

Systemic Team Coaching in a Volatile, Uncertain, Complex & Ambiguous (VUCA) World

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the impact of systemic team coaching and emotional intelligence (EI) development on leadership and team performance in hierarchical organizations within a VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) world. The research investigates how these interventions can enhance team cohesion, communication, and adaptability. Utilizing an interpretative phenomenological approach, qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews and coaching sessions with team members from a municipal utility company. Findings reveal that systemic team coaching reduces hierarchical barriers, fosters psychological safety, and improves team dynamics, while EI development enhances self-awareness and interpersonal relationships. The integration of these approaches empowers leaders and teams to navigate complex challenges more effectively, promoting resilience and innovation in rapidly changing environments. This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on leadership development and offers practical recommendations for organizations seeking to thrive in the modern world.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The world has significantly changed from the onset of the 20th century (Hunt, 2018; Thompson Heames & Harvey, 2006). The birth of the industrial revolution created a demand for products to be made so that society could increase their standard of living. Frederick Winslow Taylor, a theorist of the early 20th century, studied how work was performed. His scientific management theory was ideal in creating mass production of widgets in the most economic and time-saving manner. Many workers in factories were employed to conduct repetitive motions with specific directions. Managers were created to ensure that workers performed their work in a prescribed manner. They adopted Theory X, which assumes that workers held an inherent dislike of work, would avoid working if possible and that they wished to be directed in how work was to be performed (McGregor, 1960).

Fast forward to the 21st century where we have most employees working in organizations based on their subject matter expertise and knowledge matter versus performing functions on an assembly line. At the same time, the world, through the development of the wide-spread internet, is connected constantly. This means that there is an abundance of information circulating across the globe and change is rapidly being communicated. The world in this light is unpredictable and volatile. Societies are unstable, innovations are rapid, and transformations of society and the natural world are instantly communicated (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014). Leaders, in turn, are experiencing difficult and complex problems that can seldom be resolved easily by one person. There are many interconnected parts that have to be considered when addressing issues. Leaders are recognizing that leadership styles commonly practised in the mid-1900s are no longer effective in today's world (Lawrence, 2013). So, what is the solution?

Purpose and Significance of the Study

This paper addresses how team coaching can assist the leader of today to thrive in the world of today and be ready for the challenges of tomorrow.

The overall aim of my research concentrates on systemic team coaching and how the development of emotional intelligence competencies, along with team coaching sessions can assist leaders in hierarchical organizations. Peter Hawkins defined “systemic team coaching” as a “process by which a team coach works with a whole team, both when they are together and when they are apart, in order to help them improve both their collective performance and how they work together, and also how they develop their collective leadership to more effectively engage with all their key stakeholder groups to jointly transform the wider business” (Peter Hawkins, 2022, p. 25).

Within this research study, it is important to address the term “hierarchical organization.” This thesis focuses on organization structures that resemble a pyramid, with one individual at the top of the structure who does not report to a more senior member. The remaining people, within the structure, report to their superior (commonly known as a manager) and thus decisions are made from a top-down process. The organization can grow by increasing the number of layers of managers and reporting employees and is favoured for its ease in seeing its undisputable lines of authority and responsibilities (“Business Organisational Structure,” n.d.).

An examination of what systemic team coaching entails provides insight into how teams can no longer function as a sole identity but instead need to think systemically. The research also touches on the value of each team member acknowledging and becoming self-aware of

their strengths and challenges in emotional intelligence capacities. Research data was collected to indicate if self-awareness has contributed to the development of strong human connections within the team and externally to their stakeholders. It is my vision that this research will contribute to academic literature in the use of systemic team coaching and emotional intelligence coaching as processes for current and future team leaders as they face today's and tomorrow's overwhelming issues.

When conducting the research for this study, I created my main research question along with one supporting research question.

Research Question 1: What is the impact of systemic team coaching on workplace team performance in hierarchical organizations; a qualitative study to explore the perception and utility of emotional intelligence and relationship building on teams.

Research Question 2: How does the development of emotional intelligence amongst team members assist the team in the development of strong internal and external relationships?

Research Objectives:

- To explore the use of Systemic Team Coaching within a hierarchical organization.
- To study how the development of emotional intelligence amongst team members can facilitate all team members (including the leader) with effective communication competencies.

The overall purpose of this research is to determine if systemic team coaching really assisted teams who are struggling in the provision of quick decision making in today's complex, unpredictable and volatile world. The leadership styles of the 20th century are no longer practical in a world that has become technologically advanced and is changing at an unprecedented pace.

Coaching became my passion and profession seven years ago. Throughout my coaching career, I saw how powerful it can be to promote self-awareness and assist the client in discovering new pathways to make their goals achievable. I commenced my coaching career focused on one-to-one executive coaching but as I continued to study human behaviour and leadership, I became more focused on the “team”. It became clear to me that coaching just the leader of the team was not enough to fully increase value of the team. I also recognized that what were considered admirable leadership qualities in the 20th century were no longer what were needed in the 21st century.

Overall, there was an increased need for the effectiveness of strong cohesive teams. During my coaching practice, I saw many instances of senior leaders believing that they themselves had the wisdom in making complex decisions, without collaborating with their team members; many of which had subject knowledge expertise. The result was that many team members frequently felt ostracized by their superiors, which often gave way to disengagement and apathy. Consequently, the organization did not benefit from diversity of thought, potentially resulting in poorer decisions.

Theoretical Framework

I have applied two theories in order to code the data gathered through my research. The first theory is Salovey’s and Meyer’s theory on emotional intelligence. They define emotional intelligence as the capacity to process and utilize information about one’s own and other’s emotions to guide thoughts and actions. (Mayer et al., 2004).

This concept encompasses four stages. The first stage is regarding perception and expression of emotions in which one must initially identify and understand personal emotions. It

is followed by recognizing and interpreting the emotion of others. The final aspect of the first stage involves discerning appropriate from inappropriate emotional expressions. Stage two refers to the emotional facilitation of thinking. In this stage, a person is aware of their emotional states and can understand how their mood can influence various perspectives which ultimately affects decision making. Stage three is the ability to distinguish basic emotions to an advanced stage of understanding complex emotional states and can perceive the shifts of emotion occurring in oneself. Lastly, the fourth stage is the regulation of emotions for growth where one can acknowledge the significant role of emotions and can regulate both personal and other's emotions to mitigate negatives and enhance positives (Mayer et al., 2004). In order to measure a person's emotional intelligence, Salovey, Mayer and Caruso created the Emotional Intelligence Test known as MSCEIT (Stein & Book, 2011).

Although Salovey and Meyer established solid foundations of emotional intelligence, it wasn't until Goldman wrote his book entitled *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* that this theory was widely shared and popularized. (Stein & Book, 2011). Meanwhile, an American psychologist (Reuven Bar-On) and other research scientists at Multi-Health Systems, developed the EQ-i, an emotional intelligence assessment that could be reliably measured.(Stein & Book, 2011). During my research, I utilized the next version of this assessment, the EQ-i 2.0.

Senge's Learning Organization Theory is a framework to code the data gathered from participants within the healthcare system (Senge, 2006). This theoretical approach provides insights into how organizations can cultivate continuous learning and adaptability. This study applies Senge's Learning Organization Theory to public healthcare to examine how coaching can

help healthcare organizations become learning-focused, emphasizing continuous learning and development to improve the well-being of healthcare workers.

Mezirow's transformational learning theory (Mezirow, 2018) describes seven phases that adult students go through in learning. The seven stages include, "a disorienting dilemma, self-examination, critical assessment of assumptions, planning a course of action, acquisition of knowledge or skills to carry out a new plan, exploring and trying new roles and building self-efficacy in new roles and relationships." (Mezirow, 2018). For the purposes of my research, I have utilized the first five phases of Mezirow's theory, which coincides with the foundations of learning through professional coaching, to analyze and elucidate the data collected. The emotional intelligence model (EQi-2.0) and Mezirow's learning theory were not critiqued nor examined for the purpose of this thesis. Rather, these theories were used to analyze and elucidate the data collected through the semi-structured interviews and from the results of the EQi-2.0. By utilizing two theories, the data findings provide a fuller picture of insights and illuminate key themes.

Overview of the Thesis

The subsequent chapters of this thesis provide an exploration of the research question, methodologies, and implications:

- Chapter Two (Literature Review) explores the most relevant research on current challenges for leaders in organizations across the world at this present timeframe.
- Chapter Three (Research Design and Methodology) illustrates my research methodology, an interpretive qualitative approach to conduct semi-structured interviews with each team participant within the chosen organization.

- Chapter Four (Findings/Results of Analysis) discusses my findings that I was able to extract from the research participants data.
- Chapter Five (Discussion) provides an exploration of recommendations developed through the data's findings and existing scholarship.
- Chapter Six (Conclusion) comprises a summary of the main findings and discussion points, this study's limitations/gaps, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The aim of this literature review can be divided into three distinct sections. Within the first section, it is prudent to review the term “team coaching” as the term has evolved greatly over the last twenty years. Defining “team coaching” and “systemic team coaching” is pertinent to my research as it explains the depth to which team coaching has changed in response to the current and future needs of teams within organizations. The second necessary review is to define the concept of “hierarchical organizations” and what impacts hierarchical organizations have on teams. They include, but are not limited to stifling creativity and innovation, slow to respond to fast-paced demands, and an increasing desire by today’s demographics for greater control and flexibility in their work (Lee & Edmondson, 2017).

The second section of this review stems from the concept of emotional intelligence and the use of emotional intelligence within team coaching. Within the realm of emotional intelligence, it is important to review how the development of emotional intelligence competencies can significantly aid leaders within their abilities to effectively communicate with fellow team members and stakeholders and also, contribute to self-control of emotions, particularly negative emotions. The remaining topic worthy of exploring within my research is how the use of psychometric assessments and coaching debriefs can aid an individual in their self-awareness and awareness of others.

The third section covers the topic of the current requirements of leaders today and the acknowledgement that we are living within a much different world than in the early and mid-20th century. The term “VUCA” (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) was originally introduced by the United States military and is still pertinent currently. The world is

quickly changing and thus we need leaders who are agile, collaborative and capable of dealing with the rapidly changing world. It is important to cover these elements as it ties into the need for leaders to develop teams that share a meaningful purpose and can think systemically.

Team Coaching: What is it?

It would be prudent to review how team coaching is defined in order to further analyze how it contributes to organizations meeting today's and future challenges. Reviewing literature on the subject, there remains differences, particularly in subtle nuances between terms such as team facilitation, team building and the inclusion or non-inclusion of one-to-one coaching for all the members of the team (Widdowson et al., 2020).

Hackman and Wageman (Hackman & Wageman, 2005, p. 269) illustrated a general definition that strengthened the concept of helping a team create a single main goal utilizing the talents of team members. They defined it as a "direct interaction with a team intended to help members make coordinated and task-appropriate use of their collective resources in accomplishing the team's work" (Hackman & Wageman, 2005). In 2007, Clutterbuck introduced the concept of the "Team Coach" working in partnership with the team versus directing the team which is commonly seen in team building exercises (Clutterbuck, 2020, p. 87). He also introduced the concept of the promotion of self-awareness, connecting with individuals in different systems and to assist the team not only for today's issues but future concerns (Clutterbuck, 2020). His description embodied the concept that upon departure of the "Team Coach", the team would have the competencies to effectively deal with future challenges.

