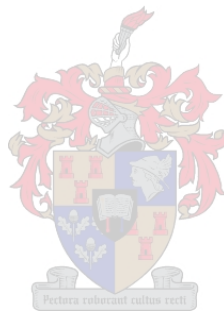# Critical success factors of the coach-client relationship:
The influence of culture

by

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Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Commerce in in the Faculty of Industrial Psychology at Stellenbosch University

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DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained herein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Date: March 2022

Marisha de Vos

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to start my acknowledgements off with a quote from Helen Keller: *"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much".* This quote echoes the fact that this study would not have been possible without the support from the community around me. I would therefore like to express my sincere gratitude to the following individuals:

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OPSOMMING

Die afrigter-kliënt verhouding is 'n sleutel komponent van 'n suksesvolle leierskap/uitvoerende afrigting intervensie in organisasies. Verskeie kritieke sukses faktore wat bydra tot die sukses van 'n afrigter-kliënt verhouding is in navorsing geïdentifiseer. Ten spyte van die waarde van hierdie navorsing, is die toepaslikheid daarvan op 'n genuanseerde multikulturele konteks soos Suid-Afrika beperk. Gevolglik, was die hoofdoel van hierdie studie om die invloed van kultuur op die kritieke sukses faktore van die afrigter-kliënt verhouding na te vors en te beskryf. Deur 'n kwalitatiewe navorsingsontwerp is daar semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude gevoer met twaalf uitvoerende/leierskap-afrigters in Suid-Afrika en is relevante inligting versamel. Die steekproef vir hierdie studie is gekies deur doelgerigte sneeubalsteekproefneming, en induktiewe tematiese analise is gebruik om die data te ontleed. Die bevindinge dui daarop dat die invloed van kultuur op die afrigter-kliënt verhouding hoogs subjektief en kompleks is, en kultuur word uniek deur alle deelnemers ervaar en waargeneem. Die hoof bevindinge is vervat in 'n konseptuele raamwerk vir die afrigter-kliënt verhouding in 'n multikulturele konteks. Hierdie raamwerk verskaf insig oor in hoe kultuur die afrigter-kliënt-verhouding kan beïnvloed, en wat die daaropvolgende strategieë is wat afrigters kan gebruik indien so 'n invloed die verhouding belemmer. Dit verskaf verder insig in die kritieke sukses faktore vir die afrigter-kliënt-verhouding in die unieke konteks van Suid-Afrika. Die kompleksiteit van hierdie studie se bevindinge vorm die rasionaal vir toekomstige afrigting navorsing om die potensiële invloed wat kultuur op die afrigter-kliënt verhouding kan hê te ondersoek, sodat die ontwikkeling en sukses van sulke verhoudings in organisatoriese omgewings verbeter kan word.

ABSTRACT

The coach-client relationship is a key component of a successful leadership/executive coaching intervention in organisations. Several critical success factors have been identified in research that contributes to the success of a coach-client relationship. Notwithstanding the value of this research, its applicability to nuanced multicultural contexts such as South Africa is limited. Given this, the primary aim of this study was to explore and describe the influence of culture on the critical success factors of the coach-client relationship. Through a qualitative research design, this study collected interview data from twelve semi-structured interviews with executive/leadership coaches in South Africa. The sample for this study was selected through purposive snowball sampling and inductive thematic analysis was used to analyse the interview data. The findings indicate that the influence of culture on the coach-client relationship is highly subjective and complex, and culture is experienced and perceived uniquely by all participants. The main findings culminated in a conceptual framework for the coach-client relationship in a multicultural context. This framework provides insights into how culture may impact the coach-client relationship, and what the subsequent strategies are that coaches may utilise if such an impact stands to impair the relationship. It further provides insights into the critical success factors for the coach-client relationship in the unique context of South Africa. The complexity of this study's findings provide a rationale for coaching research to continue to explore the potential influence that culture may have on the coach-client relationship, in order to enhance the development and success of such relationships in organisational settings.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to Study

The industry of coaching has witnessed fundamental growth and coaching has become a widely used and trusted strategy for leadership and executive development in organisations across the globe (Burt & Talati, 2017; Jones et al., 2016; Terblanche & Heyns, 2020; Theeboom et al., 2014). The definition of coaching for this study integrates several definitions found in literature, and speaks to an intervention facilitated by a coach to a client within an organisation to improve both professional and personal skills, facilitate leadership development, and work together to achieve agreed-upon goals which will positively impact the individual personally and professionally, as well as the organisation (de Haan et al., 2013; Grant, 2006; Kilburg, 1996; Sharma, 2017; Standards Australia, 2011).

Coaching improves the performance, skills, well-being and coping strategies of individuals, consequently resulting in a better return on investment for organisations and a sustainable leadership development strategy (Burt & Talati, 2017; Grover & Furnham, 2016; Jones et al., 2016; Odendaal, 2016; Theeboom et al., 2014). Given that coaching is evidently a valuable implementation for both organisations and individuals, researchers have endeavoured to discern which components of the coaching intervention contribute significantly to the success of its implementation. Their findings have strongly indicated that one such component, the coach-client relationship, is critical in determining the success of the coaching intervention and producing positive coaching outcomes (Boyce et al., 2010; De Haan et al., 2013; Gessnitzer & Kauffeld, 2015; Graßmann et al., 2020; Grover & Furnham, 2016). The coach-client relationship is a key component for this study, which aims to explore the influence that culture has on the success of this relationship. For this reason, further discussion on this component is presented next.

This study uses the term "coach-client relationship" interchangeably with the term "working alliance", which is defined as a relationship characterised by agreement on goals, allocation of tasks and bond development (Bordin, 1979; de Haan et al., 2013). The working alliance is further used as a measure of the quality of the strength of the relationship in numerous quantitative coaching studies (De Haan et al., 2013; Gessnitzer & Kauffeld, 2015; McKenna & Davis, 2009; O'Broin & Palmer, 2019). These studies have examined several different outcomes to illustrate the effect that the quality of the coach-client relationship may have. Prominent is the study of De Haan et al. (2013), which found that when clients reported a valuable working alliance they also reported a positive coaching outcome. Further studies

indicate that the quality of the coach-client relationship improved client's self-efficacy, which in turn provided clients with the self-assurance to execute skills gained from the coaching intervention; this highlights the importance of a high-quality coach-client relationship in producing positive coaching outcomes (Baron & Morin, 2009; De Haan et al., 2013; Ely et al., 2010).

Another key study fundamental in supporting the importance of the coach-client relationship is the meta-analysis conducted by Graßmann et al. (2020). This comprehensive analysis indicates that the working alliance has a significant impact on several measurable coaching outcomes, grouped into *affective*, *cognitive* and *results* outcomes (Graßmann et al., 2020). Clients' self-efficacy and motivation (affective outcomes) were positively related to high-quality coach-client relationships (Graßmann et al., 2020; Baron & Morin, 2009). Furthermore, the quality of the coach-client relationship was related to clients gaining knowledge (cognitive outcomes) and by achieving desired goals (results outcomes) (Graßmann et al., 2020). The meta-analysis provides support for the effect the coach-client relationship has on the success of the coaching intervention, as tangibly shown by the client's improvements in more than one domain. Given the evident importance of the coach-client relationship in producing positive coaching outcomes, it is imperative to understand the factors which contribute to a successful relationship (Gessnitzer & Kauffeld, 2015; Lai & McDowell, 2016; Odendaal, 2016). These are referred to as *critical success factors* in this study.

A key critical success factor is the capabilities and personal characteristics of the coach (Boyce et al., 2010; Odendaal, 2016; Simon et al., 2014). To be effective, coaches need to have specific emotional capacities conducive to creating a safe coaching space, adequate coaching experience relevant to the needs of the client and knowledge of the client's organisation and industry (Boyce et al., 2010; Odendaal, 2016). It is further recommended that coaches use supervision from experienced coaches for personal development (Graßmann et al., 2020; Koortzen & Odendaal, 2016; Passmore & Law, 2009). Coach capabilities are used extensively in matching coach and client (Boyce et al., 2010; Simon et al., 2014); this entails the process of allocating a coach to a client based on predetermined criteria (Wycherley & Cox, 2008). There is, however, contention in literature surrounding the importance of matching as a critical success factor, which is further discussed in Section 2.5.2 (Boyce et al., 2010; de Haan et al., 2013).

Equally important to the success of the coach-client relationship, albeit less researched, are client factors (O'Broin & Palmer, 2019; Pennington, 2020). These include clients' readiness, motivation, commitment to the coaching process and active involvement

(Gessnitzer & Kauffeld, 2015; Kretzschmar, 2010; Mosteo, et al., 2021; Pandolfi, 2020). Kretzschmar (2010) concludes that there are complex constituents that influence whether a client is ready to change (and therefore actively engage with the coaching experience), which ultimately influences the success of the coach-client relationship. Relational processes such as rapport, trust, commitment and collaboration also contribute to a favourable coach-client relationship (Booysen, 2015; Boyce et al., 2010; Ely et al., 2010). Lastly, the organisation also plays a role in the success of the coach-client relationship through providing support and a conducive organisational culture (Odendaal, 2016). The critical success factors identified in the research are discussed in detail in Section 2.5.

Notwithstanding the empirical evidence related to critical success factors, there is scant evidence on whether they translate in a multicultural context, or when coach and client are operating from different cultural perspectives (Booysen, 2015; Odendaal & le Roux, 2016; Peterson, 2007; Plaister-Ten, 2009; Rosinski, 2003). The studies researching coach-client relationships are predominantly from European and/or American contexts, and as such the applicability of the findings to a unique and culturally-rich country such as South Africa is unclear (Geber & Keane, 2013). In addition, researchers have identified lack of cultural consideration in their studies as a clear limitation, and recommend that future research take cognisance of cultural influence (Lowman, 2007). These considerations are pertinent to this study, which aims to explore the influence culture may have on the success factors of the coach-client relationship in the unique multicultural context of South Africa.

Informed by specific research on culture (Gilbert & Rosinski, 2008; Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2006; Hofstede & Milosevic, 2018) (see Section 2.6.2), this study defines culture as *a multidimensional construct referring to a groups' shared way of doing and thinking in their social systems, that distinguishes them from other groups.* This study therefore aims to investigate the influence of *social* culture and not organisational culture (i.e. the shared beliefs and values that defines the organisation) on the coach-client relationship. A multicultural context thus refers to a context within which cultural differences between individuals are rife.

South Africa is a culturally complex and demographically diverse nation, characterised by eleven official languages, with over 60 million citizens from several different racial groups and socio-economic backgrounds (O'Flaherty & Everson, 2009; Odendaal & le Roux, 2016; Statistics South Africa, 2021). The researcher postulates that South Africa's heterogeneous and multicultural context is such that the probability of coaching in a context without cultural influences is low. It is therefore imperative to be cognisant of the potential influence of cultural

factors when investigating, exploring and attempting to understand the coach-client relationship in South Africa (Baron & Azizollah, 2019; Odendaal & le Roux, 2016; Passmore & Law, 2009).

Research has shown that cultural differences or influences may potentially impact the coach-client relationship (Rosinski, 2003). As such, the coach-client relationship may not be adequately understood (or even effective) if individual cultures, as well as cultural contexts, are not considered (Baron & Azizollah, 2019; Booysen, 2015; O'Broin & Palmer, 2019; Odendaal & le Roux, 2016; Passmore & Law, 2009; Rosinski, 2003). A few key studies, albeit limited, aim to identify which cultural factors may impact the coach-client relationship. Research indicates that the intercultural competence of the coach may contribute to a successful coach-client relationship in a multicultural context (Baron & Azizollah, 2019; Coetzee, 2012; Ferreira, 2016; Odendaal & le Roux, 2016; Passmore & Law, 2009). To this end, Hammer et al. (2003) define intercultural competence as an individual's capability of behaving and thinking in an interculturally suitable manner. In support, researchers have furthermore identified cultural awareness (Baron & Azizollah, 2019; Coetzee, 2012; Odendaal & le Roux, 2016), cultural knowledge (Chmielecki & Contreras-Loera, 2020; Peterson, 2007; van Zyl et al., 2011) and cultural intelligence (Booysen, 2015; van Zyl et al., 2011) as potentially key components in developing a coach's intercultural competence. These constructs and their applicability to this study are further unpacked in Section 2.6.4.

Notwithstanding the potentially significant impact of intercultural competence, research specifically addressing these aspects in the unique context of South Africa is sparse. More specifically, insights into the critical success factors of the coach-client relationship anchored in this multicultural context is limited. The problem statement and consequent research question and objectives of this study are discussed next.

1.2 Problem Statement

Little is known about whether the critical success factors of the coach-client relationship in European and American contexts are equally applicable and transferrable to a multicultural context such as South Africa. The current body of knowledge and research on specific success factors of the coach-client relationship are based on questionnaire designs predominantly conducted in European (De Haan et al., 2013; Gessnitzer & Kauffeld, 2015) or American settings (Boyce et al., 2010; Gregory & Levy, 2011) with limited recognition of the influence which culture may bring (Geber & Keane, 2013; Odendaal & le Roux, 2016). It is proposed that the studies represent participants' views that are largely shaped by western paradigms, and the findings from such studies may not apply equally to non-western and

diverse contexts, such as South Africa. In particular, the diverse demographics of South Africa (see Section 2.6.1) make for a unique multicultural landscape, such that there will inevitably be cultural factors influencing the coach-client relationship in South African organisations (Coetzee, 2012; Odendaal & le Roux, 2016). However, there is limited recognition in literature of the potential contribution of culture to a successful coach-client relationship. This study thus aims to address this limitation.

1.3 Research Question and Objectives

Against this background, the purpose of this study is to address the need to obtain a deeper understanding of the potential influence culture may have on the critical success factors of the coach-client relationship in a multicultural context such as South Africa. This study proposes that due to the unique and diverse cultural landscape of South Africa, cultural factors will inevitably play a role in the relationship between South African coaches and clients. The cultural factors which influence the coach-client relationships are understudied and this study aims to help close the gap in the literature. O'Broin & Palmer (2019, p. 482) provides a pertinent justification for the need for further research on the influence of culture on the coach-client relationship by stating that "Coaching inevitably takes place within a relationship, yet we are some way from understanding the nature of the coaching relationship across individuals, dyads, groups, cultures, types of coaching, coaching approaches, contexts and time".

This study, therefore, aims to address a particular aspect of these "missing links" and provide useful information to the growing body of coaching research; it also aims to add to the limited literature covering coaching in a multicultural context. Given this, the primary research question is posed as: How does culture influence the critical success factors of the coach-client relationship?

To address the research question, the following key theoretical and empirical research objectives are set out for this study:

1.3.1 Theoretical Objectives

There are three key theoretical objectives which this study aims to achieve: (1) to present a comprehensive literature review to identify the critical success factors of the coach-client relationship; (2) to determine the influence culture has on the coach-client relationship, in particular, to identify the key cultural theories which inform the influence of culture; and (3) to utilise the findings to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the coach-client

relationship, in particular to the limited research on the influence of culture on the coach-client relationship.

1.3.2 Empirical Objectives

The study has a two-phased approach to achieve its empirical objectives. Phase One includes the output of this study in the form of a minor thesis. Phase Two includes the confirmation of the conceptual framework obtained from Phase One. Phase Two will, however, not be included as part of the minor thesis and will be published as an academic article in a peer-reviewed journal, subsequent to submission of Phase One. Each phase will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

The empirical objectives for Phase One are: (1) to explore and describe coach's lived experiences concerning the influence of culture on the critical success factors of the coach-client relationship; (2) to identify strategies that coaches can employ in a multicultural context to enhance the success of their relationships with their clients; and (3) to develop a conceptual framework which can be used by coaches to inform the success of the coach-client relationship in a multicultural context.

The empirical objective for Phase Two of the study is to corroborate the conceptual framework developed as part of Phase One, utilising the Delphi technique to obtain verification of the contents of the framework from a panel of experts.

Given the exploratory nature and objectives of this study, a qualitative study is deemed appropriate and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. The next section will provide an outline of the structure of the study.

1.4 Structure of Study

Chapter 2 meets the first and second theoretical objectives through a rigorous analysis of the literature on the coach-client relationship and culture. This analysis provides further depth to the study, culminating in a clear justification and rationale for this study. Chapter 3 provides the research methodology adopted to address the empirical research objectives. To this end, the research design and approach for both phases of this study are presented. Chapter 4 presents the findings of this study, followed by Chapter 5 which discusses the findings in relation to literature. The study concludes with Chapter 6 which provides a synopsis of the study's key contributions, limitations, recommendations for future research and concluding remarks by the researcher.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature review to follow is a thorough analysis of research on two key aspects of this study namely the coach-client relationship, and the potential influence of culture on this relationship. This study specifically aims to explore the influence of culture on the critical success factors of the coach-client relationship in a unique multicultural context such as South Africa. Firstly, the definition of coaching will be stipulated to anchor this study in the realm of coaching in an organisational context. Thereafter, the value of coaching in organisations will be demonstrated through reference to key empirical evidence to provide context for the relevance and importance of further research on the influence of culture on the coach-client relationship. The coach-client relationship will then be defined for this study, and evidence for its' importance in promoting coaching success will be provided, along with the critical success factors of the coach-client relationship identified in research. The literature study will then proceed to the next key aspect namely the importance of considering the role of culture in coaching. To provide sufficient information on this aspect, a contextual overview of the multicultural context of South Africa within which this study operates will be provided, along with a discussion on the definition of culture and theoretical cultural orientation frameworks which inform the practice of coaching. Lastly, the cultural factors identified by research that may impact the coach-client relationship will be analysed.

2.2 Defining Coaching

Coaching has gained tremendous momentum over the past decade and is continuing to evolve as an industry towards professionalisation (Burt & Talati, 2017; Grant et al., 2010; International Coach Federation, 2016; Odendaal & le Roux, 2016). Along with this momentum, an applied discipline with a range of different types and forms of coaching has emerged. As such, it is important to distinguish between these types and forms to ascertain the domain in which this study is anchored, and how it defines coaching.

2.2.1 Types of Coaching

Firstly, it is pertinent to distinguish between coaching and therapy. Coaching differs from therapy in that it involves intervention with *a non-clinical* approach, and does not result in a potential diagnosis of a client who may be distressed (Grant, 2006; Simon et al., 2014; Theeboom et al., 2014). Whilst certain coaching concepts, such as the working alliance (discussed in Section 2.4.1) is derived from therapeutic practice (McKenna & Davis, 2009), the distinction as stated remains critical. Secondly, given that this study operates within the practice of Industrial Psychology, it is approached from a psychological perspective. As such,

the definition of the practice of the psychology for coaching, i.e. "coaching psychology" in South Africa is noteworthy (Odendaal & Le Roux, 2013, p.18):

> Coaching psychology, as practiced by a 'coaching' psychologist is a conversational process of facilitating positive development and change towards optimal functioning, well-being and increased performance within work and personal life domains, in the absence of clinically significant mental health issues, and through the application of a wide range of psychological theories and principles. The intervention is action orientated with measurable outcomes, but also reflective towards creating greater self-awareness and meaning and directed at individuals, groups, organisations and communities within a culturally specific context.

It is important to note that *coaching*, as referred to in this study, is distinct from the practice of *coaching psychology,* as the stringent requirements for coaching psychology (i.e. practice limited to registered psychologists and an increased focus on psychological theories, thereby including a scientific approach to interventions) are not necessarily applicable to coaching (Odendaal & Le Roux, 2016). However, despite the distinction, the definition of coaching psychology is of interest to this study as it highlights the need to consider the "culturally specific context" within which interventions are executed, which is a key aspect of this study.

Having isolated coaching from the practice of therapy and coaching psychology, it is important to understand the different types of coaching. A salient source in understanding the different types of coaching is Standards Australia (2011). Table 1 provides a taxonomy that describes and separates different categories of coaching based on definitions of coaching identified in literature.

Table 1.1

Standards Australia Coaching Definitions

Type of Coaching	Definition
Business Coaching	"Business Coaching refers to the provision of coaching services focused on the design of business systems, and business financial and marketing strategies. It is distinguished from executive and workplace coaching in that business coaching is concerned with enhancing the performance of the business as an entity, rather than focused specifically on the skills, performance or personal capacities of the executive, employee or team-members being coached." p.9
Developmental Coaching	"Developmental coaching refers to coaching aimed at enhancing a coachee's ability to meet current and future challenges more effectively via

the development of increasingly complex understanding of the self, others and the systems in which the coachee is involved." p.9

Executive Coaching	"Executive coaching refers to coaching services provided to executives and line managers for the purpose of improving skills, performance or work-related personal development." p.9
Life Coaching	"Life coaching refers to one-to-one coaching provided to an individual for the purpose of development. It may incorporate skills, performance, developmental or remedial coaching. It tends to adopt a 'whole of life approach' and as such may impact work and non-work-related development." p.10
Performance Coaching	"Performance coaching refers to coaching that is aimed at improving the coaches ability to achieve work related goals such as specific metric based organisational outcomes. It is not so much interested in the acquisition or establishment of skills as it is in assisting the coachee to use established skills more effectively. Performance coaching typically involves the articulation of desired levels of performance and pathways to achieve those goals. It may also involve the identification of current and potential cognitive, behavioural and environmental blocks to performance. While performance coaching can be conducted as a stand-alone intervention (e.g. targeted goal focused coaching), it is often a subset of a wider coaching intervention involving both skills coaching, developmental and remedial coaching strategies. Coaches engaged in performance coaching can be expected to have knowledge and skills associated with goal setting, motivation and change management." p.10-11
Remedial Coaching	"Remedial coaching is coaching aimed at the remediation of problematic attitudes or behaviours that interfere with the coachees organisational performance. It may involve a combination of skills, performance or developmental coaching, and is most often conducted in response to the identification of potential career or performance derailers. In addition to knowledge and skills associated with skills, performance and developmental coaching, a coach engaging in remedial coaching is expected to have competencies and understanding of the psychological and behavioural processes associated with the problematic attitudes and behaviours." p.11
Skills Coaching	"Skills Coaching refers to coaching that is aimed at acquiring or improving work-related skills. Examples of such skills include (but are not limited to) delegation, time management, active listening, questioning, feedback and performance management skills. The purpose of skills coaching is to build capability, rather than achieve particular work-related targets. While skills coaching can be conducted as a stand-alone intervention (e.g. following a skills training course), it is often a subset of a wider coaching intervention involving performance and developmental coaching strategies. Coaches engaged in skills coaching can be expected to have knowledge of the process of skills acquisition, and competencies in supporting the coachee to acquire and develop the particular skills targeted in the coaching." p.11

Source: Standards Australia. (2011). Coaching in organisations. In *Draft handbook produced by Coaching Guideline Working Group HB41 of Standards Australia HR & Employment Committee MB 9.* pp 9-11. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429469510-11

Coaching in this study is aimed specifically at coaching within an organisational context. Therefore, life coaching, which relates specifically to non-work-related matters, is not the focus of this study. The remaining types of coaching shown in Table 1 all relate to the

organisational context; distinctions should however be made between these types to ascertain their applicability to this study. Firstly, business coaching focuses specifically on improving the "business as an entity" (Table 1.1) and extends into the financial sphere, which this study does not seek to explore. Developmental, performance, remedial and skills coaching focus on specific work-related outcomes and is therefore also not the main interest to this study. This study will specifically focus on *executive coaching*, which is most applicable to the domain in which this study is operating.

Executive coaching is aimed at improving "skills, performance or work-related personal development" (Table 1.1) and therefore it encompasses several personal and professional work-related outcomes. Executive coaching has differing definitions in literature and is frequently used interchangeably with leadership coaching, as researchers describe executive coaching as a form of leadership development (de Haan et al., 2013; Grant et al., 2010). For this reason, this study will refer to executive/leadership coaching interchangeably. The definition proposed by Standards Australia is endorsed by stipulations that executive coaching is an intervention utilised to improve work-related performance and achieve mutually agreed-upon goals (Kilburg, 1996); it is also a tool for enhancing both professional and personal skills (Grant et al., 2010; Sharma, 2017). Therefore, whilst there are differing definitions of executive/leadership coaching in literature, there is consensus regarding the outcomes which executive/leadership coaching aims to achieve.

2.2.2 Internal vs External Coaching

In operationalising coaching for the purpose of this study, it is important to understand the difference between an internal and an external coach (Grant et al., 2010; International Coach Federation, 2016; Jones et al., 2016). In an organisational context, an internal coach is employed by the organisation to fulfil the duties of a coach either on a full-time basis or in conjunction with additional roles they may have (Jones et al., 2016). An external coach is appointed by the organisation as an independent expert to coach specific employees within the organisation (Jones et al., 2016). Executive/leadership coaching is most typically conducted by an external coach (Grant et al., 2010; Standards Australia, 2011). However, Grant et al. (2010, p. 129) postulate that *workplace coaching* is a form of coaching which includes executive coaching but extends to non-executive employees and can also be conducted internally with specific employees adopting the role of the coach. Therefore, executive/leadership coaches are identified in the literature as being either internal or external coaches. It was not a selection criterion for coaches to be either internal or external coaches to participate in this study. However, all twelve participants in this study were external coaches (further discussed in Section 3.3.1).

2.2.3 Individual and Team Coaching

Another salient distinction to consider is the difference between team coaching and individual/ one-on-one coaching. Whereas individual coaching speaks to a coaching intervention targeted specifically towards one individual, team coaching collectively targets a group of individuals working together towards a common and shared purpose, in order to enhance effectiveness (Clutterbuck, 2010; Hackman & Wageman, 2005; Maseko et al., 2019). Team coaching is a multifaceted process targeted towards an assisted change of both the individual members in a team and the team as a collective (Anderson et al., 2008). There is less focus in the literature on team coaching compared to individual coaching, however, there is empirical support for its effectiveness as a development tool in organisations (Hastings & Pennington, 2019). Whilst several participants in this study coach at both team and individual levels, given the strong focus on the individual relationship between the coach and the client, the focus of this study was on exploring cultural influences in *individual* coach-client relationships that take place through *one-on-one* coaching sessions.

2.2.4 Proposed Definition for Coaching

Based on the distinctions around the types and forms of coaching discussed, the definition of coaching proposed for this study is as follows:

> *An intervention facilitated by a coach (either external or internal) to a client (employee) within an organisation in order to improve both professional and personal skills, facilitate leadership development, and work together to achieve agreed-upon goals which will positively impact the individual personally and professionally, as well as the organisation.*

Having clearly defined coaching for this study, it is pertinent to ascertain whether coaching is indeed a valuable practice in organisations. Understanding the value-add of coaching is critical to justify this study, as it illustrates why further research into the mechanisms of coaching is important. As such, the empirical evidence for coaching effectiveness in organisations will be discussed next.

