as their reflected selves. They profess a love for what they do. Tarina proclaimed, "It

impacts me every day. It is what makes me want to get up in the morning. I think it is important work, and I love it." Adeline told me, "What an incredible opportunity and privilege to develop other coaches. It is probably one of our favorite things to do."

When concerns about coach training are mentioned, they are born out of their care and protection of the profession that is their life and livelihood. This work fits them like the skin worn by the image in the mirror.

Chapter V

Discussion

This final chapter describes how the findings apply and connect to each of the previous chapters. The stated problem and purpose of the study are followed by an overall analysis of the theoretical framework and connections to the literature review. This summary of the findings leads to implications and recommendations for further research. Limitations of the study are followed by a conclusion.

As asserted in the problem statement, coaches' training and certification programs hold coaches to high standards of ethical conduct in their practice (Iordanou et al., 2016; Whitworth et al., 1998; Williams & Anderson, 2005). It is not known if coach training organizations utilize virtue ethics as a tool in teaching coaches to use it in their own practice. Is there a gap between the ethical praxis of a coach and how they are trained to hold their clients accountable for living into their virtues? Is there a conflation of the terms values and virtues in coaching? Research on this topic has not yet been conducted with certified coach trainers from various training backgrounds.

Therefore, this study aimed to gain knowledge of how coaches are trained to use virtues, virtue ethics/ethics in general, character, strengths, and values as a tool, method, technique, or exercise with their clients who strive to be their best. Purposeful sampling of certified members of the International Coaching Federation (ICF), training for five years or more, resulted in finding eight trainers (see Table 1, Coach Trainer Profiles). The data collection and analysis process followed Moustakas' (1994) description of transcendental phenomenology as a qualitative methodology.

The findings in Chapter 4 were collected in interviews and through the process of reduction and horizontalizing. They were clustered into textural and structural themes. The compilation of these themes revealed the essence of the coach training experience.

Theoretical Implications

The data in this section reviews the implications of the theoretical framework in this study. These include virtue ethics, the exemplarist virtue theory, the broaden and build (positive emotions) theory, transformative learning theory, and self-determination theory.

Coaching has theoretical roots in psychology—influenced by Jung, Adler, and Maslow (Williams & Anderson, 2005)—in education, management, social science, and philosophy. The theoretical framework supporting this study integrates theoretical frames that show their complementary relationship to virtuous living.

Virtue Ethics

Participant responses show the connection between how virtues and ethics are viewed in their coach training. Two participants said they set an ethical standard that demonstrates how to align with the ICF Code of Ethics using integrity, character, and values. The others said they do not explicitly talk about how to help the client identify their ethical awareness, thereby influencing they're being their best self. Lawrence explained his view, "We don't do what you are talking about [teaching virtue ethics] until our advanced course, which is optional and by invitation. It's a pretty advanced issue."

The results of this study indicate that the participants in this study do not teach virtue ethics as a learning theory or subject matter. As commented by two of the trainers

using positive psychology as the foundation of their training, "Virtue ethics are something I haven't spent much time with learning, teaching, etc." Another added, "By and large, psychologists have shied away from taking this type of virtue [ethics] lens because it does seem so fully the domain of philosophy or religion. Positive psychology is an interesting exception to that."

While virtue ethics emphasizes the virtues or moral character (Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2018) and is talked about in Christian-based courses, as in modeling the life of Christ as a virtuous or moral person, nothing explicit is taught about virtue ethics by this group of trainers. The two trainers who work in Christian-based programs said the greatest time spent is on the ethical guidelines from a Biblical perspective and an ICF core competency in the ICF Code of Ethics.

Here we see a divide in how virtues may be viewed as being strictly Christian, thereby indicating a reluctance by some participants to teach a subject perceived to be tied to religious or personal beliefs.

Virtue ethics is about how a person wants to live (Grant, Arjoon, & McGhee, 2017). Virtue ethics is one of the three forms of normative ethics. Deontology and utilitarianism do not include discussions of character, wisdom, happiness, and emotions that question what kind of person we should be/become. Instead, deontology and utilitarianism focus on actions and what we should do (Hursthouse, 1999, Haidt & Joseph, 2008).

The ICF Code of Ethics is an example of principles that focus on what a coach should do. It is essential to distinguish that what is in question in this study is the experience of using *virtue ethics* as a framework or learning theory, not of ethical principles, also referred to as coaching ethics.

Krigbaum (2006) called ethics and competence "symbiotic twins" (pp 79, 80). One cannot exist without the other. A coach promises the profession and the client to be ethical in their practice as a coach.

In this study, the understanding, practice, and promises of coaching ethics and competence, as defined by Krigbaum (2006), stood out in each participant's narrative of their experience. Their coaching mastery became evident in the themes that exemplify the devotion, vigor, conviction, concerns, and passion for being their best while training others how to do and *be* the same.

Coaching focuses on *being,* as in who am I being at my best. This focus connects to identity studies that are based on virtue ethics through philosophical theories (Bock et al., 2021).

However, aspects of theoretical concepts like those found in identity studies and virtue ethics are used in coaching without realizing the origins of the concepts or the scientific theory behind them. Xavier pointed out:

> I laugh with some of my dearest friends who are MBA coaches. I'll say, 'You
>
> should be a psychologist. You know all of this; you just don't know you are doing
>
> it. I'll call out a random theory and say, 'Did you know you just did that?' And
>
> they will say, 'I just know it works.'

The point Xavier makes, that coaches often use assessments, inventories, and practices without realizing they are tied to specific theories, lead to the concern mentioned by a couple of the trainers. Not having a depth of knowledge in the theory results in a legitimate "lack of sophistication" in being able to use it fully. I share this concern and have had this experience myself. When I was in coach training, I learned a method of identifying traits I admired in others as a way of clarifying what is of value to me. It was not until later that I learned this tool had roots in the exemplarist virtue theory. Understanding much more about the theory amplified my ability to design learning that strengthens the outcome for the client and myself. Through teaching, we learn.

Virtue ethics is an area of study missing from coach training or is touched on briefly only in advanced classes. With all the research behind the value of virtues, coaches are in a significant position to bring the understanding of virtue ethics into their practice. This practice will contribute to the advancement of well-being while relieving any misconceived notions that virtues are only for the religious or that being religious is the same as being virtuous.

The Exemplarist Virtue Theory

Although coaches are trained to use various methods, assessments, and tools, none of the participants discussed using the exemplarist virtue theory.

The interest in moral exemplars has been referred to (Kristjansson 2020) as "the hottest ticket in town, with major contributions from within moral philosophy, moral psychology, moral education, and even popular trade books" (p. 350). Through our admiration, we are led to want to imitate that which we admire (Zagzebski, 2000).

The exemplarist virtue theory (Zagzebski, 2010) is based on the emotion of admiration of an exemplar, which leads the person to emulate the virtues and character traits the exemplar displays. Van de Ven et al. (2019) found that those who felt motivated to better themselves were most moved to do so after admiring another's behavior and judging it to be important. Thrash and Elliot (2004) discussed that being *inspired by* often leads to being *inspired to* do or to be.