Kriek and Venter (Kriek, H.S. & Venter, P., n.d.) suggested that team-building exercises were also part of team coaching including such activities that introduced play and fun (paintball), group team challenges (problem solving exercises) and personality learning assessments (psychometric assessments). However, Clutterbuck (Clutterbuck, 2020, p. 99) argued that although team building can help foster relationships amongst the team, there is no correlation that team building's benefits result in long term team effectiveness/increased performance.

Peter Hawkins extended the concept of team coaching into what is known as “Systemic Team Coaching” (Peter Hawkins, 2017). In Hawkin’s literature (Peter Hawkins, 2017, p. 101), he describes “Systemic Team Coaching” as a process in which the Team Coach assists the team to collectively work together but also helps the team to look beyond the team to effectively engage with all stakeholders, thus being a pivotal force within their organization. Hawkins further defines “Systemic Team Coaching” in acknowledging that the Team Coach works with the team so that they function as a team not only when they are together, but also when they are working apart (Peter Hawkins, 2022, p. 25). By seeing other systems, the team understands and can function beyond themselves, recognizing their potential ripple effect on communities, the environment, other professional associations and organizations. In this light, the team recognizes themselves as what Hawkins refers to as a “team of teams” (Peter Hawkins, 2022, p. 220).

Hawkin’s work has evolved the definition of team coaching into big picture thinking and indicates that in the 20th century, we need to think beyond our internal team to how individual teams can influence the decisions/actions taken by individuals globally. The focus

of this research study will be centered on teams functioning within a hierarchical organization. Beyond the basic principles described in the introduction of this proposal, it is helpful to understand the origins of the hierarchical structure where people worked for other people within an established matrix. During the Guild period, apprentices of trades worked for and learned from someone who was already highly talented in their field. In order to move up the hierarchy, an apprentice had to demonstrate their expertise within their chosen trade (Clegg & Haugaard, 2009). Fast forward to the early years of the 20th century, the term employee had been commonly established with the meaning of a “permanent worker belonging to an organization; being subordinated; being assigned to tasks to which one is fitted, and for which one is paid a wage; being subject to the expertise of a managerial specialist...” (Clegg & Haugaard, 2009, p. 311). Within this definition, there is a monetary exchange created between the person (the employee) who provided work (labour) and the organization (company) who received the services. There is also a power relationship created between the employee, who is subject to being obedient to the manager and/or anyone senior to them within organization.

Taylorism further expanded the concept of hierarchical organizations with the establishment of rules imposed on employees and the delineation of “categories of employees” who had clear lines of responsibility, authority, and power (Clegg & Haugaard, 2009, p. 317). Hierarchical structures remain popular today, particularly in areas of government, large corporate private sectors and structures that favour discipline, regulations and autocratic style leadership.

Emotional Intelligence

The concept of emotional intelligence can be researched back to the 1870s where Charles Darwin referred to how emotional expression can be fundamental in human survival and being able to cope with change (Stein & Book, 2011) (Stein & Book, 2011). In the 20th century, Thorndike, an American Psychologist, introduced the wording “social intelligence” (Thorndike & Stein, 1937) while Wechsler published a paper documenting emotional and social intelligence competencies. By 1983, Gardner recognized that humans have the capacity to hold “multiple intelligences” thus distinguishing between cognitive intelligence and social intelligence (Stein & Book, 2011) (Stein & Book, 2011). The use of the term “emotional intelligence” was first introduced by Salvo and Mayer (Saha et al., 2023) and the two academics further developed the concept of humans having the capacity to be able to some extent control and monitor their feelings for themselves and others, thus influencing their behaviours. Nevertheless, it was Goleman (Kanesan, P & Fauzan, N., 2019) who popularized the term emotional intelligence and described emotions as “impulses to act” (Pfeiffer, 2001).

Furthermore, he initiated the theory that one’s emotional intelligence capacities or lack of capacities would determine one’s success in life (Pfeiffer, 2001).

The significance of understanding the evolution of the term emotional intelligence within my research is to comprehend the correlation between a leaders’ emotional intelligence and their ability to perform effectively in a world heavily reliant on excellent communication skills and self-awareness. Reuven Bar-On introduced a psychometric assessment, known as the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) that depicted a person’s emotional intelligence strengths (Stein, 2017).

There has been controversy regarding Goleman's emotional intelligence theories, particularly at the turn of the 20th century. Pfeiffer argued that Goleman's emotional intelligence competencies can be grouped under the formation of another form of intelligence (Pfeiffer, 2001). He further argued that the competencies described, such as empathy, were more in line with personality traits versus another form of intelligence. Other academic critics stated that there failed to be a scientific objective manner in which to measure precise emotional intelligence levels. (Pfeiffer, 2001).

In 2014, MHS, a leading company in world scientific psychometric assessments, introduced a revised version of the EQi assessment, known commonly as EQi-2.0 (Stein, 2017). It claims to be the first validated scientific assessment that reliably produces accurate assessments for clients (*Emotional Intelligence*, n.d.). Despite initial criticism, the benefits of learning about emotional intelligence and having a client undergo the EQi-2.0 assessment has greatly been supported by wide circle of psychologists and academics (Cotler et al., 2019). This information is pertinent to my research as I wish to utilize the EQi-2.0 within team coaching. The aim will be to observe if the use of the tool assists clients in becoming more self-aware through self-reflection of their strengths and challenges and if coaching these individuals helps clients in developing higher levels of emotional intelligence competencies.

Current Day Leadership Challenges

During the 20th century, which highlighted the industrial revolution, most organizations followed Frederick Taylor's "scientific management" practices, that is to have workers repeat cyclical work, ensuring that the process ran at "peak efficiency"(McChrystal et al., 2015). Work in the early and mid-19th century focused largely on the production of widgets and Taylor's

thinking streamlined processes which in turn allowed factories to produce more items per hour. The result was lower production costs (McChrystal et al., 2015). But there is a cost to scientific management.

The cost is how human beings feel within their jobs as they are largely treated like machines, as workers were given precise rules in how to do their job, with little empowerment (Uddin & Hossain, 2015).

Fredrick Taylor's management solutions worked well in the 20th century when there was predictability within its environment (McChrystal et al., 2015). However, the world is no longer predictable. Indeed, it has been described as a VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguous) world (Sarkar, 2016). Leaders within the 20th century are dealing with a very independent, fast-paced world where complexity reigns (McChrystal et al., 2015). Moreover, despite leading edge software that has allowed us to track, monitor and collect endless data, the world has become less and less predictable (McChrystal et al., 2015). A clear example of today's complexity and unpredictability was the quick global spread of the Covid-19 virus, which impacted all businesses, and people worldwide. Businesses struggled in the rise of global shortages and transportation issues due to the pandemic, which had never been encountered to such a degree in the developed world. The businesses that succeeded were those that became innovative, creative and flexible in their approach to serve society.

In today's society, workers are now largely employed for their knowledge base versus being a mode for production. Moreover, workers are favouring work environments in which their input is sought and valued, where employee wellbeing matters and where they feel they contribute to a meaningful purpose (Uddin & Hossain, 2015). With a current labour shortage,

many companies compete for top talent within their industries, which has resulted in several organizations placing more emphasis on benefits and wellness programs.

This information is significant to my research as it provides the need for leaders to develop a new approach to their leadership style (McChrystal et al., 2015). This leadership approach promotes working systemically. McChrystal's philosophy favours leaders who recognize that not only do they need to work with their members of their teams to accomplish tasks, solve problems, etc. but they also need to create teams that work as a team beyond the walls of the conference room. Each respective team member needs to work well with their stakeholders to push forward the main purpose of the team in a collaborative versus competitive fashion. Strong emotional intelligence competencies can only aid in the ability to effectively network with stakeholders and constructively deal with conflict. These competencies can be learned through systemic team coaching.

In summary, it is interesting to see within the literature review the overlap of themes within this research study. Understanding the concept of team coaching and more specifically systemic team coaching, the elements of emotional intelligence, how leadership has evolved over the last hundred years, and lastly the competencies a leader needs to possess within a VUCA world, helps illustrate how systemic team coaching can greatly assist leaders, teams, and organizations to effectively deal with today's and moreover future concerns.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

Methodology

For this thesis, I chose to approach it from an interpretative paradigm (Kaloef et al., 2008). It is my belief that there is not one truth or objective outcome when studying and observing social behaviour (Kalof, L et al., 2008). It was my intention to use qualitative research practices for this study. “Qualitative research methodology is considered to be suitable when the researcher or the investigator either investigates a new field of study or intends to ascertain and theorize prominent issues” (Jamshed, 2014, p. 87). Key theories explored included whether systemic team coaching is helpful in creating better team performance (Peters & Carr, 2013), if a team that builds strong interpersonal relationships with each other will perform better overall (Paul et al., 2016), and if team coaching helps create cohesion within teams (Hawkins, Peter, 2021).

Upon learning about different analysis approaches, it was my decision to adopt an interpretative phenomenological research design (Alase, 2017). The “Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis shares the view that human beings are sense-making creatures, and therefore the accounts in which participants provide will reflect their attempts to make sense of their experience” (Alase, 2017, p. 9). It was important for me to obtain the uniqueness of each participant’s authentic thoughts and opinions. I wanted to learn how the team coaching experience and the emotional intelligence assessment impacted team member relationships including such items as psychological safety, team cohesiveness along with individual self-awareness and desire to alter behaviours.

Data and Data Gathering

The research questions selected for this study focused on the impact of systemic team coaching and its impact on teams along with the development of emotional intelligence competencies amongst team members. Individual semi-structured qualitative interviews were my primary chosen method for this study. This permitted me to provide each participant with identical open-ended questions, while having the flexibility to ask follow-up questions to clarify meaning or to seek deeper interpretation of their thoughts and/or opinions. Mezirow's Transformative Learning theory was ideal in examining the team member's capacity in self-examination, followed by challenging their old norms and deciding a new course of course of action in set behaviours (Mezirow, 2018). Meanwhile, Salovey & Mayer's emotional intelligence theories focused on self-awareness of one's own emotions and thoughts, being able to understand one's emotions and from that being able to choose what emotions would best influence one's current situation (Mayer et al., 2004).

Although the semi-structured interviews were the primary method of collection of data, I additionally utilized two other processes, namely in collective team coaching and individual emotional intelligence assessments (EQi -2.0) which included a one-hour coaching debrief. These individual coaching sessions ran parallel to the team coaching sessions. Upon conclusion of all interactions, final interviews were conducted in which specific questions with some follow up questions were asked to each of the team members. Each interview was planned for an hour, and the participant was cautioned prior to commencement that they could choose to refrain from asking any particular question(s) or choose to take a break if needed. The shortest post-team coaching interview was thirty-five minutes, and most participants chose to speak for the full

hour. At no time did any of the participants choose not to respond to a question nor did any of them choose to take a break in their respective interviews. The interview data was then analyzed for patterns, insights and was the primary source of research information to ascertain findings.

The selected team for this study was a municipally owned utility company located in British Columbia, Canada. The General Manager of the organization reached out to my social media request to find a team that was interested in participating in my research for my master's program. I ensured that all participants were volunteers and followed up with each participant with a signed consent form confirming their volunteer status and their right to remove themselves from the study at any given time with no negative repercussions. Other information provided within the consent form included the purpose of the research study, a broad outline of the process and cautionary notes regarding possible emotional injuries during team coaching and/or emotional intelligence debrief coaching. My contact information including my email address and phone number were documented on the consent form, with instructions to contact me at any time regarding any concerns or questions throughout the study. During the study, none of the participants reached out to me for exclusion from the study, to ask questions or seek clarification. The final page of the consent form included a line for the participant's name and signature and date along with my own signature and date signed. Each of the participants received a signed consent form.

