

# A PRACTICE ANALYSIS OF COACHING PSYCHOLOGY: TOWARD A FOUNDATIONAL COMPETENCY MODEL

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This article presents results of an initial, empirically based professional-practice analysis (i.e., “job analysis”) of executive/professional development coaching by psychologists. This project was initiated in 2012 by the Society of Consulting Psychology (SCP) and the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP) in a collaborative effort to (a) begin to systematically investigate and identify the domain of knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal characteristics (KSAPs; i.e., “competencies”) important for coaching by psychologists, and (b) develop a foundational competency model. The study had two phases: (a) in-depth interviews with a sample of 27 subject-matter experts (SME) who are recognized thought leaders and highly experienced, well-reputed coaching psychologist practitioners and/or researchers in SCP and SIOP; and (b) a Practice-Analysis Survey (PAS) questionnaire developed and designed on the basis of the results of phase-1 interviews, administered online to SCP and SIOP members who do coaching. The major findings included (a) the top coaching critical success factors were coach quality (e.g., expertise, personal effectiveness), quality/strength of the coaching relationship, and coachee readiness (e.g., motivation, willingness to learn, openness to feedback); (b) important skills and personal attributes were consistent with those of other (nonpsychology) coaching competency models; however, (c) the knowledge areas deemed important, and the theoretical frameworks used, were different from those of other models and represented a wide range of psychology knowledge and theory, reflecting the range of psychology backgrounds of study participants. This article

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describes the practice analysis and how it is being used to develop the model of foundational coaching psychology competencies.

**Keywords:** coaching, coaching competencies, coaching job analysis, coaching practice analysis, coaching psychology

This article presents the results of an empirically based professional-practice analysis (similar to “job analysis”) of executive/ professional development coaching by psychologists. The project was initiated in 2012 by the Society of Consulting Psychology (SCP) and the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP) in a collaborative effort to (a) begin to systematically investigate and identify the domain of knowledge, skills/abilities, and personal characteristics (KSAPs, i.e., “competencies”) of coaching by psychologists, and (b) develop a foundational competency model for coaching by psychologists based on the results of practice analysis.

This project was primarily undertaken in response to the following factors: (a) a significant and continually increasing worldwide demand for coaching (Sherpa Coaching, 2015; International Coach Federation, 2013); (b) an increasingly large number of psychologists migrating their practices to coaching of leaders in key organizational roles (Foxhall, 2002); (c) the proliferation of coaches worldwide—with limited barriers to entry, no professionally agreed-on standards for practice, and no graduate programs in coaching in the U.S. specializing in coaching psychology; (d) the need for more scientific underpinnings for this professional practice-initiated-and-led area of consulting psychology; (e) concern about the impact of nonpsychology-based certifications by free-standing self-accredited professional groups with strong branding and marketing expertise; and (f) increasingly loud reverberations among psychologists asking, “Where is psychology in the coaching space?”

While recognizing that a competency model cannot specify all that is required to be effective in a complex professional role such as that of a coaching psychologist, and that “competence is a dynamic process rather than a static state” (Donovan & Ponce, 2009; Rodolfa et al., 2005), we undertook this research to identify the *foundational competency domain* of coaching psychology. The practical purposes for this research were to (a) inform psychology graduate programs that wish to help prepare students for coaching; (b) help guide graduate students and psychologists wishing to prepare for the practice of executive coaching; (c) begin to establish a baseline of professional standards of practice by identifying the foundational KSAP domain; (d) serve as a mechanism for educating consumers of coaching services; (e) serve as input to possible future credentialing examinations; and (f) identify key areas where research is needed.

This paper has several sections. First, we present the background for our work: the factors that stimulated it, the intended uses of the findings, and the small grants that supported it. Next we provide a description of, and rationale for, our methodology, followed by the results of each of the two primary study phases: (a) in-depth semistructured interviews with subject-matter experts (SMEs); and (b) a practice-analysis survey of SCP and SIOP members who do coaching. The method for developing the Foundational Coaching Psychology Competency Model based on this research is then briefly described, followed by a discussion of our conclusions and suggestions for needed additional research.