The absence of use (and, or knowledge?) of this theory indicates the all too common disconnect between scholarly research and "everyday people," as Biglan et al. (2020) discussed. Because coach trainers work with "everyday people," who then coach more "everyday people," they are in the perfect relationship to close the gap between research and methods that help others reach their best potential. As a theory, it is "the hottest ticket in town," but in coach training, it appears to be an unknown quantity. Coincidently, in the case of Christian-based training, virtues are taught as admirable qualities of Christ to follow and emulate. Therefore, the purpose behind the theory is used as a way to help others identify how to be their best.

The Broaden and Build Theory

This study shows that the use and knowledge of positive emotions are evident in every form of training offered by these subjects. Each has a goal in how they use positivity in assisting the trainee in seeing their inner beauty, true talents, the best of who they are. The broaden and build theory regarding positive emotions informs the promotion of flourishing.

In 1998, Martin Seligman launched the idea of positive psychology. Rather than continue to have therapy focus on pathology alone, Seligman (2019) studied the effects of positive psychology to help people thrive and develop toward their potential.

The study of positive emotions was part of the newly launched positive psychology. Fredrickson's (2001) studies showed that positive emotions cause an increase in positive thoughts and ideas about what we'd like to act upon or do at the moment. This *broadening* of our cognition *builds* coping skills against negativity, thereby contributing to our overall well-being. (Fredrickson, 2001, Haidt, 2003, Vianello et al., 2010; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2018).

The participants in this study conclusively use positivity in coach training as a fundamental principle. Positivity is not only a principle and method they use, regardless of their focus (i.e., positive psychology, Christian-based, narrative, strengths, etc.); it is part of who they are. The approach through positivity is needed in our world today. This means that those who seek coaching can be assured that the issues or needs they bring to the coaching relationship will be treated with positivity.

The Transformative Learning Theory

Coaching is a Transformative Process was one of the five themes identified in the essence of this study. In the experiences described by the participants, transformation was evident. Transformative learning is what coaching amounts to.

"Transformational coaching shows people how to transform or stretch their visions, values, and abilities" (Hargrove, 1995, p. 23). Each of us has a worldview based

on our beliefs, values, biases, and assumptions about the world and how we fit in it. This meaning system can be difficult to change because it is how we see ourselves.

A goal in coaching is to bring about a client's self-assessed and desired transformation and growth, which is a form of learning (Whitworth et al., 1998; Bartlett, 2007; Moore, 2013; Pagis, 2016). Several studies (McGonigal, 2005; Taylor, W. E., 1998; Cranton, 1994; Clark, 1993; Mezirow & Associates, 1990; Mezirow, 1991) define transformative learning as an adult education process and product of adult development.

A part of adult development is relationship building. People learn to transform their relationships through open communication and trust that develops in the coaching experience. Maslow (1970) found that basic needs are filled only by and through other human beings and that the need for community is itself a basic need. Creating and maintaining a sense of community within the coach training programs is paramount. This statement has proven true for these trainers who said, [to the trainees] "we claim you for life—this is a place of belonging.'" And "We genuinely fall in love with every person. We stay in touch with them."

The participants in this study consider transformation to be an expected outcome of their training. It is more than a goal. It describes the process of coach training itself. The trainers are an aid in the trainees' learning. Transformation is deeply meaningful as a form of adult development and provides community-building skills through the practice of relationship building.

Self-Determination Theory

The coach trainers in this study named self-determination theory (SDT) as a tool/method of learning. Confirmation is indicated in how self-determination theory is described and verified in their statements.

When it comes to motivation theories, self-determination theory (SDT) is currently the "most widely researched and available" (Curren and Ryan, 2020, p. 297). This theory supports the Basic Psychological Needs Theory (BPNT), which points to three basic human needs for our well-being. These needs are autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2012).

The fundamental nature of coaching meets the basic need for *relatedness*. The other two needs show up as coaching cornerstones. "The client is naturally creative, resourceful, and whole" (Whitworth et al., 1998, p. 3). To be naturally creative and resourceful is to be *competent.* To be whole is to be autonomous or self-determining.

The basic psychological need for *competence* has to do with our ability to master an activity, to feel completely capable of doing our job or meeting a goal. Participants reported that they continually build awareness in each session that helps trainees become who they want to be by reinforcing the best self through conscious decisions. One trainer spoke in support of the science of self-determination in coaching. She pointed out that by illuminating principles, core values, and strengths, trainers help trainees see their competence. In so doing, trainers "help other people see the wisdom of what a lot of us researchers already know."

The subjects in this study view relationship building as foundational to their work. The need for *relatedness* is to feel a sense of belonging, connectedness, and support by important people in a position to provide encouragement and positive reinforcement (Curren and Ryan, 2020).

Autonomy and self-determination are synonymous regarding human ability and striving for "self-regulation and integrity" (Deci and Ryan, 2012). When healthy, people naturally grow toward more autonomy. Valerie acknowledged this regarding her clients, "I haven't had any clients that have made me feel there is a compromise in their integrity."

Whether the participants know of the BPNT, they meet the needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in their work. Curren and Ryan (2020) affirm that we flourish when these needs are met. Which is what coaching is all about. Without realizing these needs, we face detriment in our "growth, integrity, thriving, and fulfillment of potential" (Curren and Ryan, p. 304). Therefore, the SDT works remarkably well as a form of motivation in training coaches and coaching overall.

Implications Related to the Literature

In this next section, the implications of the themes established in the findings are related to the literature review.

Theme 1: Coach Training Begins with Values

The most prominent theme in the findings, Coach Training Begins with Values, has to do with the starting point in coaches' training and reiterates the overwhelming perspective of the participants of the foundational importance of understanding values.

All eight subjects reported that they begin their training by identifying and comprehending values as what is most important to them and therefore act as a guide in what they do and who they are.

Who we are is made up of our identity. It includes our beliefs, cultural norms, ways of seeing the world through our lens of understanding, and what we are for or against. "What answers the question who am I? for us is an understanding of what is of crucial importance to us" (Taylor, C., 1989, p.27).

Values recognition and understanding in coach training is the starting point because it becomes a way to set goals and identify what guides and motivates us. While this is a crucial start, values, in word alone, are meaningless until we act upon them (Solomon, 1999). What is needed afterward are virtues. Virtues are internal values that become actions.

Hasa (2017) describes the difference between values and virtues as follows, "values are *principles or standards of behavior* [emphasis added] that help one to decide what is important in life, whereas virtues are *qualities* that are universally or generally considered to be good and desirable."

Researchers reiterate that values only become virtues when practiced until habitual becoming a trait of the person (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Annas (2015) compares the development of virtues to the development of skills.

While helping clients identify their values is a bedrock tool in coaching (Whitworth et al., 1998), Van Dijk et al. (2012) argue that values are key to aligning virtues. The participants made no mention of aligning values to virtues.