The participants represented a broad range of age demographics, held various levels of formal education and worked from very junior positions to senior positions within the organization. The male gender monopolized the collected data which was an indication of Canada's society culture in working in utility organizations.

MS Teams was selected as the virtual software to conduct interviews due to the organization's security preference to use a government sanctioned program. During the virtual calls, the participant was given an assigned code name, (such as 005), to remain anonymous. My name was listed as "researcher" to clearly indicate my given function. The virtual calls were recorded, placed into transcripts and saved to my MacBook Pro documents. It is only me that knows the required password to gain access to this laptop ensuring that sensitive information was kept confidential. Lastly, research participants were informed and reassured during all virtual contact (for example before and upon completion of team coaching interviews), assessment results and individual coaching would remain confidential. Moreover, all team coaching conversations remained anonymous in nature. In this research, I have decided to refrain from disclosing any personal data that could potentially identify any of the participants.

In order to ensure the validity of the data (research participant validation) (Birt et al., 2016), I sent some of the transcripts of the ad hoc selected interviews back to the participants to clarify or correct any misinterpretations of dialogue. One participant provided some minor changes, and the other two participants did not reply which was a given option in my written request.

Upon completion of my data collection, I conducted 9 pre-team coaching interviews, 9 post team coaching interviews and 9 individual coaching on their emotional intelligence assessment results.

Data Analysis

In order to make sense of the information collected in the post-coaching interviews, I utilized thematic coding utilizing two frameworks: Mezirow's transformative learning theory and

Salovey and Mayer's emotional intelligence theories. In Mezirow's theory, the following principles were selected based on my thesis research questions: a disorienting dilemma, self-examination, critical assessment of assumptions, course of planned action and acquisition of knowledge. From Solovey and Mayer's theories which formed the foundation for Dr. Reuven Bar-On's EQ-i assessment, the following principles were selected, once again from their practicality of answering my research questions: emotional self-awareness, empathy, flexibility, emotional expression, interpersonal relationships and optimism. These principles became code headings within my Excel spreadsheet and text associated with this code was placed under each heading (Maguire, M & Delahunt, B, 2017). The information collected under each respective code was then reviewed from a "zoom-in" and a "zoom out" perspective, looking for main patterns of thoughts that created themes.

In order to gain a different perspective while checking for inter-rater reliability, I sent a peer master's student with unassigned participant text and requested that he assign the text under the same code headings and from there create themes. Inter-rater reliability refers to how frequently the same results come from various raters in evaluating the same data, information or phenomenon (Stolarova et al., 2014). In my particular case of inter-rater reliability, the bulk of the coding and themes were notably similar with a few minor discrepancies. A follow-on discussion revealed that my train of thought was of the same persuasion to my peer, just worded in a different manner.

Certainly, the process of using Excel and identifying texts associated with codes and from there deducting themes was instrumental in the analysis of a large pool of data. As a visual

learner, it was beneficial for me to see how various participants experienced similar thoughts during the team coaching and in the emotional intelligence coaching debrief.

Ethics

Following the guidelines within the master's handbook, I completed my ethical review and submitted and received approval from the Royal Roads Office of Research Ethics. As a professional accredited coach, I was very aware of the possible psychological harm that can arise from team coaching and receipt of personal assessments. With this in mind, I was adamant to follow ethical guidelines.

As mentioned before, participants in the study had to be volunteers. I made this quite clear to the General Manager prior to agreeing to conduct the study with his team. The second most important principle was the assurance and maintenance of confidentiality. As such, participants were informed to be in a confidential setting for all interviews and for the individual coaching session. Similarly, I was located in a confidential room and ensured that any notes were promptly inputted into my laptop and were password protected. Notes were then destroyed. Along with that, no mention of any names is provided in this thesis to align with the principle of anonymity.

During the first morning of the team coaching, the team created foundational guidelines in which they all agreed to adhere to during every team coaching session. Within these guidelines was the principle of respecting all members of the team, even if a member vehemently disagreed with what another member was stating. The guidelines were read by me at the commencement of each team coaching session, and I always asked the team if there were any comments or proposed additions or deletions to the guidelines. No comments or proposed

additions or deletions was made during any of the team coaching sessions. By having the team create the foundational guidelines which included such items as respect, the team had in essence created their own form of psychological safety. It should also be noted that within the volunteer consent form, I wrote a paragraph regarding my commitment to psychological safety and noted that the potential for emotional harm would be present. Following this paragraph, I listed a 24-hour help line available to the participants in British Columbia at no cost.

Prior to commencing their interviews and their individual coaching session, I reminded each member that they could refuse to answer any question, take breaks or withdraw from continuing the session or the study program with no negative repercussions. Upon conclusion of the formal questions/coaching, I spoke with the member in a free-flow manner to check in with them on their emotional state.

In my initial interview with each team member, I introduced myself, the purpose of my research study and my current occupation, namely a certified executive coach and team coach. At that time, I was transparent in informing each member that the results of the study were up to them and that in no way would I try to influence, alter, and/or misrepresent their responses.

Lastly at the end of the first interview with each participant, I informed them that all team members would be briefed of the conclusions and recommendation of the research study. This provided them with reassurance that the data was purposeful and would adhere to the ethical principles of Royal Roads University. In addition, the name of my thesis advisor and her phone number was included in the consent form, permitting members to voice any concerns to an outside source. No contact to my thesis advisor was made by any member during the data gathering stage nor during the thesis construction.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

In chapter 4, I will be discussing the findings of my research questions. The questions are:

1. What is the impact of systemic team coaching on workplace team performance in hierarchical organizations; a qualitative study to explore the perception and utility of emotional intelligence and relationship building on teams.
2. How does the development of emotional intelligence amongst team members assist the team in the development of strong internal and external relationships?

Study Demographics

For this research, I chose a team that volunteered for the research project. I made it clear that although I would act as the team coach, I would primarily be in the position of researcher. The team is employed by a municipal government yet acts independently. The field of work consists of the provision of utilities to a small town within western Canada. The team leader reached out to me when he heard that I was looking for a team to conduct my thesis. All members of his team and the team leader came voluntarily and all signed consent forms. Each member of the team received an anonymized code, and this code was used with the collection of their data, instead of using their names. The codes ranged from 001 to 009 and the participants were told their particular code. When collecting the data, I chose to use a semi-structured interview process which provided structure to all interviews, yet at the same time provided me flexibility in using follow-up questions to clarify what was been said. Most of the participants were very eager to express their thoughts and opinions and it was not difficult at all to collect the data. The bulk of the participants had never experienced professional coaching, nor had they ever

been a part of a research study. Many of them expressed interest in seeing the final results of the research, and I assured them that the team would receive a copy of the final findings and recommendations.

Within the team itself, there was some diversity amongst participants. Some have engineering degrees; others went through college apprenticeships. It was not surprising that 89% of participants were males due to the male domination of the work in utilities. Despite this high male participation, it was refreshing to have some female representation. There was also a mixture of employees that had been with the organization for several years and others who had joined in the last 2 years. This point is significant as I learned through the interviews that the work environment was extremely toxic during the tenure of the previous general manager which resulted in some learned misbehaviours being tolerated and repeated in the workplace. In this respect, a negative cultural undercurrent still resides with some employees that endured the previous leadership of the general manager. Having a mixture of old guard versus new guard participants facilitated openness to new ideas and a sense of optimism within the team coaching sessions.

When reviewing the composition of the team with respect to position and title, there was a good spread of those holding positions in leadership, management and operators. The analysis of participants by their level within the organization hierarchy indicates a good representation of levels involved in the study (see Table 1). By having the general manager and another senior manager within the study along with another participant who is considered to be on par with the senior manager, the team discussions opened up dialogue between hierarchical levels. Similarly, there was representation from operators, who conduct the actual day to day physical work who

added different perspectives from their superiors. It was also interesting to note thoughts and opinions of mid-level hierarchical representation.

Table 1

Positions Held by Participants in the Organization

Position	Leadership and Management	Supervisors	Operators
	3	2	4

Due to the small size of this specific team and the commitment to the team that I have made with respect to participant anonymity and ethical promises that I have made within their consent forms, I will not disclose the years of service or age of the participants. In no way, do I wish to disclose additional data concerning the participants that could potentially risk their identity.

Study Findings

Based on detailed thematic analysis along with thorough observation during team coaching sessions and conducted interviews, I developed the following findings:

1. Emotional intelligence assessments and coaching debriefs are highly beneficial in enhancing self-awareness and provide insight in areas of emotional intelligence strengths and challenges. By acknowledging individual results, participants recognize the impact of their behaviours on others and use this information when engaging in dialogue.

2. Systemic team coaching sessions promote participation amongst members and empowers the team to lower vertical barriers and to commence collaborative discussions.
3. Understanding the competencies within emotional intelligence results in a greater comprehension of human emotions; facilitating the participant's ability to see beyond themselves; to see others.
4. Emotional intelligence coaching along with systemic team coaching facilitates increased psychological safety which in turn promotes the ability of team members to safely disclose authentic thoughts and vulnerabilities.
5. Systemic team coaching improves team dynamics.
6. Systemic team coaching alters emotions regarding the team.
7. By incorporating emotional intelligence learning along with systemic team coaching, most members commit to new behavioural actions to continue the momentum felt within the study.

Each of these findings will be discussed in more detail, along with themes found within each finding. The themes are supported with data excerpts collected within the participants' individual interviews. The quotes provided within the tables support the findings in a clear logical format.

Finding 1: Emotional intelligence assessments with coaching debriefs are highly beneficial in enhancing self-awareness and provide insight on one's emotional intelligence strengths and challenges.

Several themes emerged within this finding including the following: Self-discovery is an output product for many individuals who have undergone an emotional intelligence assessment and debrief; emotional intelligence assessments and coaching debriefs result in self-reflection; clients who engage in emotional intelligence assessments become more willing to become vulnerable; and emotional intelligence assessments with coaching debriefs promote change in self-behaviour. These themes are discussed and supported with associated data.

Self-discovery is an output for many individuals who have undergone an emotional intelligence assessment and coaching debrief.

In the final interview, all participants were asked the question, “Describe in your own words if you have a greater sense of self-awareness (knowing yourself) after the team coaching and the EQi coaching debrief. If so, how so?” As I waited for their response, I observed that most participants paused before answering the question. This practice of pausing and thinking, did not occur in the initial interviews which occurred prior to the team coaching and the emotional intelligence coaching debrief. The practice of pausing and thinking about their response indicated to me that most participants were in the act of reflection. A sampling of this data is presented in Table 2.

Each participant expressed their new awareness in their own unique way.

Table 2*Participant's Growth of Self-Awareness*

Participant	Definition
005	I have grown in my self-awareness – particularly from the Emotional Intelligence assessment. I really was able to understand my strengths and challenges. Now, I know what I can lean into. And I want to work on my challenges.
006	Assessment? It had some kind of surprising results to me for myself... Again, more just insight. I think I have a more detailed level of self-awareness.
007	I do have a greater sense of self-awareness. I acknowledged my strengths and my weaknesses, and I was able to compare it to my current behaviours.
004	Yeah, I guess to a slight degree I would say it's a bit more of an awareness thing for me. And yeah, I guess the vulnerability element helps a bit.