2.3 Coaching Effectiveness in Organisations

Given the increase of coaching interventions in organisations, researchers have set out to empirically establish whether coaching is indeed an effective and worthy investment for organisations. Findings in the literature largely suggest that coaching is a valuable intervention for organisations to employ (Burt & Talati, 2017; Grover & Furnham, 2016; Jones et al., 2016; Longenecker & McCartney, 2020; Odendaal, 2016; Sharma, 2017; Theeboom et al., 2014).

Several studies and meta-analyses provide strong evidence for the effectiveness of coaching in organisations through the measurement of several outcome variables, which positively impact both the individual and the organisation (Burt & Talati, 2017; Jones et al., 2016; Theeboom et al., 2014). These will be discussed.

Coaching interventions have been found to improve skills and performance at the individual level (Longenecker & McCartney, 2020), which consequently translate into positive benefits for the organisation such as a better return on investment and enhanced leadership (Jones et al., 2016; Theeboom et al., 2014). More specifically, coaching has a positive effect on affective outcomes in individuals such as improved well-being (Burt & Talati, 2017; Theeboom et al., 2014) improved self-efficacy (Jones et al., 2016) and enhanced coping strategies (Burt & Talati, 2017; Theeboom et al., 2014). These outcomes impact individuals personally and professionally, and further lead to increased leadership development and employee engagement (Sharma, 2017) which positively impacts both teams and organisations (Burt & Talati, 2017; Jones et al., 2016; Theeboom et al., 2014). Coaching effectiveness has further been measured by utilising goal-setting as an outcome variable and has been found to improve individuals' self-driven capabilities of setting and reaching goals (Burt & Talati, 2017; Theeboom et al., 2014).

Despite the evident success of coaching, studies posit that there is still a great need for continued rigorous academic research in the field, as the empirical research conducted on coaching is not keeping up with the growth of the industry (Burt & Talati, 2017; Grant et al., 2010; Odendaal, 2016). Specifically, researchers call for an increased understanding of the mechanisms which impact coaching outcomes. These include elements such as the coach-client relationship (Burt & Talati, 2017; Grover & Furnham, 2016; Theeboom et al., 2014) as well as contextual (Jones et al., 2016) and/or cultural factors (Grover & Furnham, 2016; Sharma, 2017) which may play a role in the success of a coaching outcome. This study, therefore, aims to add to the growing body of research that is required by the field of coaching by specifically addressing the research area of the coach-client relationship and culture, and gaining further insights into the potential influence that culture may have on this relationship. The section to follow will discuss the research that has been conducted on the coach-client relationship and where this study aims to address any research gaps.

2.4 The Coach-Client Relationship

Given the empirical evidence of the effectiveness of coaching, and the widespread use of coaching in organisations, researchers resolved to determine which factors contribute to the success of its implementation. These factors are referred to by poignant researchers in

the field of coaching as "active ingredients" (de Haan et al., 2013; McKenna & Davis, 2009). One such active ingredient emerging from the literature as being critical for successful coaching outcomes is the coach-client relationship (Boyce et al., 2010; de Haan et al., 2013; Gettman et al., 2019; Graßmann et al., 2020; Lai & McDowell, 2016; McKenna & Davis, 2009; O'Broin & Palmer, 2019). The coach-client relationship is a key aspect of this study, and therefore a thorough understanding of the definition of the coach-client relationship is required. The section to follow discusses the various definitions of the coach-client relationship in literature and proposes the definition for this study.

2.4.1. Defining the Coach-Client Relationship

Given that this study is anchored in the Industrial Psychology domain, the practice of coaching falls within an organisational realm. An important consideration in this regard is that the organisation is thus a key stakeholder to consider in the relationship between the coach and the client (Odendaal, 2016), as in many cases the organisation is responsible for initiating this relationship. To this effect, the organisation may also be referred to by a coach as their "client" as they are providing compensation for coaching services (Burger & van Coller-Peter, 2019). However, for the sake of clarity, this study refers to the client as the individual who is receiving coaching (Burger & van Coller-Peter, 2019) and who is in a dyadic relationship with the coach. This study will thus use the term *the organisation* when referring to the third party involved in this relationship.

There is no definitive and widely agreed-upon definition for the coach-client relationship and researchers have postulated various conceptualisations (Crosse, 2019; Gettman et al., 2019; O'Broin & Palmer, 2019). As mentioned above, the organisation will be a third-party influence on the coach-client relationship (Gettman et al., 2019). However, to define the relationship, the *coach-client relationship* speaks specifically to the relationship between *only* the coach and client.

Critical to the conceptualisation of the coach-client relationship is the fact that researchers studying coaching and the coach-client relationship have adopted the concept of the working alliance from psychotherapy research and - due to its generalisability (Bordin, 1979) - applied it to the coach-client relationship (de Haan et al., 2016; de Haan et al., 2013; McKenna & Davis, 2009; O'Broin & Palmer, 2019). The working alliance was identified by Bordin (1979, p. 253) as pertinent to the therapeutic relationship and is characterised by three key properties namely: (1) the agreement on goals; (2) task allocation; and (3) the development of a bond.

Researchers use the concept of working alliance, coach-client relationship and coaching relationship interchangeably and may even refer to the relationship as the "coaching alliance" (de Haan et al., 2016; Gettman et al., 2019; Grant et al., 2010; McKenna & Davis, 2009; Odendaal, 2016). This, therefore, indicates that the coach-client relationship is characterised by a bond between the coach and the client, the coach and the client mutually agree on specific goals and the coach allocates specific tasks for the client to complete as part of the coaching intervention. O'Broin and Palmer (2019, p. 473) illustrate the interchangeability of the terms as outlined above, and through the integration of various researchers' definitions define the coaching alliance as follows: "The coaching alliance reflects the quality of the coachee and coach's engagement in collaborative, purposive work within the coaching relationship, and is jointly negotiated and renegotiated throughout the coaching process over time".

The study will adopt the above definition posited by O'Broin & Palmer (2019) for the operationalisation of the coach-client relationship in this study, as it adequately describes the fact that the relationship is collaborative and purposive, indicative of the goals of the working alliance. This allows the terms coach-client relationship and working alliance to be used interchangeably in this study. In addition, the definition extends beyond the concept of the working alliance by stipulating that the relationship is redefined over time, which adequately incorporates the fact that coaching interventions typically take place over some time (O'Broin & Palmer, 2019; Odendaal, 2016). It is essential to note that despite the overlap and interchangeable use of terms, the concept of the working alliance is also commonly utilised as a *measure* of the strength of the coach-client relationship in empirical coaching studies (de Haan et al., 2016; de Haan et al., 2013; Gessnitzer & Kauffeld, 2015; McKenna & Davis, 2009; O'Broin & Palmer, 2019). Such studies have found that the strength of the working alliance between coach and client significantly impacts the success of the coaching outcome, thus indicating that the coach-client relationship is a key variable in coaching effectiveness. This corroborates and justifies the need for this study, wherein the coach-client relationship is a core focus. The evidence in support of the importance of the coach-client relationship will be further analysed.

2.4.2 The Coach-Client Relationship and Coaching Outcomes

Firstly, a large scale study by de Haan et al. (2016) provides evidence for the impact of the strength of the working alliance on coaching success. Their findings indicate that the strength of the working alliance, as measured by agreement on goals, task allocation and development of a bond, reported on by both the coach and the client, significantly impacts the success of the coaching intervention. These findings are corroborated by a meta-analysis

conducted by Graßmann et al. (2020) who found that the working alliance significantly impacts the effectiveness of coaching outcomes. A thorough analysis of the effect of the working alliance on coaching outcomes indicates that a strong working alliance results in clients reporting increased levels of contentment and perceived effectiveness of the coaching process, improved self-efficacy, increased achievement of goals and increased acquisition of knowledge (Graßmann et al., 2020).

Further corroborating the importance of the coach-client relationship, several studies have found the relationship to have a mediating effect on several alternative factors influencing coaching outcomes (Baron & Morin, 2009; Boyce et al., 2010; de Haan et al., 2016; De Haan et al., 2013; O'Broin & Palmer, 2019). The strength of the relationship mediates the impact of the number of coaching sessions provided, the client's perception of the support of the coach (Baron & Morin, 2009), the influence of self-efficacy (de Haan et al., 2016; de Haan et al., 2013) and the scope of techniques utilised (de Haan et al., 2013). Further support is thus provided that the coach-client relationship is essential for successful coaching due to its mediating effect over other determinants of coaching success.

Converse to the above findings, a more recent longitudinal study by de Haan et al. (2020) indicates that the length of the relationship between a coach and a client may impact the relative importance of the strength of the relationship. Their study found that the working alliance was more related to coaching effectiveness at the start of a coaching relationship, and had less impact as the coaching proceeded (de Haan et al., 2020). These findings contradict aforementioned studies highlighting the importance of the coach-client relationship, suggesting that researchers need to continue efforts into exploring and understanding the active ingredients for positive coaching outcomes.

Notwithstanding contrary evidence regarding the importance of the coach-client relationship, given the paucity of support for the effect of the coach-client relationship on coaching outcomes, researchers have identified the need to understand which specific mechanisms of the relationship contribute to its success (Boyce et al., 2010; de Haan et al., 2013; Ely et al., 2010; Gessnitzer & Kauffeld, 2015; Graßmann et al., 2020; Lai & McDowell, 2016; O'Broin & Palmer, 2019; Odendaal, 2016). As such, this study aims to add to such research by exploring the factors which contribute to the success of the coach-client relationship, whilst considering and accounting for the influence of culture. It is, however, imperative to remain aware of the critical success factors identified by research that play a key role in fostering a successful coach-client relationship.

2.5 Success Factors of the Coach-Client Relationship

Through rigorous analysis and integration of the literature, this study has ascertained that the following features: (1) coach characteristics; (2) coach-client matching; (3) client characteristics; (4) relational processes; (5) organisational influence; and (6) coach-client perspectives of the coach-client relationship contribute to its prosperity. These will subsequently be discussed in more detail.

2.5.1 Coach Characteristics

The coach is a key role-player in the success of a coaching relationship (Boyce et al., 2010; Gettman et al., 2019; Grant et al., 2010; Graßmann et al., 2020; Gregory & Levy, 2011; McKenna & Davis, 2009; Pandolfi, 2020; Simon et al., 2014; Spaten, 2020). Pandolfi (2020) conducted a critical literature review of key studies evaluating the active ingredients in coaching and identified that several studies attested to the importance of a coach's skills and behaviour in building a successful relationship. More specifically, the emotional capacities of the coach have been found to have an impact on the coaching relationship (Gregory & Levy, 2011; McKenna & Davis, 2009). Gregory and Levy (2011) found that coaches who show individual consideration towards their clients and foster a positive coaching atmosphere are likely to develop higher-quality coach-client relationships. Coaches who are empathetic towards their clients (Grant, 2014; Gregory & Levy, 2011; McKenna & Davis, 2009) by being non-judgmental (Kretzschmar, 2010; Spaten, 2020) and providing them with a safe space to openly communicate (Graßmann et al., 2020) are also likely to develop a successful relationship with their clients.

In addition, coaches who are well informed of the industry and business context in which their client is operating are more likely to foster successful relationships (Boyce et al., 2010). Moreover, research has indicated that the evaluation of a coach's performance through supervision and monitoring from experienced coaches is also key to favourable coaching relationships (Graßmann et al., 2020; Koortzen & Odendaal, 2016; Simon et al., 2014). The capabilities of the coach, therefore, are key to the coach-client relationship. Awareness of this success factor of the coach-client relationship is pertinent to this study, as it indicates that the coach may be a key driver in fostering successful relationships within a multicultural context. These coach capabilities and characteristics further play a key role in the process of coach-client matching (Gettman et al., 2019; Simon et al., 2014) which will be discussed in the section to follow.

2.5.2 Coach-Client Matching and Selection

A key theme emerging in the literature regarding the success of the coach-client relationship pertains to coach-client matching and selection (Boyce et al., 2010; Simon et al., 2014; Wycherley & Cox, 2008). Matching refers to the process of pairing coach and client together based on how well they are deemed to work together, measured against specific criteria including the needs of the client, personality, demographics, the coach's skills and credentials (Wycherley & Cox, 2008). Selection refers to the process where a coach is chosen for a particular client based on their competency for the role (Wycherley & Cox, 2008). This study will speak to these processes simultaneously and refer to the selection and/or matching process collectively, referring to the process that takes place before the coach and client formally enter into a relationship. This process may also be referred to in the literature as the "chemistry" process (Burger & van Coller-Peter, 2019; Simon et al., 2014) wherein a coach and client evaluate their willingness to work together and their perceived ability to achieve desired outcomes as a dyad.

The determinants and relative importance of the matching process have been researched and overall there is a lack of consensus among coaching researchers regarding the effect that matching has on the success of the coach-client relationship. Some studies have identified that several differentiated matching criteria have been found to lead to higher quality coach-client relationships. These include matching based on the coach's capabilities (Simon et al., 2014), interpersonal characteristics (Ianiro et al., 2013) and managerial and learning styles (Boyce et al., 2010). The process of matching (which takes place before the coaching process) has been identified as a critical step to promote the likelihood of goal attainment and a successful coaching relationship (Simon et al., 2014). In contrast, de Haan et al. (2016) and de Haan et al. (2013) found that coach-client matching did *not* influence the strength of the ensuing relationships. They posit that, notwithstanding potential limitations in their studies, matching based on personality or demographical factors may not be as critical to coaching as is stated in certain literature. These results provide support for the study of Bozer et al. (2015, p. 227) who found that coach-client matching based on "gender or other personal characteristics" may be less important to coaching outcomes than matching based on the coach's experience.

These confounding results in the literature regarding the importance of coach-client matching (O'Broin & Palmer, 2019) is a particular point of contention to consider for this study. Research calls for the need to further understand the impact of matching based on similarity across specific characteristics (Boyce et al., 2010). To this effect, this study looks specifically

at which factors may impact coach-client relationships when cultural influence is being considered.

2.5.3 Client Characteristics

The client plays an equally critical role in determining whether the coaching relationship is successful (Gessnitzer & Kauffeld, 2015; Kretzschmar, 2010; Pandolfi, 2020; Simon et al., 2014). A key theme emerging from the literature is the client's willingness and readiness for coaching (Kretzschmar, 2010; Mosteo et al., 2021; Pandolfi, 2020). A client who is ready to partake in the coaching intervention will play an important role in building a beneficial coaching relationship.

A key study exploring client readiness by Kretzschmar (2010) provides insights into the various factors which influence whether a client is ready for coaching or not through a *Coaching Client Readiness Model.* One such factor which is of interest is that of *Culture and Class.* This suggests that the client's culture and social class could play a role in determining whether he/she is ready to engage in the coaching process or not. Kretzschmar (2010) calls for further research on client readiness by taking into account cultural aspects and utilising a more diverse sample. This study aims to address this gap and provide insights into the cultural factors which may influence the success of coaching relationships.

Mosteo et al. (2021) provide further support for the importance of a client to be ready for engagement in the coaching process. More specifically, they found that clients willingness for coaching impacted their perceptions of how much value they receive from the coaching process (Mosteo et al., 2021). Research also highlights the importance of active engagement and involvement from the client (Gessnitzer & Kauffeld, 2015; McKenna & Davis, 2009) in ensuring the success of the relationship. Gessnitzer and Kauffeld (2015)'s study is pertinent in highlighting this key feature of the coaching relationship. They found that when specific coaching goals needed to be agreed upon by both parties in the coaching relationship, there was an increased likelihood of successful outcomes if such agreement were initiated by the client. Agreement on goals is a key aspect of the working alliance and highlights the importance of an active client in promoting the strength of the coach-client relationship. This study provides support for McKenna and Davis (2009) who postulate that the success of a coaching relationship is impacted by a client being actively involved. Overall, there is consensus in the literature that whilst the coach plays a key role in establishing a successful relationship, the client cannot be passive in this respect, and through readiness, willingness, engagement, and involvement, also contributes to the success of the relationship.

2.5.4 Relational Processes

The next critical success factor is the interplay between the coach and client, and the relational processes which contribute to the success of the relationship. The fundamental relational processes identified by research that affect the quality of the coaching relationship are trust, rapport (Booysen, 2015; Boyce et al., 2010; Ely et al., 2010; Gan & Chong, 2015) and contracting (Burger & van Coller-Peter, 2019). When these components of the relationship are present within the coaching process, improved coach-client relationships are fostered (Boyce et al., 2010; Ely et al., 2010).

Trust in particular has gained great attention in coaching literature (Boyce et al., 2010; Gan & Chong, 2015; Gregory & Levy, 2011; O'Broin & Palmer, 2019; Spaten, 2020). Trust was identified in the study of Gregory and Levy (2011) as the most critical determinant of the quality of the coaching relationship. The study found that when clients reported higher levels of trust in their coaches, the quality of the coaching relationship was improved. Trust is of particular interest to this study as it has further been identified by researchers of cross-cultural coaching to be an important component of effective coach-client relationships in multicultural contexts (Booysen, 2015). In addition, the rapport between coach and client is also identified as critical to the success of the relationship (Boyce et al, 2010; Gan & Chong, 2015). Boyce et al. (2010, p. 917) define rapport as "reducing the differences between the coach and client and building on similarities" which fosters connection and enhanced understanding between the two parties.

An additional relational component is the process of "contracting" (Burger & van Coller-Peter, 2019; Gettman et al., 2019; Kretzschmar, 2010; O'Broin & Palmer, 2019). Contracting is defined by Gettman et al. (2019) as the collaborative process between coach and client where the coaching arrangements are predetermined and agreed upon before commencing with the coaching process. The contracting process may also include a third party, namely the organisation (Burger & van Coller-Peter, 2019). Effective contracting has been associated with successful coaching relationships and enhanced coaching outcomes (Burger & van Coller-Peter, 2019; Gettman et al., 2019). More specifically, Gettman et al. (2019) highlight that effective contracting improved clients' perceptions of their coaches and the effectiveness of the coaching relationship. Interestingly, Gettman et al. (2019) posit that contracting may have been impacted by differing cultural backgrounds and orientations, a variable which their study did not account for, and as such, they identify the need for further exploration of the cultural factors which may impact contracting, and consequently the coach-client relationship. This call for research affirms the relevance of this study as it suggests that success factors for coach-client relationships may vary as a result of cultural differences.

2.5.5 Organisational Influence

O'Broin and Palmer (2019) and Odendaal (2016) postulate the importance of considering the context within which the relationship is taking place as a further factor that might impact the coaching process or the coaching relationship. In the case of executive/leadership coaching, the coach-client relationship is taking place within an organisational context (Odendaal, 2016; Standards Australia, 2011). As such, the organisation acts as both a contextual factor and a third role player in the coaching relationship which may influence the quality or effectiveness of the relationship (Odendaal, 2016; Sharma, 2017; Simon et al., 2014). This is because the culture of the organisation (Booysen, 2015; Passmore & Law, 2009; Sharma, 2017), and the responsibility of the organisation to effectively match coach and client (Odendaal, 2016), may impact the quality of the coach-client relationship. Notwithstanding the potential influence of the organisation, there is limited research on this contextual additional role player, and studies have called for further research in this regard (Pandolfi, 2020; Sharma, 2017).

2.5.6 Coach-Client Perspectives

A further possible influence on the quality of the coach-client relationship is that of differing perspectives between coach and client (Crosse, 2019; de Haan et al., 2010; Gilbert & Rosinski, 2008; Graßmann et al., 2020; Odendaal, 2016). It is important to consider that the respective judgements and beliefs of the coach and client concerning the effectiveness of the relationship may differ (de Haan et al., 2016). Researchers have therefore aimed to identify whether such differing perspectives are critical to consider in the coaching process (de Haan et al., 2010). Interestingly, both the studies of de Haan et al. (2010) and Graßmann et al. (2020) focusing on perspectives, found that there were no significant differences in coach or client perspectives. In contrast, de Haan et al. (2016) found that although both the coach and the client rated the strength of the working alliance as critical to coaching effectiveness, their ratings differed. Their findings indicated that coaches rated the relationship as less important to coaching effectiveness than clients (de Haan et al, 2016).

Given the contention in the literature regarding perspectives, Graßmann et al. (2020) highlight the importance of accounting for such potential influences when evaluating the coach-client relationship; they in fact identify the need for further studies in this regard. Of particular importance in respect of the potential influence of perspective, and critical to the aim of this study, is the potential differing of perspectives resulting from cultural differences (Chmielecki & Contreras-Loera, 2020; Lowman, 2007) which researchers in cross-cultural coaching studies have sought to explore further. The next section of this chapter will focus on

discussing and analysing the research on the role of culture in coaching and the coach-client relationship, as the influence of culture is a key element to this study.

2.6 The Role of Culture in Coaching

Notwithstanding the value of the research that inform our empirical knowledge on the mechanisms of coaching as discussed in the above sections, it should be reiterated that the studies largely originated within European or American settings and do not specifically account for cultural factors or diversity of sample within the study. This has been indicated throughout this study where researchers specifically identify the need to explore constructs by accounting for cultural influences. Coaching researchers recognise the need to evaluate research from a cultural lens (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018; Pandolfi, 2020) in order to scrutinise the applicability of empirical outcomes on non-Western societies or groups. Given this, and despite contention in literature (Plaister-Ten, 2009), several studies have identified that research on coaching and the coach-client relationship cannot ignore the potential impact that cultural influences may have on the success of the coach-client relationship (Booysen, 2015; Geber & Keane, 2013; Gilbert & Rosinski, 2008; Lowman, 2007; Milner et al., 2013; O'Broin & Palmer, 2019; Odendaal & le Roux, 2016; Peterson, 2007; Plaister-Ten, 2009; Rosinski, 2003; Simon et al., 2014).

Globalisation and the changing world of work have resulted in an increased likelihood of coaches working with clients from different backgrounds and cultures (Baron & Azizollah, 2019; Passmore & Law, 2009; Roth, 2017). As such, culture may influence the coach, the client and the organisation (Booysen, 2015; Odendaal, 2016; Passmore & Law, 2009). For all three these key role players, culture may impact their views and beliefs regarding leadership, which is a critical aspect of leadership/executive coaching (Booysen, 2015). As such, cross-cultural coaching or coaching in a multicultural context is a field which, although under-researched (Booysen, 2015; Gilbert & Rosinski, 2008; O'Broin & Palmer, 2019; Odendaal & le Roux, 2016) is gaining grounds in coaching research. It should be noted that the terms cross-cultural, multicultural or transcultural may be used interchangeably within the literature (Odendaal & le Roux, 2016). This study uses the term "multicultural context" to refer to an environment where cultural factors are likely to play a role given the diversity and demographics of the context. The unique multicultural context within which this study operates will receive attention in the next section.

2.6.1 Culture and Coaching in South Africa

South Africa is a developing country and is exceptionally unique in its cultural diversity (O'Flaherty & Everson, 2009; Odendaal & le Roux, 2016). It is a nation consisting of eleven official languages and more than 60 million citizens from several different racial and socio-economic backgrounds (Statistics South Africa, 2021). Coaching in South Africa has gained formidable traction as a strategy used widely in organisations for leadership development (Odendaal & Le Roux, 2016). Thus, given the growth of coaching as a profession in the multicultural context of South Africa, and the rich diversity of the nation, it can be deducted that coaching will inevitably take place within the context of cultural influences.

It is clear that given South Africa's eminent diversity, understanding coaching in South Africa needs to be approached from a unique contextual perspective (O'Flaherty & Everson, 2009). Further research is required to better understand South Africa's unique cultural landscape and how it may consequently impact the coaching relationship. Furthermore, as stated, the available research on coaching is to a great extent based on European or American samples, and it is unclear whether these research outcomes are transferable to the unique context of South Africa, further adding to the need to increase research in this regard (Geber & Keane, 2013). More specific to this study, the critical success factors of the coach-client relationships are derived from international studies and therefore insights into how these success factors translate in the context of South Africa are unclear. This situation provides pertinent justification for the need to explore the influence of culture on the critical success factors of the coach-client relationship in South Africa. The sample thus selected for the study (see Section 3.3.1) specifically have experience as coaches in South Africa's multicultural context. Thus, they should have the knowledge to address the potential influence of culture on the coach-client relationship in such a diverse environment.

Having established that the cultural context of South Africa is a vital consideration when implementing coaching interventions, it is important to identify what is known about how culture and its theoretical frameworks relate to and impact the practice of coaching, and also how researchers have thus far incorporated these aspects into their coaching research. As such, the section to follow will discuss the definitions of culture found in literature and a proposed definition for this study, as well as highlight the theoretical frameworks of culture and their relevance to this study and the practice of coaching.

2.6.2 Defining Culture

Defining culture is extremely difficult as there is no widely accepted definition of the term within literature (Booysen, 2015; Gilbert & Rosinski, 2008; Hofstede & Milosevic, 2018;

Milner et al., 2013; Roth, 2017). Culture can be used to describe the culture of a tribe, group, nation, organisation, society or individual (Hofstede & Milosevic, 2018), demonstrating the nature of its complexity. Research postulates that culture is multidimensional and can be understood through reference to various elements within its definition namely values and belief systems (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2006; Rosinski, 2003), traditional markers and observable elements such as race (Rosinski, 2003) language, customs (Malan, 2009), gender (Hofstede & Milosevic, 2018; Ye et al., 2016) or cultural orientation frameworks (Hofstede & Milosevic, 2018; Rosinski, 2003). The researcher thus postulates that given the plethora of diversity across several of these dimensions within the South African context, the complexity of culture within the context of this study is further illustrated.

Notwithstanding the difficulty associated with defining culture, several key researchers have shaped the general understanding of culture in literature, agreeing that culture is viewed as a collective phenomenon (Booysen, 2016) and a group's shared way of thinking, doing and interpreting that distinguishes them from other groups (Ferreira, 2016; Gilbert & Rosinski, 2008; Hofstede & Milosevic, 2018; Roth, 2017). In conducting interviews for this study, it became clear that a definition was required to anchor participants, to make a distinction between culture (as explored in this study) and organisational culture and to orientate their thinking around the questions being asked (see Section 3.3.4.3). Despite providing a definition, the researcher proposed culture as a **multidimensional** construct, not focussing on any specific element of culture discussed above, but rather propositioning culture as a broad phenomenon. This allowed participants to allocate their own meanings to specific dimensions. To this effect, the definition of culture for this study is as follows:

'Culture' is a multidimensional construct referring to a groups' shared way of doing and thinking in their social systems, that distinguishes them from other groups. To this effect, culture is referred to as 'social culture' and speaks to the culture of the individual coach and client in interaction, and not to the organisational culture.

A common way in which the role of culture is understood in the coaching literature is through the use of cultural orientation frameworks, in particular conceptualisation of culture on a national level (Hofstede & Milosevic, 2018; Rosinski, 2003). These will be discussed next.