Theme 2: The Process of Coach Training Includes the Use of Tools

Over twenty-five learning theories, practices, and studies were influential in the practices of the participants. Each participant has a unique method of training from the others. The level of loyalty to these ways of training came across as strongly as their strategies in teaching about values. The participants emphasize this in the affirmations of their particular training methods. For example, two of the participants focus on ICF ethics and Christian modeling; two focus specifically on strengths; one uses narrative/story in her approach; three others work under the umbrella of positive psychology, and one focuses on leadership. While their practices have a unique focus from one another, they all use elements of the theoretical framework in this study.

There are a variety of fields and disciplines from which theories, practices, assessments, inventories, and inquiry are tools that are taken and used in coaching to help the client understand themselves more deeply and clearly (Whitworth et al., 1998; Williams & Anderson, 2005). The theories and practices utilized by the participants are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Theories and Practices Utilized by Participants
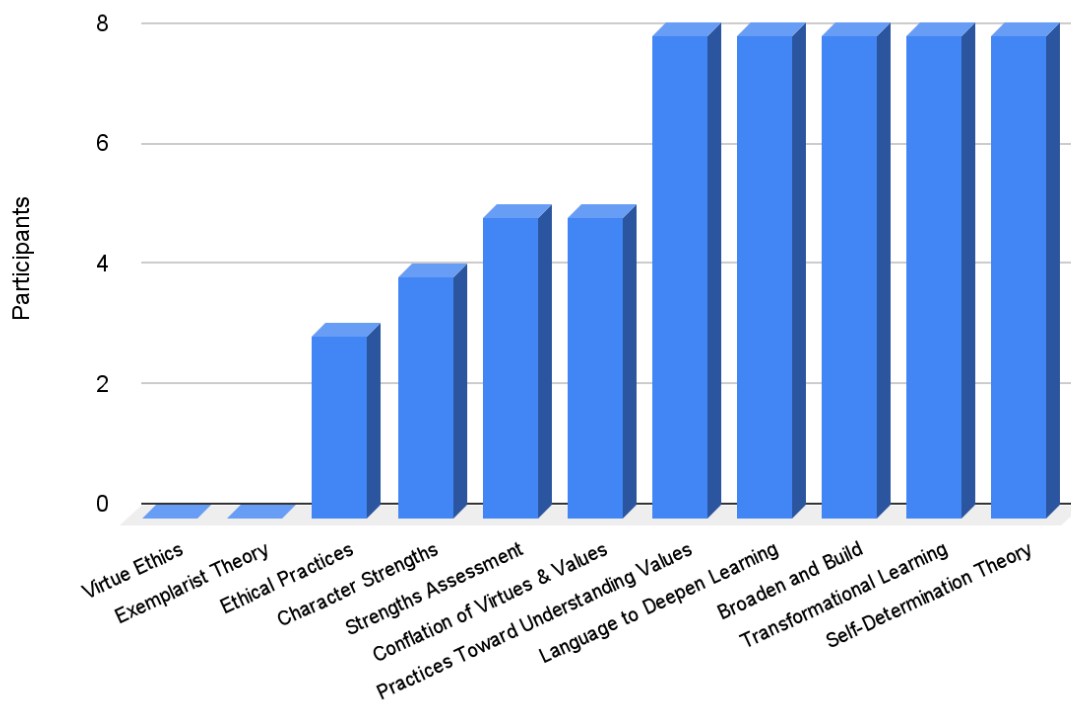
For example, strengths-based research was born out of the science of Positive

Psychology. Because of that, psychologists are on the front line for the dissemination of

new research (Biswas-Diener et al., 2011). Positive Psychology brought about new

theories in the science of amplifying and nurturing strengths, character traits, and virtues.

Lawrence reported that the quality of research on the health and happiness link is

ironclad, "like A+ research." Two of the participants training with positive psychology

said using research and best practices most heavily to determine how to design and

improve their courses.

When research makes its way from the heady think tanks into the hands of

practitioners who can put the theories into practice, the profession of coaching benefits

overall. Through this process, it is the everyday person who would not usually have

access to the research who benefits most.

Coaching is a field that is always working towards improvement. That makes sense because coaching is about assisting others in their desire for improvement in their relationships, leadership role, parenting, finding fulfillment, etc. Therefore, it is prudent for coach trainers to follow the research in the area(s) they train to stay abreast of best practices and new approaches. As the field of coaching continues to grow, trainers can help guide new coaches toward their continuous growth and development by leading them to the science behind the frameworks and techniques they use as tools in their trade; understanding the "why" behind the "what" deepens the level of knowledge.

Theme 3: The Process of Coach Training is About Conversations and Language

Language is a tool in coaching. The participants use language, vocabulary, conversations, discussion, articulation, and inquiry to describe how they train. One said, "It's not just in the abstract. We're doing practice around the conversation. I'm doing demonstrations of it in coaching," and "I'm a big believer in vocabulary. When people don't have a sophisticated vocabulary for a thing, then I can't have a sophisticated conversation around that thing." Another added, "It is an articulation. It's bringing the language to clarity."

The participants lived experience in this study connected powerfully to the literature about the importance of language as an anchoring piece throughout the coaching experience. Interaction with others helps individuals examine alternative perspectives to derive new personal meaning (Clark, 1993). Vella (2000) refers to

dialogue as "the guiding principle" in which the teacher takes on a new role that invites learners to be "Subjects" of their own learning. She writes, "Everything in your design moves toward dialogue as a plant moves toward the sunlight (p. 11). The coach's role is like the teacher, using dialogue as the guiding principle.

In a study of teachers' use of moral language, there may be a lesson regarding the absence of moral language by coach trainers. Sockett & LePage (2002) found that moral language is not used in classrooms because it is not in teachers' terminology. Their research concludes that teachers are not prepared in teacher education to be moral leaders in the classroom or with their peers or students' parents. The researchers do not blame the teachers. Instead, they understand that a moral vocabulary is taken over by behaviorist language, developmental psychology, and normative language in general.

While the participants in this study hold vocabulary and dialogue in high regard, there appears to be a gap in the use of language that focuses on virtuousness. The research may explain this. Annas (2015) wrote that we have "little or no developed vocabulary for describing the phenomenology of virtuous, as opposed to merely self-controlled activity" (p. 284). Therefore, passing on this language is becoming a thing of the past. According to Vasalou (2012), virtues are the vocabulary of our moral language. The less we use this vocabulary, as with any language, as in substituting the subjective notion of "values" for the ethical norm of "virtues," the more it fades.

As noted in Chapter 1, the findings of historian Dr. Gertrude Himmelfarb's (Shirley, 2018) research are significant in understanding how virtues ceased to be virtues and became "values" practically without notice. The literature also shows a decrease in virtuous language used over the twentieth century (Kesebir & Kesebir, 2012; Brooks, 2015). Passing on this language is becoming a thing of the past. Therefore, moral development suffers in human development overall.