Emotional intelligence assessments and coaching debriefs result in self-reflection. An emotional intelligence coaching debrief performed by a certified professional emotional intelligence practitioner results in the transfer of the assessment results along with posing questions to the client for his/her/their internal reflection. For some participants, the act of self-reflection was an easy process whereas for others who were new to the concept found the process uncomfortable. Those who felt uncomfortable with the process tended to be more stuck on the assessment results – particularly the results that showed possible areas of potential growth. Moreover, those who were foreign to the concept of self-reflection were more prone to communicate their feelings towards others than speaking about themselves. I also provided those who were new to the concept more silent time to think. This silent time can be difficult for some coaches, but it is imperative in having the client fully gain the essence of the assessment process.

For those individuals who had previously experienced the art of self-reflection, I found that many of them had less resistance to the actual results and instead, could focus on specific examples which demonstrated the results. In addition, they were more likely to reflect on the impact of their actions on others.

These findings listed in table 3 below demonstrate self-reflection.

Table 3

Emotional Intelligence Assessments and Coaching Debriefs Result in Self-Reflection

Participant	Describing Self-Reflection
001	So, I guess maybe I didn't express well, or I could have expressed better. It's what you do with those hours at work. So rethinking processes or ways of conducting business that we can become better at. So sometimes that means eliminating old practices and moving forward to something that is perhaps streamlined or less risk averse or eliminating the concept. Well, we've always done that. Well, that's not a good enough reason to continue doing that. It's being able to say, okay, well, how would we change it?
002	I joined a bit more empathy towards everybody and trying to approach that differently. So, I guess, yeah, my outlook has changed. I don't know. I don't think I've seen much of a change in habits and in actions, but that's hard to tell because it's such a short period of time. But I would say my outlook has changed towards other people within my group, and I guess outside of the group as well. I'm trying to take a bit of a different look at things
005	The team coaching and the emotional intelligence assessment/debrief was very helpful. I wish that the whole team at X were able to take it. It has been very interesting. It opened my eyes. Now I ask myself, why am I frustrated? Why am I upset? What is really the root cause of how I feel. I guess, when you see your strengths and weaknesses, you just kind of compare it mentally to actually your behavior and say, am I offline here?
007	Am I overconfident or am I not speaking out enough? Or things like that. So, it's just kind of an affirmation of maybe which side of the line I am on from my previous thought?

Participant	Describing Self-Reflection
006	I know I was surprised that some of the results of my assessment, but with reflection, I think it all sort of aligns with where I'm at in my own head about who I am and how I'm going through life.

Clients who engage in emotional intelligence assessments and debriefs become more willing to become vulnerable.

The act of speaking about oneself after the receipt of assessment results can be very an uncomfortable experience for some participants. During the assessment debrief, I noticed that some participants kept the discussion to a minimum whereas others wanted to have a deep dive conversation about their results. However, on the whole, participants became much more vulnerable in talking about themselves during team coaching sessions and during their emotional intelligence coaching session. The vulnerability yard stick was moved. As a researcher I had to recognize that the starting point of expressing vulnerability was unique for each participant. Moreover, the degree of the shift was also unique for each participant.

Table 4 provides samplings of findings of increased vulnerability.

Table 4

Becoming More Vulnerable to Others

Participant	Comment on Government and Decision-Making
003	I would say yes, but I think what is different is just me. I am more open to sharing things about me versus my perceptions of them.
006	I was kind of surprised with how open I actually became in those sessions. A lot kind of close and I'm not big on interpersonal stuff at work, but yeah, just kind of allowing myself to be who I was in those meetings.
006	Typically, it's those, the really memorable moments are from the people that are so guarded and sort of lash out more and aren't super outgoing or

Participant	Comment on Government and Decision-Making
	buddy buddy and yeah, all of a sudden, they're sharing that there's this experience or oh, I've been missing this, or it's like, it was funny too. It was very memorable. But I also get it, I can kind of see it from my interactions with them, the things that they, but having them realize it themselves is pretty cool.

Emotional intelligence assessments with coaching debriefs and systemic team

coaching promote changes in self-behaviour. It was astonishing for me to observe the desire of many participants to want to change their behaviours. Indeed, many actually changed their behaviours within the one month exposed to coaching.

When observing the entire team of participants, all of them changed their behaviours to some degree from the commencement of the research period to completion. It was interesting to note that some changed their behaviours based on what the behaviours of others during the team coaching sessions. As they saw their peers becoming more vulnerable in their team discussions or saw from others warmer non-verbal communication, they followed suit.

Table 5 provides oral testaments upon reflection of changes in self-behaviour.

Table 5

Promote Change in Self-Behaviour

Participant	Comment on Desire to Change Self-Behaviour
003	I guess, yeah, I guess I've seen a little bit more. I joined a bit more empathy towards everybody and trying to approach that differently. So, I guess, yeah, my outlook has changed. I don't know. I don't think I've seen much of a change in habits and in actions, but that's hard to tell because it's such a short period of time. But I would say my outlook has changed towards other people within my group, and I guess outside of the group as well. I'm trying to take a bit of a different look at things. Yeah, I think

Participant	Comment on Desire to Change Self-Behaviour
005	<p>it's something that was growing in me before we did the training, and then the training probably helped in that.</p> <p>The team coaching and the emotional intelligence assessment/debrief was very helpful. I wish that the whole team at XXXX were able to take it. It has been very interesting. It opened my eyes. Now I ask myself, why am I frustrated? Why am I upset? What is really the root cause of how I feel. I also really like how I learned to have a difficult conversation. I avoided those kind of conversations, which wasn't a good thing. I ask myself now why do I have negative feelings towards someone? I can't just brush off my feelings anymore. Now I dive deeper.</p>
007	<p>I guess, when you see your strengths and weaknesses, you just kind of compare it mentally to actually your behavior and say, am I offline here? Am I overconfident or am I not speaking out enough? Or things like that. So, it's just kind of an affirmation of maybe which side of the line am I on of my previous thought?</p>
008	<p>I'm coming to terms with the fact that I'm not super mentally healthy right now and I got some work to do. It's been very, very uncomfortable and I don't quite have the space for the realization that I need to make, and I need to buy some time. So no, it's been challenging for me. It's turned me inside out a bit, wasn't in any way prepared for which whatever. That's probably all to do with me and where I'm at right now.</p>

Finding 2: Systemic team coaching sessions promotes participation amongst members and empowers the team to lower vertical barriers which in turn helps commence collaborative discussions.

Two main themes emerge from this finding. Firstly, systemic team coaching promotes authentic dialogue within the team. Secondly, once participants commence sharing authentic dialogue, they can tackle real issues that need addressing in the team. These themes are discussed in detail below.

Systemic team coaching sessions promotes authentic dialogue within the team. With a team that was entrenched in hierarchy and fearful of saying the “wrong thing”, I chose to use icebreakers to unleash the firm boundaries between managers and supervisors, supervisors and

front-line workers and managers and front line workers. As participant 005 stated, “I felt a change in the power dynamics. We were all equals around the table.” The questions for the icebreakers were interesting, yet light-hearted and facilitated authentic dialogue with little risk to the participant. Each participant of the team was provided equal opportunity to speak and share as they saw fit. The sharing of personal information resulted in participants getting to know each other as people, instead of just knowing them by their role, work and position within the organization. Overall, the use of icebreakers was well received by the team. As one participant stated, “I liked that the openness of everybody and that it was nice to be in that environment to talk about things that aren't necessarily work focused, just a little icebreaker. That was great.”

Table 6

Promotion of Authentic Dialogue using Icebreakers

Participant	Comment about use of icebreakers
001	Without naming specific individuals in the team, I overall, it's kind of brought us closer as a group of members. I think there's a little bit more sort of openness to sharing and willingness to participate in things with just an understanding that it's safe to do so.
001	I think some of the icebreakers learned a few things about some of the members that I didn't. They like music or, or real foodie or things like that. It's really pieces that maybe hadn't come out in conversations over the water cooler.
002	I shared more during the team coaching sessions than otherwise normally.
002	Yes, I would say so. Well, I think I have a deeper sense of friendship with them now. My relationship with my team members was very professional before the commencement of the team coaching sessions. I would say that there is a friendlier connection now. I know them on a deeper level, and I understand their values more. I would say I am friendlier with them now and less formal than before.

Participant	Comment about use of icebreakers
003	I don't think I would've ever had the opportunity to see these people in any other, this was a very unique opportunity for me to see them in this context, and it really made me kind of more empathetic to them.
006	I was kind of surprised with how open I actually became in those sessions. A lot kind of close and I'm not big on interpersonal stuff at work, but yeah, just kind of allowing myself to be who I was in those meetings.

Once participants commence sharing authentic dialogue, they can tackle real issues that need addressing within the team. An interesting phenomenon occurred in the fourth team coaching session. As their coach, I facilitated a discussion on conflict and why conflict within a team is not necessarily a bad thing to occur. Quite contrary, it can be a really good thing. Through coaching conversations and the showing of a couple videos, most participants began to shift their perspective from being fearful of conflict to recognizing the benefits of having different opinions on work matters. What ensued was the commencement of the team participants engaging in a difficult conversation regarding critical shortage of human resources within the organization and how to approach the problem. When this occurred, I sat back watching the diverse views being shared in a respectful manner. It was a signal to me that this team was ready to deal with their intrinsic issues.

Table 7

Authentic Dialogue Leads to Feasibility to Address Real Issues

Participant	Comments about having real issue discussions
002	I think the team coaching was very beneficial for the workplace. We are a better team. But we still need to deal with fundamental issues that need to be resolved – such as obtaining more resources. I think now we are better

Participant	Comments about having real issue discussions
005	<p>prepared to talk about fundamental issues, and we can more openly discuss our own needs. I think it will help us going forward.</p> <p>By the fourth session, we were really addressing the real issues affecting the team. I unfortunately missed the first session, but I could definitely feel and see the switch in dynamics between the 2nd session and the 4th session.</p>
008	<p>Maybe [now] we could have a discussion about the actual work we're doing in an environment of trust and that we could say things, how we really feel about what we see. That would be a real, I think, an opener to some pretty big decisions.</p>

Finding 3: The process of understanding the competencies within emotional intelligence resulted in a greater understanding of human emotions and the capacity to use those emotions towards others.

Within this finding, two main themes emerged. For many participants who were new to the concept of emotional intelligence, they began to have a fuller appreciation of emotional intelligence competencies. In addition, participants grew in their capacity to feel emotions for others, namely empathy. Further information on these two themes is discussed below.

Learning the principles of emotional intelligence provided participants a greater sense of understanding and seeing felt emotions. Two research participants commented on the fact that they were hearing emotions from others and what that meant to them. At the offset, this team had rarely expressed emotions to each other (preferring to staying in business talk only) and yet by the second team coaching session many participants were freely sharing a very personal side of them along with the emotions contained within that subject. The last research participant's comment in this table expressed that perhaps in team meetings it was preferable to

add some “feeling” words versus just speaking business jargon. This theme is illustrated in Table 8.

Table 8

Greater Appreciation of Emotions

Participant	Data on understanding and seeing of emotions
008	People are talking quite directly how they feel. I get it and I can work with it, I think, anyways, I think that's what made it, it's just that's what we were there to talk about ourselves. People are talking very specifically about themselves and how they feel made it easy for me to hear that stuff. Right?
006	I remember coming out of there one day just I died from what someone had shared or expressed just like, oh wow!
001	I could use a few more words, and this is part of my EQ coaching, as just encouraging a little bit more of how you're feeling as opposed to, does anybody have any other points to bring up that they haven't shared so far?