2.6.3 Cultural Orientation Frameworks

The cultural orientation framework within which individuals operate can shape their beliefs regarding critical aspects of the coaching process; this is applicable to both coach and client (Gilbert & Rosinski, 2008). The key frameworks pertinent to the profession of coaching

that has relevance when considering culture in coaching include Hofstede Framework, Rosinski Framework, GLOBE Study and Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) Learning Framework. Each framework with their respective dimensions are in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Cultural Orientation Frameworks

Hofstede Framework	Rosinski's Framework	CCL Learning Framework	GLOBE Study
Individualism vs collectivism	Power and responsibility	Source of identity	Individualism vs collectivism
Power distance	Time management	Goals and means of achievement	Power distance
Uncertainty Avoidance	Identity and purpose	Orientation to authority	Uncertainty avoidance
Masculinity vs femininity	Organisational arrangements	Response to ambiguity	Gender egalitarianism
		Knowledge acquisition	Future orientation
Long-term orientation	Territory and boundaries	Perspective on time	Assertiveness
Indulgence vs restraint	Communication patterns	Outlook on life	Humane orientation
			Performance orientation
	Modes of thinking		

Adapted from: Hofstede, G., & Milosevic, D. (2018). Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede model in context. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 2*(1); Gilbert, K., & Rosinski, P. (2008). Accessing cultural orientations: the online cultural orientations framework assessment as a tool for coaching. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice, 1*(1); Van Velsor, E., McCauley, C. D., & Ruderman. M. N. (2010). *The center for creative leadership handbook of leadership development* (Vol 122). John Wiley & Sons; House R. J., Hanges, P. J., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P. W., & Gupta, V. (2004). *Culture, leadership & organizations: The GLOBE study of 62 societies.* Sage Publications.

Table 2.1 shows that each framework posits unique cultural dimensions that speak to how culture may inform the thoughts of behaviours of individuals. For example, Hofstede postulates that there are six dimensions namely individualism cs collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity vs femininity, long-term orientation and indulgence vs restraint. Cultural orientation may inform how individuals differ across these specific dimensions.

It is evident that despite the different dimensions in the frameworks above, there are clear overlaps in the way in which culture may manifest differently in individuals. Firstly, the dimension of individualism vs collectivism, identified by both the Hofstede Framework and the

GLOBE study, is a key cultural constituent to consider in coaching (Baron & Azizollah, 2019; Passmore & Law, 2009; Ye et al., 2016). In individualist cultures, the onus is on the individual to take care of him or herself and immediate family. The individual takes full ownership and responsibility for his or her life. In contrast, in collectivistic cultures, the individuals create their identity through virtue of their relationships with others and are connected to others (Hofstede & Milosevic, 2018). These cultural orientations may impact what the client aims to gain from the coaching session (Baron & Azizollah, 2019; Plaister-Ten, 2009) and consequently how the coach should approach the relationship. This dimension is particularly salient in the context of South Africa, as research has shown that African communities may be more orientated towards the collectivistic orientation (Eaton & Louw, 2000; van Zyl et al., 2011). Therefore, if clients who are collectivistically orientated are receiving coaching from an individualistic orientation, cultural clashes may ensue. This study aims to provide further insight into this potential problem.

Another note of particular importance to this study is the orientation towards communication patterns as indicated by the Rosinski Framework. Gilbert and Rosinski (2008) highlight that individuals differ with regards to their cultural communication styles in several different ways, such as how much implied communication takes place through body language, how conflict situations are dealt with, how much emotion is displayed and how formal individuals may be in their approach to their relationships (Gilbert & Rosinski, 2008). Peterson (2007) posits that the understanding of these cultural communication patterns is valuable to coaching in a multicultural context and that it will assist with the methodologies used with which coaches should approach clients from different cultures.

In addition, individuals may differ concerning how they perceive goal setting, as indicated by the *goals and means of achievement* dimension of the CCL Framework. This is a significant aspect of culture that may impact the coaching relationship, as the working alliance is characterised by agreement on goals, and goal-setting is an important element of coaching (Grant, 2014). Therefore, if this fundamental aspect of the coach-client relationship differs culturally, it may impact the success of the relationship.

Lastly, perceptions of leadership may differ across cultures as all four of the cultural orientation frameworks include leadership dimensions, namely *power distance* (Hofstede and the GLOBE study) *power and responsibility* (Rosinski's framework) and *orientation to authority* (CCL Learning framework). Practically this suggests that the client's notion and perception of what is considered effective leadership may be different to that of the coach (Booysen, 2015; Gilbert & Rosinski, 2008; Odendaal, 2016; Peterson, 2007). This may consequently impact

the success of the coaching relationship. Therefore, it is pertinent that culture is considered in the context of coaching as it has a direct influence on the outcome and focus of the coaching intervention in organisations (Booysen, 2015). As such, this study aims to gain an increased understanding of this influence.

It is evident that individuals' dissimilar cultural orientations may have a significant impact on coaching interventions in organisations. Despite the research in this area being scant, the discussion and literature analysis to follow will further explore the influence that culture may have on the coach-client relationship specifically.

2.6.4 The Influence of Culture on the Coach-Client Relationship

As with the perceived influence of culture on coaching outcomes, there is contention in the literature surrounding the relative importance that culture has on influencing the coach-client relationship specifically (Plaister-Ten, 2009; Roth, 2017). Notwithstanding this contention, researchers have postulated that cultural dynamics may impact the success of the coach-client relationship (Milner et al., 2013; Noer, 2005; Peterson, 2007; Rosinski, 2003; Ye et al., 2016). More specifically, Rosinski (2003) is considered a key researcher in the applicability of culture to coaching, and postulates that cultural differences may present as a source of frustration within a coach-client relationship if misunderstood. However, Rosinski (2003) also views cultural differences as an opportunity to be leveraged and embraced within the relationship. This study aims to explore this viewpoint and identify how culture influences the dynamics of the coach-client relationship within a South African, uniquely multicultural context.

Due to the potential impact which cultural differences may have on the coach-client relationship (Peterson, 2007), it can be argued that if a coach is unaware of specific cultural factors, their client may be misunderstood as a result, and this may impact the quality of the relationship. Researchers have thus aimed to determine specifically which cultural factors may contribute to successful and high-quality coaching relationships (Booysen, 2015; Gilbert & Rosinski, 2008). Such research is scant and under-researched (Baron & Azizollah, 2019; Coetzee, 2012; Odendaal & le Roux, 2016). However, from the studies conducted, an emerging factor is the importance of coaches' intercultural competence (Booysen, 2015; Coetzee, 2012; Ferreira, 2016; Odendaal & le Roux, 2016; Passmore & Law, 2009) in facilitating successful coaching relationships. Various important aspects contributing to intercultural competence (when coaching in a multicultural context) have been identified by researchers and these will be discussed next.

2.6.4.1 Intercultural Competence. Researchers have identified a coach's cultural knowledge as a potential key aspect of coaching in a multicultural context (Peterson, 2007). Cultural knowledge speaks to understanding different cultures and particularly the clients' culture (Baron & Azizollah, 2019; van Zyl et al., 2011). Knowing and understanding your client's culture, and personalising the coaching intervention and relationship based on cultural aspects unique to your client, will assist in navigating the cross-cultural differences more appropriately (Baron & Azizollah, 2019; Chmielecki & Contreras-Loera, 2020; Peterson, 2007). Coaches should however not generalise or stereotype based on a client's cultural background (Baron & Azizollah, 2019; Chmielecki & Contreras-Loera, 2020; Peterson, 2007).

Cultural knowledge generates cultural intelligence (van Zyl et al., 2011) and is thus closely linked to the aforementioned. The ability to be culturally intelligent refers to a person's capacity to remove themselves from their own cultural framework and put themselves in the framework of an alternative culture, in order to understand the person better (Booysen, 2015). Booysen (2015) identifies cultural intelligence as a capability that has the potential to enhance coaching in multicultural contexts. Cultural intelligence and cultural knowledge are thus key aspects for consideration in this study, as it aims to explore whether culture influences the critical success factors for the coach-client relationship, and if so, which cultural factors or competencies are important to consider.

A further component of intercultural competence in coaching identified in the research is that of cultural awareness. Cultural awareness can speak to either how aware an individual is of the influence of culture on another person, or how aware they are of the influence of culture on themselves (Baron & Azizollah, 2019). The latter speaks to cultural *self*-awareness. Literature indicates that it may be pertinent for coaches coaching across cultures to be aware of their own culture and specific cultural biases or assumptions which may impact not only their own belief systems, ideals and values, but ultimately also their coaching capabilities (Baron & Azizollah, 2019; Booysen, 2015; Coetzee, 2012; Handin & Steinwedel, 2005; Peterson, 2007; Plaister-Ten, 2009).

Linking this concept to applicable theory, Bennett's *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity* is key in highlighting the importance of cultural self-awareness (Hammer et al., 2003). Bennett proposed that there are six stages of cultural sensitivity within which individuals may find themselves, and an upward move from one stage to the next indicates increased levels of cultural sensitivity or awareness. Bennett's six stages of intercultural sensitivity are *denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation and integration* (Hammer et al., 2003). *Denial* refers to a cultural state wherein individuals

experience their own culture as the only culture and are devoid of any understanding or sensitivity towards differing cultures. In contrast, *integration* refers to a cultural state in which a person's cultural self-awareness is amalgamated within different cultural views and is a key determinant of achieving cultural competence. *Adaptation,* refers to a cultural state in which a person has sufficient awareness of different cultures, enabling appropriate modification of behavior. Adaptation is seen as the appropriate level of intercultural sensitivity for leaders in multicultural organisations to possess (Antal & Friedman, 2003).

Through upward movement between the six stages, individuals may progress from a "ethnocentric" to a "ethnorelative" cultural worldview (Hammer et al., 2003, p. 421). Thus, individuals' levels of cultural sensitivity/awareness (as demonstrated by the Bennett scale) are likely to impact their behaviour towards people culturally different from them, depending on where they may be on the scale. This model is therefore applicable to the context of coaching in a multicultural context as it provides a theoretical grounding and justification for the importance of developing cultural awareness.

Further theoretical understanding of intercultural competence is introduced by Antal & Friedman (2003)'s construct of "negotiating reality". They refer to this concept as the process of developing a "strategy of action" in multicultural interactions, wherein the individuals makes themselves and one another aware of their internalised culturally-influenced understanding of situations. Antal & Friedman (2003, p. 14) propose that Bennett's model is limited in that adaptation and integration approach may "promote stereotypical thinking" and does not adequately cover the breadth of complexity inherent in cultural differences that may exist in individuals, both overtly and covertly. Thus, negotiating reality is a tool for promoting effective intercultural interaction that allows for individuals to surface their subjective perceptions and realities based on cultural influences, and appropriately navigate the relationship. It is thus a method for *learning* from one another without making assumptions (Antal & Friedman, 2003). Given the objective and exploratory nature of this study, it thus aims to provide further insight into the potential importance of these cultural aspects in coaching.

It should be reiterated that despite the discussion of various cultural factors earlier in this chapter, the literature on the impact of culture on the coach-client relationship remains scant and researchers specifically call for further insight into this phenomenon (O'Broin & Palmer, 2019; Plaister-Ten, 2009). More specifically, research in a South African setting is significantly limited, a research gap which this study addresses.

2.7 Conclusion

The literature review provided empirical evidence for the effectiveness of coaching in organisations, and how a strong coach-client relationship is key in ensuring the successful implementation of coaching in organisations. Several factors for successful coaching relationships were identified in the literature. However, this study acknowledges the gap in literature in that the potential influence of culture has not been considered adequately. It is thus unclear whether the success factors identified for coach-client relationships will translate in a uniquely multicultural environment such as South Africa. The literature study provided insights into the multicultural context of South Africa and provided evidence for the cultural orientations and influences which may impact on the coach-client relationship. Lastly, the studies which have identified specific cultural factors relevant to the coaching relationship, albeit limited, were discussed. To expand on the limited research, this study thus aims to answer the following research question: How does culture influence the critical success factors of the coach-client relationship?

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed description of the research methodology applied to gain insight into the research question: How does culture influence the critical success factors of the coach-client relationship? The research methodology has largely been informed by the literature findings and this chapter will provide a thorough overview of the respective techniques and methods utilised to best approach the research objectives. These techniques and methods will be described and presented.

Figure 3.1

Overview of Research Methodology
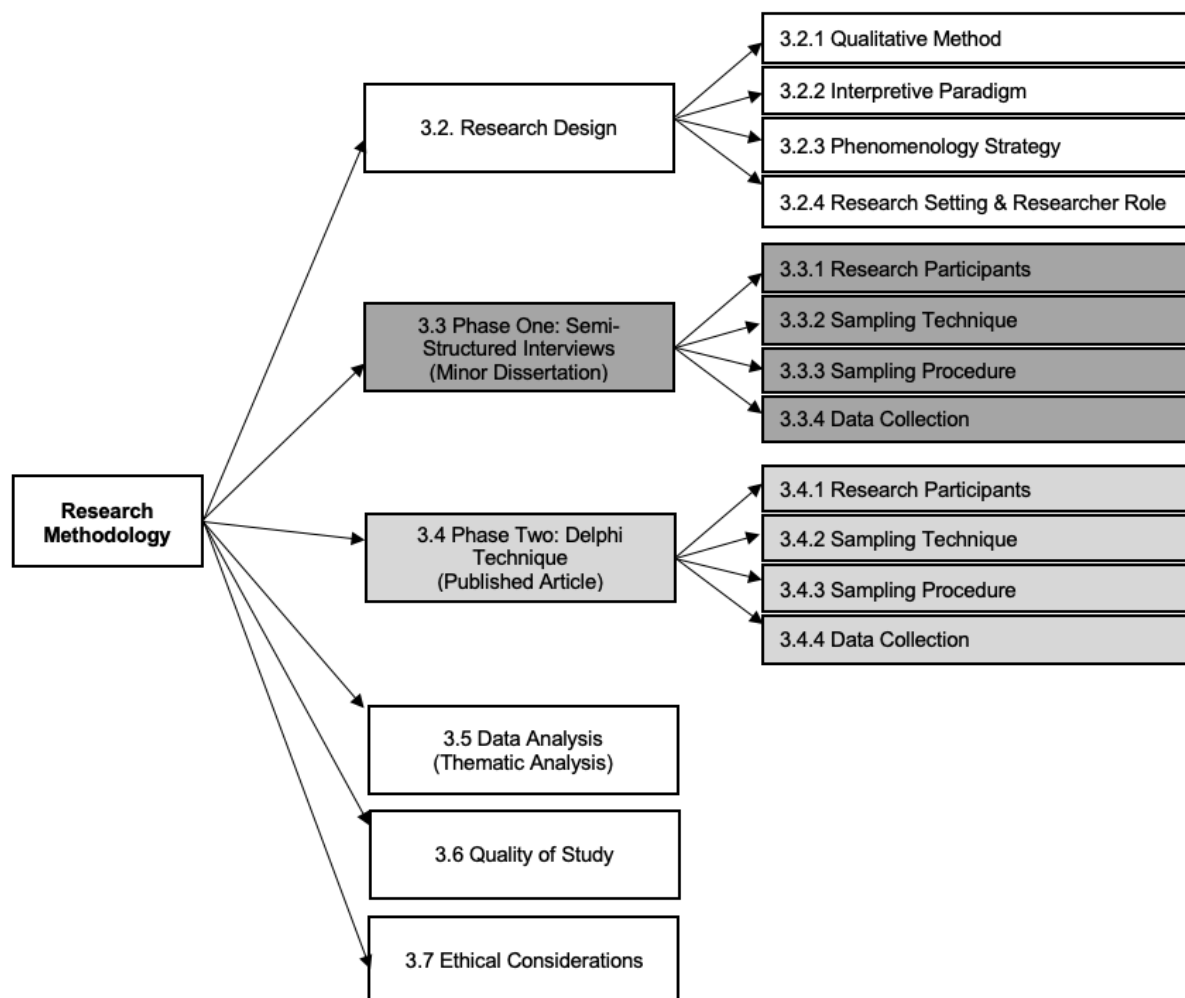
Figure 3.1 provides an overview of the research methodology and the sections to follow. As shown in the figure, this study adopts a two-phase approach. Phase One includes the conducting of semi-structured interviews and Phase Two includes the administration of a

Delphi technique. The data collected in Phase One of the study will be presented within the current research thesis, for the researcher's minor thesis. Data collection for Phase Two will commence after submission of this thesis, and the findings will be utilised to publish an article in a Peer-Reviewed Academic Journal. The Delphi technique will be utilised to verify and corroborate the consolidated findings of Phase One, through the use of a sample of experts. This process will add to the credibility of the published research paper.

Although the findings of the present research paper in the form of a minor thesis are based only on the data collected in Phase One, the research methodology for both phases will be outlined and discussed in this chapter, as ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee has been received for both phases (see Section 3.7). Each section as shown in Figure 3.1 will be discussed in detail in this chapter.

3.2 Research Design

Research design refers to the comprehensive plan and framework utilised to address a study's research question (Eriksson & Kovaleinen, 2008; Myers, 2013). It is the strategic approach utilised to gain knowledge and insights into the phenomenon being studied (de Vos et al., 2005). Terminology within qualitative methodology (such as research method, research design or research strategy) is often used interchangeably in the literature and as such may lead to uncertainty or ambiguity (de Vos et al., 2005; Eriksson & Kovaleinen, 2008). Myers (2013) defines research design as a broad range of the respective methodological components required to undertake one's research. This study adopts the definition proposed by Myers (2013) and the research design therefore encompasses the broad and overall strategy utilised to gain the knowledge and data required to answer the study's research question and address the research objectives. The elements of this study's research design that will be discussed in this section include the following: Qualitative research method, interpretive research paradigm, phenomenological research strategy, the setting of the research and the role of the researcher.

3.2.1 Research Method (Qualitative)

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, a qualitative research method approach has been identified as the most appropriate and effective research method. Qualitative research, in contrast to quantitative research, enables the researcher to account for the fact that knowledge and reality are socially constructed and largely influenced by context (Myers, 2013) and culture (Eriksson & Kovaleinen, 2008; Langdridge, 2007). It aims to explore and understand different perceptions of the world and takes into account people's personal

experiences, rather than to empirically prove a scientific hypothesis (Eriksson & Kovaleinen, 2008; Langdridge, 2007; Mack et al., 2005; Myers, 2013). Owing to this study's research question, the view that reality is subjective and influenced by culture is critical to adopt when exploring the influence of culture on the success factors of the coach-client relationship. Qualitative research is thus appropriate to gain insights into individuals' subjective experiences and personal perceptions of their relationships with their clients. Furthermore, a qualitative research method approach enables this study to address the complexity (Eriksson & Kovaleinen, 2008) of the potential impact of culture on the coaching relationship in a business and organisational context. As presented in Chapter 4, answering the research question is highly complex and multidimensional. Therefore, a qualitative research method is deemed best suited to this study.

In addition, it has been highlighted in Chapter 2 that research into understanding the critical success factors of the coach-client relationship in a unique multicultural context such as South Africa is limited. Qualitative research methods are commonly utilised in instances where insights into the phenomenon under study are scant (Eriksson & Kovaleinen, 2008; Myers, 2013), further justifying the appropriate use of a qualitative study to address the research objectives. Lastly, Myers (2013) stipulates that qualitative research is more useful in comparison to quantitative research for studying the *cultural* factors of people and organisations, which is a critical component of this study.

3.2.2 Research Paradigm (Interpretive)

Research studies are conducted within the context of a specific paradigm, philosophical underpinning or way of evaluating one's research material (de Vos et al., 2005; Eriksson & Kovaleinen, 2008). Research is typically approached from three key paradigms namely positivism, interpretivism or critical theory (de Vos et al., 2005). The research paradigm from which this study is approached is that of interpretivism. The interpretive paradigm posits that reality is subjective, and aims to research to ascertain meaning through interaction with participants (Myers, 2013). Key to the interpretive paradigm is the influence of the context in which the research and the individual are operating (Myers, 2013). It acknowledges that research cannot be conducted without such consideration.

This interpretive paradigm is embedded within the researcher's epistemology and ontology. Epistemology refers to differing views of knowledge and ontology refers to differing views of reality (Creswell & Poth, 2013; Eriksson & Kovaleinen, 2008). The interpretive paradigm as such posits that the researcher is approaching the subject matter from the epistemological and ontological perspective that each participant, as well as the researcher,

generates a unique, individualised, subjective view of both knowledge and reality which consequently impact the research findings (Eriksson & Kovaleinen, 2008). This is an important consideration for this study as the researcher's ontology and epistemology impacted how the data is viewed and analysed (Eriksson & Kovaleinen, 2008) and thus forms part of the study's findings through the use of reflective notes (see Section 3.3.4.2).

The interpretive paradigm further influences the research in that there is no predetermined relationship between variables (Eriksson & Kovaleinen, 2008; Myers, 2013). The interpretivist approach allows the researcher to explore and understand complex human behaviours, exploring the phenomenon continuously throughout the process, and aiming to make sense of individual experiences without preconceived notions of the findings (Eriksson & Kovaleinen, 2008; Twining et al., 2017). Relating to the objectives of this study, the respective subjective realities of coaches operating in a multicultural context are not limited or fixed, and the emerging data presented several alternative views of the reality of the coaching relationship in a multicultural context, rather than one fixed truth or objective reality; this will be presented in Chapter 4.

3.2.3 Research Strategy (Phenomenology)

The research paradigm in which the researcher is operating impacts the specific research strategy adopted. Numerous qualitative research strategies can be used to address specific research objectives, which are guided by the nature of the objectives and research questions (de Vos et al., 2005; Eriksson & Kovaleinen, 2008). These include biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case studies (Creswell & Poth, 2013). Due to the epistemological position adopted in this study that knowledge is subjective (refer 3.2.2), a suitable research strategy for this study is that of phenomenology, which focuses on the experiences of individuals and as such cannot be objective and scientific (Langdridge, 2007). A strong focus of phenomenology as stated by Langridge (2007. p. 2) is the "rich description of some aspect of experience".

Phenomenology is further defined as the study of the way people experience and perceive the world around them (Langdridge, 2007). It entails research into the study of how individuals personally attach meaning to certain phenomena in the world. In exploring the influence of culture on the success factors of a coach-client relationship, a phenomenological strategy was adopted, as the aim of the research was to explore each coach's personal and subjective experience of their relationships with their clients within a multicultural context. The aim is not to provide answers or prove one ultimate truth (Pringle et al., 2010), and therefore a phenomenological approach was a suitable strategy for this study.

3.2.4 Research Setting and Researcher Role

This research is conducted within an Industrial Psychology setting, as this is the context within which the researcher is operating. The research setting is further informed by the context within which the research participants operate, which is the executive or leadership coaching domain in South Africa.

It is important to evaluate the role which the researcher will play in the process of this research study. Due to the research design being informed by the interpretive paradigm and phenomenological research strategy, the researcher plays an active role in the outcome of the research (Cassell et al., 2018). The researcher created the interview guide (see Section 3.3.4.1) which was informed by the subjective epistemological paradigm within which the researcher is operating. Additionally, the data was interpreted and analysed from the subjective viewpoint of the researcher (Cassell et al., 2018). The researcher also played an active role in identifying, approaching and securing the participants for the study, along with the guidance and assistance of the researchers' supervisor. Hence, the role of the researcher in this study was critical as it impacted several process components of the study (further discussed in Section 3.3.4). Reference to the role of the researcher and the relative influence it had in the study will be made throughout the research paper.

3.3 Phase One Research Methodology

Phase One of this study included the conducting of semi-structured interviews. The data obtained from Phase One informs the content of this research paper in the form of a minor thesis for academic purposes. The next section will outline the following methodological aspects for Phase One of this study: Research participants, sampling technique, sampling procedure and data collection.

3.3.1 Research Participants: Phase One

The participants in Phase One of this study included leadership and/or executive coaches who had experience coaching within the unique multicultural context of South Africa. Due to the unique data and depth of responses required for this study, the selection of the research participants was critical. To ensure people who were equipped to provide insights into the influence of culture on the coach-client relationship in the context of South Africa were selected, the following inclusion criteria were applicable: The coach needed to either be currently engaged in, or have within the last year been engaged in an executive/leadership individual coaching intervention with a client in South Africa. To this effect, it was important that individuals approached to participate in the study had a) leadership/executive coaching

experience in South Africa and b) experience with individual (one-on-one) coaching. Owing to the context of coaching positioned in this study (Section 2.2) only participants operating in the executive/leadership coaching environment were considered for inclusion. Furthermore, the multicultural context within which this study was done was of critical importance when selecting participants for inclusion in this study.

It should be noted that it was the initial aim of the researcher to include both coaches and clients as participants in the study. Given the potential unique contribution of the different perspectives from coaches and clients (see Section 2.5.6), the researcher aimed to include both these perspectives in the study. However, after the pilot interview (see Section 3.3.4.3), it became clear that including clients would not allow for the researchers objectives to be met. The participant in the pilot study utilised her experiences with *several* different clients to respond to the interview questions. Following the pilot study and discussions with the study supervisor, the researcher concluded that clients may not have the insight to answer the research questions. This is because in many cases, clients have only had exposure to working with one coach. Thus, their depth of responses would be limited. However, given that the inclusion of clients as part of this study was the initial aim of the researcher, and given that it remains important to get perspectives from both the coach and the client, the inclusion of clients is thus recommended as an area of future research (see Section 6.3).

De Vos et al. (2005) postulate that there is no set guideline for the number of participants to be included in a qualitative study and that the sample size is dependent on the aim of the research study, the consequent insights required, and practical constraints. To facilitate richness of data, this study aimed to include a minimum of twelve coaches. However, to optimise findings, the researcher aimed to achieve data saturation, which may have impacted sample size. Data saturation refers to when data is collected until no new insights or findings emerge (de Vos et al., 2005; Mack et al., 2005). As such, participants continue to be selected until saturation occurs. After interviewing twelve participants, saturation had taken place and thus the final sample consisted of twelve coaches, thereby meeting the size requirement set out by the researcher. It should be noted that one participant withdrew from the study, thereby making the total number of *initial* interviews fourteen (including the pilot interview). However, this participants' withdrawal took place prior to the completion of interviews, and thus did not affect data saturation. Table 3.1 provides a summary of the characteristics of the participants included in this study.

Table 3.1

Characteristics of Participants (n=12)

Neutral Identifier	Gender	Ethnicity	Years Experience	Type of Coach	Experience
Pilot	F	White	2	L	SA
P1	M	White	18	E & L	SA & I
P2	M	White	9	E & L	SA & I
P3	F	White	18	E & L	SA
P4	F	White	20+	E & L	SA
P5	F	African	4	L	SA & I
P6	M	White	15	E & L	SA & I
P7	F	White	8	E & L	SA
P8	F	African	8	E & L	SA & I
P9	F	African	15	E & L	SA
P10	F	African	5	L	SA
P11	M	Coloured	4	E & L	SA
P12	F	White	20	E & L	SA
TOTAL N = 12	**F: 8 M: 4**	**White: 7 African: 4 Coloured: 1**			

Note: E=Executive Coach; L=Leadership Coach; SA=South Africa; I=Internationally

As shown in Table 3.1, a total of twelve coaches, eight female and four male, accepted the invitation to participate in this study. Each coach had either executive and/or leadership coaching experience, ranging between 2 to 20 years. Gender or racial demographics were not included as specific selection criterion for this study. However, given the purpose of this study, the researcher remained cognisant of selecting a sample of coaches reflecting the multicultural context of South Africa. In the context of South Africa, culture is viewed as a multidimensional construct given the fortitude of diversity across race, language, beliefs and cultural backgrounds (Odendaal & le Roux 2016). Therefore, to ensure that the views and opinions of participants are reflective of this multicultural context, the researcher aimed to be cognisant of diversity within the selected sample across demographics such as race and gender.