This kind of research brings attention to the need for education to drive positive change. Coach trainers are educators who are in the business of human development. They immerse themselves in new and proven theories as a way of life. The use of "conversational technology" and dialogue are tantamount to transformation in the process of coaching. Understanding the language within methods, assessments, and tools is part of coaching expertise.

Therefore, the gap in the use of virtue language is evidence of the opportunity for coaches to extend their professional and personal development toward furthering their conversational technology in the best interest of themselves, their clients, and society at large.

Theme 4: To Coach is to Lead

Seven of the eight trainers in this study stand firmly in the position of seeing themselves and coaches as leaders. To be clear, coach trainers and coaches will not "lead" the client's agenda, which would be unethical. So, how leadership is defined or perceived is part of the question.

The trainers talked about coaching as a "new model of leadership that moves from giving advice and direction to asking questions so people can find their own solutions." In leading this way, "people feel empowered and not just a follower." It was mentioned that coaching is a critical leadership skill and is "under-taught in leadership development programs." One person sees leadership as the "capacity to inspire others." Another considers the skills a coach develops–listening, being curious, and creating environments for people to contribute without hesitation, as skills that leaders need to succeed. It was pointed out that coaches often bring expertise such as being in leadership and human behavior into the profession.

The idea that coaches are leaders is supported in the literature. Professional coaches are leaders who work with people in every sector of society (Whitworth et al., 1998; Bartlett, 2007; Moore, 2013; Pagis, 2016; Ladegard & Gjerde, 2014). Parents, teachers, organizational and governing leaders, professionals including therapists and coaches, and adults in general) influence others as they model human behavior. Having influence is a form of leadership, for better or worse.

Educational leadership is not confined to classrooms. In learning to coach, individuals are educated–thus, the process of learning shapes who they become. Educational leaders, like coaches, model by example and set expectations for those who work with them and those who benefit from the work they do (Vianello et al., 2010).

Leaders have a moral imperative to be their best in developing others to do the same. The participants in this study do precisely that. In business today, leaders are often expected to use the coaching model or framework rather than the less effective command

and control method. Several participants talked about how they are often sought after to implement internal coaching programs, lead coach-manager training, and more. This form of leadership is good news for humanity.

Theme 5: Strengthening the Best Self and Passion for the Work

There is a high level of satisfaction in this work, as validated by the trainers in this study. Fulfillment comes through in the expression by all of the trainers of a sense of self-satisfaction. This form of happiness is a form of flourishing, living life well, which is in accordance with virtue (Eudaimonia, 2017). This form of living well is not solitary. It involves taking part in something outside of oneself that makes us proud, causes self-respect, and requires the ability to be in harmony with others (Solomon, 1999). These words define the essence of the experience as related by the study participants.

In training coaches, *Strengthening My Best Self* applies to the trainer, the coach, and the client. As noted by one trainer, "It has a downstream effect that comes from the conversational technology." The movement from helping ourselves to benefiting others is a highly valued prosocial behavior and a marker of well-being (Biglan et al., 2020; Thomson & Siegel, 2013; Diessner et al., 2013; Vianello et al., 2010); Algo & Haidt (2009). Being virtuous in our behavior is when we are kind, supportive, cooperative, and show interest and gratitude. These ways of being are prosocial because they contribute to the well-being of others, which leads to the improvement of human well-being overall (Biglan, 2015).

Who among us would not want to reap the rewards of fulfillment, flourishing, and well-being in work that has a ripple effect to transform the lives of others? In this study, coach training was described as a hospitable profession found to be broadly efficacious.

Additional Implications

The findings in this study are meant to inform those in the field of coach training and those with influence as educational leaders in business, churches, government, non-profits, and wherever there is a need for a greater understanding of how virtue ethics impacts self-development and well-being. Research reveals an increase in the human sciences interested in passing along this learning as validation of what is needed for humanity to flourish (Biglan et al., 2020).

Implications for Coach trainers

Coach trainers understand that the process of engaging in coaching is an aspirational journey—not a destination where one ever arrives. Research completed by Berger & McGrath (2019) led to the image of virtue being the same type of journey. The inclusion of virtue ethics in coach training connects to theoretical frameworks they already use. Building upon these with knowledge and inclusion of virtue education will strengthen the alignment of values to virtues, thereby leading to greater fulfillment and well-being.

Coach trainers need to have an ever-expanding toolbox filled with the latest technologies and research methods that inform the practices they select for their training. The use of "sophisticated language" regarding the theories, assessments, and inquiry used is critical to the level of sophistication apparent in their training. Due to the decrease in

the amount of virtuous language used over the twentieth century, human development suffers overall (Kesebir & Kesebir, 2012; Brooks, 2015; Shirley, 2018). This decrease in human development is explicitly the opportunity for coach trainers to close this gap in the importance of understanding what virtue is, right alongside understanding the nature of one's values. It is believed that a "virtue-salient culture" is more beneficial for "societal flourishing than leaving concepts of moral excellence [virtues] at the fringes of public conversation" (Keseber and Keseber, 2012, pp. 478, 479). To contribute to a virtue-salient culture, "ordinary people" from every sector of society seek coaching (Whitworth et al., 1998; Bartlett, 2007; Moore, 2013; Pagis, 2016; Biglan et al., 2020).

Being a coach trainer requires many virtuous qualities, ethical principles, extensive theoretical knowledge, a sincere interest in the well-being of humanity, self-development, strengths in educational leadership, passion, dedication, and loyalty to their coach/trainer relationships. This quote, by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (Goodreads, 2022), speaks to the heart of these coach trainers:

Treat people as if they were what they ought to be

And you help them become what they are capable of being.

Implications for Society

As individuals in society, Walker (2020) asserts that we are responsible for the breakdown in our practices of virtue that is needed when responding to moral and ethical problems. He said the main obstacle to moral progress is ignorance of what can and should already be known. A way to help remove this obstacle is through professional development. The need to learn virtues adds up to the essential need to pass along the

learning through education. Andragogy, transformational learning, emotion theory, and self-determination are adult learning theories used in coach training and most professional or personal development. Adding virtue theory education is appropriate and needed in leadership training, teacher training, and character education to reach ordinary people in learning situations. Hursthouse & Pettigrove (2018) reported:

> There is now a growing movement towards virtues education amongst both academics (Carr 1999; Athanassoulis 2014; Curren 2015) and teachers in the classroom. One exciting thing about research in this area is its engagement with other academic disciplines, including psychology, educational theory, and theology (see Cline 2015; and Snow 2015).

The need is great for an array of academic disciplines to engage in virtue education. However, there is much controversy and debate between philosophers (Miller, C., 2019; Harmon, 1999) and psychologists (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Ng & Tay, 2020; McGrath, 2018) on the subject of virtues, character, character strengths, and traits, in general. Collaboration in their engagement would be even more exciting and beneficial to "ordinary people" who find themselves bumping up against differing views and approaches, becoming overwhelmed and potentially defeated in an attempt to find greater fulfillment through virtue education simply.