Capacity to sense emotion, such as empathy, grew. A number of participants during their final interview mentioned their capacity to feel empathy for the other participants on their team. (see Table 9 for a sampling of this data). It should be noted that empathy, one of the competencies of emotional intelligence was explained in detail within each participant’s coaching debrief along with their assessment result of this competency. The term, empathy, was also discussed during the team coaching sessions. As a coach, I facilitated a conversation regarding how to define “empathy” and encouraged participants to illustrate examples. Moreover, a discussion eschewed regarding how judgement can interfere with the practice of empathy towards others.

Table 9*Capacity to Feel Emotion for Others, Namely Empathy*

Participant	Comments on capacity to feel emotions for others, namely empathy
002	I don't think I would've ever had the opportunity to see these people in any other, this was a very unique opportunity for me to see them in this context, and it really made me kind of more empathetic to them.
003	We are humans at work. We have motions are not robots, and I think the more we can empathize and identify within ourselves what's happening, and then have our coworkers empathize and understand our triggers, and I think it's just mandatory. I think it's got to be mandatory.
005	Yes, I feel more connected to them. I have a better understanding of how they see things. I have more empathy towards them.
006	I do appreciate that they're there and that, but just because of who I am and how we all interacted, I just do try and make it more lighthearted and fun than it gives me another avenue for that interaction.

Finding 4: Emotional intelligence coaching along with systemic team coaching facilitates increased psychological safety which in turn promotes the ability of team members to safely disclose authentic thoughts and vulnerabilities.

Two key themes emerged from this area of my research including the following: Emotional intelligence coaching along with systemic team coaching creates psychological safety to occur, and psychological safety, once intact, permits participants to disclose vulnerable authentic thoughts to each other. Each of these themes will be explored in further detail.

Emotional intelligence coaching along with systemic team coaching creates psychological safety to occur. Five participants commented on the increase of psychological safety that they felt upon conclusion of the team and emotional coaching. (see Table 10 for a sample of this data).

Table 10*Creation of Psychological Safety*

Participant	Discussion on Time and Priority
001	I clearly felt that there was an increase in the comfort of the team in terms of psychological safety. As I mentioned, people seemed more willing to step in and share just sort of body language, relaxed a little bit. People weren't sure in the first session sort of how it was going to go. So I think overall, I think the group relaxed into the coaching exercise and to each other, to a great extent, witnessed some interactions outside of the group coaching session that I don't know if I would've seen that same type of interaction.
002	There was no holding back during our team coaching sessions. We talked about issues about leadership and there was no holding back. Everyone pitched in and everyone seemed willing to contribute.
003	I can think from the first session to the end of the fourth session. I think if psychological safety means comfortable to share your thoughts, then yeah, I think there was more of that for sure.
005	I felt a change in the power dynamics. We were all equals around the table. So, yes, there was an increased sense of psychological safety. For myself personally, yes, I felt more psychologically safe. I could express my feelings more, with no negative consequences occurring.
007	[In response to the question: Did you feel an increased sense of psychological safety by the end of the team coaching and if yes, how so?] I would say yes. I would say yes. Just talking about just the topic there about having dinner, you have dinner with, and people have their own lives and what they're interested in, and most of the times at work you feel that most people aren't interested in hearing any of that. So, when somebody brings it up and it's unusual, that's all good, that's all great, and nobody gave any looks to each other or anything like that. It seemed like there was a lot of eager ears to listen to what somebody else had to say. So, I felt psychologically safe. I didn't think that I was risking anything like that.

Feeling psychological safety allows participants to be more vulnerable in their expression. It was interesting to observe the onset of psychological safety within the team. At the first team coaching session there was some interactions amongst the participants, but it was limited. But the participants of this study did have to create their own guidelines of how they

would operate during the coaching sessions and that was the first task in which they had to work together. There were a couple participants within the study who were more comfortable in sharing than others and I observed that as they stretched the amount of personal information with others, those who were previously very reserved followed. It was clear that as they felt psychological safe, participants' sharing showed increased vulnerability. See Table 11 for examples of this finding.

Table 11

Psychological Safety Opens the Possibility of Being Vulnerable

Participant	Data on being open/expressing vulnerability
006	I was kind of surprised with how open I actually became in those sessions. A lot kind of close and I'm not big on interpersonal stuff at work, but yeah, just kind of allowing myself to be who I was in those meetings.
002	I would say though that the type of things I was sharing was different after I heard others share.
001	As I mentioned, people seemed more willing to step in and share just sort of body language, relaxed a little bit.
005	It opened the channels of communication. By the fourth session, we were really addressing the real issues affecting the team. I unfortunately missed the first session, but I could definitely feel and see the switch in dynamics between the 2nd session and the 4th session.

Finding 5: Systemic team coaching improves team dynamics.

One central theme comes from this finding. It is explained in detail below.

Systemic team coaching creates team cohesion. All 8 participants mentioned the increased closeness that occurred within the study team (see Table 12 for a sample of this data). Along with the data collected from participants, I observed the closeness within the study group

as well. On the first day of the systemic team coaching, people came into the room and did not converse around the table with the exception of required business talk (such as, “Where is X?”). Some had arms crossed, others looked down at their papers, and there was a general sense of anxiety and uncomfortableness. At the last day of the team coaching sessions, the participants came into the room and immediately joined conversations of subjects outside of business. I also observed friendly body language such as smiling, open arms, facing of each other so that they were conversing eye to eye, and lightheartedness in their banter. During my individual emotional intelligence sessions, I learned that the study participants met a few times at lunchtime to discuss their emotional intelligence results with each other.

Table 12

Creation of Team Cohesion

Participant	Data regarding the creation of team cohesion
001	So, I think overall, I think the group relaxed into the coaching exercise and to each other, to a great extent, witnessed some interactions outside of the group coaching session that I don't know if I would've seen that same type of interaction.
001	I think any kind of shared experience that tends to bring people closer together. We have some new language and vocabulary. We've already had a few laughs about to have a difficult conversation just because it's sort of an inside it's language that only the people in that team understand.
002	Well, I think I have a deeper sense of friendship with them now. My relationship with my team members was very professional before the commencement of the team coaching sessions. I would say that there is a friendlier connection now. I know them on a deeper level, and I understand their values more. I would say I am friendlier with them now and less formal than before
003	For those I attended, yeah, even after the course, we were talking about a work-related thing, and I was way more honest with them than I've ever been.

Participant	Data regarding the creation of team cohesion
004	Yeah, I would say I feel more connected with XXX, XXX and XXX. Those were the people I felt more connected with in the beginning, so I feel like I kind of increased that with them there. And then I guess I feel like there's maybe a slight increase with XXX and XXX, and yeah, so I'd say there's a slight increase with everybody, and then probably a higher increase with the people I was already feeling safer around.
005	Yes, my impressions have changed about the people on my team after the team coaching sessions. I feel more connected to these members. I have more empathy for them. I can see their perspectives more clearly and I can understand their side of their story.
006	A lot of it has just been discussing our own EQI results or stuff like that, but there's been more clusters of us discussing stuff that's been going on in the course. So just security and more sense of team
007	Just that little bit of what we did and what I experienced makes it a little easier to converse and stuff. It just feels a little more comfortable.
008	Well loosened up a little bit. Freer to chat. I mean, it's still not hanging out with your buddies on Saturday. Right. But yeah, I mean I think the flow of things improved and we got to know each other a little better and that's nice. We don't make a lot of time for that at work.

Finding 6: Systemic team coaching alters emotions regarding the team.

This finding has one theme. It is explained in detail below.

Systemic team coaching results in increased optimism levels towards future team achievements. In my initial participant interviews, I heard a lot of complaints about the work environment. There was an overwhelming sense of despair, with some participants even expressing that there was no hope regarding the team making difficult decisions nor was there a desire from management to make necessary changes to modernize and increase efficiency for the organization. Within my final participant interviews, many participants expressed optimism for the future work that needs to be accomplished. The following tables indicate before coaching and post coaching remarks about the team and its future.

Table 13*Pre-Coaching Sentiments of the Team*

Participant	Pre-coaching sentiments of the team
006	I would describe the team dynamics as disconnected. There is not a lot of enthusiasm for those meetings. We try to stay engaged but it is really difficult. We cover the same material month after month. There is not a lot of interest in the meeting. There is a lot of grumbling, and the Union voices are against the meeting.
003	There are a lot of snickers, comments and rants. No one really stops the unacceptable behaviour. There are no ground rules. There should be some rules on no eye-rolling, looking at cell phones during the meeting, etc. I am very observant of what is going on.
004	Psychological safety within the team does not exist. I try to protect myself. There is no attempt to really listen to others. I can be normally outspoken, but I have safety concerns. Mistakes are not very well accepted. People have been chastised in the past.
008	My initial impressions of my manager have soured. My manager doesn't have my back. Budgets are blown. People are under resourced.

The following table (Table 14) shows data from the post-coaching interviews.

Table 14*Participants' Sentiments of the Team Post-Coaching*

Participant	Data regarding participant's sentiments of the team
002	I think the team coaching was very beneficial for the workplace. We are a better team. But we still need to deal with fundamental issues that need to be resolved – such as obtaining more resources. I think now we are better prepared to talk about fundamental issues, and we can more openly discuss our own needs. I think it will help us going forward.
001	In terms of anything else in the study, it was a great experience for the team. That's my perspective. I think I heard that in the comments from the group as well, so yeah, really appreciate it. You did it in a very, very kind and open way, and for many of them, this is the first experience like that. And so, it was always nice to have that positive idea so that when they hear the word coaching, they don't roll their eyes and go, oh yeah, another coaching session. Great.

Participant	Data regarding participant's sentiments of the team
003	I don't think I would've ever had the opportunity to see these people in any other, this was a very unique opportunity for me to see them in this context, and it really made me kind of more empathetic to them.
004	I joined a bit more empathy towards everybody and trying to approach that differently. So, I guess, yeah, my outlook has changed.
007	I think there's only eight of us, so, I think we are now on kind of all on the same page, maybe we could have a discussion about the actual work we're doing in an environment of trust and that we could say things, how we really feel about what we see. That would be a real, I think, an opener to some pretty big decisions.
008	We're getting there. We've finally started taking steps in the right direction. I mean, that's the thing, you'd halfway through the first baby step and all of a sudden, they stopped going, okay, are we good now? It's like, no, no. Step one on a thousand step journey. No, we're not good now. That's a ridiculous question to ask. Right. That's kind of where I'm coming from. So no, we aren't there. No. It's got a long way to go, but yeah, we've turned a corner for sure. We have. Absolutely.

Finding 7: By incorporating emotional intelligence learning along with systemic team coaching, most participants committed to new behavioural actions.

There was one central theme to this finding. As the case in individual coaching, there is evidence indicating that the participants engaged in systemic team coaching and emotional intelligence assessments along with coaching debriefs, are committed to making changes to their own behaviour. This theme is explained below.

Systemic team coaching and emotional intelligence awareness can result in personal action regarding desired behaviours. As emotional intelligence awareness grows for a participant and they are intrinsically motivated to improve themselves as a human being, team coaching can result in behavioural change. This was the case for this study team. Table 15 provides data indicating a sampling of participant's planned actions upon conclusion of the research study.