## Background

Coaching by psychologists in the U.S. has a long history, dating back to the 1940s (Hart, Blattner, & Leipsic, 2001). A part of organizational consulting (Lowman, 2002, *in press*), one-on-one executive-development work was referred to variously as *management consulting* or *executive consulting*, *individual executive development*, *advising*, or something else and was not called *coaching* until more recently (Brotman, Liberi, & Wasylshyn, 1998; Diedrich, 2001; Diedrich & Kilburg, 2001; Fitzgerald & Berger, 2002; Frisch, 2001; Goldsmith, Lyons, & Freas, 2000; Hall, Otazo, & Hollenbeck, 1999; Hendricks, 1996; Hollenbeck, 2002; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson,

2001; Kilburg, 1996, 2000; Kralj, 2001; Levinson, 1996; Peterson, 1996). Pioneered by psychologist practitioners, coaching psychology as an area of psychology practice for many years has had the underpinnings of the scientific theories and frameworks of the particular psychologist's area of graduate training (e.g., psychodynamic, counseling, industrial and organizational, social psychology, developmental, and cognitive). Over the past 15 years or so there have been numerous calls for better research on coaching effectiveness and outcomes (Brotman, Liberi, & Wasylyshyn, 1998; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Wasylyshyn, 2003), and there have been increasingly high-quality publications of science-based models and methods of coaching (e.g., Bachkirova, 2011; Kilburg, 2000, 2004, 2005; Kilburg & Diedrich, 2007; Laske, 2007; McKenna & Davis, 2009; Neenan & Palmer, 2012) as well as critiques of available research on coaching (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Peterson, 2010)—the body of knowledge to which we seek to contribute the findings of this study, helping to build a strong evidence base for the practice of coaching psychology.

Because there are no consensually agreed-on standards for coaching practice and few barriers to entry, this area of professional practice has been referred to by many as the “wild west of executive coaching” (Sherman & Freas, 2004). Many psychologists not trained in coaching who wish to begin doing coaching do not seek retraining, as many health-services providers (HSPs) are not aware of the considerable differences between coaching and clinical therapy or counseling (Hart, Blattner, & Leipsic, 2001). For psychologists and psychology graduate students who wish to know what they need to learn to prepare themselves for eventually doing organizational executive/leader coaching—and for graduate psychology programs that aim to help prepare students for coaching—we hope the results of this research will serve as a useful guide.

## This Study

The specific objective of this study and the development of a foundational competency model was to develop a technically sound, professionally defensible, and practically useful model of the domain of core competencies that provide the basis for effective coaching by psychologists.

## Study Design for the Practice Analysis of Coaching Psychology

The methods used in this study were designed to be consistent with professionally recognized standards for analyzing requirements of jobs and professional roles, including the competency requirements of individuals in those roles.

## Overarching Study Parameters and Assumptions

We began this work with the following assumptions:

A working definition of *coaching psychology* was needed for the study. The approach taken for this is elaborated in a section below.

The approach should be multimethod; that is, the study design should incorporate multiple data/information sources (the coaching research and practice literatures, coaching experts and thought leaders, coaching practitioners) and methodologies (literature review, structured interviews, standardized survey) and draw on multiple approaches from the domains of “job/work analysis,” “practice analysis,” and “competency modeling” (e.g., inferring KSAPs/competencies from broader coaching strategies or objectives as well as from setting-specific coaching activities and tools). This approach would enable examination of data convergence from multiple perspectives and provide research underpinnings valuable for multiple potential uses (e.g., future graduate education/training guidelines and selection-, development-, and certification-related applications).

There should be a bias toward taking a narrower versus broader approach to sampling and consequent generalizability, primarily because of budget and resource constraints. In practical terms this led to a decision to limit our target population to SCP and SIOP members (i.e., drawing participants from APA Divisions 13 and 14, respectively).

This study would be a modest “starter” effort, to be built on over time, with an emphasis on coaching practice and use of a *descriptive rather than prescriptive approach—a direct consequence of the prior assumption.*

## Underlying Conceptual Model

Based on an extensive literature review, we defined three broad classes of coaching-related variables, with associated key descriptor variables:

- Coaching context (referring to the situational variables that influence the specific character and effectiveness of a coaching intervention, including organizational, coachee, and coach characteristics; coaching goals/objectives; and duration of coaching engagement).
- Coaching process components (referring to major coach responsibilities and activities, including key assessment tools and coaching techniques/methods characteristic of typical coaching interventions).
- Coaching-related competencies (referring to KASPs that, when applied properly and in situationally appropriate ways, are likely to contribute to the effectiveness of coaching interventions).