Limitations

This study found only one subject who purposefully uses aspects of virtue ethics

as a theory and practice in their (advanced, by invitation only) training. This shortage severely limited the collected data in that regard. A limitation characteristic of the transcendent phenomenology method is the limited results of the small sample size. The results cannot be generalized for the entire population. Another limitation is the lack of previous research studies on coach trainers' use of virtue ethics that aim to move the coaching client in meaningful ways toward their best potential. Finally, the biases of the researcher are limitations. As a certified coach, I realize my ways of knowing cannot be entirely separated from those of the coach trainers. I used epoché and bracketing to reduce this limitation while reviewing the interview transcripts and throughout each analysis stage.

Recommendations for Further Study

Biglan et al. (2020) report the need for research and action if changing practice in society is to be achieved. Following are recommendations for more research and action.

Virtues Most Practiced Become Second Nature

Because of the discovery of the limited use of virtue ethics in coach training, a recommendation for future research would involve a) training the subjects on how to create a tool they can easily understand and use in their work, b) testing their success with using it. A study done by Crossan et al. (2013) would be an excellent example to follow. The study tested a new non-linear model for ethical decision-making (EDM) that included personal reflection on virtues, values, and character strengths. The findings showed that the more a person puts these into practice, the more natural it becomes to train one's ways of being—versus doing. The findings were consistent with literature that

claims virtues most practiced become second nature (Athanassoulis, 2000, Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2018).

The "Ben Franklin's Discipline of Cultivating Virtues" assignment for adult students provides an example of how an educational lesson can become research. The assignment included students' self-selecting virtues they would practice over six weeks. They recorded what worked or didn't work for them. After completion of the project, students were surveyed about their self-perception of their understanding, reflection, and observation of their experience (Eriksen et al., 2019, p.p. 647-648).

The VIA Survey of Strengths is an easy (and free, online) assessment to use as part of research on the efficacy of practice using and understanding character strengths. These character strengths are defined as positive qualities of one's thoughts, feelings, and actions, that, when practiced, lead to greater well-being or flourishing (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Include the Language and Constructs of Virtue Ethics

Due to how virtue language has fallen out of use, Emmons (2003) suggests that future research on human motivation may do well by including the language and constructs of virtue ethics.

Additionally, research on the use of language and virtue ethics in the coaching relationship, leadership training, and adult education would benefit.

Virtue Theory and SDT

Self-determination theory (SDT) is a motivational theory that fits with *Learning Virtue* (Besser, 2020) and moral education (Curren, 2014). Virtue theory and SDT share the belief that "virtue is necessary for leading a good life, which points to a possible connection between the two theories in further research when "virtue theory and SDT will go hand in hand" (Iizuka, 2020, p. 2323).

Grounded theory

Grounded theory is a method that explains a phenomenon through a variety of data collection methods that result in a theory or theories that transpire in the data collection and analysis. This study followed the tradition of transcendental phenomenology, a method used to understand a lived experience shared through interviews. It would be of interest to conduct a study using grounded theory on the use of virtue ethics by coach trainers who decide to engage in virtue education.

Studies in Sociology

Hitlin and Vaisey (2010) wrote of "the gradual disengagement from morality" in their discipline of Sociology. They added that "without consideration of human morality's social and cultural dimensions, our collective understanding of the subject will remain exceedingly limited" (2010, p. 3).

Summary

This study aimed to learn how coaches are trained to use virtues, virtue ethics/ethics in general, character, strengths, and values as a tool, method, technique, or exercise with clients who strive to be their best.

The theoretical framework supporting this study integrates theoretical frames connected to virtuous living. These are virtue ethics, the exemplarist theory, the broaden and build (positive emotions) theory, transformative learning theory, and self-determination theory.

This research indicates that virtue ethics and the exemplarist theory are not taught by the participants in this study. Christian values and virtues are expected to be taught in Christian-based training programs. Because the understanding of virtue through virtue ethics differs from specific Christian-based teachings, this study inadvertently reveals the difference and similarities in training toward best potential.

While the trainers I interviewed strictly follow the ICF Code of Ethics, these principles focus on what a coach should *do* in the case of an ethical dilemma. Virtue ethics has to do with who and how a person wants to *be.* This knowledge is ironic because coaching has to do with who and how a person wants to be. While knowing what to do is critical, having moral virtues makes us care to do the right thing. (Sommers & Sommers, 2001).

All ethical theories address the critical need to understand and observe ethical rules, duties, and consequences in their own way. Because virtue ethics is personal, having to do with building the individual's character, it most closely aligns with theories that assist humanity in being their best.

The participants all use elements of emotion theory, transformative learning, and self-development theory. For example, the broaden and build (Fredrickson, 2001) positive emotions theory is woven into their work as trainers and is part of who they are.

Transformative learning is an expected outcome of the experience of learning and practice as a coach. Self-Development theory (SDT) has much in common with coaching principles and frameworks.

One of the participants pointed out that some coach trainers often use elements (like assessments, inventories, and practices) of theories without knowing the theory itself. They "just know that it works." An example of this is the close connection between SDT and virtue theory. I maintain that deepening their learning around the theories they use will result in exponential growth in their capacity to help others understand the why behind what just works.

Coach trainers are excellent at helping people identify their values and understand their significance related to their worldview. Values work is part of identity theory. Coaches are positioned to offer identity support (Pagis, 2016) and an awareness of how virtue ethics fit into self-understanding (Hardman et al., 2010). Aligning values to virtue would be an important next step.

The trainers use various theories/practices/and tools borrowed from various fields and disciplines. Each trainer has a unique training method from the others in this group. The use of language as a tool in coaching is seen as a critical skill necessary to deepen learning. With their practice around the conversation and belief in the use of language, I encourage coach trainers to take on the challenge to lead the way back to understanding virtuous language.

The role of a coach is to assist others in their pursuit of fulfillment/well-being. In training coaches to do this, the participants report a high level of self-satisfaction. This

form of happiness is defined in virtue ethics as eudaimonia. It involves taking part in something outside of oneself that makes us proud, causes self-respect, and requires the ability to be in harmony with others (Solomon, 1999). These words define the essence of coach training as related by the study participants.

Conclusion

I advocate for virtue ethics, not in place of deontology, consequentialism, and utilitarianism. I promote virtue ethics as the place to begin deciding who we are and want to be in our duty, following rules, and understanding consequences. Phronesis is a virtue that means to have practical wisdom. This form of intellectual virtue is meant to help the individual reason how to be or behave with the right action. Having practical wisdom is only possible when one understands goodness by being good. (MacIntyre, 2007; Mitchell, 2015). Virtue ethics teaches goodness.