Table 15*Participant's Planned Action(s) upon Conclusion of Coaching*

Participant	Comments on participant's planned action(s)
001	So I think from a personal practice, just sort of reframing in that way and using language that's less rigid and more sort of, we'll call it welcoming or opening open things like guidelines or just change the language enough that any walls or preconceive notions of more strict language might dissolve and help 'em see what the intent is as opposed to just reacting to the words that are being spoken.
003	Yeah. I guess I had these beliefs and opinions prior to this course that my way of seeing the world wouldn't be accepted or tolerated with working with engineers. And after this course, I'm like, screw it. It's so important to get people to look at things differently, get out of their comfort zone and question things about themselves.
005	The team coaching and the emotional intelligence assessment/debrief was very helpful. I wish that the whole team at XXXX were able to take it. It has been very interesting. It opened my eyes. Now I ask myself, why am I frustrated? Why am I upset? What is really the root cause of how I feel.
005	I avoided those kind of conversations, which wasn't a good thing. I ask myself now why do I have negative feelings towards someone? I can't just brush off my feelings anymore. Now I dive deeper.
006	And mostly I would wish those things for those people generally as a group, my wish and my hope is that we can carry what we learned forward and sort of use it to our collective benefit.

In Chapter 5 the significance, impact and recommendations that result from these findings will be discussed.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Within this chapter, my thesis research questions will be repeated for reference purposes, along with recommendations based off the findings as detailed in chapter 4.

The first research question was “What is the impact of systemic team coaching on workplace team performance in hierarchical organizations; a qualitative study to explore the perception and utility of emotional intelligence and relationship building on teams. The second research question was how does the development of emotional intelligence amongst team members assist the team in the development of strong internal and external relationships?

The primary objectives were:

1. To explore the use of Systemic Team Coaching within a hierarchical organization, and
2. To study how the development of emotional intelligence amongst team members can facilitate all team members (including the leader) with effective communication competencies.

Study Recommendations

The data collected from this research study was compiled through 2 methods; through the use of semi-structured interviews conducted pre-study and post-study and observation. The following recommendations were constructed to determine if systemic team coaching and emotional intelligence assessments with coaching debriefs assist teams in being more capable of addressing the complexities, uncertainties and volatilities of a VUCA world.

1. Leaders should systematically implement emotional intelligence (EI) assessments followed by personalized coaching for themselves and their team members. This

- practice aims to foster self-awareness among team members, enabling them to recognize and understand their emotional intelligence behaviours, including both strengths and areas for improvement.
2. Leaders should adopt Systemic Team Coaching as a method to mitigate the effects of siloed team structures. This approach encourages active participation and shared responsibility among all team members, thereby reducing hierarchical barriers and fostering stronger team cohesion.
 3. Leaders should prioritize the development of emotional intelligence competencies within their teams. This focus should be integrated into systemic team coaching to enhance team members' comprehension of human emotions, thereby improving interpersonal relationships and team dynamics.
 4. Leaders should integrate emotional intelligence coaching with systemic team coaching to cultivate a psychological safe environment where authentic conversations and open communications are encouraged.
 5. Leaders should leverage Systemic Team Coaching to improve team interactions, particularly during conflicts, to promote more innovative and creative problem solving.
 6. Leaders should incorporate systemic team coaching to cultivate optimism and stability within their teams, thereby enhancing their focus on performance and task completion.
 7. Leaders should articulate the value of systemic team coaching to all stakeholders, demonstrating its impact on overall organizational success.

8. Leaders should recognize the broader human developmental benefits of incorporating emotional intelligence assessments and systemic team coaching, emphasizing their impact beyond the professional sphere.

For the remainder of this chapter each of these recommendations are explored and supported through a discussion of the relevance and implications of the findings, which may be supported by scholarly research.

Recommendation 1: Leaders should systematically implement emotional intelligence (EI) assessments followed by personalized coaching for themselves and their team members. This practice aims to foster self-awareness among team members, enabling them to recognize and understand their emotional intelligence behaviours, including both strengths and areas for improvement.

Integrating emotional intelligence assessment and coaching into team development strategies empowers leaders to cultivate a deeper understanding of their own and their team members' emotional landscapes. By understanding their own strengths, leaders can acknowledge what areas they can lean into, particularly during periods of difficulty. Moreover, they can also address their weaker areas and work on strategies to develop these challenged competencies. This deepened insight allows leaders to tailor their leadership approach, while developing their abilities to effectively communicate, make decisions and resolve conflicts. Leaders who are attuned to their emotional and psychological states of themselves and their team members are better equipped to foster a collaborative and supportive environment, thereby enhancing their overall effectiveness.

Similarly, team members also benefit in becoming more aware of their behaviours and communication styles. This self-awareness experience can overall improve their relationship with their leader and with others on the team.

Stein and Book make reference to this in the following paragraph:

Emotional self-awareness is crucial for success, whatever our role. Why? Because if we cannot recognize how we are feeling, if we cannot take our “emotional temperature,” we are at risk of behaving in demeaning, angry, belittling, and belligerent ways that will turn others off...Self-awareness is a critical foundation of emotional intelligence because what we are unaware of, we cannot change, and self-awareness is the first step in modifying other otherwise alienating behaviours. To do so, we must be conscious of what we are feeling and the impact these feelings have on others. (Stein & Book, 2011, p. 63).

During the research study, each participant with the aid of the assessment results, became more aware of their current behaviours and debrief coaching unpacked the impact of current behaviours along with new desired behaviours. One participant distinctly stated this within the final interview.

I have grown in my self-awareness – particularly from the Emotional Intelligence assessment. I really was able to understand my strengths and challenges. Now, I know what I can lean into. And I want to work on my challenges. (005)

Overall, the self-awareness gained through emotional intelligence assessments and coaching improves interpersonal team dynamics which ultimately assist the team leader.

Recommendation 2: Leaders should adopt Systemic Team Coaching as a method to mitigate the effects of siloed team structures. This approach encourages active participation and shared responsibility among all team members, thereby reducing hierarchical barriers and fostering stronger team cohesion.

Systemic Team Coaching facilitates a shift from traditional hierarchical dynamics towards a more egalitarian and collaborative team structure. The experience of systemic team coaching helps leaders learn new practices which move away from micromanagement or a single source of information and decision proposals. Instead, the leader can focus on strategic guidance and empower their team members to create solutions to problems. In essence it shifts the balance of responsibility from solely being on the leader's shoulders to all of the team members thus taking ownership collectively.

The result is not only an improvement in team morale and cohesion but also an enhanced ability of leaders to delegate effectively and trust in the autonomous function of their team. As a result, team members feel more engaged in their work as they see the impact of their decisions. In addition, the polarity of the team diminishes as team members see themselves as being critical to the operability of the team and no longer see the division between management and employees.

One of the ways in which I introduced participation equality within this research, was to have the participants create a team charter that outlines how they will operate as a team. This charter or as I relabeled it as "functional guidelines," listed what behaviours the team actively wanted to see within their sessions. Each participant was asked to offer something towards the charter, promoting equal contribution. When the charter was completed, I created a slide that was

presented at the commencement of each meeting. This practice not only reminded all participants of the commitment that they had agreed upon, but it also reviewed to provide all participants opportunity to discuss any violations that they sensed occurred, or to open the floor to any further additions or deletions from the charter.

By conducting this exercise with the participants during their first team coaching session, it was clear that it was not the team leader's sole responsibility to supervise any misbehaviour within the team, but instead each participant held collective responsibilities for their own behaviour and to voice any viewed contraventions.

One participant notably made mention of the experience. "I really liked creating your own guidelines approach. I even already suggested to people that we adopt that because that's a great way to get people to hold each other accountable, and I don't think we do that very well."
(003)

Lastly if silos existed within teams, team members learn that they all play a significant role in the team's tasks and success. They learn that they can achieve more by working together, than working apart. This strategy is particularly crucial in environments where silos hinder collaboration and innovation.

This theory goes back to Aristotle's teachings and has more recently been rephrased by Peter Hawkins who commonly asks teams when practising systemic team coaching, "What can we uniquely do together, that we cannot do apart?" (Peter Hawkins, 2017, p. 246).

Recommendation 3: Leaders should prioritize the development of emotional intelligence competencies within their teams. This focus should be integrated into systemic team coaching to enhance team members' comprehension of human emotions, thereby improving interpersonal relationships and team dynamics.

The development of emotional intelligence competencies, such as emotional expression, empathy and the ability to build long-term, trusting relationships is critical to the success of the team. During the exercise of undergoing emotional intelligence 2.0 assessments, the leader and the team members learn the principles of the 15 competencies and what behaviours do and do not exhibit solid abilities within each of those competencies.

By integrating systemic team coaching concurrently with emotional intelligence development, the leader and the team members are encouraged to practice their competencies within the systemic team coaching sessions. During this study, I purposely subdivided the study team into smaller groups in the earlier sessions, thus encouraging the forming of interpersonal relationships within the team. Sub-divided teams each had a spokesperson who presented the findings of their discussions to the rest of the team. In this manner, each of the members, including the leader, could see the representation of their input which provided a sense of inclusivity. Moreover, it assisted in creating improved team dynamics.

As one participant stated, “There was no holding back during our team coaching sessions. We talked about issues about leadership and there was no holding back. Everyone pitched in and everyone seemed willing to contribute.” The process of everyone participating and feeling included within the discussions was key to changing the dynamics within the study team. During the team coaching sessions, participants deepened their ability to express themselves and to

actively listen to each other. These emotional intelligence competencies were practised throughout the sessions, facilitating a closer bond with their fellow participants.

Commenting in how a participant felt about the team, a participant stated,

Well, I think I have a deeper sense of friendship with them now. My relationship with my team members was very professional before the commencement of the team coaching sessions. I would say that there is a friendlier connection now. I know them on a deeper level, and I understand their values more. I would say I am friendlier with them now and less formal than before. (002)

Recommendation 4: Leaders should integrate emotional intelligence coaching with systemic team coaching to cultivate a psychological safe environment where authentic conversations and open communications are encouraged.

Emotional intelligence assessments and coaching prompts self-awareness on one's current behaviours and mindsets. By integrating systemic team coaching while undergoing growth in self-awareness, many individuals become more conscious of how they are interacting with others.

It was interesting to note that within a short duration, participants in this study became much more open in expressing themselves and leaning into the state of vulnerability. Some participants were naturally more inclined to explore vulnerability than others. However, by having some participants take the lead in expressing personal vulnerability, the stick of free expression expanded. Those who were more reserved suddenly felt that it was okay to match the level of vulnerability of their peers.

Several participants commented on this phenomenon. One participant stated, “I was kind of surprised with how open I actually became in those sessions. A lot kind of close and I'm not big on interpersonal stuff at work, but yeah, just kind of allowing myself to be who I was in those meetings.” (006)

The expansion of expressing vulnerabilities heightened feelings of trust. Individuals were cognizant of not expressing or showing through non-verbal signals of judgement or disagreement. Instead, many displayed curiosity and interest and thus encouraged this level of openness. This created a sense of team psychological safety. As one participant clearly stated,

I felt a change in the power dynamics. We were all equals around the table. So, yes, there was an increased sense of psychological safety. For myself personally, yes, I felt more psychologically safe. I could express my feelings more, with no negative consequences occurring. (005)

Psychological safety is critical within teams in today's complex world. Problems arise quickly and are usually not previously handled by today's generation of workers. Teams need to be capable of creating innovative and creative problem solving. Each of the team members need to feel comfortable in expressing outside the box ideas, which may be the perfect solution to a complex problem or may lead to further team discussions that result in the ultimate decision.