The researcher's reflective notes further indicated that there were clear differences in viewpoints between P5 (African female) and the preceding four participants (White males and females), indicating that racial diversity may potentially influence the experiences of coaching in a multicultural context. Therefore, after the fifth interview, the researcher was particularly cognisant of inviting diverse participants to ensure that a diverse sample as possible was included in this study.

3.3.2 Sampling Technique: Phase One

The broad sampling technique used in Phase One was that of non-probability sampling, which refers to a sampling technique in which participants are not representatively or randomly assigned to a study, but rather get purposefully selected (Etikan & Bala, 2017). Expanding on this technique, the participants required for Phase One were selected utilising purposive and snowball sampling techniques.

Purposive sampling refers to a non-probability sampling technique commonly used in qualitative research, in which the participant is selected based on the fact that he/she meets the inclusion criteria for the study (de Vos et al., 2005; Mack et al., 2005; Robinson, 2014). This sampling technique thus allowed the researcher to *purposefully* select the sample for Phase One based on the unique inclusion criteria.

Due to the challenge that arose from gaining access to participants who met the inclusion criteria, a snowball sampling technique was further utilised for Phase One to gain access to more participants. Snowball sampling refers to a method in which the researcher utilises existing participants to find additional participants for inclusion (de Vos et al., 2005; Mack et al., 2005). The existing participants utilise their personal and professional networks to provide the researcher with the contact details of potentially suitable research participants, or they forward the invitation to participate in the study to prospective participants meeting the requirements for inclusion (Etikan & Bala, 2017).

3.3.3 Sampling Procedure: Phase One

The procedure to select the sample was informed by the sampling technique and criteria for inclusion. The researcher primarily utilised the personal and professional networks of both the researcher and the study leader to select and approach participants for inclusion in Phase One. The use of snowball sampling further provided the opportunity to widen the initial sample and increase the number of suitable participants.

The procedure adopted once participants had been identified was as follows: Participants were emailed an Invitation to Participate in Study (Annexure A) outlining the nature of the study. All participants were invited to online interviews. Once participants had agreed to take part in the study, a suitable date and time were arranged, and participants were sent a virtual interview invite and provided with an Informed Consent Form (Annexure B). The Informed Consent Form ensured their confidentiality and privacy (see Section 3.7) and the particulars of the study were described in detail. Interviews only took place once participants had signed the Informed Consent Form.

3.3.4 Data Collection: Phase One

The data collection approach utilised in Phase One of this study was the conducting of semi-structured interviews. Interviews are one of the key techniques for gathering data in qualitative research (Myers, 2013). Interviews are a suitable approach to gain information required for the study's research objectives, as they allowed coaches to provide personal subjective accounts of their experiences.

In addition to the widely used technique of interviewing, observation is a further qualitative method popularly used by qualitative researchers (Eriksson & Kovaleinen, 2008; Myers, 2013). Whilst it is encouraged to utilise more than one approach to data collection to improve the quality of one's findings (Twining et al., 2017), data collection via observation was not deemed viable or feasible for this study because observing a coach-client interaction during a coaching intervention would violate confidentiality. Therefore the utilisation of interviews was the primary data collection strategy adopted for Phase One.

Three different types of interview formats may be utilised to obtain data namely structured interviews, semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews (Eriksson & Kovaleinen, 2008; Myers, 2013). This study utilised semi-structured interviews to not only allow for a systematic approach (Eriksson & Kovaleinen, 2008) and a degree of consistency between interviews, but also to allow unique data to be gathered owing to the specific answers presented by the individual participants (Myers, 2013). Semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to ask probing questions and guide the interview in a specific direction, should the interviewee provide valuable insights on a specific question (Eriksson & Kovaleinen, 2008; Myers, 2013). A potential limitation with the use of semi-structured interviews is that whilst they allow for flexibility, they simultaneously guide the participant in a particular direction (Myers, 2013) and as such may not elicit the depth of data required for interpretation. To address this potential limitation, a pilot interview was conducted (Section 3.3.4.3) to evaluate the depth of response, and accordingly adapt the questions.

3.3.4.1 Interview guide. Due to the semi-structured nature of the interview, the interview questions (see Table 3.2) were designed with an opening statement to provide context on the nature of the interview and the study's proposed definition for culture. This definition aligns with the one proposed in Section 2.6.2. As will be discussed in Section 3.3.4.3, it became clear to the researcher during the pilot interview that to avoid confusion, participants needed to be informed of the study's proposed definition for culture before proceeding with the questions.

The list of questions was available to the researcher as a guide to ensure that all relevant and important areas were covered within the interview. In many cases, the participant would answer a question before it was asked, and therefore a semi-structured approach was utilised to avoid duplication. Table 3.2 shows the interview guide, which was adapted slightly after the pilot interview. The same interview guide was used for all participants.

Table 3.2

Interview Guide: Phase One

Opening Remarks
Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. Before we get started I would like to highlight a few procedural aspects of the interview. Firstly, this interview is being recorded. The recording will be used for the transcription. I will send the transcription to you to check and once you have verified it the recording will be deleted. Participation is entirely voluntary and you are allowed to refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any stage. I will be taking a few notes as we go through the interview. Do you have any questions?

Introduction to Study
My study is exploring the influence of culture on the coach-client relationship. This influence is significantly embedded within the unique multicultural context of South Africa. For the purpose of my study, 'culture' is defined as a multidimensional construct referring to a groups' shared way of doing and thinking in their social systems, that distinguishes them from other groups. To this effect, culture is referred to as 'social culture' and speaks to the culture of the individual coach and client and not to the organisational culture. If you are comfortable with this definition, may I proceed?

Key Questions	Probing Questions
1. In your experience, what do you think makes your relationship with your clients successful?	How do you as a coach enhance the success of your relationships with your clients?
	What do you find are the key elements to a successful relationship?
2. How have you experienced the influence of culture on your relationships with your clients?	Has culture been a barrier to your relationships with your clients?
	Why do you think it's important to consider the influence of culture on the coach-client relationship?
	How does the unique cultural context of South Africa influence your relationships with your clients?
	How does your own culture play a role in your relationship with your clients?
3. What strategies (if any) do you adopt when coaching clients from different cultures?	N/A

Each participant was asked the three key questions shown in Table 3.2. Depending on the nature of their responses, the researcher would refer to probing questions to further elicit information from the participant. To this effect, there was a degree of consistency

between participants, however, the researcher guided the interview in a specific direction depending on responses of individual participants.

3.3.4.2 Data recording. To maximise the quality of the research, the interviews conducted were recorded with the participants' consent (Langdridge, 2007). Interviews were conducted online, using the video calling applications of Microsoft Teams or Zoom, depending on the preference of the participant. These platforms allowed for the interview to be recorded using the platforms' internal software. Recorded interviews allowed the researcher to develop verbatim transcripts and effectively conduct data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Langdridge, 2007). To enhance the quality of the research, the researcher personally transcribed all interviews. Once the interviews were transcribed, the process of *member checking* (see Section 3.6) took place. This provided the participants with the opportunity to confirm that the transcripts accurately represent what they intended to answer. The recording of data and consequent verbatim transcripts allowed for direct quotations to be utilised in the write up of the research findings, thereby adding depth and richness (Myers, 2013).

In addition to the recording of the interview, the data was enriched by the use of reflective field notes (Mack et al., 2005; Myers, 2013). Field notes can be utilised for several purposes within qualitative research (Myers, 2013). For this study, the researcher utilised *reflective* field notes to capture her reactions, thoughts and emotions as the interviews and the study progressed (de Vos et al., 2005). These reflective notes were included as part of the findings discussed in Chapter 4. To this effect, the researcher partook in a process of *reflexivity* where she continually evaluated the active involvement and influence she had on the outcome of the research (Dowling, 2008). This is a critical component to the data, as the researcher played an active role in the interpretation of the data and subsequent identification of the research findings, and as such her responses may have impacted this process (Cassell et al., 2018).

The interview recordings, transcriptions and reflective notes are kept in a secure electronic location which only the researcher and her supervisor have access to. To this effect, these files are kept in a password-protected file, on a password-protected computer. In addition, the data was regularly backed up to the online, secure and password-protected platform, Microsoft OneDrive in the event of theft of the original storage device or data corruption.

3.3.4.3 Pilot interview. Due to the subjective and exploratory nature of conducting qualitative research, it is advised to conduct a pilot study to assess the quality of the data

obtained from the interview questions (de Vos et al., 2005; Langridge, 2007). A pilot study allows the researcher to determine whether the questions elicit the richness of data that the researcher is aiming to obtain, and it also allows for changes to be made to the interview guide before the commencement of the main study (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; de Vos et al., 2005). In addition, conducting a pilot study allows the researcher to gain insights into several practical aspects of the research design namely the sampling procedure, the conducting of the interview and the data obtained, thereby enabling the researcher to make amendments if necessary (de Vos et al., 2005).

Accordingly, this study conducted a pilot interview with a coach before commencing with the main inquiry. The pilot participant met the sampling criteria (see Table 3.1) and also provided written, informed consent before commencement (Mack et al., 2005). The data collected in the pilot interview was not utilised in the main findings. The purpose of the pilot interview was to allow the researcher and her supervisor to evaluate the depth of responses received from the interview questions. To this effect, the pilot interview demonstrated that the interview guide was largely effective in obtaining the depth of data required for the objective of this study. However, a few considerations led to subsequent changes. These will be discussed.

Firstly, it was pertinent to include the definition of culture proposed by this study in the interview guide (see *Introduction to Study* in Table 3.2). It was clear from the pilot interview that without a definition, the participant was uncertain whether the questions were about organisational culture or social culture. Secondly, as discussed in Section 3.3.1, the decision was made to proceed with only coaches as participants and to exclude clients entirely. This decision was made given the projected limited responses clients could offer given their exposure to only one or two coaches, and was made possible by the use of a pilot interview.

3.4 Phase Two Research Methodology

Phase Two of this study includes the application of a Delphi technique. The data obtained from Phase Two is not included in this research paper, however, it will be utilised for the publication of an article in a Peer-Reviewed Academic Journal after submission of the researcher's minor thesis. The researcher and her supervisor agreed to include the proposed research methodology for Phase Two as part of this thesis, as ethical clearance has been obtained for Phase Two (Section 3.7). The next section will outline the following methodological aspects for Phase Two of this study: Research participants to be included, sampling technique, sampling procedure and data collection.

3.4.1 Research Participants: Phase Two

The selection of research participants for Phase Two of the study is critical, as the outcome of the Delphi technique is centred around the inputs and opinions of a suitable panel of subject matter experts (Chew, 2010; Powell, 2003). The participants for Phase Two will provide their opinions and inputs on the conceptual framework developed from the data collected in Phase One (presented in Section 4.8). The participants for inclusion in Phase Two will consist of the coaches who partook in Phase One who meet the Phase Two inclusion criteria, as well as additional experts who meet the criteria.

The participants for inclusion in Phase Two will also be required to meet the unique inclusion criteria for participation as with Phase One of the study (as highlighted in Section 3.3.1). In addition, two further inclusion criteria are required. These include the following: 1) Participants are required to have at least 3 years of leadership/executive coaching experience in South Africa, and 2) such experience needs to include working with culturally diverse clients. These criteria are critical as the participants in Phase Two need to have the knowledge, expertise and experience to enable them to provide their expert judgement on the proposed conceptual framework. This framework will provide insights into the dynamics of the coach-client relationship in a multicultural context, therefore knowledge of the aforementioned is essential.

There are no set criteria for the number of participants to be included in a Delphi application, and panel sizes have varied across studies (Rowe & Wright, 1999; Vernon, 2009). However, the consensus is that a larger panel size is advantageous for research findings and the richness of data (Powell, 2003). Therefore, Phase Two of the study aims to include a minimum of twelve to fifteen participants. A larger sample of fifteen will be initially invited to participate, to allow for the potential dropout of participants that may occur after each iteration of the Delphi technique. The iteration process adopted for Phase Two of the study is discussed in Section 3.4.3. The techniques which will be utilised to select the sample for Phase Two will be discussed next.

3.4.2 Sampling Technique: Phase Two

Both purposive and snowball, non-probability sampling techniques will be used for Phase Two. Purposive sampling will include purposefully selecting participants who meet the following inclusion criteria: (1) they are an executive or leadership coach; (2) they are currently engaged or was previously engaged (within the last year) in an individual or one-on-one coaching intervention; (3) they have a minimum of 3 years of experience coaching in South

Africa's multicultural context; and (4) they have experience working with culturally diverse clients.

In addition, as with Phase One, the use of snowball sampling will also be utilised for Phase Two to gain access to additional participants who meet the inclusion criteria.

3.4.3 Sampling Procedure: Phase Two

The identified participants will be invited to take part in Phase Two of the study by receiving an Invitation to Participate email (Annexure C), wherein the nature of the Delphi technique process, the requirements of the participant and the allocated timelines will be clearly outlined. If the selected participants agree to partake in Phase Two, they will be sent an Informed Consent Form (Annexure D) and once signed and sent back, they will be sent the conceptual framework identified in Phase One of the study. They will be asked to provide their feedback on the conceptual framework by answering four questions over a series of iterations. This will be discussed next.

3.4.4 Data Collection: Phase Two

The Delphi technique is a confirmatory method utilised to gain consensus and verification on research findings through the combination of expert knowledge (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963; Donohoe & Needham, 2009; Rowe & Wright, 1999; Story et al., 2001). It is a method suitable for qualitative research, as it utilises subjective, personal judgement rather than focusing on factual or statistical information (Chew, 2010; Dalkey & Helmer, 1963; Donohoe & Needham, 2009; Story et al., 2001). The Delphi technique is suitable for this study as it aims to corroborate the developed conceptual framework to be utilised by coaches in establishing a coach-client relationship in a multicultural context such as South Africa. The application of a Delphi technique will verify the proposed framework by combining the opinions of subject matter experts who will potentially be utilising such a framework in establishing a successful coach-client relationship, thereby adding to its credibility.

A Policy Delphi is deemed appropriate for this study as it is developed through the collation and analysis of opinions, rather than facts or data (Story et al., 2001). The application of the Policy Delphi technique will allow the expert panel to provide their detailed feedback on the proposed conceptual framework, both verifying the propositions of the framework and providing alternative viewpoints (Story et al., 2001). The Policy Delphi takes place through a series of iterations (Vernon, 2009). After each iteration, data analysis will take place and the conceptual framework will be adapted according to the collective expert feedback. After

adaptation, participants will be sent the revised conceptual framework to provide further comments on the changes. This process will take place until no new data emerges and confirmation is achieved. To achieve the aforementioned, the identified participants will be sent the conceptual framework and asked the following questions at each iteration:

1. Please provide your feedback on the suitability of the proposed conceptual framework to be utilised by coaches working with culturally diverse clients in South Africa.
2. Please comment on the aspects of the framework which you a) agree with and b) disagree with.
3. Please relate your feedback to your own experience of working with culturally diverse clients in your coaching.
4. Do you have any additional closing comments on the proposed conceptual framework?

Participants will be provided with a date by which to send back their feedback, which will form part of the findings of this study for publication purposes. The data analysis technique for both phases of the study will be discussed next.

3.5 Data Analysis (Thematic Analysis)

This study utilised *thematic analysis* to analyse the findings of the data for Phase One, and the same approach will be used for Phase Two. Thematic analysis is a commonly used approach to data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Due to the subjective definitions of the different approaches to thematic analysis, this study will make use of a singular and widely used approach, namely Braun and Clarke (2006). Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 79) define thematic analysis as a "method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data, around a central organising concept" Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 82) define these *themes* as the researcher's subjective judgement on "patterned response(s)" within the data which collectively represent important information relating to the research question. These themes ultimately inform the interpretation of the data and consequent research findings.

Thematic analysis is a flexible technique that allows the researcher to utilise the data to provide a rich and detailed description of the phenomenon under study. This approach to data analysis is suitable for this study, which specifically aims to describe and explore the personal experiences of coaches and identify common themes in their experiences of coaching relationships in a multicultural context. Due to the limited research on the coach-client relationship in a multicultural context such as South Africa, an *inductive approach* to thematic analysis was adopted in this study. This allowed for analysing the data without any pre-existing notions on which patterns may emerge and allowing the data alone to reveal the

themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher was not aiming to fit the success factors of the coach-client relationship into pre-determined findings, but rather evaluated the data intending to discover *new* findings which can expand on the limited research available.

Following the approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), the Phase One data was analysed using their six-step process as follows:

1. *Familiarising yourself with your data.* In this first step, the researcher studied the verbatim transcriptions thoroughly before commencing with coding. This process of data familiarisation allowed the researcher to identify and make note of initial emerging meanings, ideas or themes and to conceptualise a comprehensive, overall picture of the data before coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

2. *Generating initial codes.* Once Step 1 was completed, the initial coding process commenced. This phase of analysis involved scrutinising the data in great detail and identifying codes or "features of the data" which related to the phenomenon in question and provided useful insights (Braun & Clarke, 2008, p. 88). An initial list of 199 codes was generated, which were later consolidated into 93 codes. See Annexure E for the final code list.

3. *Searching for themes.* The next phase of data analysis entailed utilising the aforementioned list of codes to identify related themes. Where possible, codes and themes were grouped into related categories. Codes and themes which did not appear to fit into any specific category were not discarded at this stage, as they may have held relevance in the next step (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4. *Reviewing themes.* This step involved refinement and consolidation of the themes identified in Step 3 (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Step 4 took place in two phases (Braun & Clarke, 2006): Phase 1 involved a process in which the researcher revisited and refined the originally identified codes to ensure that they were correctly assigned. Phase 2 involved evaluating the refined themes against the entire data set and scrutinising the relevance of the identified themes to the research question. This two-phased process allowed the researcher to have a proper understanding of the different themes identified, and how they inform the data and the phenomenon under study.

5. *Defining and naming themes.* This step involved the final refinement process of the themes in the data. The researcher named and defined the final list of themes (Braun & Clarke,

2006). The researcher clearly defined each theme by writing a "detailed analysis" of the "story that each theme tells" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92) in Chapter 4.

6. *Producing the report.* The final step entailed the write up of the findings and the themes identified in the data, as presented in Chapter 4. An overall analysis of each key theme is provided along with verbatim quotes related to each theme to support the analysis and provide the reader with a rich and detailed description of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

To analyse the data concisely and effectively, the researcher utilised Atlas TI, a popular and widely used form of electronic qualitative data analysis software (Myers, 2013). The use of Atlas TI allowed for the process of data analysis to be performed more efficiently (Dowling, 2012). It also allows for the researcher to easily store and code the transcripts, as well as write reflective notes on aspects of the data. Lastly, to ensure that thematic analysis had been adequately utilised in this study, the researcher consulted the 15-point checklist proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

Braun & Clarke's 15-Point Checklist of Criteria for Good Thematic Analysis

Process	No	Criteria
Transcription	1	The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for 'accuracy'.
Coding	2	Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.
	3	Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach) but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.
	4	All relevant extracts for each theme have been collated.
	5	Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set
	6	Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive.
Analysis	7	Data have been analysed – interpreted, made sense of – rather than just paraphrased or described.
	8	Analysis tells a convincing and well-organised story about the data and topic.
	10	A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.
Overall	11	Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly.
Written report	12	The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated.

13   There is a good fit between what you claim you do, and what you show you have done – ie, described method and reported analysis are consistent.

14   The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.

15   The researcher is positioned as *active* in the research process; themes do not just 'emerge'.

Adapted From: Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101.

This checklist is a succinct list of the criteria needed to determine whether thematic analysis has been effectively conducted. This checklist was consulted throughout the process of data analysis and will be further discussed in Section 6.5. Utilising this checklist added to the credibility of the study, and therefore the "trustworthiness" of the researcher (discussed in the section to follow).

3.6 Quality of Study

Reliability and validity are common evaluation tools utilised to determine the quality of a quantitative study. However, determining the validity and reliability of a qualitative study, due to its exploratory nature, is not possible. As such, alternative methods to ensure a high-quality study need to be adopted (Eriksson & Kovaleinen, 2008); to this effect, Phase One of this study incorporated the following methods: Member checking and ensuring researcher trustworthiness. These will be discussed.

Member checking is a process in which the researcher provides the participants with the transcription of their data, for them to corroborate whether or not the transcription is accurate and reflects what the participant intended to say (Eriksson & Kovaleinen, 2008). Member checking is thus a method which this study adopted to promote a high-quality research paper.

In addition, the quality of the study is largely dependent on the *trustworthiness of the outcomes* (Eriksson & Kovaleinen, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) postulate that the quality of qualitative research is determined through *trustworthiness* which comprises four key concepts namely *transferability, dependability*, *credibility* and *conformability*.

Firstly, *dependability* speaks to whether the research adequately provides information to the reader regarding the logical process of the research, and whether such information is well documented (Erikson & Kovaleinen, 2008). This study clearly outlines the process

followed for the research, and it highlights the need for the study through an extensive literature review. Important documents (including the interview guide, invitation letters, informed consent forms, ethical checklist and interview transcriptions) were carefully compiled and made available to the reader to promote dependability, and consequently the quality of the research.

Secondly, *transferability* refers to the comparison between the study in question and other research to indicate a degree of similarity (Eriksson & Kovaleinen, 2008). To facilitate and optimise transferability, the researcher adequately compares the findings of this study with alternative relevant, high-quality studies (see Chapter 5).

Thirdly, the *credibility* of the research speaks to the extent to which the researcher is well-informed on the research topic, and whether the researcher has established significant inferences from the interview information (Eriksson & Kovaleinen, 2008). By conducting an extensive literature study, the researcher meets this requirement by being well-versed on the topic in question. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that the credibility of the study is upheld by drawing sound and logical inferences from the data collected by following the Braun & Clarke (2006) checklist for effective thematic analysis. This was accomplished under the guidance of her supervisor. In addition, conducting a pilot interview also promoted the credibility of the research.

Lastly, to promote trustworthiness of the research, the research needs to demonstrate *conformability.* As this study is anchored in the interpretive paradigm, the inferences made are supported with narratives from the participants. This speaks to the fact that the interpretations are derived directly from the data collected (Eriksson & Kovaleinen, 2008). This is a further aspect of the study which the researcher upheld to promote quality research.

It should be noted that through the completion of Phase Two (commencing after Phase One), a further quality control method will be implemented namely Triangulation. *Triangulation* refers to a method adopted to improve the credibility of the research findings, and consequently the quality of the study (Eriksson & Koveleinen, 2009; Twining et al., 2017). There are several different types of triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), however, for this study, *method triangulation* will be utilised. Method triangulation refers to the process of utilising more than one method of data collection technique (Twining et al., 2017), thereby enhancing the quality of the study. Triangulation will thus be achieved through the use of the Delphi technique, thereby adding to the quality of the article for a peer-reviewed journal. Story

et al. (2010, p. 498) further postulate that application of the Delphi technique will enhance the "accountability" of research findings.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Stellenbosch University (See Annexure F). Ethical considerations are fundamental when doing research as it is critical to avoid potentially adverse impacts on individuals which may result from the research (de Vos et al., 2005; Eriksson & Kovaleinen, 2008; Health Professions Council of South Africa, 2016; Myers, 2013; Stellenbosch University, 2016). The Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) provide ethical guidelines to be considered when conducting research. These guidelines, along with the Departmental Ethics Screening Committee (DESC) Guidelines of Stellenbosch University and the Policy for Responsible Research Conduct at Stellenbosch University, inform the ethical principles, values and standards considered and adopted in this study.

According to the Research Ethics Committee Guidelines of Stellenbosch University, this study is categorised as a medium-risk study because the interview questions require the participants to reflect on a subject which may be considered sensitive, or may bring up negative experiences for them (Stellenbosch University, 2012). The study addresses the subject of culture and the influence which it may have on fostering successful coach-client relationships. The subject of culture, in the context of South Africa, may cause discomfort to some participants and thus it is critical to be cognisant of the effects this study may have on participants and readers.

Given the medium risk, the researcher ensured that mitigation measures were put in place to prevent and manage any potential discomfort experienced by participants. These included informing the participants of the nature of the study and the sensitivity of the subject matter in both the Invitation to Participate and the Informed Consent Form. The latter document was signed by both the researcher and the participants and each party was provided with a copy. The Informed Consent Form further outlined the confidentiality with which participants' details were treated, and that their anonymity was assured. Furthermore, the voluntary nature of the study, as well as participants' right to withdraw from the study at any point was adequately indicated in the Informed Consent Form, as well as in the interview. This form also referred the participants to the details of the South African Depression and Anxiety Group should they experience any discomfort from the interview.

Lastly, in addition to the aforementioned, the researcher also ensured that high ethical standards, as posed by both the HPCSA and Stellenbosch University were adhered to. To promote high ethical standards of the study, the researcher ensured that all personal information of the participants is kept confidential (de Vos et al., 2005; Eriksson & Kovaleinen, 2008). This ethical consideration is in line with best practice guidelines, namely the HPCSA's *Principle of Confidentiality* (Health Professions Council of South Africa, 2016, p.2)*.* The essence of this principle is that participants have the right to both their privacy and confidentiality being protected. This principle informed the steps that the researcher took to ensure that ethical standards were adhered to in this respect. These steps included the following: Firstly, the researcher ensured anonymity by utilising neutral identifiers such as P1 (Participant 1), P2 (Participant 2) etc. instead of the participants' names. Secondly, the researcher ensured that the video recordings, transcripts and field notes are kept in a secure electronic location namely a password protected file, on a password protected computer. The recordings were erased after member checking took place and the remaining raw data will be erased after publication of this study in a peer-reviewed journal. Additionally, the researcher ensured that only the researcher and the study supervisor have access to the raw data collected. These steps adhere to the data acquisition and management policies as set out by Stellenbosch University (Stellenbosch University, 2016).

Informed consent is critical to ensure that the study is conducted ethically (de Vos et al., 2005; Eriksson & Kovaleinen, 2008; Myers, 2013). The HPCSA indicate that researchers need to ensure that participants are made aware of the nature and potential effect of the research, to allow them to make an informed and voluntary decision regarding their participation in the study (Health Professions Council of South Africa, 2016). Participants need to provide their written consent before commencing with the study. To ensure that this critical ethical standard was adhered to, this study provided participants with both an Invitation to Participate in the study, as well as an Informed Consent Form. The invitation provided insight into the nature of the study and allowed participants to indicate whether they would be willing to participate. Once their willingness had been ascertained, an Informed Consent Form was provided to ensure participants were aware of the voluntary nature of the study.