Coach trainers are educational leaders. It is time to reclaim an understanding of virtues through the educational leadership of coach training that upholds and advances human ways of being through virtue ethics. This study revealed virtues are embedded in the character of the participants and how they carry out their work. Virtue ethics is about understanding how to live a life of moral character by practicing virtues such as those perceived in the participants. Because these educational leaders exhibit virtues within themselves, they are likely admired and seen as exemplars by those they train to do and be the same. This study reveals a compelling opportunity to bring virtue ethics into coach training to help close the gap in our societal misunderstanding of virtues and values.

As a coach, I chose to study the question of how virtue ethics are used today in coach training because of the need I see for virtues to be more prominent in our society. This need is an understatement when we consider that society is us! We are individuals that live, work, and lead in our organizations, businesses, families, and neighborhoods. The responsibility to create the society we want is ours.

Today, our society is marked by increasing divisiveness in the many stories provided in chapter one. For example, how we think about, behave toward, and establish judgment toward those who hold different values/opinions/beliefs than our own, has run amuck. We hold fast to our values, saying no one has a right to condemn what we hold as most important, in many cases, regardless of the impact upon others. This position has proven useless in dealing with contentious dilemmas between those we know and love over important issues to "us" when they are not important to "them." Suppose we cannot see our way through these issues with our workmates, neighbors, friends, and family. What hope is there in raising the next generations to understand what it means to develop virtuous qualities that help us become our best as individuals who make up our society and way of life?

Part of this ignorance of what has faded may be due to decreased recognition of or expectations of exemplary behavior. As a coach, I have witnessed that raising awareness of admirable persons and practices contributes to learning the virtues a person values and wants to develop. We see this in Christian-based programs, too.

I hope this study brings to our collective consciousness what has been missing in our language, our way of knowing, and our being. I agree with author C.A. Woolf (Goodreads, 2022) in this regard:

What has been seen cannot be unseen; what has been learned cannot be unknown. You cannot change the past, but you can learn from it. You can grow from it. You can be made stronger. You can use that strength to change your life, to change your future.

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Appendix A – Recruitment Letter

Dear

You are invited to participate in a research study that I am conducting. My name is Julianne Schwietz. I am a doctoral candidate at Minnesota State University, Mankato. The research I am doing is conducted under the direction of my advisor, Dr. Bernadeia Johnson, in the Department of Educational Leadership.

Like you, I am a coach and a member of ICF. I am contacting you because I am looking for coach trainers to interview for my research study.

In looking at the information about your training, **it looks like you may use virtues, ethics, character, strengths, and/or values as exercises, a method, or techniques in providing tools coaches learn to use with their clients.** If so, I would love to hear about your experience with these!

The purpose of my study is to understand how coach trainers use virtues, virtue ethics, character, and/or values as tools coaches can use with clients to help them reach their best potential.

This research is significant because it will examine the ways in which coaches are trained to utilize values and virtues to move the coaching client in meaningful ways toward their best potential. It is important to study this topic to advance understanding of how coaches are trained to use virtue, understand virtue ethics, and character in their coaching. It is important to understand the experience coach trainers have with using values and virtues in leading coaches to achieve higher, more ethical goals.

If you use virtues, ethics, character, strengths, and/or values as a tool, method, technique, or exercise in your training, you qualify as a trainer I'd love to interview. For your participation in this study with 5-8 people, you will be entered into a drawing for a $300 Visa card. I hope to hear from you!

This study is seeking 5 to 8 participants who:

- Use virtues, ethics, character, strengths, and/or values as a tool, method, technique, or exercise in their training
- Work with coaches whose clients seek their best potential
- Are trained and certified as a coach for five or more years
- Are between the ages of 30-70
- Are any gender
- Speak English and train in the United States

Participation will consist primarily of a 30-45-minute recorded interview. If you agree to participate, I will interview you at a mutually agreed-upon time using Zoom. I am planning on conducting the interviews in November and December 2021.

In the interview, you will have the option of answering only the questions you wish to answer. You may discontinue participation at any time before the data collection is complete without penalty. Your privacy and confidentiality are very important. Therefore, you will not be identified by name or any other identifying information in this study. The records of this study will be kept private and confidential. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any

information that will make it possible to identify you. The research data and recorded interviews will be kept in an encrypted drive on my password-protected computer.

If you have questions regarding this study, please contact me, Julianne Schwietz, at julianne.schwietz@mnsu.edu for further information. **I will get back to you immediately.** You may also contact the principal investigator, Dr. Bernadeia Johnson, at (952) 818-8924 or Bernadeia.johnson@mnsu.edu

Please carefully read the attached Consent for Interview form for full details. If you agree to the conditions in this consent form and are willing to sign it, please do so and return it to me via email **BY FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2021**. We can then find a time for the interview. There are no direct benefits to you for participating unless your name is selected in the $300 drawing between 5-8 people. Still, you will be helping to contribute to the understanding of the use of virtues, ethics, character, strengths, and/or values in coach training.

Thank you for your consideration of my invitation.

With much appreciation,

Julianne

Julianne Schwietz
Julianne.schwietz@mnsu.edu
651-210-3443

MSU IRBnet # 1823851

Date of MSU IRB approval: 11-4-2021

Appendix B – Informed Consent for Interview

Introduction and Purpose

My name is Julianne Schwietz. I am a graduate student at Minnesota State University, Mankato, working with my faculty advisor, Professor Bernadeia Johnson, in the Educational Leadership Department. I would like to invite you to take part in my research study. The purpose is to look at how coach trainers use virtues, virtue ethics, character, and/or values as tools coaches can use with clients. You are invited because you are a coach trainer certified by ICF.

Procedures

If you agree to participate as a volunteer in my research,

- You will be interviewed for 30-45 minutes about your experiences as a coach trainer using virtues, ethics, character, strengths, and/or values as a tool, method, exercise, or procedure in your training.
- The interview will take place virtually, using Zoom, at a time that is convenient for you.
- The interview will be audio-recorded to ensure accuracy in recording your statements and will give me (Julianne) a way to analyze the conversation afterward. The Zoom recording feature will be used with our cameras off. Transcription of the interview will be made and stored securely in Zoom.
- Audio recording is necessary to accurately record the information you provide and will be used for transcription purposes only. If you choose not to be audiotaped, the interview will not proceed. If you agree to be audiotaped but feel uncomfortable or change your mind for any reason during the interview, I will turn off the recorder at your request and can stop the interview at any time.
- As a matter of confidentiality, you will not be identified by name or any other identifying information in this study. Other names mentioned in the interview will also not be used.
- You will have the option of answering only the questions you wish to answer.
- I will send you the transcript and the tentative interpretations of our interview for your verification. Additionally, you may be contacted to clarify your interview answers for one or two brief (5-15 minutes) follow-up(s). If so, I will contact you by phone or email to request this.
- The total time commitment will be approximately one hour.
- There will be 5 to 8 participants in this study.

Benefits

There is no direct benefit to you from taking part in this study unless your name is selected in the drawing for $300. It is hoped that the research will advance understanding of how coaches are trained to use virtues, character, and values in their coaching.