Leaders who implement this integrated approach will likely observe a more cohesive and supportive team dynamic, which is instrumental in achieving sustained team performance and organizational success.

Recommendation 5: Leaders should leverage Systemic Team Coaching to improve team interactions, particularly during conflicts, to promote more innovative and creative problem solving.

The creation of psychological safety as mentioned in recommendation 4, facilitates team members in expressing differing opinions and to do so in a well-constructed manner. When a team has no psychological safety, there is a tendency for team members to live in fear of expressing opinions or thoughts contrary to those expressed by the team leader or to the general consensus of the team. However, while engaged in systemic team coaching, members practice expressing their authentic thoughts without fear of repercussions. Once achieved, the result of group think is diminished and innovative thinking (including outside of the box thinking) increases. Leaders who adopt this approach facilitate an environment where divergent thinking is valued. Traditional problem-solving techniques are challenged in which the leader voices his/her way ahead without any collaborative or challenging discussion. This results in more creative and effective solutions to complex and unforeseen problems, positioning the leader as a catalyst for innovation within the organization.

Conflict, when introduced in a systemic team coaching manner, can be viewed as a positive occurrence instead of a negative experience. It is interesting to note how many participants viewed conflict in such a negative light prior to the exploration of the topic of conflict was explored. This was demonstrated to me through a show of hands prior to the session commencing. The participants recognized, after the end of team coaching, that they could still feel psychologically safe even though they had expressed divergent thoughts to other participants. One participant expressed during the final interview,

I also really like how I learned to have a difficult conversation. I avoided those kind of conversations, which wasn't a good thing. I ask myself now why do I have negative feelings towards someone? I can't just brush off my feelings anymore. Now I dive deeper.

Recommendation 6: Leaders should incorporate systemic team coaching to cultivate optimism and stability within their teams, thereby enhancing their focus on performance and task completion.

Leaders who engage in practices taught within systemic team coaching into their regular meetings, are likely to observe a long-term trend of rising team optimism and emotional stability. As mentioned previously; by adopting systemic team practices, team members will feel a sense of increased psychological safety and trust. They will see that their opinions, regardless of how diverse are still desired and that they play a critical impact on how the team will proceed with decisions. As they evolve in systemic thinking, many individuals, including the team leader will begin to see increased productivity and effectiveness in team tasks. Statistics such as the use of sick leave reduces with increased sense of purpose and contribution to team decisions. Members will begin to see that they can achieve more by combining their efforts collectively.

The result of this is that the once felt "drama" of poor team dynamics and interactions will no longer occupy in the team leaders' or team members' heads. Simply expressed, it reduces the time that individuals focus on negative interpersonal relations, freeing their minds to focus on team tasks and goals. Leaders meanwhile can reduce their time spent on resolving poor team dynamics and instead focus their energy on future potential issues. Studies have indicated that

many leaders consume their time on day-to-day operational issues instead of long-term strategic initiatives.

Recommendation 7: Leaders should articulate the value of systemic team coaching to all stakeholders, demonstrating its impact on overall organizational success.

Systemic team coaching encourages both leaders and team members to think systemically, recognizing the broader impact of their actions on the organization and with its stakeholders.

Stakeholders can include the team's superiors, supply partners, customers, potential future customers, boards, government agencies and even if we broaden our systemic thinking, the environment. It is thus imperative that team members recognize and inform superiors on the potential impact of engaging in systemic team coaching. Thus, in a world where financial resources remain constricted, particularly in the areas of leader and team development, the team leader must be capable of explaining to his superiors the return of investment of systemic team coaching and thinking. Peter Hawkins eloquently states,

The team's success is co-created with and for all its stakeholders, including those employees that it leads vertically or horizontally, investors, customers, suppliers and partner organizations, other functions and teams in the organization, those that have gone before them, the communities where they operate, that provide the infrastructure that gets the employees decent and safe places to live, affords the ways to travel to work, and necessary services in health, education, sanitation, energy and water. Beyond all of these is the more-than-human world of the wider ecology that provides the key essentials for

our life, the air that we breathe, the water that nourishes us, the earth that produces our food, the warmth and energy from the sun (Peter Hawkins, 2017, p. 225).

Teams that undergo systemic team coaching are more able to rise up to today's VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) world, and through their stakeholder connections, can assist the success of their organization's strategic objectives. "Success is always, but always, contextual and co-created, it is about co-creating value with and for the communities and ecosystems in which you operate" (Peter Hawkins, 2017, p. 225).

For leaders, this alignment not only strengthens their influence within the organization but also enhances their reputation as effective change agents capable of driving significant organizational improvements. Furthermore, the leader's personal development grows extensively beyond themselves, where they can assist all stakeholders in navigating complexity in an increasingly dynamic environment. The potential impact is immeasurable.

Recommendation 8: Leaders should recognize the broader human developmental benefits of incorporating emotional intelligence assessments and systemic team coaching, emphasizing their impact beyond the professional sphere.

While the primary focus of emotional intelligence assessments (including coaching debriefs) and systemic team coaching is to enhance team and organizational performance, the personal development benefits cannot be overlooked.

Engaging in emotional intelligence and systemic thinking requires leaders to reflect and develop greater self-awareness. Although the emphasis is placed on providing value to the team and in turn the leader and the organization, I wish to acknowledge personal benefits.

A leader or team member who is self-aware and exudes strong emotional intelligence competencies is a human being who is capable of communicating well with others, able to enact impulse control, is positive and flexible in mindset, and overall is self-aware of how their actions, speech, and non-verbal skills affect others. This human being will not only be able to have successful work relationships, but will also become a more effective partner, parent (or any other family position – i.e. sister, brother, aunt, uncle, grandparent, etc.) and friend. They will become more competent in addressing home conflict, become advocates of encouraging diverse thoughts and will be more able to create psychological safety within their home. The ramifications are enormous.

Overall, the people that engage in emotional intelligence assessments, individual coaching and systemic team coaching will grow developmentally as human beings. They are more capable of thinking beyond their self needs; instead, being able to think outside in versus inside out.

A research study indicated that there was indeed a positive correlation between higher levels of emotional intelligence and life satisfaction. (Palmer, Donaldson & Stough, 2001). It is interesting to note on how many researchers have documented the benefits of expanding emotional intelligence capacities within the workplace and how little research has been conducted on personal lives. This fact may illustrate the priority of researchers to validate the requirement of having strong emotional intelligence competencies in an area in which assessment companies can source substantial revenue.

It should be noted that one participant noted personal impacts of the expansion of emotional intelligence capabilities in the final interview. The participant stated,

So even my partner and I are like, I think we need to have an uncomfortable conversation. And we say it as a joke because they're not always that uncomfortable, but we're trying to set up the parameters. I say, this is how I feel when this behavior, you exhibit this behavior, so what are we going to do? So that's super useful. (007)

Clearly, this participant had seen the benefit of utilizing stronger emotional intelligence capabilities within the home front.

A leader who commits to engaging in emotional intelligence assessments, including coaching debriefs and systemic team coaching is essentially providing a huge investment return to his/her/their company, but moreover a priceless gift to team members that can conceivably change lives for the better.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

The 21st century has brought about unprecedented changes in the organizational landscape, driven by rapid technological advancements, globalization, and the evolving nature of work. Traditional leadership models, rooted in the hierarchical and mechanistic structures of the industrial age, are increasingly being challenged by the complexities and uncertainties of the modern VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) world. In response to these challenges, there has been a growing recognition of the need for more dynamic, flexible, and collaborative approaches to leadership and team development. This thesis set out to explore the effectiveness of systemic team coaching and the development of emotional intelligence (EI) competencies as strategies for enhancing leadership effectiveness within hierarchical organizations.

Systemic team coaching, as defined by Peter Hawkins (Peter Hawkins, 2017), is a holistic approach that focuses on developing a team's collective performance and leadership by engaging with all key stakeholders and considering the broader system within which the team operates. Emotional intelligence, on the other hand, refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions and the emotions of others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Together, these approaches offer a powerful framework for addressing the interpersonal and systemic challenges that teams face in today's complex and rapidly changing environment.

This research study aimed to assess the impact of these approaches on team performance and leadership effectiveness within a specific organizational context—a municipally owned utility company in Canada. Through a combination of qualitative research methods, including semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and emotional intelligence assessments, the

study sought to uncover the ways in which systemic team coaching and EI development can facilitate better communication, reduce hierarchical barriers, and foster a psychologically safe environment conducive to innovation and collaboration.

Key findings revealed that integrating EI assessments and coaching into team development significantly enhanced self-awareness among team members, leading to improved interpersonal relationships and communication. Systemic team coaching was found to reduce silos and hierarchical barriers, promoting active participation and shared responsibility, which are essential for team cohesion and effectiveness. Moreover, the combination of EI and systemic coaching contributed to creating a psychologically safe environment, where team members felt secure in expressing their ideas and engaging in authentic conversations. These findings align with the growing body of literature that emphasizes the importance of emotional intelligence and collective leadership in navigating the challenges of the modern workplace (Edmondson, 1999; Lawrence, 2013).

The study also highlighted the broader implications of these interventions for human development. Participants reported not only professional growth but also improvements in their personal lives, suggesting that the benefits of EI and systemic coaching extend beyond the workplace. This finding is consistent with research linking emotional intelligence to life satisfaction and overall well-being (Benjamin Palmer et al., 2001).

In summary, the findings of this study underscore the significant potential of systemic team coaching and emotional intelligence development in enhancing both individual and team effectiveness within hierarchical organizations. These approaches not only improve

communication and collaboration but also contribute to a more positive and resilient organizational culture.

Study Limitations

While the findings of this study provide valuable insights into the benefits of systemic team coaching and emotional intelligence development, several limitations must be acknowledged:

Scope and Generalizability: The study was conducted within a specific type of hierarchical organization—a municipally owned utility company in Canada. As such, the findings may not be fully generalizable to other larger organizational structures or industries, particularly those that are less hierarchical or operate in different cultural work environments. Further research is required to explore the applicability of these findings across a broader range of organizations.

Qualitative Research Methodology: The research primarily relied on qualitative data obtained through semi-structured interviews and observations. While this approach provided in-depth insights into the participants' experiences, it may lack the statistical rigor needed for broader generalization. The subjective nature of qualitative research also introduces the possibility of researcher bias, despite efforts to mitigate this through peer review and validation processes. It is thus recommended to explore further studies utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

Self-Reported Data: The study relied heavily on self-reported data from participants, particularly in the emotional intelligence assessments and coaching debriefs. Self-reported data can be subject to bias, as participants may present themselves in a more favorable light or may

not fully articulate their true thoughts and feelings. Future studies could benefit from incorporating more objective measures of emotional intelligence and team dynamics, such as 360-degree feedback or behavioral assessments.

Short-Term Study Duration: The research was conducted over a relatively short period, which limits the ability to observe the long-term effects of systemic team coaching and emotional intelligence development. While the initial findings are promising, it is unclear whether the observed improvements in team dynamics and leadership effectiveness are sustainable over time. Longitudinal studies that track participants over several months or years would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term impact of these interventions.

Cultural Context: The study was conducted within a specific cultural context—Western Canada—which may influence the findings. Organizational cultures and leadership practices can vary significantly across different regions and cultural settings. This particular study was conducted in a utility organization, that was mostly composed of male participants. Future research should explore how cultural and gender differences impact the effectiveness of systemic team coaching and emotional intelligence development, particularly in global organizations with diverse workforces.