Participants were also informed that continued participation is voluntary, and that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants in Phase One were informed that should they withdraw from the study, their contributed data (if any) would be erased and not used in the findings of the research. Participants for Phase Two will be informed that their contributed data will remain as part of the study should they withdraw after the first or second iteration. However, this will be with the participants' consent and should they request their

previously contributed data to be removed the researcher will permanently erase all data accordingly. A copy of the signed Informed Consent Form will be provided to the participant.

Lastly, in line with best practice ethical guidelines as determined by the HPCSA, participants were provided with the opportunity to verify their transcripts prior to data analysis through a process of member checking (Section 3.6). The transcribed interviews were sent to the participants and they were entitled to make changes and verify the correctness of the transcripts. These aspects were also pointed out to participants in the Informed Consent Form.

3.8 Conclusion

This study utilised a qualitative research method to explore, describe and provide insights into the success factors of coach-client relationships in a multicultural context such as South Africa. The research was approached from an interpretivist paradigm and a phenomenological research strategy was employed. Through the use of purposive and snowball sampling techniques, the researcher interviewed a sample of twelve coaches, using a semi-structured approach. After submission of this minor thesis, a Delphi technique on a sample of identified subject matter experts will be applied to further corroborate the findings in this study. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis, with the assistance of the electronic software Atlas TI. Conducting member checking and ensuring trustworthiness of the research outcomes enhanced the quality of the study. The researcher's epistemological and ontological views were accounted for and acknowledged throughout the study through a process of reflective field notes.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the key findings of the study. These findings were identified through the use of inductive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), as discussed in Section 3.5. To this effect, the researcher had no preconceived notions of the results, but rather allowed the data alone to reveal itself. Twelve interviews were transcribed and analysed, with a total word count of 70 732. Given that data saturation was achieved, no further interviews were conducted and data analysis could commence.

From the analysis, 199 initial codes were identified, which were refined and consolidated into 93 final codes. Following thematic analysis, these final codes were grouped into five key themes with related sub-themes. Annexure E shows the final list of codes and their allocated themes and sub-themes. The themes were checked against each other as well as the original data set to ensure internal consistency and coherence (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A total of 426 participant quotations were coded using the participant's neutral identifier (i.e. P1, P2). Of these, 96 quotations are included in this chapter to support the presented findings. Each participant provides a unique and meaningful contribution, and their number of individual quotations included in this chapter are shown in Annexure G.

Each theme and sub-theme will be presented in detail in this chapter, in conjunction with the researcher's reflective field notes. As discussed in Section 3.2.4, the researcher plays an active role in the interpretation of the data; as such her subjective viewpoints may influence the findings. Where this has been noted and acknowledged by the researcher in her reflective notes, this will be included in the findings.

It should be noted that several participants refer to their client as a "coachee". However, the researcher will continue to refer to clients as defined in Section 2.4.1 (Defining the coach-client relationship).

4.2 Overview of Key Themes

The five key themes identified in the data (see Figure 4.1) increases our understanding and insight into the research question: How does culture influence the critical success factors of the coach-client relationship? Given the richness of data in the findings and an extensive code list, each theme will be covered in depth. It should be noted that for several sub-themes more than one relevant quotation was identified in the data. However, the most meaningful quotation was selected by the researcher to be included in the findings.

Figure 4.1

Overview of Five Key Themes
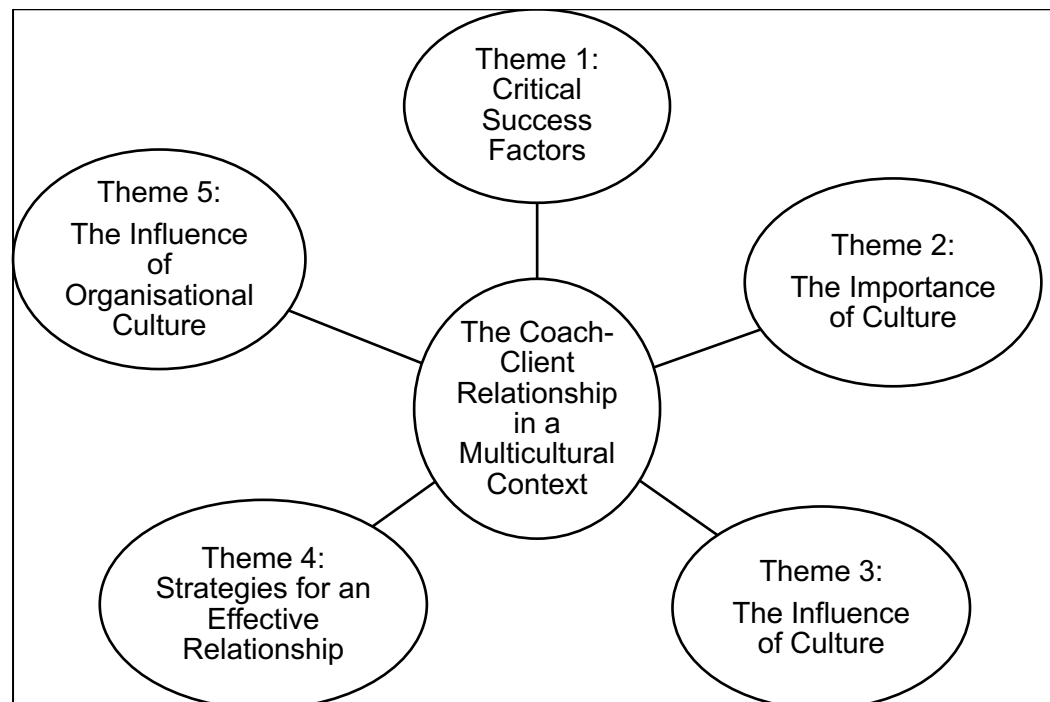
Despite the distinctive nature and value-add of each respective theme, there is alignment between the different themes. To this effect, a conceptual framework (see Section 4.8) was developed to integrate the themes and provide a holistic overview of the influence of culture on the critical success factors of the coach-client relationship in a multicultural context.

4.3 Defining Culture

In conducting the interviews with participants, it was made clear that the focus of the study is on the *social* culture of the individual coach and client, and the influence that it may have on the relationship. Culture was not defined across one dimension, but was rather proposed as a multidimensional construct (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2006; Rosinski, 2003). Participants were encouraged to apply their own epistemological and ontological viewpoints to the discussion on culture, and to submit examples of what culture means to *them* in the interview. To this effect, participants either referred to culture holistically and as a broad construct in their discussions, or discussed specific cultural dimensions (such as race, language, age or religion) in isolation.

The findings presented in this section will predominantly discuss culture holistically, encompassing a myriad of dimensions. However, where specific dimensions were discussed in isolation, these will be stipulated. It should be noted that the influence of *organisational*

culture on the coach-client relationship was not a focus of this study. However, participants did include discussion on its influence when it was relevant and important to them, and as such, it forms part of the findings (see Theme 5).

4.4 Theme 1: Critical Success Factors

The first main theme to be discussed is the critical success factors of the coach-client relationship identified in the findings. As shown in the interview guide in Section 3.3.4.1 participants were asked to reflect on what makes their relationships with their clients successful. This question preceded the discussion on the influence of culture, and whether success factors are indeed influenced by cultural factors. This allowed for meaningful comparison to be drawn between the critical success factors identified in the literature, the critical success factors identified in a multicultural context (Theme 1) and the specific coach strategies for an effective relationship in a multicultural context (Theme 4).

The findings indicated that the critical success factors for a coach-client relationship in a multicultural context include factors related to the coach, client, relational factors and organisational factors. The coach and the client have certain characteristics associated with supporting a more successful relationship. In addition, there are relational components between a coach and client, independent of their individual contributions, that contributes towards the success of the relationship. Lastly, given that executive/leadership coaching takes place within the context of an organisation, organisational factors also contribute to the success of a coach-client relationship. Each of these contributing factors will be discussed in more detail.

4.4.1 Coach Factors

The coach factors identified in the findings that contribute to the success of a coach-client relationship are shown in Table 4.1. Findings suggest that the coach factors are most prominent in influencing the success of the relationship. This relates strongly to the findings discussed in Theme 4 (Section 4.7) indicating that there are eight key strategies that a *coach* needs to employ to enhance relationship building in a multicultural context. Thus, the extensive requirements to build a successful relationship as shown in Table 4.1 is a key finding to indicate the pertinent role that the coach plays in the success of the coach-client relationship.

Table 4.1

Critical Success Factors: Coach Factors

Key Coach Factor	Sub-Factor	Supporting Quotation
Way of being	Empathy	"...coach behaviour is being able to connect and relate to, empathically what the client is experiencing. So whereas I look for the client to bring willingness and openness, I ask the coach, myself, to bring empathy." (P6)
	Listening skills	"The other thing that I realised that contributes to the success, is the ability to listen as a coach." (P10)
	Authenticity	"For me that's the cycle, if I've spent three or four sessions with you, I've been real with you, you feel I am trustworthy, then you're going to start opening up and we're going to get to a level that we may not have gotten to without those things in place. So it's a genuine relationship. There's intimacy there. There's trust. There's freedom. There's ease. Authenticity." (P1)
	Openness to learn	"And, I suppose, the openness to learn from different cultures, both for the coach and for the coachee, is a success factor." (P3)
Credentials	Experience	"...a lot of them if they see that I've got Executive coaching experience they will then say fine I'm comfortable with him because he's got experience on Executive level." (P11)
	Organisational knowledge	"So maybe this is one of the factors, understanding the politics of the organisation, and I don't mean politics in a negative way, but understanding the way they do things, the way they understand things, and make sure that feedback into the organisation is managed contractually in a fair, confidential, respectful way." (P12)
Client-centric approach	Humility	"The client is the hero. The client is the person that goes out there and does all the hard work, not the coach. So humility I think is incredibly important." (P4)
	Safe space	"It doesn't mean that you sugarcoat or withhold feedback, but the primary role of a coach is to create that safe space for an individual to be able to go and explore and gain insights." (P7)
	Providing support	"...that feeling from the coachee or client that you're on their side and really committed and wanting to help see them succeed." (P2)
	Holding client accountable	"...so I think the issue of holding your coachee accountable, encouraging generally. Just you know, it's all about accountability. I feel contributes to the success of the coaching session." (P10)
	Non-judgemental	"It's important because it's a safe space, that's what clients expect. They expect a very safe space where they can say anything without being judged." (P9)

There are three key coach factors with supporting sub-factors that contribute to the success of the relationship. Reflective field notes of the researcher indicated that the coach factors proved prominent in the discussions and appeared to be more strongly emphasised by coaches than the success factors relating to the client, relational components or the organisation. To this effect, the researcher noticed that participants place a large onus on themselves as coaches to develop and maintain a successful relationship with clients. A further reflective note in this respect is the difficulty the researcher experienced with consolidating the coach factors into succinct themes and sub-themes, given the extensive number of coach success factors identified in the data. Notwithstanding this challenge, the discussion to follow presents the most prominent and condensed coach success factors identified in the findings. The supporting quotations from participants are provided as presented in Table 4.1.

Firstly, a coach's *way of being* is critical for the success of the relationship. This is expressed by P1 who states that his way of being as a coach may be more important than shared meaning between him and his client: *"I think I find this a lot with my coaching is there is a way of being, so my ease, not necessarily shared constructs can have an effect on that relationship."* To this effect, P1 refers to his way of being as his *"orientation to [himself], [his] ease with [himself], [his] presence".* A coach's way of being further extends to how they act towards their client by showing empathy, listening effectively, being authentic and having an openness to learn. The findings indicate that to promote a successful relationship with clients, coaches need to display these attitudes towards their clients.

A second key element to a successful relationship identified in the findings is a coach's credentials. Credentials refer to the amount of experience a coach has and whether it is relevant to the client's coaching purpose. Credentials also refer to the knowledge the coach has of the organisation in which they are coaching. According to P12, understanding how the organisation works and "how they do things" will positively impact the success of the relationship.

Lastly, a coach plays a key role in fostering the success of the relationship through maintaining a client-centric approach. The researcher defines *client-centric approach* through the work of Carl Rogers and person-centred therapy, which speaks to placing the client first on all accounts (Joseph, 2010; van Zyl et al., 2016). Coaches should adopt a client-centric approach that manifests in displaying humility, creating a safe space for the client, providing support, holding the client accountable and, most importantly, to remain non-judgemental.

4.4.2 Client Factors

In addition to the coach's characteristics contributing to the success of the coach-client relationship, findings indicate that the client also plays a key role in fostering a successful relationship. The client factors related to a successful relationship are shown in Table 4.2. A client's readiness to commence with coaching, their commitment to change and role clarity is pertinent to the success of the relationship.

Table 4.2

Critical Success Factors: Client Factors

Client Factor	Supporting Quotation
Readiness	"I suppose, first of all, is intent on the part of the client. That is they come with their intent to be open and willing to be coachable. And really open to learning. I mean, that's almost too obvious. But that lays the foundation for the relationship." (P6)
Commitment to change	"One of the questions that's often asked of us in a chemistry session is what sort of client do you work best with? And generally my answer is people who are committed. People who are ready for change." (P2)
Role clarity	"...what makes it successful is when the focus is and clarity on what the outcomes are, and what client expectations are. So the clearer and the more measurable the outcome is of what that relationship is about and what success would look like, and regular feedback on whether we're achieving that or not....So ya, it's clarity. Clarity on outcome, on what success looks like and an agreed path on how we're going to get there and regular feedback." (P7)

Readiness is defined as being both "willing and able" to engage in the coaching process (McKenna & Davis, 2009, p. 247) and as expressed by P6 requires "*intent on the part of the client*". In addition, the client needs to be committed to change because coaching requires the client to fully engage in the process through work and input from their side. Thus, being willing to take part in this process is critical as it consequently enhances the success of the clients' relationship with their coach. In addition, clients need to know what is expected of them to develop a successful relationship with their coach and achieve positive coaching outcomes. This refers to role clarity. The relationship will be more successful if the client is clear on what they need to do within the coaching space, and what their role is defined as. This is referred to by P7 as *"clarity on outcome, what success looks like and the agreed path on how we're going to get there".*

4.4.3 Relational Factors

In addition to individual coach and client factors, there are relational components that contribute to the success of a coach-client relationship in a multicultural context. These are shown in Table 4.3. Relational factors refers to the process components that occurs *between*

the two individuals in the coaching relationship. That said, if coach and client success factors are prevalent independently, there are specific interactions between the two individuals that need to be present for the relationship to function satisfactorily. As identified in the findings, these include trust, rapport and a relationship of equals.

Table 4.3

Critical Success Factors: Relational Factors

Relational Factor	Supporting Quotation
Trust	"Yea, I think without any relationship if you engage with somebody else and there is no relationship that is... relationship of trust and all that, I think a coachee won't be able to open up." (P10)
Rapport	"But now to the relationship itself between coach and client, what makes that relationship successful...I think, rapport is really important." (P6)
Relationship of equals	"I think firstly having that relationship of equals wherein the coachee brings content, and I treat him as an expert in their issue and then see myself as an expert as a coach because my role is more of facilitating and working with the information that the coachee has brought to the coaching session." (P10)

Coaching requires vulnerability on the part of the client; if trust is not prevalent, they may not feel comfortable to open up and share with their coach, which may hinder relationship building. Trust was a prominent factor identified amongst the majority of participants as critical to a successful relationship within a multicultural context. In addition, there needs to be rapport between the coach and the client. Rapport refers to the process wherein the coach and the client "build on similarities", easily understand each other and feel comfortable communicating openly (Boyce et al., 2010, p. 917). Lastly, a relationship of equals is a further relational component required for a successful relationship. This is an interesting finding of this study and a potential contribution to literature (see Section 5.2), as it indicates that within a unique context such as South Africa, rich with cultural influences that may be characterised by power dynamics, it is important for the coach and the client to be seen and treated as equals. A *relationship of equals* in this context refers to where the coach is not viewed as an authority figure, but rather as a thinking partner. To this effect, there are no power dynamics at play in the relationship.

4.4.4 Organisational Factors

Lastly, given the context of executive/leadership coaching, the organisation itself also plays a role in the success of a coach-client relationship. Table 4.4 shows the supporting quotations for the list of organisational factors.

Table 4.4

Critical Success Factors: Organisational Factors

Organisational Factor	Supporting Quotation
Supportive organisation	"My coaching always involves the line manager and where there has been good line manager commitment to the coaching and the individual's growth and development, it certainly has been more successful." (P2)
No imposition by organisation	"Where a coach is imposed on a coachee, and I speak of this from a corporate context, so if for example an employee has been assigned a coach by the organisation, by HR or by their manager or whatever it is, it doesn't feel as natural. It almost feels as something one needs to comply with, and that can definitely work against the relationship..." (P5)

The findings indicate that a supportive organisation can contribute towards a more successful relationship, wherein the line manager is committed to the growth and development of the client. In addition, if the client can choose their coach within an organisational setting, and the coach is not imposed on the client by the organisation, then the relationship is more likely to be successful.

Before proceeding to the next theme, a notable reflection on the part of the researcher included the prominent similarity between critical success factors identified across participants and across the literature. Even though the data was analysed inductively and the researcher was not aiming to fit critical success factors into those identified through the literature search, it became clear in the reflections on the data and after the interviews that there is a notable resemblance. This prompted the researcher to be more cognisant of her objectivity when doing analysis and made her careful not to simply allocate theoretical descriptions onto the data. The prominent similarity between the findings and success factors in literature will be discussed in detail in Section 5.2.

4.5 Theme 2: The Importance of Culture

The findings in the study indicate that there are mixed views on the relative importance of culture on the coach-client relationship. To this effect, culture was viewed to either influence or not influence the relationship, either once it has been established or during the selection and/or matching phases. For clarity of terms, the *relationship* refers to the coach-client relationship as defined in Section 2.4.1 after selection/matching has taken place. The *selection and/or matching phase* refers to the process that takes place preceding the relationship, wherein the coach and client are initially paired together (as discussed in Section 2.5.2) and are allowed to determine whether there is sufficient chemistry, thereby allowing the relationship to proceed (Simon et al., 2014), unless the organisation imposes a coach on the

client as discussed in Section 4.4.4. This process is also used interchangeably with the term "chemistry session" (Burger & van Coller-Peter, 2019. p. 3).

The importance of culture was expressed by some participants as influential to the relationship in that it could act as a potential barrier and get in the way of the relationship: "*...culture can get in the way, let me be honest, culture can get in the way" (P3)* which may subsequently affect the client: "*Culture does have an influence on the coachee" (P10)*. These sentiments were strongly echoed by P1 who stated the following in support of cultural influences being important to the coach-client relationship: "*...I think it's foolish and naive to assume that the cultural contexts aren't at play...".* These influences may manifest in such a way that the coach changes their approach or strategy towards the client, depending on whether the client is perceived to be culturally similar to them or not, as expressed by P12:

> *I change the kinds of approaches that I take depending if it's – you know the diversity of a team if it's team coaching, or individual coaching. So I find I have to position things less when I'm speaking to somebody who's similar to me, has a similar sort of world view. With more diverse groups or people, then I definitely need to think way more carefully about a strategy. (P12)*

It was further proposed by some participants that culture is important to the dynamics of the coach-client relationship because both the coach and the client are entering into the relationship with "*...different cultures, different perspectives."* (P7). These perspectives are shaped from cultural contexts and backgrounds, and thus point to the fact that culture may indeed be important to consider when coaching in a multicultural context:

> *And so what is quite important, and as coaches we are trained for that but it's still difficult at times, that somebody will come up with a completely different context, cultural context. In terms of their way of thinking, in terms of their way of response. And so from a coaching perspective, where I needed to be quite adaptable and agile, is to say okay fine, I'm dealing with somebody with this particular background. (P11)*

In addition, the importance of culture was expressed by some participants as manifesting in specific overt dimensions of culture as for instance indicated by P6: "*So does culture impact the coaching relationship? Unquestionably. Is it based mainly on race and gender? Yes, to a large extent."* These findings provide support for the rationale of this study, as it shows that culture is perceived by some coaches as having an impact on the relationship.

Further understanding of this impact is therefore critical to foster successful relationships within multicultural contexts.

Notwithstanding these views, some coaches expressed contrary opinions and stated that they do not perceive culture as important to the relationship, and that it has not impacted their relationships with their clients. In particular, P5 stated "*I personally don't think I assume that culture is a factor in the conversation*", indicating that cultural factors do not show up in the relationship between herself and her clients. This view was also expressed by P9 who stated: "...*I have yet to come across somebody where culture stood out as an influencer, in one way or another.*" An additional finding in support of the notion that culture may not influence the relationship is that culture may solely be viewed as a surface descriptor along certain overt cultural dimensions, and beyond the surface, it may not influence the core of the relationship. This was described by P8 in the following quotation:

> *I think in South Africa when people describe people it's on the basis of race, gender, age. And those are cultural components, right? Sometimes it can be even to the tribe, right? I've got a Zulu coach, or I've got an Afrikaans coach, I've got a Coloured coach. But I think sometimes that's where it ends. It's not really that we go deep enough in the culture to actually explore what's in the culture, maybe it's just a descriptor. For me, I've found it almost ends at the descriptive level. It's not the core of the relationship...(P8)*

In addition to the above, findings suggest that a rationale for culture not showing up in the relationship may be because potential culture clashes would have shown up more significantly in the selection and/or matching phase of the relationship, and thus by the time the relationship commences, cultural factors may no longer be relevant. This was expressed by P9: "*...because people chose their coaches. So by the time I'm having a conversation with my client they have chosen me, I have not chosen them. I have not been imposed on them. So if you have issues with taking instructions from a woman leader and you've chosen me as a coach, I don't even ask.*" This indicates that culture may be an important influential factor *preceding* the relationship and should play a more significant role in selection/matching as stated by P4: "*They have what they call a chemistry session. Well that's the common name. And they might interview two or three coaches. And that's probably where culture is most visible*". However, contrary to the above, findings also indicate that some participants do not regard culture in the selection/matching process as important, as expressed by P5: "*...So ya, I'm not convinced that culture is something that should be almost part of the screening process, no*".

Given the view that culture may not be important in influencing either the coach-client relationship itself or the selection and/or matching phase preceding the relationship, participants proposed that there may be factors *apart from* culture that are more important to consider. Table 4.5 provides a summary with supporting quotations of the factors apart from culture that participants believe to influence the coach-client relationship.

Table 4.5

Factors Apart from Culture that Influence the Coach-Client Relationship

Factor	Sub-Factor	Supporting Quotation
Contextual factors	South Africa's history	"I think in the South African context, racism, which in my opinion isn't necessarily a cultural construct, it's more an outcome of our history. Racism in South Africa might be something that could challenge a coach-coachee relationship." (P5)
	Social class	"... the relationship is located in middle-class, and I think that kind of over shadows a little bit the race and gender considerations." (P6)
	Social circumstances	"There's culture, but there's also circumstance that you have to get to know." (P3)
	Organisational influence	"It's usually the organisation that's procuring, that says we're looking for coaches and we need to find Black coaches because we've got Black executives." (P8)
Personal factors	Personality and values	"Coaching is about helping people become ready for change. I suppose it's about openness to thinking differently. So all of these things I guess transcend culture. You know in the sort of traditional way we understand culture. And that's why the more I think about it, the more it boils down to values and personality, and being able to build up that trust." (P2)
	Discomfort of coaching	"Coaching is uncomfortable. Coaching pushes you to go to a different place where you haven't been to, that's the purpose of it. That's my biggest resistance and that doesn't show up in race, or age, or colour or gender. It's just individual barriers. And I know it's not aligned to your study." (P7)

Table 4.5 indicates that factors such as South Africa's history, social circumstances, social class, organisational influences, personality, values and the inherently uncomfortable nature of coaching may be more influential to the coach-client relationship and/or selection/matching process than culture. The focus of the present study is on exploring the influence of **culture**; thus these factors did not receive further attention in the interviews. However, as will be discussed in Section 6.3, further insights into these factors are suggested as an area of future research.

It is evident from these insights that there is no consensus amongst participants around the relative importance that culture may have in influencing either the relationship or the selection and/or matching process. An important point of reflection to note in this respect is that the researcher found the viewpoint that culture may *not* be influential to the relationship or selection and/or matching processes surprising. Given the researchers' interest in this phenomenon, and her epistemological viewpoints, she made the assumption that participants will likely have had experiences to share based on how culture has influenced their relationships with their clients. However, as is seen in the findings, there was no consensus in this respect and not all participants did have such experiences to share. It was thus important for the researcher to reflect on this immediate assumption, to ensure that it did not direct the course of questioning when participants' viewpoints were surprising. Therefore, despite the researchers' expectations on the influence of culture, she remained neutral, objective and curious in her approach to receiving insights from participants, which informs the findings presented in this chapter. In addition, the researcher gained clarity that given the mixed results, there is certainly a salient need for this study to explore the construct of culture and how it relates to the coach-client relationship, given its complexity and subjectivity.

Notwithstanding the above contention, there remains support from several participants that culture may indeed be viewed as important and influential to the coach-client relationship. The findings will thus move to the next key theme speaking to *how* culture influences the relationship when such influences are prevalent.

4.6 Theme 3: The Influence of Culture

The key findings relating to *how* culture influences the coach-client relationship is grouped into four sub-themes, based on culture as either a barrier or an enabler to either the selection or matching process, or the relationship itself once the selection/matching process has taken place (See Figure 4.2).

As with Theme 2, the discussion of culture and its potential influence on the relationship as either a barrier or enabler is complex and based on the subjective personal experiences of participants. As a result, there was no consensus but indeed different views amongst participants regarding *how* culture may influence the coach-client relationship.