Risks/Discomforts

The risks you will encounter as a participant in this research are not more than experienced in your everyday life.

Participant Initials**:** _____ (for page 1)

Confidentiality

The records of this study will be kept private and confidential. A pseudonym will be used to protect your identity. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. The research data and recorded interviews will be kept in an encrypted drive. Only the researchers, Julianne Schwietz and Dr. Johnson will have access to the data. Furthermore, these files will be destroyed, and recordings erased by the Principal Investigator, Dr. Johnson, three years after the conclusion of the research study (estimated to be spring of 2025).

If you would like more information about the specific privacy and anonymity risks posed by storing data, please contact the Minnesota State University, Mankato Information and Technology Services Help Desk (507-389-6654) and ask to speak to the Information Security Manager.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Participation in this research study is voluntary. Your decision on whether to participate will not affect your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits. Individuals may discontinue participation at any time before the data collection is complete without penalty. If desired, contact Julianne Schwietz to discontinue participation.

Questions about the Research

If you have questions about this research study, contact Julianne Schwietz, julianne.schwietz@mnsu.edu for more information. You may also contact Dr. Bernadeia Johnson at (952) 818-8924 or Bernadeia.johnson@mnsu.edu with any questions about this study.

If you have any questions about participants' rights and for research-related injuries, please contact the Administrator of the Institutional Review Board at 507-389-1242.

You have the right to be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records. Julianne Schwietz will provide this via email.

Statement of Consent

To return this consent form to Julianne Schwietz, please print, sign, initial, scan, and attach this form to an email and send it to julianne.schwietz@mnsu.edu. Once this is done, Julianne Schwietz will contact you to set up the interview.

Submitting this signed consent form indicates my informed consent to participate and be audio recorded. I agree to be audio recorded in this interview _____ (Initial)
I am over the age of 18 _____ (Initial)

_____

Print full name

_____   _____

Signature   Date

MSU IRBnet# 1823851

Date of MSU IRB approval: 11/4/2021

Appendix C – Interview Questions Protocol

1) Introduce Self:

Hello _____. I am Julianne. How are you today? Thank you again for taking the time to talk with me today. As stated in my invitation to you, I am currently a Doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership at Minnesota State University, Mankato. This research project is part of the dissertation process. For consistency in my questions, I will be following a script.

2) Intro project:
Script:

This study seeks to understand the experience of coach trainers who use virtues, ethics, character, and/or values as a tool, method, exercise, or process in teaching coaches how to lead their clients to their best potential.

Your willingness to accept my invitation to participate in the study reveals you have a generous nature!

This research is significant because it will examine the ways in which coaches are trained to utilize values and virtues to move the coaching client in meaningful ways toward their best potential. It is important to study this topic to advance understanding of how coaches are trained to use virtue, understand virtue ethics, and character in their coaching. It is important to understand the experience coach trainers have with using values and virtues in leading coaches to achieve higher, more ethical goals.

Review aspects of consent form:

You completed a consent form indicating that I have your permission to audio record our conversation. Are you still ok with me recording our conversation today?

Thank you! Please let me know if, at any point, you want me to turn off the recorder or keep something you said off the record.

Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? [Discuss questions] If any questions arise at any point in this interview, please ask them. I anticipate our discussion to be 45 minutes or less. Should it look like we will run over, we may continue if it is ok with you, or you may excuse yourself, as agreed upon in your consent form.

3) Build rapport - Background Questions

Qa: How long have you been a coach trainer?

Qb: Where were you trained as a coach?

Qc: How do you describe the niche(s) you prepare coaches for (Leadership, personal development, business, etc.)

Qd: What area of education is your background? What is your highest level of ed?

Interview Questions

Q1. I am going to ask you to describe how you define virtues, virtue ethics, character, and values, one at a time.

Q1 a. Do you see a difference in how values and virtues are defined and understood?

Q2. Describe how you include any or all of these: virtues, virtue ethics, strengths, character, and/or values as a tool in your training that helps your coaches understand how to assist clients to reach their best potential.

Q3. As coaches certified through ICF, ethics are of the highest standard. How do you train coaches to hold clients to a standard of ethics that brings out their best potential? Have you thought about it this way?

3b. Of these, which do you use more often than the others in your training?

Q4. What conditions or circumstances have typically guided your inclusion of virtues, virtue ethics, character, and values in training?

Q5. Describe how your coaching tools (methods) align with the development of your coaches' virtuous character (best self).

Q6. How would you describe the difference you've experienced in training with virtue, ethics, character, and/or values versus without including these as tools or methods? (because not every coach trainer sees the benefit in doing so.)

Q7. What benefits do you see in doing so? What do you wish more people knew about your method of training? Or why people should use___ in coaching?

Q8. What barriers, if any, do you experience in the use of these as tools when training coaches?

Q9. What is the impact upon your personal and professional learning around the use of virtues, etc., in coaching?

Q10. Do you view coaching as a form of leadership? If so, please describe how.

Q11. Describe any learning theories you use in helping coaches understand how to shepherd clients to their best potential. (Like character strengths, aspects of positive psychology,

admiration/emulation/exemplar, self-determination, transformational learning, broaden and build theory of positive emotions, other?)

Q12. Is there anything else you'd like me to know or understand about your experience?

Q13. What might you be curious about in regard to this study?

> **Thank you, and wrap up**

Script for closure: After I look at the audio transcript, I would like to send you a copy of what was said to be sure it accurately states your views. Will that be ok with you? As I move through the interviews, I may find another question I would like to ask you. If so, may I get back to you for your response?

Once I have completed the interviews, I will have the drawing for a Visa cash card for $300. As of today, there are a total of ___ people being interviewed and, therefore, in the drawing. I will send an email to all participants after the drawing to let you know if you are the winner or not. Because of confidentiality, I will not be able to name the winner in individual letters unless, of course, it is you in your letter.

Thank you again for your participation. I am grateful for your willingness to accept my invitation to participate in the study. If you have any questions or concerns going forward, I welcome hearing from you.

Appendix D – Thematic Organization of Participants' Definitions

The definitions given by the participants are noted for each word and categorized by themes. When the same or a similar definition was used for another word, that is noted as "Similar definitions to[term] are found in." For example, virtues were defined as "what is important to you." Among the eight subjects, the statement "what is important to you" was also made to define values, ethics, and character.

Q1: Please describe how you define virtues, virtue ethics, character, and values.