Effectiveness of Team Coach: A large part of this research study was dependent on the quality of the emotional intelligence coaching debriefs and systemic team coaching provided to the participants. In order to solidify the findings, it would be prudent to have many studies conducted utilizing an assortment of certified emotional intelligence practitioners along with

coaches who have graduated from the senior practitioner systemic team coaching program. The findings would then be independent of coaches' personalities and unique styles.

Despite these limitations, the study provides a solid foundation for understanding the potential benefits of systemic team coaching and emotional intelligence development in hierarchical organizations. The findings offer valuable insights that can inform both academic research and practical applications in the field of leadership and organizational development.

Future Research:

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several avenues for future research are recommended:

Broader Applicability Across Various Organizational Structures: Future research should explore the effectiveness of systemic team coaching and emotional intelligence development in a wider range of organizational structures, including non-hierarchical and flat organizations. This would help determine whether the benefits observed in this study are consistent across different contexts and provide insights into how these interventions can be tailored to fit various organizational needs. Moreover, future studies should also focus on diverse organizations that include public, private sector and non-profit entities.

Different Cultures: This research study was focused on one organization within Canada. Future studies should include various global cultures to be able to ascertain if the outcome of emotional intelligence assessments and systemic team coaching produce similar results. Although the number of senior practitioners qualified in systemic team coaching is limited globally, there are sufficient global systemic team coach graduates to provide data. Further

research coordinating data collected worldwide will solidify the potential impact of emotional intelligence and systemic team coaching development.

Human Impact: Another promising area for future research is the exploration of the impact of these interventions on individual well-being and life satisfaction outside the workplace. As this study has shown, the benefits of emotional intelligence development extend beyond the professional sphere, potentially influencing personal relationships and overall quality of life. Understanding these broader impacts could provide additional motivation for organizations to invest in emotional intelligence and systemic team coaching as part of their leadership development strategies.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, this thesis has demonstrated that systemic team coaching, and emotional intelligence development are powerful means for enhancing team performance and leadership effectiveness in hierarchical organizations. In a world that is increasingly characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, these interventions offer leaders and teams the skills and mindsets needed to navigate challenges and seize opportunities with confidence and resilience.

As organizations continue to grapple with the demands of a rapidly changing global landscape, the importance of collaborative leadership, emotional intelligence, and systemic thinking cannot be overstated. By embracing these concepts and integrating them into their leadership practices, organizations can not only survive but thrive in a VUCA world, driving innovation, stakeholder partnership, and success in the face of uncertainty.

This research has contributed to the growing body of knowledge on leadership and team development, providing evidence that systemic team coaching, and emotional intelligence are essential components for navigating the complexities of modern organizational life. As leaders and teams continue to adapt to the ever-evolving challenges of the 21st century, the insights gained from this study can serve as a valuable guide for fostering resilience, collaboration, and sustainable success in the workplace and beyond.

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Appendix A: Consent Form to All Participants

Systemic Team Coaching in a Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous World

Consent Form

Kristina Patsula (Graduate Student Researcher)
Master of Arts in Executive & Organizational Coaching
Royal Roads University
Contact Number: xxx-xxx-xxxx
Royal Roads Email Address

Tanis Farish (Thesis Supervisor)
Master of Arts in Executive & Organizational Coaching
Comosun College

This study is being undertaken by Kristina Patsula, a graduate student, and will contribute to the thesis requirements of the program and graduation of the Master of Arts in Executive & Organizational Coaching.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

The overall purpose of this research study is to determine if systemic team coaching can assist teams in hierarchical organizations who are struggling and are experiencing team dysfunctions in today's complex, unpredictable and volatile world. By exploring this research topic, we hope to better understand how systemic team coaching can evolve leadership thinking required by the 21st century.

STUDY PROCEDURES:

You will participate in two one-to-one interviews conducted by graduate student, Kristina Patsula. You will be sent the questions in advance so that you can reflect on your experiences prior to the interview. In addition to the questions sent before the interview, you can expect the student researcher to ask follow-up questions to some of your answers to ensure she has captured your sentiments. The first interview will be conducted prior to any commencement of team coaching and the second interview will be held upon the end of team coaching. Each interview will take approximately an hour and will be held over Zoom. With permission, the interview will be audio-recorded so that it can be transcribed verbatim for analysis. In order to protect your identity, you can log on using a nickname or a pseudonym, along with turning off your camera.

Observation will also be part of the data collection. A source of data will be collected through observation including photos of team coaching sessions and observations of behaviour,

significant conversation, context, mood, and any other qualitative observations not captured in the above list.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Your identity will be kept strictly confidential. All interview recordings will be kept encrypted and password protected folder on the RRU drive. No names or identifiable information (i.e., age, gender, location, position) will be used when reporting the results of the study. The results of the study will be published, and all participants will be advised of the findings. The findings will also be disseminated on RRU's digital repository in an open access format, meaning that it can be made available online, free of charge. Please note that during teamwork, team participants will be asked to keep information expressed within the meetings confidential; that is to say what was said and by whom would not be divulged to any non-participants.

YOUR RIGHTS:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to answer a specific question (s) and can withdraw from the study prior to the commencement of the coaching program. If they choose to discontinue their participation during the coaching program, their data up to that point will be anonymized.

POTENTIAL RISKS:

All interviews and coaching will be held over Zoom so there will be no risk to physical harm. There is low risk of emotional harm due to the potential of negative personnel interactions (i.e., conflict) occurring and/or recall of potentially traumatic experiences during the team coaching program. Should the topics in this study cause you any emotional or psychological stress, you can find local mental health resources through Crisis Services Canada at <https://www.crisisservicescanada.ca/en/looking-for-local-resources-support>.

RESEARCHER RELATIONSHIPS:

Given that the student researcher, Kristina Patsula, has worked in various sectors through her work as an Executive Coach across Canada, it is possible that participants may know of or previously worked with her before. This study is a stand-alone research and is in no way associated with Kristina Patsula's previous employer, National Defence.

WHO TO CONTACT IF YOU HAVE COMPLAINTS OR CONCERNS ABOUT THE STUDY?

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Royal Roads University at the Office of Research Ethics at 250-391-2600 ext 4425 or email them at ethicalreview@royalroads.ca.

QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions or wish to request further information about the study, please contact Kristina Patsula by telephone at (613) 878-1154 or by email at Kristinakpatsula@gmail.com.

CONSENT

I have read the information presented within this document concerning the research study conducted by Kristina Patsula under the supervision of Tanis Farish at Royal Roads University.

I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details sought. I am aware that I may withdraw at any time during the study by advising the researchers of this decision.

With full knowledge and acceptance of the two above paragraphs, I agree to participate in this study.

Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Date: _____

*Note: To those individuals who are receiving this consent form through email, an email reply to yours truly indicating your consent will suffice the requirement to confirm your consent.

Appendix B: Email to All Participants

Good Morning!

With the consent forms all completed (thanks so much everyone!), it is time to launch into the next stage of this coaching experience.

This next step entails having a one-to-one interview with each of you in order to establish a baseline in my research study. This interview will be comprised of seven questions with some follow-up questions from me in some cases. It is important for you to have a private space to respond to questions, so that you feel free to authentically express yourself. As I mentioned before, there are no right or wrong answers to the questions. The collection of data from this interview will remain confidential in nature. Even your name will not be used. Instead, your data will be retained with an anonymous number which will help me to coordinate data collected from the initial interview and the closing interview. If you wish to have the interview questions prior to the interview, please let me know and I will send them to you. The only thing I ask is that you don't discuss the questions with each other or how you will or have responded to them.

These initial interviews must be completed prior to 5th February as on the 6th February, we commence team coaching! 😊

Please send me an email by COB Wednesday January 31st with your preferred day/time for your interview. As I am on EST, I am open to conducting interviews during my evening hours between 6-9 pm EST (3-6 pm PST). The interview will take approximately 45 minutes.

Along with conducting the interviews in the next week, I will also be sending you your Emotional Intelligence assessment in the coming days. When you receive the email, all you need to do is open the email, click on the link and the link will allow you to commence the assessment. The assessment takes approximately 20 minutes to complete. Find a time when you aren't rushed to respond. It helps also if you take the assessment in a quiet location where you won't be disturbed. The more that you answer honestly, the more the results will help you! There are no good or wrong answers.

Once again, your results will be private to you. When I receive your results, I will contact you individually and we will schedule your debrief coaching session and at that time you will also receive your individual report and results. The debrief coaching session takes an hour in length.

If you experience any issues opening up the assessment, please contact me and I will sort out the issue for you!

I know this is a lot of information and if you are seeking clarification or have any questions, please feel free to contact me. I'm here to support you!

Best!
Kristina

Appendix C: Pre-Study Interview Questions

One to One Interview Questions – Prior to the Commencement of Systemic Team Coaching

1. Tell me about when you joined your team and what were your initial impressions of working in this organization.
Probe: Have your impressions of working here changed at all since your early days working at Nelson Hydro?
2. Tell me about your team meetings. What is the usual format of the meetings?
Probe: Do you feel there is ample time for team discussion? Why or why not?
3. How would you describe the team dynamics within the team? Can you provide me an example? What role do you usually play?
4. Psychological safety has been defined by Amy Edmondson, a leading world psychologist. She defines it as when a “leader creates a safe space for people to speak up, make mistakes, and people can bring their full selves to work.” How would you describe your experience within your team in respect to psychological safety? How does your team deal with conflict?
5. How well do you feel you know yourself? – i.e. your strengths and challenges within your human skills – i.e. ability to express yourself verbally and nonverbally, ability to pause before taking action when triggered, ability to be flexible with unexpected changes, ability to relate to others, etc.
6. What discussions/conversations, if any, do you have with stakeholders (customers, horizontal enabling partners, suppliers, logistical support, or any other stakeholder outside of the team? Do you feel in these conversations that you are speaking on behalf of your hydro team? How so?
7. If I provided you a magic wand, what would be the one thing or things, you wish would change within your team, if anything?
8. Is there anything else you wish to add to our discussion today?

Appendix D: Post-Study Interview Questions

One to One Interview Questions – Upon Completion of Systemic Team Coaching

9. Upon commencement of this study, I asked you what your initial sentiments were of this organization. What are your feelings now upon conclusion of the emotional intelligence assessments and systemic team coaching?
Probe: What has changed for you?
10. Tell me about your current team meetings. Have any changes been made regarding how meetings have changed in structure or process? Was there anything that you learned during the study that you would like to implement within your team?
11. How would you describe the team dynamics currently within the team? Can you provide me an example?
12. Psychological safety has been defined by Amy Edmondson, a leading world psychologist. She defines it as when a “leader creates a safe space for people to speak up, make mistakes, and people can bring their full selves to work.” How would you describe your experience within your team in respect to psychological safety now? What changes have occurred if any?
13. After completing the emotional intelligence assessments and coaching debrief, do you feel that you know yourself better? – i.e. your strengths and challenges within your human skills – i.e. ability to express yourself verbally and nonverbally, ability to pause before taking action when triggered, ability to be flexible with unexpected changes, ability to relate to others, etc. What has changed for you?
14. In the initial interview, I asked if you worked with internal and/or external stakeholders. How do you feel your communication with them has changed if at all?
15. I asked you in the first interview the magic wand question! Do you remember that? What if I asked you the same question now? How would you answer? As a reminder, my initial question was, “If I provided you a magic wand, what would be the one thing or things, you wish would change within your team, if anything?”
16. Is there anything else you wish to add to our discussion today?