Figure 4.2

Theme 3 Overview: The Influence of Culture
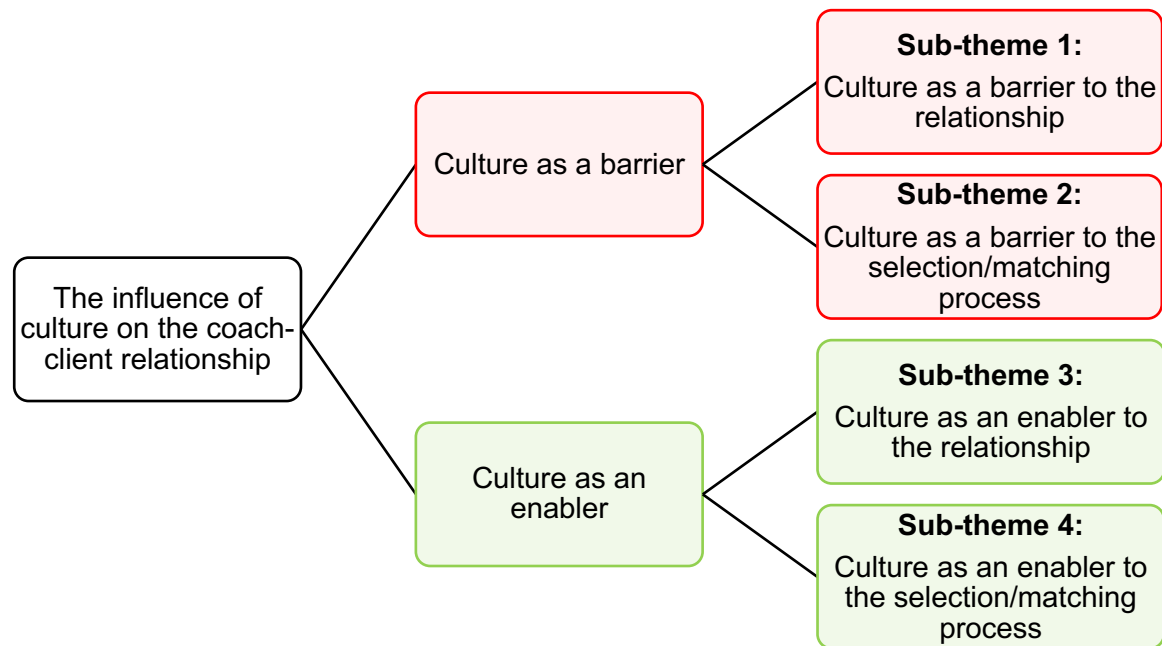
The findings revealed that culture and specific overt cultural dimensions were either viewed as contributing to a successful relationship (enabler), or as a potential hindrance to fostering successful relationships (barrier). There was also a clear distinction between the influence of culture on the relationship itself, and its influence on the processes *preceding* the relationship namely the selection and matching phases. Each of these will be discussed in more detail.

4.6.1 Culture as a Barrier to the Relationship

The findings indicate that there are certain cultural influences on the coach-client relationship that may pose as a barrier to the relationship, and thus negatively impact the relationship. These are shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Cultural Factors that Act as Barriers to the Coach-Client Relationship

Key Barrier	Sub-Barrier	Supporting Quotation
Coach's internal systemff	Assumptions	"...I'm starting to lay some assumptions on you, that you don't hold. And so now you've got my projections in your space. And some people take that on, they will introject those projections and now they've got a more confusing set of constructs." (P1)
	Biases	"If fundamentally as a coach I was racist I might be biased towards certain races and coaching certain races versus others. If as a coach I was, for example, sexist, I might have a preference in terms of coaching a particular gender versus

		another. Or I might be on higher alert when it comes to sexual preferences." (P5)
	Triggers	"So anything where somebody is treated as a minority or as somebody whether it be female, whatever racial whatever – doesn't matter what it is – I get triggered as an example. So even a manager that treats as a staff member in a certain way, I kind of get triggered and so my own self-regulation with my supervision sessions to kind of, you know, these are things that are coming up for me, how do I then manage myself?" (P11)
	Differences in perspectives	"So there might be colour, there might be race, there might be age, there might be gender, there might be anything you can think about naming. Religion. All of these things. Everything. Including the culture of the organisation. Including the culture of the little bit of the organisation the person happens to work in might be completely different to somebody else that I might be coaching in this large organisation that has a different culture. So all of this stuff plays a role in how this person sees the world. And my culture plays a role in how I see the world. So if I come to a coaching engagement with that knowledge then I'm going to foreground the persons own wisdom and not mine." (P4)
Overt cultural dimensions	Race	"There is high potential in a coaching relationship for suspicion at the opening, at the start of a coaching relationship. Suspicion of another ethnicity and race. And that will hamper the coaching relationship unless it's brought to the surface." (P6)
	Language	"I can kind of follow but when somebody is speaking quickly and emotionally in Afrikaans then I'm going to miss things, and then I'm not – you know I can't be a good coach or counsellor." (P12)
	Gender	"I mean even something like sexism can get in the way of coaching if you are not willing to, if you feel a revolt inside of yourself." (P3)
Cultural orientations	Individualistic vs collectivistic	"Most coach training, almost without exception, and there are some shifts starting to happen, but most come from a western individualist kind of a starting place. Now, if somebody is located in a collectivist culture, which if we generalise, is characteristic of South African black communities, are much more community and collectivist cultures. And so when a coach is helping somebody to be their best and strive for improvement and growth and learning, outside of the context of that person's broader set of relationships, ya – it can be really unhelpful I think." (P6)
	Management styles	"Our management style was completely different. So the way we manage people is different...And I was triggered highly by that. And so from that perspective I said this is my challenge that I've got in this relationship with us, and he couldn't understand why I'm so participatory in my approach generally. And I said well we are here about you, but I think that the two of us are triggering each other. So how are we going to move forward and what would you like to do?" (P11)

Relational factors	Intercultural trust issues	"I think trust is so so important on an interpersonal level, but I think culturally, collectively in this country we have massive trust issues. So it can't – you know if you are talking about intercultural trust issues, you know I think that's a real problem." (P1)
	Rank, power & privilege	"I think the reality is that even without obvious cultural differences, issues of rank, power and privilege enter every relationship and can be barriers to beneficial relationships – mutually beneficial relationships. And I think it's multiplied in South African context, especially where the coach and client are substantially different from each other." (P6)
	Lack of homogeneity	"I've had as I mentioned I think two clients, one Black client and one Indian, he was a Muslim man, from a non-government organisation, or in face a government organisation I guess, being the Joburg City. And I did find that challenging. So there's definitely something to be said for more homogeneity" (P2)

A key aspect of culture acting as a barrier to the relationship was found to be located within the coach's internal system. Findings show that the coach's internal assumptions, biases, triggers or differences in perspectives from their clients may act as a barrier to the relationship. This suggests that coaches, and their internal reaction to cultural elements, may play a role within the relationship. This is a critical finding related to the influence of culture as it demonstrates that coaches may indeed benefit from challenging their internal beliefs and biases and developing awareness in this respect (further discussed in Theme 5).

Furthermore, participants indicated that differences across overtly visible dimensions of culture have played a role in their relationships. More specifically, these included cultural elements such as language, race and gender. It was found that participants had experienced coaching relationships wherein these dimensions altered the behaviour of either the coach or the client, and due to stereotypical notions or assumptions, inhibited the relationship from flourishing. In addition, findings indicated that notions around cultural orientations, specifically around differences in individualistic or collectivistic orientations, or differences in management styles, may also act as a barrier to the relationship.

Lastly, cultural influences also played a role in relational factors. More specifically, linking to the critical success factor of trust, cultural factors were also found to play a key role, due to perceptions of intercultural trust issues arising from a national level that may act as a barrier to the relationship. In addition, rank, power and privilege, and lack of homogeneity arising from cultural differences were found to serve as potential barriers to the relationship. Overall, these findings indicate that culture, for the various reasons mentioned above, may serve as a barrier to the coach-client relationship and hinder the relationship from developing

successfully, owing to the importance of exploring the construct and its complex influences within the coaching domain.

4.6.2 Culture as an Enabler to the Relationship

Contrary to the above, findings indicated that culture may also serve as an *enabler* to the relationship. Thus, there may be certain cultural factors that influence the dynamics of the relationship positively and subsequently contribute to its success. Interestingly, the complexity of culture and how it influences the coach-client relationship is further demonstrated in the confounding views and lack of consensus amongst participants. Where some cultural influences were viewed as a barrier for some participants, it was viewed as an enabler by others. As shown in Table 4.7, these include relational factors and overt cultural dimensions.

Table 4.7

Cultural Factors that Act as an Enabler to the Coach-Client Relationship

Key Enabler	Sub-Enabler	Supporting Quotation
Relational factors	Homogeneity	"...sometimes it's easier, the entry point is easier when I'm coaching people that are very similar to me." (P12)
	Understanding each other	"Some people from a "you understand me kind of point of view", like I mentioned earlier, that for them is important. It's like you're a Coloured boy, you had the struggles, you are still battling the glass ceiling at times – and so understand that that is what it is." (P11)
	Offering a different perspective	"To say as a coach, am I coming in as an expert or a thinking partner? And I think offering that different perspective from a space of not knowing and literally just asking so okay, bear with me, I don't actually know... I don't if this is a fact, but you know take me through this..." (P8)
Overt cultural dimensions	Race	"Um, ya I guess I have to say that there's definitely you know a familiarity when you are working with clients who match your race in a corporate setting." (P2)
	Language	"I mean just in terms of being able to speak the language I build a level of rapport and trust with them. And sometimes the requirement is not even to be able to speak it back to them but to be able to understand them." (P8)
	Religion	"...the comment that I normally then receive is, "I'm happy that you also talk about Christianity because that's what guides me. Everything I do I take from – and I'm happy that you are able to integrate Christianity into the coaching sessions." So I've had a few examples where, and predominantly women, who have really said, "This is good for me, because I was hoping it's not separate from what we are doing in the coaching session." (P9)

Relational factors (converse to those in Table 4.6) include homogeneity between the coach and the client concerning culture, understanding each other given similar cultures, or

offering a different perspective when cultures are different. In addition, *similarities* across overt cultural dimensions such as race, language or religion may *enable* the development of the relationship as opposed to hindering it (as discussed in Section 4.6.1). Interestingly, gender did not surface as an enabler, and religion surfaced as an enabler but not as a barrier.

The findings in this respect indicate that overt cultural dimensions are perceived by some participants as either a barrier to the relationship and by others as an enabler. This finding highlights the complexity and subjectivity of exploring the influence of culture on the coach-client relationship, as one participants' experience with a specific element or dimension of culture (for example language) may be significantly different to that of another.

4.6.3 Culture as a Barrier to Selection and/or Matching

As with overt cultural dimensions influencing the coach-client relationship as either a barrier or an enabler, it was identified in the findings as similarly influencing the selection and/or matching processes preceding the relationship, further exemplifying the complexity of culture.

Findings indicated that for some participants, overt dimensions were found to potentially influence whether clients selected specific coaches or not, as indicated by P9: *"Because I'm just thinking also, normally people will say, I want the woman coach, I want the man coach, I don't want the man coach, I don't want the Black coach, I don't want the white coach."* More specifically, P3 shared her experience of not being selected by a client due to language elements: *"So I suppose there is something of my culture, rigidity of pronunciation is part of my culture. And I could see as we were having this conversation how this person decided to not take me as her coach. Because that very thing of rigidity of pronouncing things in the language that they originate, it was too much for her."* In addition, race was also a cultural dimension that presented in the findings as a potential barrier to selection: *"Clearly these five white men felt more comfortable with me as a white coach than they did with some of the other coaches, who were Black coaches. While I was trying to get Black clients, they were looking for a white coach to help them." (P2)*

In addition, a further cultural dimension that did not present in influencing the relationship itself but did appear in the findings concerning selection/matching is that of religion. One participant shared her experience of not being selected by a client given that she was not willing to disclose her religious affiliation, a cultural dimension that was important for the client to know about their coach:

...one person says to me: "I'm a proper Christian. So I need to know before we go any further if you are too. And if you're not, I can't work with you." So I said, "I can't answer that question. I'm not willing, like I said, I'm not willing to disclose my religious affiliation. Because I do not think it's relevant to your corporate coaching." And it was the last time that person came. (P4)

Lastly, the findings further indicated that coaches may also play a role in excluding *themselves* from particular clients in the selection and/or matching phases based on specific overt cultural dimensions. P8 provides an example of how she excluded herself from coaching as a result of the cultural dimension of age: "*So, there's a thing about ageism in the Black culture. So if you're younger you're likely not to know much. So I excluded myself from coaching people older than me on that basis. Not that they excluded me as their coach, it was more with me when I was younger.*" It is clear from these findings that overt cultural elements such as race, language, religion or age may play a role in a coach or client not being selected as part of the selection or matching process. This is in contrast to the nuanced, hidden cultural elements that may influence the relationship once it has been established (Sections 4.6.1 and 4.6.2.)

4.6.4 Culture as an Enabler to Selection and/or Matching

As with the confounding views on how culture influences the relationship itself, participants also had differing experiences on how culture has influenced their matching and selection experiences with clients. Thus, while certain overt cultural dimensions were experienced as barriers to starting a coaching relationship, some participants experienced the dimensions of race, language or age as favourable to selection or matching. For example, P11 stated that racial and language similarities enabled him to get selected by certain clients:

...I've worked with Afrikaner, Afrikaans guys, and their key thing there was the language. So if they are presented with a panel of coaches, they will look for somebody that will be able to understand them. At least so that they are able to express themselves...And then I've got some clients who kind of look at that I understand their background. So where it's from a Coloured community and those kind of things. So those things kind of come through and they will explicitly say I chose you because you are Coloured, and you understand where I come from. (P11)

In addition, P4 states that she has been selected based on age: "*So I've had people say to me outright: I really want an older coach*". Conversely, overt cultural differences may also aid in selection, has expressed by P3: "*So with him, he didn't choose me on the basis of*

chemistry, he chose me on the basis of perhaps a need to be challenged to grow, a need for a stretch zone, and I chose him based on my curiosity about this person. And our first two conversations were not comfortable ones, and then it clicked, and the chemistry happened."

Overall, the findings on **how** culture may influence the coach-client relationship indicate that there is contention and complexity in the data around this issue, as the experiences of participants differ significantly.

4.7. Theme 4: Strategies for an Effective Relationship

The findings aim to address the second objective of this study which is to explore the strategies for an effective relationship in a multicultural context. It is not surprising that the strategies that will be discussed in this section partly overlap and align with the coach's critical success factors discussed in Theme 1 (Section 4.4.1). These findings point to the fact that to foster a successful relationship within a multicultural context, the critical success factors are important elements to the relationship, as well as the use of cultural-specific strategies.

It should be noted that the participant quotations to follow in this section were derived specifically from asking the participants *directly* about strategies. The participants provided their subjective meanings through their own experiences of multicultural coaching relationships; however, all participants were asked to evaluate their strategies as a coach from a cultural lens. To this effect, the researcher asked: "What strategies (if any) do you adopt when coaching clients from different cultures?" Figure 4.3 shows an overview of the eight key strategies identified in the findings. These will be discussed with supporting quotations in the sections to follow.

Figure 4.3

Eight Key Strategies for a Successful Relationship in a Multicultural Context

4.7.1 Way of Being	4.7.2 Bring Culture into the Conversation	4.7.3 Coach Supervision
4.7.4 Coach Introspection	4.7.5 Intercultural Competence	4.7.6 Client-Centric Approach
4.7.7 Provide Role Clarity	4.7.8 Curiosity	
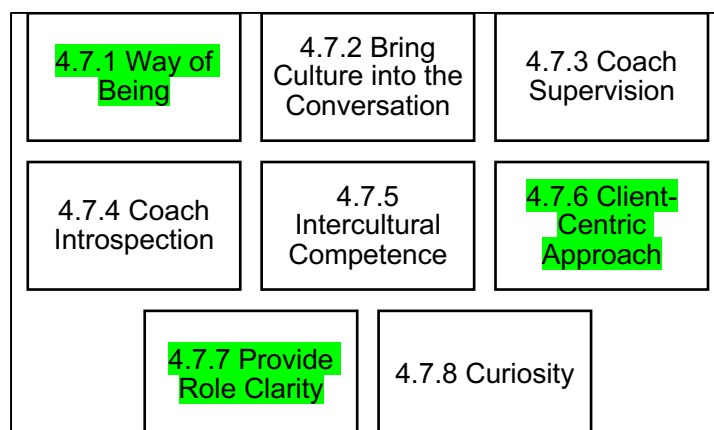
Note: Highlighted items align with coach critical success factors

4.7.1 Way of Being

Coaches' way of being speaks to their characteristics and individual approaches adopted in their relationships with their clients. This strategy (as shown in Figure 4.3) is strongly aligned with the coach critical success factors discussed in Section 4.4.1. The findings indicate that when coaches work with clients from different cultures, they paid due attention to their way of being towards the client to promote a successful relationship.

More specifically, honesty and transparency came forward as important, as indicated by P3 who stated "...*I'm very straightforward with coachees...*". Way of being also included coaches remaining open-minded and adaptable, as stated by P10: "*...as a coach it is handy when you are open minded because then you can work with the coachee based on where your coachee is*". Additionally, when engaging with coachees in a multicultural context, coaches need to be authentic and non-judgemental:

> *I think a lot of connection can actually transcend cultural differences if it is completely authentic and genuine and non-judgemental and curious and all of those things I say a coach needs to have (P4).*

It is clear from the findings that a coach's way of being and their ability to be transparent, honest, open-minded, adaptable, authentic and non-judgmeental, are key strategies to fostering a successful relationship within a multicultural context.

4.7.2 Bring Culture into the Conversation

The strategy of bringing culture into the conversation was identified in the findings as a key component of fostering a successful relationship within a multicultural context. This strategy refers to the coach speaking about culture when it is necessary, and when it will benefit the client and the relationship. This is indicated by P4: *"...just about every single person I coach, culture plays a role. It's playing a role for them, and it's playing a role for me. So...if it becomes necessary to talk about it you must talk about it. And it is often important to talk about."* This may take several different forms. Firstly, bringing culture into the conversation may involve the coach asking the client culture-related questions to further understand their perspectives and cultural contexts, and how these relate to the relationship: "*And I listen for it very carefully, and I ask questions for me to be clear that I understand where they're at. So I'm not assuming that they come from a place of understanding.*" (P7)

Bringing culture into the conversation is particularly important when there is a perceived cultural barrier in the relationship: *"So you...have to bring it to the table and say it*

seems like this might be going on for you, or there's some resistance with us working together and I'm wondering what that's about. So calling it out I guess is how one would describe it in a coaching relationship." (P2). In addition, when specific cultural dimensions play a significant role in the coaches' coaching philosophy, P9 suggested that they declare this upfront and bring it into the conversation:

> *I always declare upfront that my leadership coaching is based on Christian principles and ask people to bring their equivalent from their own religions when relevant. And that has created harmony when the religions are not the same, because there isn't one religion competing for space or whatever. (P9).*

Moreover, bringing culture into the conversation is deemed necessary by some participants when they believe that there may be an element of cultural transference taking place between the client and the coach, and talking about it may provide further insights in this regard. This is stated by P12: "... *the coach becomes the transitional objective, or the transitional phenomenon. So there's a lot of projection and then the coachee kind of works out what that means for them".* P2 supports the importance of talking about culture when it might be reflecting an external cultural conflict for the client that is impacting on the relationship:

> *So bringing it back to what's real and in the room, and how what's happening outside might be reflecting on what's happening in the coaching room, and as I mentioned earlier, what's happening in the coaching room and how that might reflect what's happening outside. (P2)*

Lastly, bringing culture into the conversation may be an important strategy to utilise when it establishes rapport and allows the coach and client to find common ground. In this respect, the coach should open up the topic, as stated by P3: *"I think, you know, finding the common ground is really important. Sharing some of your own experiences to unpack culture."*

As seen in these findings, there are various ways in which participants, through their own subjective experiences, brought culture into the coaching relationship deliberately, to enhance the coach-client relationship.

4.7.3 Coach Supervision

Coach supervision was identified as an additional strategy to be utilised by coaches when coaching in a multicultural context. This speaks to taking cultural issues or barriers experienced directly to a supervisor and receiving guidance, as expressed by P10:

You see, what is nice about coaching, if you don't know something, you ask. And secondly, in coaching, we have supervisors. So if you are stuck, you communicate with your supervisor about a difficult case. So in that way, it becomes a win-win situation. (P10)

4.7.4 Coach Introspection

Coach introspection was identified as a pertinent strategy to utilise by coaches when coaching in a multicultural context. Introspection in this context speaks to enhancing self-awareness as a coach and being aware of the impact that your culture may have on the client, as well as self-regulating when cultural aspects may be emotionally arousing. Coaches should also consistently check automatic assumptions internally and not allow these to influence the coach-client relationship. These will be discussed.

Firstly, self-awareness as a coach involves being aware of your triggers and not projecting them on to the client, as stated by P5: "*If I as a coach am aware of my triggers and the things that might impact my effectiveness, then I as a coach should work on dealing with those issues in me. I should not be projecting them or trying to correct them or raise them in a coaching conversation with a coachee.".* This further extends to an awareness of potential biases that may emotionally trigger the coach: "...*non-attached to any of my own biases and also to exercise my own emotional intelligence because it's very easy to allow yourself to be emotionally triggered." (P6).* To this effect, self-awareness should further extend to self-regulation in order to facilitate introspection, and not project emotional triggers onto the client: "...*So in a session, I would actually pause and it's like I need to suspend that thought almost immediately and just park it somewhere kind of thing. So there's a lot of self-regulation that happens. (P11)"*

Introspection also involves awareness of potential assumptions that one might make and how those may affect the coach-client relationship. It is important to continuously check assumptions: "*So I mean you could argue that a lot of coaching is really addressing assumptions implicitly and explicitly. So I'm implicitly making sure that my assumptions don't get in the way. (P1).* This further involves being aware that the client is bringing their own worldview and paradigm into the coaching session: "*Not make assumptions that everybody thinks like I do, and practice functioning outside of the box that you've been socialised in. (P8)*

The findings thus indicate that to enhance successful relationships in multicultural contexts, coaches need to practice self-awareness and challenge their own beliefs and

assumptions, and the impact they may have on the client. This self-regulation, within a context of vast cultural diversity, facilitates reflection, which in turn may aid in fostering a successful relationship through the development and education of the coach, as stated by P7:

> *I think the diversity of our culture is one where, as coaches we can develop a different kind of language that goes beyond the race or the age or the colour or the gender. But also gives us greater reflection on us, myself as a coach, to say you know, what am I oblivious to? So I think my learning is great by listening in on what the diversity is. (P7)*

4.7.5 Intercultural Competence

The fifth strategy to be utilised by coaches when coaching in a multicultural context is to practice intercultural competence. Intercultural competence refers to the ability to think and behave in a culturally suitable manner when engaging with different cultures (Hammer et al., 2003). In the context of this study, comprises cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity. Cultural awareness concerns the recognition and conscious appreciation that there are different cultures and that the coach and the client may differ in their cultural understanding of the world. This, in turn, allows coaches to be aware that the client's perspective, viewpoint and cultural influences may differ from their own, as stated by P9:

> *I've grown up in a very principled family – so one of the things I had to learn as a coach was to appreciate that my culture is not the only culture and it's not the right culture. So that if I coach somebody who's got a different view, I'm able to coach them on what they believe in and support them to choose what they need to choose. (P9)*

In addition to cultural awareness, intercultural competence entails being sensitive to different cultures: *"Those nuances do come up, and then as a coach, it's not necessarily to just subscribe to it, but you are sensitive to it." (P11).* Sensitivity thus refers to adapting behaviour as a coach based on awareness of cultural influences and being sensitive to the impact that culture may be having on the client or the relationship. Hammer et al. (2003, p.422) define intercultural sensitivity as "the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences". P7 provides an example of how cultural awareness led her to adapt her coaching sensitively to get better results from her client:

> *And as a coach, where I have been aware that my own belief system is not at all what the other person is. For me the important thing in that is I was aware that she was holding back, I was aware that there was no buy-in at coaching level. My role was then to be able to create a question for her to be able to get to that space. (P7)*

The findings further indicated that successful coaching in a multicultural context attributable to intercultural competence may have resulted from exposure to a wide range of different people from different cultural backgrounds, as expressed by P12: *"and what helps is that I worked across like a real range of people, I mean I've been lucky enough to work with many many different people and many different behaviours, approaches."*

4.7.6 Client-Centric Approach

The strategy of adopting a client-centric approach strongly aligns with the critical coach success factors discussed in Section 4.4.1. This suggests that this particular strategy may be critical in fostering a successful relationship within a multicultural context. Adopting a client-centric approach speaks to focussing the coaching session *only* on the client, and as stated by P4, focussing the session on what matters to the client, not to the coach: "*So in that first session where people are telling me who they are, I'm fascinated about what really matters to them and I'm absolutely going to work with what matters to them. And it's not what matters to me. It's not what I think should matter to them. It's what matters to them. And there's a very big cultural element in that."*

The findings indicate that a client-centric approach further involves remaining neutral as a coach and not to allow the client's perspectives, beliefs or actions to influence or affect you as a coach: *"If you can sit within that diversity and look at it without getting sucked into it, then I think THAT is probably one of the success factors for coaching. Is to be able to help a person to unpack their world and to look at it with them and not getting sucked into it."* (P3). This neutrality further manifests in the coach playing a key role in asking questions in a coaching session, rather than agreeing, disagreeing or providing advice. Therefore, in a multicultural context, a client-centric approach of focussing only on the client, remaining neutral and not providing advice is pertinent for a successful relationship:

> *It's irrelevant what the coach's opinion is on those topics because the coach's role is not to give advice. It's not to interpret, it's not to agree with the coachee's solution. It's about asking questions that bring the coachee, whether it's a team or an individual, to insight around their issue as the coachee or the team being coached (P5).*

4.7.7 Role Clarity

An additional coach strategy identified in the findings which align with the critical success factors is providing role clarity in the coach-client relationship. Role clarity in the context of a critical success factor refers specifically to role clarity on the part of the client

(Section 4.4.2). However, for a strategy to work from the *coach's* perspective in the context of coaching in a multicultural context, it is important to provide role clarity for both parties in the relationship. That said, the coach and the client both need to understand what is expected from each other, as indicated by P11: *"...the other thing in a cultural context is to put on the coaching agreement what is it that we want to achieve, and expectations from each other. And to be open with that. And that helps a lot."* To facilitate a successful relationship in a multicultural context, a coach should therefore be proactive in ensuring that the client has clarity on their role and expectations.

4.7.8 Curiosity

The last strategy identified in the findings that coaches can implement to enhance successful relationships in a multicultural context is adopting an attitude of curiosity. As stated by P6, it is important for the coach to adopt *"curiosity rather than judgement"*, and to continuously ask questions to the client in order to understand them and their cultural orientations, influences and backgrounds better. P6 states: "*And so my strategy is to be unattached and to be curious and say: Well that's interesting, tell me more. So you ask about strategies, it's just to adopt a very intentional stance of non-attachment and curiosity and non-judgement as well.*" The strategy of being curious further speaks to acknowledging that as a coach you may not know all there is to know about your client, and thus asking questions becomes important:

> *Secondly, I saw the attitude of curiosity as a coach, and not being judgmental. I felt it was an interesting thing because you can coach someone of a different culture, but it doesn't mean you coach this person already knowing everything about their culture. (P10)*

4.8 A Conceptual Framework for the Coach-Client Relationship in a Multicultural Context

As indicated in Section 4.2, despite the unique contribution of each theme to the study and the depth of the findings under each specific discussion, there is alignment between the four key themes discussed. This alignment is shown in Figure 4.4, which depicts a conceptual framework serving as a high-level understanding of the influence of culture on the critical success factors of the coach-client relationship, and thus the consolidation of the four themes into a framework is a pertinent contribution of this study. The section to follow will provide insight into how this framework can be read, understood and implemented.