Participants' Definitions of Virtue

Definitions of Virtue Provided by Participants	Similar Definitions to Virtue found in other definitions provided by participants
Theme 1: Virtues are in Alignment with Life	
Virtue is what is *important* to you.	Values, Ethics, Character
What you *live your life by*	Ethics
Virtue is internal and external; this is *how I need to operate*	Character, Ethics, Values
Virtue means being *aligned with the core values* we hold	Ethics
Tries to *balance ethics, morals, and values*, as well as possible, even in conflict	Values
Theme 2: Virtues are Characteristics/Qualities	
Virtues are *Traits or characteristics* that you value	Ethics
Virtues are *Positive characteristics*	
Desirable qualities	
The *assets* an individual has	Strengths
Qualities can be virtues, or we can turn them into virtues	Character

There's a gray area sometimes between *virtuousness and perhaps character qualities.*	Character
Theme 3: Virtues are Good	
Virtue has a value label -- like *virtue means good*; she's a virtuous person.	
Defines *what is good*.	
A particular *culture will define what is good* and give them a name, virtues.	
Virtue is how other people *perceive the goodness* or not, of my values.	
To do what's right for humanity as a whole. Virtues are about the *greater good*.	
Theme 4: Virtues are Moral	
Virtue is a sort of *moral code.*	Character, Ethics, Values
The *moral fiber*.	
Virtues are society rules that guide me, kind of like the moral *ground* that everyone should have, but not everybody has. For example, society touts' acceptance as a virtue, but it is not fully practiced.	
Virtue ethics are *morally valued behaviors,* strongly influenced by religious and philosophical thinking about the moral life as being a good life.	
Theme 5: Virtues are Based in Philosophy	
Virtue is something that *comes out of philosophical writing*. It is not strongly ensconced in modern psychological or social sciences thinking.	Ethics

Participants' Definition of Ethics/Virtue Ethics

Definitions of Ethics/Virtue Ethics Provided by Participants	**Similar Definitions to Ethics found in other definitions provided by participants**
Theme 1: Guidelines	
Ethics are the *guidelines of your life*	

Ethics are rules that protect us as a society or as *ethical guidelines within an organization*	
Professional ethics, which is what we are somewhat more concerned with in terms of coach training and professional ethics, is *not a list of rules, but a list of guiding principles* that help us think through complicated and ambiguous (gray) scenarios	
Ethics is a system of virtues that helps us define, "are we acting in an ethical way?" This whole body of things can *guide our behavior*	Virtues
Ethics are just *common rules*; if I'm going to belong to this group, there are *agreements*	
A hallmark of being part of ICF is having an *ethical code,* which is critical	
Theme 2: Ethics are an Internal Compass	
Ethics are our *standard for operating*	Values
Ethics are kind of your *moral compass*. It sort of tells you internally what is the right thing to do	Virtues
Virtue ethics are *within you*; *traits* that you live your life by. The barriers you live your life by	Character
Virtue ethics are *anchored in our value and belief systems*	Values
Theme 3: Ethics are Based in Philosophy	
Ethics is a *branch of philosophy*, which is a sort of right action, high-minded moral living	Virtue

Participants' Definition of Character

Definitions of Character Provided by Participants	Similar Definitions to Character found in other definitions provided by participants
Theme 1: One's Character is their Personality	
Character really is, in some sense, our *biologically influenced personality*.	

Character is *natural and enduring. It is not aspirational*	
Theme 2: Character Has to do with Being Virtuous	
Character, as we use it in the English language is largely overlapping. I think *we use a virtuous person and a person with strong character as largely interchangeable* linguistically	Virtue
Overlapping, with virtue and ethics, character is *a reflection of who you are* internally; how you make decisions; what you do when no one's watching	Virtue, Ethics, Character
Character is maybe *all of that [ethics, virtue]* at an individual specific level	Ethics, Virtue
Character is what's *important to you*	Virtue
People with *strong character are those that have decided which virtues are important* to them. These people are pretty inflexible in compromising them	Virtue
Character is a little bit of that *moral fiber*; it's a *code of who we are*, *our guiding system* of sorts, how we navigate life	Virtue, Ethics
Character and integrity - I think about people who have high integrity, *high ethics, high standards* that they hold themselves and others to	Virtue
Theme 3: Character Shows Up in One's Behavior	
Character is *being the same inside as outside*	Values
Internal *beliefs govern your outward behavior*	
Character is *beliefs expressed by behavior.*	Values, Ethics
Character is *virtuous behavior*	Virtues
Character is *an interpretation of how someone is being in the world*. It is formed by identity. This is what society wants from me.	
We, as human beings, like to put labels and names on things. I suppose that's where character came from. *If I observe you long enough, I'll start creating labels that define your character*	

Participants' Definition of Strengths

Definitions of Strengths Provided by Participants	Similar Definitions to Strengths found in other definitions provided by participants
Theme 1: Strengths are Natural Behaviors at Which a Person Excels	
Something that is *a default within you* that you rely on	
Areas where we demonstrate competency and sometimes, they can be fine-tuned, but in general, *they're things that we just have*	Values
T*hings that come easily to you*	
A sort of *path of least resistance*, a *natural pattern of behavior*	Character
Largely behavioral, and they are *the behaviors at which a person excels*	Character
Not just a personality characteristic or a tendency, it's something that then *allows you to successfully complete or achieve a positive outcome*	
The Gallup approach is "*an ability that a person consistently engages in with near-perfect performance*"	
The virtue-based approach found in the VIA says that strengths are *"positive personality characteristics"*	Character
The Cappfinity approach says, "*strengths are inborn (natural) behaviors that a person performs well and that are energizing while being performed*"	
A little bit *more intrinsic* to who we are	Values

Participants' Definition of Values

Definitions of Values Provided by Participants	Similar Definitions to Values are found in other definitions provided by the participants
Theme 1: There is a Conflation Between the Terms Values and Virtues	
Values and virtues have been *used interchangeably*	Virtues

It's tricky for people because *we use value as a noun and a verb in English*. You get poor explanations of values. Like "family is a value" when it fundamentally is not. It's a collection of individuals in relationship. What people mean is, I value my family. And I tell people, Yeah, I value knowing where my car keys are, but that's not value	
Values are sort of maybe a bucket that *encapsulates all of those things [virtues, ethics, character, strengths]*. You make decisions in line with those values	Virtue, Ethics, Character, Strengths
Theme 2: Values are Demonstrated Convictions	
Our *convictions* are our beliefs, and *we demonstrate those*	Ethics
Other *people can usually name our values* without us telling them because they see them regularly	
Those things that *we live by*	Ethics
Our *standard-bearer*	Ethics
Those things that *I anchor to*	Ethics
Values are *Intrinsic* to you	Strengths
When I choose not to stand in my values (*what I believe in*), then at some point I won't be able to sustain whatever I'm trying to live out	Ethics, Character
Theme 3: Values are One's Guiding Principles	
Our *compass*: my core values are *what guides me*	Ethics
My virtues guide me and, and my *values guide me*, but they're ever so slightly different	
I think of *values as individual*, and I think of virtues as external in some ways.	
Values give us a *code of who we are*	Ethics, Virtue, Character
We are *born with an inner knowing of what's important to us*; these are our values	Virtue
Values are different from virtues. Virtues define goodness, *values define significance or importance*	Virtue
Values are very *abstract guiding principles*	Ethics

We *choose our values* perhaps more than our virtues or our character	
Largely, *values are non-behavioral*	