## Major Project Steps

The project consisted of the following sequential steps:

First, we reviewed the relevant literature, which informed the development of a preliminary structure and content of key coaching-related context, process, and competency variables. That initial structure was used to create a protocol for organizing interviews with SMEs, as described below.

Second, we interviewed SMEs. The interviews were designed to gather qualitative information about coaching-related context, process, and competency variables that would, in turn, inform the structure and content of the planned survey instrument (next step).

Third, we created a Practice Analysis Survey (PAS), which was developed on the basis of results of the SME interviews and the literature review and was designed to elicit quantitative and qualitative data that would inform and help guide the identification and development of a taxonomy of coaching psychology competencies/KSAPs.

Fourth, we did survey sampling and administered the PAS online; this was designed to ensure the collection of high-quality survey data from an appropriate and representative sample of practicing coaching psychologists.

Fifth, we analyzed the PAS data; this was designed to inform and enable the construction of a preliminary model of foundational coaching psychology competencies.

Sixth, we developed a foundational competency model on the basis of the PAS results and subsequent SME final review.

## SME Interviews

### Method

**Purposes.** The primary purposes of the SME interviews were:

- To gain an understanding of this area of professional practice from those recognized as experts in order to determine the focus, content, and structure of the PAS (the primary instrument for collecting quantitative and qualitative data from a broader sample of psychologists in SCP and SIOP who do coaching).
- To provide input to the subsequent online survey content development.
- To elicit expert opinion on (a) KSAPs associated with coaching effectiveness; (b) relevant theoretical frameworks and coaching tools/methodologies used; and (c) other specific issues of importance to coaching psychology practice.

**SME sample.** A sample of 30 thought leaders and experienced, well-reputed coaching psychologist practitioners from SCP and SIOP were selected. Potential SMEs were those (a) nominated

by members and advisors of SCP's Coaching Psychology Credentialing Committee (CPCC)—recognized experts in executive coaching—as well as referrals made by those nominated; and/or (b) identified as thought leaders by virtue of their book and journal article authorship, conference presentations, and/or continuing-education-qualified workshops. The SMEs all had PhD or PsyD degrees in psychology, were members of SCP and/or SIOP, and had between 25 and 45 years of professional experience since receiving their doctorate degrees. The sample was stratified to ensure diversity of affiliation, area of psychology that their advanced degree represented, and nature of coaching background and experience. The final selection of 30 interviewees was made on the basis of CPCC member and advisor voting and ranking of the compiled pool of nominees. Of those, 27 SMEs actually participated; three had time and scheduling constraints.

**Interview content.** We developed a semistructured interview protocol that covered the following areas: (a) personal and professional background and demographics; (b) amount and types of coaching-related experience; (c) the definition of *coaching psychology* for review and suggested comments/editing; (d) primary coaching philosophy, “school,” approach, models, theoretical frameworks, and methods used; (e) major coaching objectives; (f) perspectives on critical factors contributing to successes and failures in coaching; (g) views about competencies (KSAPs) required for effectiveness in coaching; (h) desired elements of coach qualification, training, or certification; (i) present and anticipated future key trends and challenges in coaching practice (present and future); and (j) descriptions of “critical incidents” (i.e., behavioral descriptions of actual coaching situations that illustrate effective/ineffective coaching practices).

**Interview methodology.** The target length of the interview was 60 min. This limit was chosen to avoid interviewer fatigue and excessive time intrusion in SMEs' schedules. Information such as background and demographics, and, if SMEs wished, preliminary responses to core interview questions, were gathered via “pre-work” questionnaires.

Five industrial and organizational or consulting psychologists were selected to join two of the members of the core project team in the conduct of the SME interviews. (The core project team consisted of this article's four coauthors.) All seven interviewers were seasoned psychologist consultants with between 5 and 25 years of experience in coaching and psychological or job-analytical interviewing. Interviewers were trained and calibrated by a member of the core project team (not one of those serving as an interviewer) via a group conference call using specially developed interviewing guidelines; and after the first few interviews, the interviewers reconvened to fine-tune their calibration based on their experiences in the interviews.