The core of the framework is depicted by the bolded grey block, the coach-client relationship in a multicultural context. From this, the question is posed: "Is culture important to the coach-client relationship?" It is clear from the findings and discussions in Section 4.5, that there are confounding answers to the questions. Thus, as shown in the framework, culture could either be perceived as important to the relationship or not. If culture is *not* deemed as an important influencer to the relationship, it is proposed that there are factors apart from culture such as personal or contextual factors that may be more salient in affecting the relationship. Conversely, if culture is indeed important to the relationship and does consequently influence the question, it leads to the question "*How* does culture influence the coach-client relationship?". The findings indicated that this influence could be present within the relationship itself, or the selection and/or matching process that precedes the relationship. Furthermore, culture may pose as either a potential barrier or enabler in both stages. The red rectangles present a high-level overview of the potential barriers that culture may pose, and the green rectangles reflect the potential enablers that culture may be for the relationship. It should be reiterated that specific cultural dimensions (namely race, language, age, gender etc.) could be viewed or perceived by some as either a barrier or an enabler, depending on their subjective worldview and perspectives. It is thus important to view the contents of the framework as highly complex and influenced by individual ontology and epistemology.

Figure 4.4

A Conceptual Framework for the Coach-Client Relationship in a Multicultural Context

Understanding The Coach-Client Relationship In A Multicultural Context

Theme 3: How does culture influence the coach-client relationship?

Yes

THE COACH-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP IN A MULTICULTURAL CONTEXT

Selection and/or Matching

The Relationship

Theme 2: Is culture important to the coach-client relationship?

Culture as an enabler:
- Overt cultural dimensions:
  o Race, language, age

Culture as a barrier:
- Overt cultural dimensions
  o Race, language, religion, age

Culture as an enabler:
- Relational factors: *Homogeneity, understanding each other, offering a different perspective*
- Overt cultural dimensions: *Race, language, religion*

Culture as a barrier:
- Coach's internal mechanisms: *Assumptions, biases, triggers, differences in perspectives*
- Overt cultural dimensions: *Race, language, gender*
- Cultural orientations: *Individualistic vs collectivistic, management styles*
- Relational factors: *Intercultural trust issues, rank, power & privilege, lack of homogeneity*

No

There may be factors **apart from** culture that are more salient in influencing the coach-client

Contextual Factors:
- South Africa's history
- Social class
- Social circumstances
- Organisational influence

Personal Factors:
- Personality and values
- Discomfort of coaching

Theme 1: Critical Success Factors
- Coach factors:
  o Way of being: empathic, listening skills, authenticity & openness to learn
  o Credentials: Experience & organisational knowledge
  o Client-centric philosophy: Humility, safe space, providing support, holding client accountable & non-judgment
- Client factors:
  o Readiness
  o Commitment to change
  o Role clarity
- Relational factors:
  o Trust
  o Rapport
  o Relationship of equals
- Organisational factors:
  o Supportive organisation
  o No imposition from organisation

Theme 4: Eight Strategies for Coaching in a Multicultural Context
1. Way of being
2. Bring culture into the conversation
3. Coach supervision
4. Coach introspection
5. Intercultural competence
6. Client-centric approach
7. Role clarity
8. Curiosity

The framework is further extended to include Theme 4 and the link it has to Theme 3. As shown in the framework, in situations where culture may pose as a barrier to the relationship, it is pertinent for the coach to adopt specific strategies that may enhance the relationship within a multicultural context. Lastly, the framework suggests that for a successful relationship, the strategies identified in Theme 4 **and** the critical success factors identified in Theme 1 are salient. The strategies and success factors in blue indicate the significant overlap between the two themes identified in the findings.

It is the aim of this study to further refine and develop the conceptual framework through the Delphi technique (as indicated in Section 3.4.1) after submission of this study in the form of a minor thesis. To this effect, the Delphi technique will enhance the credibility of the framework, thereby promoting its use as a developmental tool for coaches to understand the influence of culture on the coach-client relationship, and to learn the strategies they can subsequently adopt to enhance their relationships with their clients. The proposals for further use of this framework will be discussed in Section 6.3.

4.9 Theme 5: The Influence of Organisational Culture on the Coach-Client Relationship

As previously indicated, the focus of this study was the influence of the individual's social culture on the coach-client relationship, and questions were explicitly framed from this perspective. However, the findings indicated that the influence and importance of the organisational culture also need to be considered in understanding the dynamics of the coach-client relationship, as indicated by P12: *"I think looking at the organisational culture in all its facets is a critical component for coaching and building that relationship. Ya I mean the individual...The individual cultural characteristics are quite minor in regards to the whole system, but they certainly have impact."*

As with individual culture, findings suggest that the organisational culture can either be a barrier or an enabler to the coach-client relationship depending on the culture, as indicated by P10: *"Culture, it's one of the things that can either make a family grow or destroy a family. The same works in organisations. So if culture supports growth, supports collaboration where everyone feels valued, this is where you'll see success, you'll see growth, you'll see shifts in a favourable manner."* An example of how organisational culture may pose as a barrier to the relationship is provided by P1: *"I think a traditional, old school kind of conservative corporate culture where there is a classic top-down hierarchy with many levels in it, a deep organogram. Ya, maybe the easiest answer to what I'm saying is the conservatism or the traditional nature of corporate life or corporate structures, I think that can slow things down."*

Findings concerning the influence of organisational culture on the coach-client relationship are limited in this study, given that it was not the core focus. However, as indicated by the participant quotations and the findings above, its influence cannot be ignored or overlooked. As such, the influence of organisational culture on the coach-client relationship will be presented as an area of future research (see Recommendations).

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an in-depth evaluation of the data obtained from twelve interviews. This data has been analysed using inductive thematic analysis, and five key themes were identified. Each key theme and its related sub-themes were presented with supporting quotations from participants, providing richness and depth to the findings. Themes 1 to 4 were consolidated into a conceptual framework to provide an overview of the factors to consider when building a successful coach-client relationship in a multicultural context. Given the confounding views of participants in several themes and sub-themes, it is evident that understanding the influence of culture on the coach-client relationship is complex. This complexity provides further rationale and justification for empirical research into the phenomenon of culture and coaching, to further explore and understand the influence of culture.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the findings presented in Chapter 4 in alignment with relevant literature to illustrate the support of this study to the current body of knowledge, as well as its unique contribution. The primary aim of this chapter is to address the empirical research objectives of this study. To this effect, Themes 1 to 4, as presented in Chapter 4, will be aligned to the empirical objectives. Ultimately, the chapter will provide insights into the research question of the study: How does culture influence the critical success factors of the coach-client relationship? The integration of the findings relevant to literature will be discussed concerning each objective outlined above. This chapter will conclude with a brief discussion on the impact of organisational culture on the coach-client relationship.

5.2 Objective 1: Understanding the influence of culture on the critical success factors of the coach-client relationship

There is clear contention in the study's findings on the relative importance that culture may have on influencing the coach-client relationship. This strongly relates to the qualitative study of Roth (2017) who reported that there are opposing views on the importance and potential impact of culture on coaching and the coach-client relationship. Roth (2017) postulated that cultural influences may be overvalued, and there may be more salient factors to consider as influential to the relationship. These findings align with the view of some participants that there may be factors apart from culture that are important to consider. In support of the lack of consensus around the relative importance of culture, Abbott (2010) stated that there are inconsistencies amongst coaching researchers concerning the discussion on cross-cultural coaching. The debate around the relative importance of culture is thus supported, and this aligns with the findings of this study. Overall, this illustrates the complexity of understanding and exploring the phenomenon of culture in the context of coaching. This is exacerbated by the plethora of individual differences, dimensions, subjective understanding and personal conceptualisations of the construct of culture (Booysen, 2016). In addition, this complexity provides a rationale for the need for coaching research to further investigate the nuances of cultural influences in coaching, given the clear incongruence and variability within the research.

Despite the notable debate around whether culture is influential to the coach-client relationship or not, it remains the view of some participants and researchers that cultural influences may be prevalent in the coach-client relationship and thus require due attention. This position is supported by researchers who highlight and defend the need for cognisance

of culture in coaching. More specifically, researchers have called for the need to adopt a culturally sensitive approach to coaching (Plaister-Ten, 2009) and maintained the importance for a cultural lens and perspective to be considered in coaching, to enhance outcomes (Baron & Azizollah, 2019; Milner et al., 2013; Peterson, 2007; Rosinski, 2003). This is further reiterated in the context of South Africa, where the definition for coaching psychology (see Section 2.2) includes recognition of a "culturally specific context" (Odendaal & le Roux, 2016, p.18). Thus, the importance of culture and *how* it influences the coach-client relationship will be discussed by integrating information from literature with this study's findings.

Firstly, the study found that aspects of the coach's internal system, such as making assumptions, holding biases, being triggered by cultural factors or having differences in perspectives from clients, may pose as a barrier to the development of the relationship. This view is supported by literature in cross-cultural coaching research postulating that cultural differences may result in different perceptions, perspectives and cultural lenses between the coach and the client, which influence their subsequent evaluation of the world (Chmielecki & Contreras-Loera, 2020; Lowman, 2007; Odendaal & le Roux, 2016; Roth, 2017). This may further manifest in biases or stereotypes being made about culturally different individuals (Baron & Azizollah, 2019; Roth, 2017; Ye et al., 2016) and are therefore laden in assumptions made about either the coach or client, that may be incorrect (Peterson, 2007). There is, therefore, corroboration in the literature that multicultural contexts may create barriers in the relationship, given cultural assumptions or biases.

Notwithstanding the potential barrier that culture may pose, Rosinski (2003) proposed the potential positive influence culture may have on the relationship, as embracing cultural diversity may *enhance* development and learning. This is supported by Antal & Friedman (2003) who stated that developing intercultural competence creates an opportunity for learning from diverse individuals. This aligns with the study's findings that offering a different cultural perspective may conversely influence the relationship positively. Therefore, there is support in the literature around the incongruence regarding how different perspectives may influence the evolution of the coach-client relationship. Notwithstanding the support in this regard, these findings further illustrate the complexity of studying culture, given that its' impact can be perceived differently by participants and researchers as either an opportunity for growth or a potential hindrance.

There is expansive literature on the potential causes for these differences in perspectives that may manifest in biases. In particular, cultural orientation frameworks (Gilbert & Rosinski, 2008; Hofstede & Milosevic, 2018; House et al., 2004) are fundamental in shaping

our understanding of how specific orientations around cultural elements may influence how we think, behave or act. The respective frameworks (see Table 2.1) reported by various authors contain different cultural dimensions, yet there is some alignment across the frameworks, as was discussed. The dimensions within the cultural orientation frameworks did not appear strongly within the findings of this study as potential influencers on the coach-client relationship. Only one specific dimension namely individualistic vs collectivistic orientations, as included in Hofstede's Framework and the GLOBE study (Hofstede & Milosevic, 2018; House et al., 2004), is presented within the findings. This indicates that the coach or client's orientation towards either individualistic or collectivistic cultures may be an important cultural influence to consider within the context of the coach-client relationship in South Africa. More specifically, if a coach is approaching a coaching intervention from an individualistic perspective, but the client is more collectivistic, there may be a barrier to the relationship. The influence of cultural orientations on the coach-client relationship has not been widely researched in the context of coaching in South Africa. Thus, this study contributes to the literature by providing evidence that such differences in orientations may be important to consider and further explore in research.

In addition to the coach's internal system and underlying cultural orientations, findings also point strongly to overtly visible cultural differences or similarities such as race, language, gender or religion that may influence the relationship negatively or positively in either the selection or matching phase or once the relationship has been established. In support of the potential influence which these overt cultural dimensions may play, Ye et al. (2016) postulated that gender differences may influence managerial coaching behaviour, which in turn may influence the relationship with the client. In addition, Boyce et al. (2010) provide support for demographic commonality across race, gender or language as influential to building rapport and trust, which are key factors influencing the success of the coach-client relationship. However, literature also indicates that coach-client matching based on demographics may not be as critical to the relationship or coaching outcomes as suggested (de Haan et al., 2013; Bozer et al., 2015). In comparison with the findings of this study, it is clear that there may be a lack of alignment concerning the relative importance or influence that overt cultural dimensions, such as demographic factors namely race, or gender, may have on the selection or matching process. Despite the contention in the findings that these overt cultural dimensions may serve as either a barrier or an enabler, there is an indication that irrespective of *how* it influences the selection process, there is an influence to some extent. Therefore, given the lack of consensus within the study and literature concerning demographic or overt cultural differences, further insights into this phenomenon are required in coaching research.

A few studies have demonstrated that there are unique cultural influences to consider in the *South African* context (Geber & Keane, 2013; O'Flaherty & Everson, 2009; Odendaal & le Roux, 2016) that also may manifest in potential biases or stereotypes based on cultural differences (Coetzee, 2012; Geber & Keane, 2013). However, further insights into the potential causes or dynamics surrounding these potential biases and the influence of the uniquely South African cultural contexts are limited.

To this effect, the study suggests that cultural influences such as intercultural trust issues arising from South Africa's history, as well as rank, power or privilege may pose as a potential barrier to the coach-client relationship. Firstly, the issue of intercultural trust is supported by Lowman (2007) who postulates that trust may be understood or internalised differently in different cultures, which may hinder its development in the relationship. In endorsement of this view, Milner et al. (2013) found that in cross-cultural coaching relationships, several coaches identified difficulties with establishing trust in the early stages of the relationship. These findings indicate that cultural influences may affect trust-building in the relationship. Secondly, Spaten (2020) suggests that coaches need to give due regard to power issues within a coaching relationship. He further states that understanding power dynamics in a coach-client relationship is critical and requires further research (Spaten, 2020). Whilst these international studies provide support for the potential barriers caused in a relationship by intercultural trust and power issues, there remains a need to further explore these issues and to understand the impact on coaches working in South Africa's unique context.

In addition, as shown in the findings, it is evident that uniquely South African factors such as social class, history or circumstance (which are defined as being *apart from* culture) may further influence the coach-client relationship. Thus, given the complexity and depth of the findings in this study that are uniquely South African, in conjunction with the concern that there is limited research available on this context, it is clear that this study contributes to the current body of knowledge, as it underpins the necessity to further explore and understand the potential influencers on the success of the relationship. This is further exacerbated by the premise that available research from other countries may not adequately apply to the unique context in South Africa.

Given the further understanding of the influence of culture and how it relates to literature, we can begin to discuss its influence on the critical success factors specifically and evaluate the critical success factors from a multicultural lens. To this effect, the objective of the study is to identify whether the empirical critical success factors for a coach-client

relationship identified in research are strongly influenced by (and therefore potentially different) within a multicultural context. Thus, the discussion will present the comparison of critical success factors identified in literature from predominantly European or American settings (that do not specifically account for cultural influence or sample diversity within the study) with the critical success factors identified in this study, which are present within a multicultural context.

Overall, there is a strong alignment between the critical success factors identified in this study and those identified in the research, with several unique contributions by the study. These will be discussed next.

Firstly, the role of coaches concerning their way of being, credentials and client-centric approach as identified in the findings, aligns with literature. The emotional capacities and behaviours exhibited by a coach have been identified to play a key role in the success of the coach-client relationship (Gettman et al., 2019; Gregory & Levy, 2011; McKenna & Davis, 2009; Pandolfi, 2020; Spaten, 2020), providing support for the coaches' way of being as important to the relationship. Additionally, coach credentials, more specifically their understanding of the organisation and expertise, is also a critical success factor identified in the literature (Boyce et al., 2010). The client-centric approach of a coach is a notable consideration for the coach-client relationship in South Africa, given its replication as a critical success factor and also as a strategy to be utilised by coaches when coaching in a multicultural context. In addition, there is strong support in the literature concerning the elements within a client-centric approach which contribute towards developing a successful relationship. More specifically, coaches who create a safe space (Graßmann et al., 2020; Kretzschmar, 2010; Spaten, 2020) and/or display unconditional positive regard, non-judgment and empathy (Kretzschmar, 2010; Spaten, 2020) are likely to foster more successful relationships with their clients. There is thus support for a client-centric approach and placing the focus solely on the client within a coaching relationship.

A notable comparison with the coach factors identified in the literature is that the supervision and monitoring of a coach by a superior (Graßmann et al., 2020; Koortzen & Odendaal, 2016; Simon et al., 2014) was not identified as a critical success factor in the findings of this study. However, the importance of receiving supervision as a key *strategy* for enhancing relationships specifically in a multicultural context did appear pertinent and will be further discussed in Section 5.3. Overall, it is apparent that the findings in this study concerning the coach's contribution to the development of a successful coach-client relationship are well aligned with empirical research.

Client critical success factors are also aligned between the study and factors identified in the literature. Client readiness (Kretzschmar, 2010) and commitment to change through active involvement in the coaching process (Gessnitzer & Kauffeld, 2015; McKenna & Davis, 2009) receive support in literature as key client elements that contribute towards the success of a coach-client relationship. Whilst the notion of role clarity for the client as critical to the success of the relationship is not identified specifically in literature, the research on goalsetting theory and clarity around goals is closely linked. Gessnitzer and Kauffeld (2015) and Grant (2014, p. 148) provide support for the importance of the client setting goals as "internal representation of desired states or outcomes", goal hierarchy and obtaining shared agreement on goals between the coach and the client.

Two key relational processes identified in the findings namely trust and rapport received strong support in literature as critical to the success of the coach-client relationship. The importance of trust between the coach and the client is a key critical success factor that has received extensive substantiation in literature (Boyce et al., 2010; Gregory & Levy, 2011; O'Broin & Palmer, 2019; Terblanche & Heyns, 2020; Spaten, 2020), and is further supported by the findings of this study. Similarly, the rapport between the coach and the client is key to the success of the coach-client relationship (Booysen, 2015; Boyce et al., 2010; Ely et al., 2010) and also receives support in this study. The relational process of contracting between a coach and client is identified in the literature as an additional critical success factor that contributes to a successful relationship (Gettman et al., 2019; O'Broin & Palmer, 2019; de Haan, 2019). However, the process of contracting was not identified by this study as an important factor.

Conversely, relational factors identified in this study that has not received significant attention in research is the importance of having a "relationship of equals" wherein the coach and client enter into a balanced, non-authoritative relationship. This finding can be related to the research of Antal & Friedman (2003) postulating the importance of negotiating reality and defining the relationship *together* through conversation in multicultural contexts. A core underlying assumption of negotiating reality includes the notion that "all people are of equal importance and worthy of equal respect" (Antal & Friedman, 2003 p. 17). To this effect, the coach and the client co-construct the relationship so that it is free of power dynamics. This is an interesting finding of this study and a contribution to literature, as it indicates that within a unique context such as South Africa, rich with cultural influences that may be often characterised by power dynamics, it is important for the relationship between the coach and the client that they or their roles are perceived as equal by both parties.

Similarities are also apparent between the organisational factors contributing to the success of the coach-client relationship as identified in both the findings and literature. Research shows that the organisational culture is an important constituent that contributes to the success of the relationship (Booysen, 2015; Passmore & Law, 2009; Sharma, 2017). This study supports this notion through the finding that a supportive organisation plays a role in the relationship. In addition, literature states that the organisation plays a role in the matching of a coach and client (Odendaal, 2016), which aligns with the study's finding that should this matching be an imposition on the client, it may hinder the success of the relationship.

This section has demonstrated that in relating the findings of this study to empirical research, the critical success factors of a coach-client relationship identified in homogenous settings are largely similar to the factors identified in a multicultural context. To this effect, this study contributes to the literature in that most of the critical success factors arising from international settings, may apply to unique multicultural contexts such as South Africa. Notwithstanding this applicability, there are complex cultural nuances and influences that coaches must be aware of and may need to consider. Thus, coaches in a multicultural context have developed specific coaching strategies that appear to be strongly embedded into or used in conjunction with the critical success factors to enhance and develop their relationships with their clients. These were identified as coach strategies for fostering a successful coach-client relationship in a multicultural context and will be discussed in the next section.

5.3 Objective 2: Coach strategies for a successful relationship in a multicultural context

Closely linked to the critical success factors for a coach-client relationship, are the cultural-specific strategies that coaches should utilise when coaching in multicultural contexts. This study integrates these findings into eight key strategies that holistically could inform potential training and development of emerging coaches for use in a multicultural context. However, when evaluating the strategies independently against the current body of literature it is clear that there is strong alignment in individual elements of the respective strategies. These will be discussed.

The coaches *Way of Being* as both a strategy and a critical success factor indicates the importance of the role the coach plays in fostering a successful relationship, especially in a multicultural context. Whilst literature focussing specifically on culture and coaching receives limited attention on the role of the coach, it is clear from the discussion in Section 5.2 that there is support for a coach's way of being as a critical success factor. In addition, the strategy of *Coach Supervision* has received attention as a critical success factor, and also from

researchers on culture and coaching. More specifically, Gilbert and Rosinski (2008), supported by Baron & Azizollah (2019) as well as Koortzen and Odendaal (2016) propose that supervision with a specific focus on contextual awareness (also referred to as contextual intelligence) is critical when coaching across cultures. More specifically, Koortzen and Odendaal (2016) postulate that given the vast diversity in the context of South Africa, supervision from a cultural lens is critical. This is particularly pertinent when coaches are utilising cultural orientation frameworks to further their understanding of their cross-cultural clients, as well as where the emphasis is on becoming more effective in dealing with clients as complex cultural beings in the complex context they find themselves in. Whilst this stems from international research, it is evident that when cultural elements stand to influence the dynamics within the coach-client relationship, the coach may benefit from receiving guidance or supervision in this respect.

The strategy of *Coach Introspection* identified in the study is also supported by literature on culture and coaching. More specifically, Plaister-Ten (2009), supported by Baron and Azizollah (2019) suggest that coaches' awareness of their own biases and their abilities to challenge their assumptions is key to coaching in a multicultural context or coaching across cultures. This is aligned to key constituents of negotiating reality in achieving intercultural competence, as awareness of one's own tacit assumptions, and exploring those in others, enhances interactions in multicultural contexts (Antal & Friedman, 2003). This study provides support through the finding that checking assumptions is a key component of coach introspection that serves as a strategy to achieve a more successful relationship. In addition, Noer (2005) identifies self-awareness and examining personal beliefs and values that arise from one's culture as pertinent to coaching across cultures; this notion is supported by this study's finding that self-awareness is a key component of coach introspection. The view of Baron and Azizollah (2019, p. 503) provides a succinct summary to this effect: *"*To be effective in a coaching relationship, coaches must continuously reflect on their own cultural assumptions and biases, and how these distort their perspective and the way they work with clients".

Intercultural Competence is an additional strategy and construct that has gained attention in research on culture and coaching. Intercultural competence refers to the "ability to think and act in interculturally appropriate ways" (Hammer et al., 2003, p. 422). The findings of this study indicate that *cultural awareness* and *cultural sensitivity* are key components of intercultural competence. To this effect, literature provides support for these elements of intercultural competence. More specifically, researchers have asserted that cultural awareness (Abbott, 2010; Chmielecki & Contreras-Loera, 2020; Coetzee, 2012; Coultas et al.,

2011; Handin & Steinwedel, 2005; Plaister-Ten, 2009) and cultural sensitivity (Coultas et al., 2011; Geber & Keane, 2013; Hammer et al., 2003; Peterson, 2007; Rosinski, 2003; van Zyl et al., 2011) is associated with increased levels of intercultural competence. More specifically, Hammer et al. (2003, p. 422) state "Greater intercultural sensitivity is associated with greater potential for exercising intercultural competence". Bennett's model of intercultural sensitivity provides further support for the importance of cultural sensitivity in being interculturally competent, as it suggests that the level of sensitivity that one has towards cultural influences, impacts subsequent behaviour and thought patterns, which in turn impacts the quality of engagement (Hammer et al., 2013). Thus, the elements of cultural awareness and sensitivity within the strategy of intercultural competence in this study support the current body of knowledge. This suggests that for coaches to facilitate successful relationships within a multicultural context, they must have awareness of cultural factors, and respond to them with sensitivity.

The literature further postulates that cultural knowledge and intelligence are further constituents of intercultural competence and key components of cross-cultural coaching (Baron & Azizollah, 2019; Geber & Keane, 2013; Milner et al., 2013). Cultural knowledge refers to knowing and understanding the inner workings of specific cultures (van Zyl et al., 2011) and cultural intelligence further extends to the understanding of how individuals in specific cultures may think, act and feel (van Zyl et al., 2011). To this effect, there is an emotional and cognitive element to cultural intelligence (van Zyl et al., 2011). Ultimately, cultural knowledge and cultural intelligence give rise to appropriate behaviour within diverse contexts (Booysen, 2016). Peterson (2007) postulates that coaches' cultural knowledge may enable them to navigate coaching processes with cross-cultural clients more effectively.

Even though this study did not specifically identify these elements of intercultural competence as strategies to incorporate into coaching in a multicultural context, the researcher postulates that elements of cultural knowledge and intelligence are embedded into the concepts of cultural awareness and sensitivity and that participants may have utilised these constructs interchangeably. A unique element of intercultural competence identified in the findings that contribute to the current body of knowledge is the aspect of contextual awareness. In addition to practicing cultural awareness, coaches are encouraged to be aware of the context from which the individual originates, and how this may impact their culture and subsequent thinking and behaviour. Ultimately, intercultural competence, referring to the ability to communicate, understand and connect with one's own culture as well as different cultures, is a key strategy for coaching in a multicultural context.

This study's strategy of a *Client-Centric Approach* for coaching in a multicultural context also corroborates literature. In addition to the critical success factors of the coach-client relationship discussed in Section 5.2, researchers in cross-cultural coaching studies have further stressed the importance of providing a safe space for clients (Lowman, 2007; Plaister-Ten, 2009) and adopting a client-centred approach to coaching as per the elements of person-centred therapy founded by Carl Rogers, namely unconditional positive regard, empathy and congruence (Joseph, 2010; Peterson, 2007; van Zyl et al., 2016). The replication of a client-centric approach as a general critical success factor, and as a key strategy when coaching within a multicultural context, emphasises the pertinence of coaches utilising this approach in their coaching to foster successful relationships. Lastly, the strategy of *Curiosity* is also supported by research. Peterson (2007, p. 270) ascertains that "...*regardless of the amount of cultural knowledge a coach has, the best coaches will always be those who coach with an open attitude of curiosity and interest...*". Being curious and showing genuine interest in the client are closely aligned with cultural awareness (Coetzee, 2012) and therefore is a significant strategy to employ when coaching in a multicultural context.