SMEs were informed in advance of confidentiality assurance; the purposes of the interviews and how the information they provided would be used; the sponsorship of this project; and what the interview would cover.

**Working definition of *coaching psychology*.** The CPCC members and advisors drafted the following working definition of *coaching psychology*, based on the various definitions in the literature, for review and editing by the SMEs:

An area of professional practice and research within psychology, coaching psychology is an individualized process of professional development in which a psychologist works with individuals one-on-one, and sometimes in a broader context, to help them enhance their effectiveness in their organizational roles and environments.

Grounded in scientifically established psychological theories, principles, frameworks, and methods, coaching psychology is designed to benefit both the individual and the organization. Qualified coaching psychologists have a graduate degree in a psychology discipline from an accredited university, plus relevant postgraduate qualifications, and they regularly undertake relevant continuing professional development.

## Results of SME Interviews

Key results of the SME interviews included the following:

**Setting, client types, purposes of coaching.** SMEs described their coaching practices as typically involving the following: (a) diverse settings and industries; (b) clients that were most

commonly senior executives and high-potentials in large and/or global private-sector companies; and (c) coaching objectives that primarily aim to enhance current coachee performance, prepare a coachee for a new role, or enhance coachee leadership effectiveness.

**Predominant coaching frameworks used.** A wide range of theoretical frameworks was identified by the SME interviewees as being important to their coaching work. A cognitive-behavioral approach was most frequently mentioned (15 of the 27 SMEs, or 56%). Many SMEs emphasized the need for eclecticism and pragmatism of approach. The eight different frameworks mentioned by more than one SME, along with the number and percentage naming each, are as follows: cognitive-behavioral (15, 56%); eclectic, pragmatic (8, 30%); psychodynamic/psychoanalytic (8, 30%); behavioral psychology (6, 22%); positive psychology (5, 19%); systems theory (3, 11%); learning/social learning (2, 8%); and existential/phenomenological (2, 8%). In addition, there was one mention each of the following frameworks: humanistic, motivation, action research, complexity theory, person-in-role, and intentionality/mindfulness.

**Typical coaching process.** A large majority of the SMEs reported using a general process involving most or all of the following steps, with the caveat that the specific process varies and is necessarily customized based on the circumstances and needs of the client:

1. Needs assessment and client qualification—that is, determining the prospective coachee's and organization's needs and the extent to which coaching is an appropriate intervention.
2. Contracting—meaning exploring mutual expectations (Schein, 1999) and agreeing on the general goals, the coaching process, how the coachee and coach will work together, who will (and will not) receive what kinds of information produced in the coaching engagement, the nature and extent of confidentiality and how that will be protected, and anything else pertinent to ensuring that expectations among coach, coachee, and the organization are aligned.
3. Assessment and data gathering—examples of which are interviews of the coachee and key stakeholders, review of existing relevant information (e.g., data from performance reviews or surveys), and administration of standardized assessment instruments.
4. Feedback provision to the coachee from assessment information and from ongoing observations by the coach from interactions with the coachee.
5. Goal setting and action planning—which consists of establishing coaching goals, agreeing on appropriate measures or indicators of progress and success, and developing a plan for achieving those goals.
6. Plan implementation and coaching—that is, the actual carrying out of an agreed-upon action plan, the nature of which might range from quite structured (i.e., specific goals, measures of progress, etc.) to very unstructured, as in establishing very general goals and engaging in a process of discovery and learning as insights emerge along the way.
7. Evaluation of progress and reporting of the results at some point in the coaching process, as agreed in the contracting stage of the engagement.
8. Coaching engagement termination and transitioning—consisting of a final coaching meeting or set of meetings in which the coaching process is reviewed and the learnings are identified and captured and in which plans for the coachee's ongoing learning and development postcoaching are established.