Bringing Culture into the Conversation was a further strategy identified in the findings. It should be noted that this strategy was specifically identified as important when coaches *perceive* it necessary for (or pertinent to) the growth of the relationship, or the development of the conversation, to discuss culture. This finding provides further support for the findings of Antal & Friedman (2003) who postulate that effective interaction in multicultural contexts arise from the individuals' ability to negotiate reality by surfacing cultural elements, implicit assumptions and culturally-laden behavioral norms into the conversation. Notwithstanding this support, the findings of this study do not suggest that cultural factors *should* be discussed in all multicultural contexts as a matter of principle, but rather when it serves to enhance the relationship. The researcher further postulates that this finding can be related to the support for building rapport found in the research (Boyce et al, 2010; Gan & Chong, 2015). As discussed in Section 2.5.4, rapport is a key relational success factor for the coach-client relationship, enhancing connection and open communication. The researcher postulates that discussing culture openly when it is perceived as a barrier in the relationship, may enhance rapport-building and subsequently contribute to the success of the relationship.

The final strategy identified for enhancing successful relationships in multicultural contexts is *Role Clarity*. Researchers on cross-cultural coaching do not explicitly discuss the concept of role clarity from a cultural perspective in their research. However, it is evident from the discussion in Section 5.2, that role clarity (linked to goal clarity) is viewed as a critical success factor for the coach-client relationship. From a South African cultural perspective and

given potential intercultural trust issues and power dynamics (as previously discussed), having clarity on roles for both the coach and the client can only be beneficial. This also aligns with the concept of a *Relationship of Equals*, a critical success factor unique to this study (discussed in Section 5.2). These findings suggest that by ensuring the client is aware that the coach is entering the relationship as an equal, and there is clarity on this role, the success of the relationship will be enhanced. Given the researcher's postulation in this respect and the limited research on understanding role clarity within cross-cultural research, it is proposed that this construct is explored further in future research.

The above discussion demonstrates that the eight strategies for coaching in a multicultural context are largely supported by empirical research on culture and coaching in international settings. It should be noted that whilst there is this support, research specific to the unique context of South Africa is limited. Given this, this study contributes to the research gap by comparing international research with the nuanced cultural influences in South Africa. Notwithstanding this contribution, the researcher proposes that further exploration and understanding of this influence is required to corroborate the findings in this study (see Section 6.4).

5.4 Objective 3: The Conceptual Framework

As shown in Figure 4.4, this study has integrated the findings into a high-level conceptual framework which combines the findings around the influence of culture on the coach-client relationship, the critical success factors and the strategies to be utilised by coaches in a multicultural context into one picture. The discussions in Sections 5.2 and 5.3 have demonstrated the support from literature for several elements within the framework. However, the framework is a unique contribution to the literature through demonstrating the linkages between the concepts and making a distinction between general critical success factors and specific culture-specific coach strategies that contribute to a successful coach-client relationship. To further corroborate and verify this framework, it will be subjected to a Delphi technique (as outlined in Section 3.4) after submission of this minor thesis. With the verification of the framework by subject matter experts, it is the aim of this study to develop an empirical conceptual framework that may be utilised by emerging and existing coaches and supervisors in South Africa. This framework will serve to further their understanding of the influence of culture on their relationships with their clients, and the role they may play in fostering and enhancing these relationships.

5.5 The Influence of Organisational Culture

The influence of organisational culture on the coach-client relationship is not directly related to the objectives of this study. However, given the attention it received from participants, its influence may be an important factor to account for when evaluating the success of a coach-client relationship. As discussed in Section 5.2, a supportive organisation, as determined by its culture, is deemed as one of the critical success factors for a coach-client relationship. Whilst this study did not further explore the dynamics of this success factor, it is evident from the findings and literature that given the influence the organisational culture may have, it is likely to influence the relationship between the coach and the client (Pennington, 2020) and thus the nature of this influence needs to be further explored (Baron & Morin, 2009). It was beyond the scope of this study to achieve that objective, however, given its salient presence, this study recommends further research into the influence of organisational culture, as stipulated in Section 6.3.

5.6. Conclusion

The findings in this study, with support from literature, demonstrate that there are disputes amongst coaching researchers on the relative importance of culture in influencing the coach-client relationship. Given this, this study is justified in aiming to further explore and understand this phenomenon, as it is an area of research that needs due attention. Notwithstanding these disputes, this study, with support from several authors, maintains that cultural influences *may* have the potential to influence the relationship and subsequently may need due attention in a multicultural context. To this effect, this study contributes to the literature by identifying that the critical success factors in a multicultural context are largely comparable to those identified in empirical research from international research.

In addition, if coaches in a multicultural context practice the coach critical success factors, in addition to the eight key strategies identified in the findings, it should assist them in promoting successful and meaningful relationships with clients. This study contributed to literature by providing insights into several unidentified aspects of culture and the coach-client relationship, and through the development of a conceptual framework to enhance our understanding of the influence of culture on the coach-client relationship. The particulars of these contributions will be discussed in Section 6.2. The elements within the conceptual framework developed in this study are significantly corroborated by relevant literature, however, execution of the Delphi technique will provide further refinement and evaluation.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide a synopsis of the key theoretical and practical contributions of this study, outline limitations, provide recommendations for future research, reflect on the quality of the study and provide the researcher's reflection and concluding remarks.

6.2 Key Contributions of the Study

In achieving this study's theoretical objectives (see Section 1.3.1) and empirical objectives for Phase One (see Section 1.3.2), several key contributions both to research and practice has been made. These will be discussed.

6.2.1 Theoretical Contributions

This study is the first to explore and discuss the influence of culture on the critical success factors of the coach-client relationship in the unique multicultural context of South Africa. Through this exploration, the study contributes to the literature by highlighting the complexity of exploring social culture influences on the dynamics of the coach-client relationship. To this effect, the findings recognise that several critical success factors identified in research in international studies may apply to the unique multicultural context of South Africa. The discussion in Section 5.2 has highlighted the extent of this applicability and, where appropriate, has highlighted the study's unique contributions concerning critical success factors. These include the importance of an equal relationship between a coach and client in a multicultural context, as well as the potential influence that individualistic and collectivistic cultural orientations may have on the coach-client relationship in South Africa. To this effect, this study provides support for the importance of coach's intercultural competence in coaching in a multicultural context. More specifically, it highlights the need to negotiate reality and co-construct the relationship to eliminate power dynamics (thus moving beyond Bennett's' *adaptation* stage), and subsequently adopt specific strategies (when deemed appropriate) to enhance the success of relationships with clients in a multicultural context.

Moreover, this study amplifies the paucity of research on culture and coaching by providing insights into cultural nuances that may impact the coach-client relationship. In addition, it provides further rationale and justification for the need for coaching research to continue to explore this construct in the coaching space, as its complexity and intricacies are evident from the findings of this study.

6.2.2 Practical Contributions

This study contributes to the practice of coaching in South Africa by developing a conceptual framework that shows the relationship between the influence of culture, critical success factors and specific strategies which coaches can use when coaching in a multicultural context. This framework can be utilised by coaches working with culturally diverse individuals, as well as for the training of emerging coaches. It is a practical guide to enhance understanding of, and ultimately contribute to, the success of coach-client relationships, which as demonstrated, is key for coaching outcomes. The credibility of this framework will be further enhanced through the application of a Delphi technique during Phase Two of the study.

6.3 Limitations of the Study

Despite the rigour with which this research was conducted, there are still several limitations inherent to the nature of the study that requires mention. Firstly, there is a severe lack of research available on the influence of culture on the critical success factors of the coach-client relationship in the context of South Africa. Given the nuanced multicultural context of this study, the researcher aimed to specifically explore and understand cultural influences within the aforementioned context. However, as is evident in the discussion chapter, the lack of literature on the subject matter in this context proved it challenging to relate the research findings to empirical research.

Secondly, the study's findings are derived from the perspective of coaches only. Whilst it was justified why clients were chosen to be excluded from this study, it remains a limitation that only the opinions and experiences of coaches were analysed. Given the dyadic relationship and also the contribution that clients make in the relationship (as illustrated by client critical success factors) it would be beneficial to explore how cultural influences are perceived, understood and experienced from the perspective of clients.

Lastly, this study culminates in the development of a complex conceptual framework for understanding the coach-client relationship in a multicultural context. A limitation in this respect is that this framework was informed and developed by the researcher only, and thus may have to be scrutinised for rigour and applicability. However, to address this limitation, the researcher will subject the framework to a Delphi technique during Phase Two of the study. The empirical objective (as outlined in Section 1.3.2) of verifying and corroborating this framework will thus serve to counter this limitation.

6.4 Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, the following recommendations are made for future research: Firstly, it is recommended that future researchers exploring the influence of culture includes coach-client dyads in their analysis, to gain perspectives from the clients in addition to the coaches. Secondly, it is recommended that this study be reproduced for comparison of results and further insights into the complexity of culture. The discussion in Chapter 5 strongly highlights the subjective nature of exploring culture. Given that this study is the first to explore this influence of culture on the relationship in detail, it is recommended that additional studies be conducted to provide support and provide further insights. In addition, the concept of *Role Clarity* surfaced in the findings of this study as both a critical success factor and a strategy for coaches to utilise in multicultural construct. Notwithstanding, this concept is under-researched in coaching literature. The researcher therefore proposes that further studies explore in more depth the importance of clarity of roles in the coach-client relationship in South Africa. Moreover, it is recommended that the application and usefulness of these findings to the field of Industrial/Organisational Psychology is researched and explored. Lastly, it is recommended that future research explore the influence of organisational culture on the dynamics of the coach-client relationship. The findings suggest that this is a key influential component of the coach-client relationship, and thus further insight into understanding how this influence manifests in the relationship is required.

6.5 Quality Review of Study

Qualitative research cannot be subjected to tests of rigour and quality analysis by evaluating validity and reliability. Therefore, the onus is on the researcher to ensure that all practical and theoretical measures have been put in place to guarantee scientific credibility is upheld in the research. To this effect, the researcher has ensured that a quality research paper is produced in the following ways: Firstly, the researcher has facilitated the trustworthiness of the findings and research outcomes by ensuring all quality control checks were put in place. These include conducting a thorough and rigorous literature analysis, collecting, storing and analysing data in a coherent, effective and systematic manner and presenting findings with supporting quotations from participants. Secondly, the researcher ensured that she followed Braun & Clarke's 15-point checklist for thematic analysis, to ensure that her analysis of the data maintained credibility and trustworthiness. The researcher also facilitated a process of member checking and treating participant's information with sensitivity and confidentiality. For the above reasons, the researcher has ensured that a meticulous and diligent qualitative research procedure was adopted and followed.

6.6 Reflection and Concluding Remarks

The researcher would like to conclude this research paper with a quotation from Participant 3, which reflects the justification and rationale behind conducting this research rather poignantly:

Yes it's absolutely important to not only pay attention but to open up the conversation! I do leadership coaching and if you can learn to sit with difference and work with difference then you are liberated as a leader. It's not just being sensitive or being aware, it's about unpacking and understanding. (P3)

In a country rich with difference and diversity, these words encapsulate the necessity to explore and understand the influence of this multicultural context on the coach-client relationship. This is particularly pertinent given the contention and mixed views regarding how this multicultural context is experienced. The findings in this study provide insights into how culture may influence the coach-client relationship in executive/leadership coaching. However, these insights are rife with complexity and subjectivity, given the unique contribution of each participant's experience. Notwithstanding this complexity, through rigour and scientific application, this study has provided unique insights into this phenomenon. The researcher sincerely hopes that research into cultural influences will continue in the field of coaching, and that the conceptual framework developed in this study will be effectively corroborated, verified and used widely in practice.

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ANNEXURE A: Invitation to Participate in Study: Phase One

UNIVERSITEIT·STELLENBOSCH·UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Dear Sir/Madam

Critical success factors of coach-client relationships: The influence of culture

I am a master's student at the University of Stellenbosch in the Department of Industrial Psychology. In fulfilment of this degree, I am conducting a research study which is exploring the influence of culture on the critical success factors of the coach-client relationship in South Africa. Research indicates that the coach-client relationship is critical to the success of a coaching intervention. This study aims to investigate which factors contribute to the success of the coaching relationship when cultural influence is considered.

In order to gain insights into these factors, I will be interviewing coaches and clients who have been engaged in an executive/leadership coaching relationship, within a South Africa organisation. In light of your experience, you are invited to participate in this study.

Should you agree to participate in this study, you will be required to partake in a 60-90 minute interview, with the possibility of a further follow-up interview. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and as such you are entitled to refuse to answer a question should you so wish. Should you participate in the study, your identity will remain anonymous and the utmost care for confidentiality will be taken.

If you would like to participate in this study and contribute to the body of coaching research in South Africa, kindly contact me at 23537760@sun.ac.za, or my supervisor, Dr A. Odendaal at odendaala@sun.ac.za.

Kind regards,
Marisha de Vos

ANNEXURE B: Informed Consent Form: Phase One

UNIVERSITEIT·STELLENBOSCH·UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Critical success factors of coach-client relationships: The influence of culture

You are requested to participate in a research study conducted by Marisha de Vos, from the Department of Industrial Psychology at Stellenbosch University. The results of the study will contribute to a master's thesis and peer-reviewed journal article. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your experience with executive/leadership coaching in South Africa. Please take time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project and contact me if you require further explanation or clarification of any aspect of this study.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to provide insights into cultural influences on the critical success factors of a coach-client relationship within a multicultural context. The study aims to provide such insights within the context of leadership or executive coaching and add to the limited research on the cultural influences on the coach-client relationship in South Africa.

2. WHAT WILL BE ASKED OF ME?

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to partake in an interview with the researcher wherein questions about your experience of coaching in the multicultural context of South Africa will be asked. The interview will take approximately 60 – 90 minutes and a further follow-up interview may be deemed necessary.

The interviews will take place online via either Microsoft Teams or Zoom. The interviews will be recorded using the internal recording mechanisms of the aforementioned platforms. The interviews will take place at a time convenient to you, between the hours of 08h00 – 18h00, Monday to Friday.

3. POSSIBLE RISKS & DISCOMFORTS

The topic of the influence of culture on the coach-client relationship may be experienced as sensitive. The researcher will be cognisant of the sensitivity of the subject at all times, and any negative experiences you may have you are welcome to share with the researcher or you may voluntarily withdraw from the study at any stage (see section 4). If further support is required the researcher will refer you to counselling support from the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) who have a toll-free emergency number available: 0800 567 567.

4. VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

You can choose whether to partake in this study or not. If you volunteer to partake, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and remain in the study. Should you withdraw from the study during or after the interview, any information that you may have contributed will be permanently erased and not included in the research findings.

5. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Your identity will be kept anonymous.

6. DATA MANAGEMENT

The interview recordings will be kept in a password-protected file, on a password-protected computer to which only the researcher and study leader will have access. The recordings will be transcribed into a word document, and you will have the opportunity to review the transcription and verify all the statements you have made. Once verification of the transcript has taken place, the recordings will be deleted and the transcriptions will be kept in a secure electronic location namely on a password-protected file, on a password-protected computer to which only the researcher and the study leader will have access. Both the researcher and study supervisor will also back up the data to OneDrive Stellenbosch University as well as on an external hard drive. These measures will ensure that in the unlikely case of a computer being stolen or having trouble in accessing data, multiple back up sources are available. All data will be erased after the publication of the peer-reviewed journal article.

7. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

Marisha de Vos (Researcher) | 23537760@sun.ac.za

Prof A. Odendaal (Supervisor) | odendaala@sun.ac.za

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT

The information above was described to me by Marisha de Vos in English as I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant

--   ----------------------

Signature of Participant   Date

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____.
He/she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English and no translator was used.

--   ----------------------

Signature of Researcher   Date

ANNEXURE C: Invitation to Participate: Phase Two

UNIVERSITEIT·STELLENBOSCH·UNIVERSITY
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STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Dear Sir/Madam

Critical success factors of coach-client relationships: The influence of culture

I am a master's student at the University of Stellenbosch in the Department of Industrial Psychology. In fulfilment of this degree, I am conducting a research study which is exploring the influence of culture on the critical success factors of the coach-client relationship in South Africa.

This study adopts a two-phase approach. Phase one has been completed and involved the conducting of semi-structured interviews. The data analysis from phase one of the study enabled me to develop a conceptual framework to be utilised by coaches to enhance their relationship with culturally diverse clients in the context of South Africa. Phase two will utilise an online Delphi (confirmatory) Technique to corroborate and verify the proposed conceptual framework from phase one. Given your experience with coaching in South Africa, and working with culturally diverse clients, I would like to invite you as an expert to participate in Phase Two of this study, and provide your personal inputs and feedback on the proposed conceptual framework.

Should you agree to participate in this study, you will be sent an email with the conceptual framework and will be asked to answer three questions based on the framework. You will be provided with *seven* business days to formulate your response and send it back via email. Completion of questions are expected to take twenty to thirty minutes. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and as such you are entitled to refuse to answer a question should you so wish. Should you participate in the study, your identity will remain anonymous and the utmost care for confidentiality will be taken. Your expertise will be invaluable in finalising the conceptual framework to be utilised by coaches in South Africa.

If you would like to participate in this study and contribute to the body of coaching research in South Africa, kindly contact me at 23537760@sun.ac.za, or my supervisor, Dr A. Odendaal at odendaala@sun.ac.za.

Kind regards,
Marisha de Vos

ANNEXURE D: Informed Consent Form: Phase Two

UNIVERSITEIT·STELLENBOSCH·UNIVERSITY
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STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Critical success factors of coach-client relationships: The influence of culture

You are requested to participate in a research study conducted by Marisha de Vos, from the Department of Industrial Psychology at Stellenbosch University. The results of the study will contribute to a master's thesis and peer-reviewed journal article. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your experience with executive/leadership coaching in South Africa.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to provide insights into cultural influences on the critical success factors of a coach-client relationship within a multicultural context. The study aims to provide such insights within the context of leadership or executive coaching and add to the limited research on the cultural influences on the coach-client relationship in South Africa.

2. WHAT WILL BE ASKED OF ME?

This study takes place in two phases. Phase one of the study was the conducting of semi-structured interviews and this phase has been complete. The results of this phase of the study have been analysed and the researcher has developed a conceptual framework to be utilised by coaches or emerging coaches to enhance their relationships with diverse clients or when working in a multicultural context.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to partake in a Delphi Technique. The Delphi Technique is a verification process wherein subject matter experts corroborate the findings of a study using their expert judgement and opinions.

This process would take place over a few rounds. Each round you will be sent the conceptual framework via email and asked to answer three questions on the conceptual framework. The researcher will then adapt the framework according to the expert opinion received from all participants in the Delphi, and send it back to you, asking the same three questions. This

process will be repeated until you have no further insights or comments and there are consensus across participants on the final conceptual framework.

3. POSSIBLE RISKS & DISCOMFORTS

The topic of the influence of culture on the coach-client relationship may be experienced as sensitive. The researcher will be cognisant of the sensitivity of the subject at all times, and any negative experiences you may have you are welcome to share with the researcher or you may voluntarily withdraw from the study at any stage (see section 4). If further support is required the researcher will refer you to counselling support from the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) who have a toll-free emergency number available: 0800 567 567.

4. VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

You can choose whether to partake in this study or not. If you volunteer to partake, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and remain in the study. Should you withdraw from the study during or after the Delphi Technique process, any information that have contributed will remain as part of the analysis with your consent. Should you wish for any previously contributed information to be erased from the study, all data will be permanently erased accordingly.

5. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Your identity will be kept anonymous.

6. DATA MANAGEMENT

The feedback provided via email will be kept securely on both the password-protected email system, as well as on a password-protected file, on a password-protected computer, to which only the researcher and study leader will have access. The data will be erased after the publication of the peer-reviewed journal article.

7. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

Marisha de Vos (Researcher) | 23537760@sun.ac.za
Prof A. Odendaal (Supervisor) | odendaala@sun.ac.za

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT

The information above was described to me by Marisha de Vos in English as I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant

--   ----------------------

Signature of Participant   Date

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____.
He/she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English and no translator was used.

--   ----------------------

Signature of Researcher   Date

ANNEXURE E: Final Code List

	Key:	
CSF	Critical success factor	
WOB	Way of being	
C	Culture	
R	Relationship	
S	Selection	
B	Barrier	

Theme	Code	No of Quotations
Theme 1: Critical success factors	CSF_Coach_WOB	4
	CSF_Coach_WOB_Authenticity	1
	CSF_Coach_WOB_Empathy	3
	CSF_Coach_WOB_Listening	4
	CSF_Coach_WOB_Openness to Learn	1
	CSF_Coach_Credentials_Experience	3
	CSF_Coach_Credentials_Organisational knowledge	2
	CSF_Coach_ClientCentric_Humility	4
	CSF_Coach_ClientCentric_Create Safe Space	7
	CSF_Coach_ClientCentric_Support	4
	CSF_Coach_ClientCentric_Non-Judgmental	4
	CSF_Coach_ClientCentric_Holding Coachee Accountable	3
	CSF_Client_Readiness	7
	CSF_Client_Committment to Change	5
	CSF_Client_Role Clarity	5
	CSF_Equal Relationship	7
	CSF_Rapport	4
	CSF_Trust	13
	CSF_Coach not imposed on coachee	1
	CSF_Organisational Support	1
	C_Important_R	18
Theme 2: The Importance of Culture	C_Important R_Cultural Orientations	1
	C_Important_R_Coach changes strategy	3
	C_Important_R_Coach's culture	1
	C_Important_R_Gender	1
	C_Important_R_Race	2
	C_Important_R_People are different	3
	C_Important_R_Stereotypes_SA Context	1
	C_Unimportant_R	10
	C_Unimportant R_Age	1
	C_Unimportant_R_Coachees Chose Coaches	3
	C_Unimportant_R_Focus on Individual	1
	C_Unimportant_R_Global Mindset	1
	C_Unimportant_R_Only a descriptor	1

	C_Important_S	4
	C_Unimportant_S	3
	Apart from Culture	9
	Apart from Culture_SA History	4
	Apart from Culture_Class	3
	Apart from Culture_Circumstance	2
	Apart from Culture_Org Influence	2
	Apart from Culture_Personality&Values	9
	Apart from Culture _Discomfort	1
	C_B_R_Coach assumptions, biases, perspectives, stereotypes & triggers	13
Theme 3: The Influence of Culture	C_B_R_Race	4
	C_B_R_Language	3
	C_B_R_Gender	2
	C_B_R_Ind vs Collect	1
	C_B_R_Management styles	3
	C_B_R_Intercultural trust issues	1
	C_B_R_Rank, Power, Privelage	2
	C_B_R_Lack of Familiarity	3
	C_E_R_Familiarity	6
	C_E_R_Understanding Each Other	1
	C_E_R_Offering different perspective	1
	C_E_R_Race	1
	C_E_R_Language	4
	C_E_R_Religion	1
	C_B_S_Matching on demographics	1
	C_B_S_Race	3
	C_B_S_Religion	1
	C_B_S_Language	2
	C_B_S_Age	3
	C_E_S_Age_Understands	1
	C_E_S_Differences Attract	1
	C_E_S_Language	1
	C_E_S_Race	1
	C_E_S_Rapport_Surface Level	1
	C_E_S_Similar Backgrounds	1
Theme 4: Strategies for an Effective Relationship	Strat_Way of Being_Adaptability	1
	Strat_Way of Being_Authenticity	3
	Strat_Way of Being_Listening	2
	Strat_Way of Being_Open Minded	2
	Strat_Way of Being_Respect	2
	Strat_Way of Being_Transparency & honesty	18

	Strat_Talk About Culture_Asking Questions	10
	Strat_Talk about Culture_Finding Common Ground	7
	Strat_Talk about Culture_Open up Topic	21
	Strat_Talk About Culture_Relationship reflects reality	6
	Strat_Introspection_Checking assumptions	4
	Strat_Introspection_Self-Awareness	17
	Strat_Introspection_Self-Regulation	1
	Strat_Intercultural Competence	1
	Strat_Intercultural Competence_Context Awareness	2
	Strat_Intercultural Competence_Cultural Awareness	21
	Strat_Intercultural Competence_Cultural Sensitivity	6
	Strat_Client-Centric	34
	Strat_Coachee-Centric_Non-Judgmental	7
	Strat_Role Clarity	2
	Strat_Curiosity	11
	Strat_Supervision	6
Theme 5: The Influence of Organisational Culture on the Coach-Client Relationship	CI_Org Culture_Enabler	3
	CI_Org Culture	4
	CI_Org Culture_Barrier	6

ANNEXURE F: Ethical Approval from REC

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STELLENBOSCH
UNIVERSITY**

NOTICE OF APPROVAL

REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (SBER) - Initial Application Form

29 August 2021

Project number: 21985

Project Title: Critical success factors of the coach-client relationship: The influence of culture

Dear Ms M De Vos

Your REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (SBER) - Initial Application Form submitted on 19/08/2021 18:13 was reviewed and approved by the REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (REC: SBE).

Please note below expiration date of this approved submission:

Ethics approval period:

Protocol approval date (Humanities)	Protocol expiration date (Humanities)
20 May 2021	19 May 2022

GENERAL REC COMMENTS PERTAINING TO THIS PROJECT:

INVESTIGATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

If the researcher deviates in any way from the proposal approved by the REC: SBE, the researcher must notify the REC of these changes.

Please use your SU project number (21985) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your project.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

CONTINUATION OF PROJECTS AFTER REC APPROVAL PERIOD

You are required to submit a progress report to the REC: SBE before the approval period has expired if a continuation of ethics approval is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

Once you have completed your research, you are required to submit a final report to the REC: SBE for review.

Included Documents:

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Default	Aletta Odendaal CV Stellenbosch 2019	01/08/2019	1
Data collection tool	DELPHI TECHNIQUE QUESTIONS	15/04/2021	1
Recruitment material	ANNEXURE C INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE PHASE TWO	28/04/2021	1
Informed Consent Form	ANNEXURE B INFORMED CONSENT FORM PHASE ONE	12/08/2021	2
Informed Consent Form	ANNEXURE D INFORMED CONSENT FORM PHASE TWO	12/08/2021	2
Default	RESPONSE LETTER	12/08/2021	1
Recruitment material	LINKEDIN MESSAGE	19/08/2021	2
Recruitment material	ANNEXURE A INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE PHASE ONE	19/08/2021	2
Data collection tool	INTERVIEW GUIDE	19/08/2021	2

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| Research Protocol/Proposal | Marisha de Vos - Research Proposal | 19/08/2021 | 2 |
| Default | RESPONSE LETTER 2 | 19/08/2021 | 1 |

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at cgraham@sun.ac.za.

Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham

REC Coordinator: Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioral and Education Research

ANNEXURE G: Quotations Included per Participant

Participant	Number of Quotations
P1	7
P2	9
P3	10
P4	8
P5	7
P6	10
P7	7
P8	6
P9	7
P10	9
P11	9
P12	7
Total	96