**Assessment and coaching tools, methods, and techniques used.** Responses essentially ran the gamut of assessment instruments and coaching techniques noted in the coaching research and practice literatures. The most frequently cited assessment tools were some kind of feedback interviews or surveys of key stakeholders. Many SMEs noted that they also incorporate into their assessments whatever existing relevant data the organization has available. Many noted that the specific assessment and coaching tools/methods they used varied by setting, context, needs, and/or scope of engagement. Both the assessment tools and coaching methods/techniques mentioned by SMEs were subsequently incorporated into the PAS for consideration and rating by the larger sample of SCP and SIOP psychologists who do coaching.

**Definition of coaching psychology.** When asked, "How would you define 'coaching' as provided by appropriately trained psychologists?" and "What elements of the working definition would



you include, and what would you discard or re-word—and how?” SMEs generally accepted the original working definition, as described above.

**Coaching critical success factors.** The three factors most frequently mentioned by the SMEs as contributing to positive coaching outcomes were (a) coach quality (expertise, insight, personal effectiveness, and other factors; cited by 59% of SMEs), (b) quality/strength of the coaching relationship (cited by 48% of SMEs), and (c) coachee readiness (motivation, self-awareness, willingness to learn, openness to feedback; cited by 41% of SMEs).

The next most frequently mentioned critical success factors were quality/clarity of coaching objectives, goal-setting, and visioning (30%); coach’s understanding of and sensitivity to the prevailing context (26%); and organizational readiness, support, and reinforcement (19%). Ten additional factors were mentioned by between 5% and 15% of respondents.

**Top perceived factors of coaching failure.** When asked to name the top two or three factors that contribute to less effective or negative coaching outcomes, 22% (six) or more of SMEs identified the following: (a) coachee attributes, such as faltering, unready, unmotivated, uncommitted, or inappropriate (cited by 48% of SMEs); (b) coach characteristics or behaviors, including making premature judgments/conclusions, ego/dogmatism or self-righteousness, overestimating one’s ability to influence client, overinvestment in outcome (the coach wants), not listening to the client or acting as if the coach knows better than the client, too much advice-giving, and putting one’s interests/agenda above that of client (cited by 48% of SMEs); (c) organizational context factors, such as lack of readiness for coaching, insufficient support (i.e., coaching not well understood/valued), and not enough sustained organization commitment (cited by 30% of SMEs); and (d) the coach’s perceived lack of expertise or poor coaching skills/knowledge/technique, or failure to diligently manage the process, follow up, or sufficiently engage key others (cited by 22% of SMEs). Table 1 reports all of the responses for both the top critical success factors and the top coaching failure factors.

**Important coaching competencies.** The KSAPs named by SMEs as particularly important for coaching effectiveness encompassed most of the KSAPs typically identified in the literature (Bachkirova, 2011; Frisch, Lee, Metzger, & Robinson, 2011; Kilburg, 1996, 2000; Kilburg & Diedrich, 2007; Levinson, 1996; McKenna & Davis, 2009; McMahon & Archer, 2010; Neenan & Palmer, 2012; Stober & Grant, 2006) and in existing coaching competency models, such as those published elsewhere as noted above. This information served as valuable input into the KSAP lists subsequently developed for the PAS survey.

**Other interview questions.** The interviewed SMEs, in response to the question, “To what extent do you believe your training as a psychologist is relevant to your coaching work?” were virtually unanimous in saying “very relevant” or “essential,” including comments such as “central to my coaching work,” and “absolutely invaluable.” The responses also reflected such caveats as “important, but not to the exclusion of other approaches” and “important not to get ‘stuck’ in a ‘pathology’ model.”

Regarding their views of the value brought by advanced knowledge of psychology to coaching clients, SMEs cited such things as (a) the depth and sophistication of understanding of the nature of human behavior, development, learning and growth, individual differences, and intra- and interpersonal dynamics and organizational dynamics; (b) ability to properly evaluate situations, problems, and needs and to identify potential pathology to refer for counseling or therapy; (c) knowledge of and adherence to the code of ethics for psychologists that, among other things, helps ensure that no harm is done; (d) advanced level of understanding, and ability to accurately evaluate, assessment measures; and (e) understanding of oneself and the nature of the coaching relationship, including impact of the coach and the coach–coachee interaction on the process and outcomes.

## PAS

### Method

**PAS development.** Development of the survey was guided and informed by (a) project goals, (b) literature review, (c) SME interview results, (d) prior relevant SIOP survey research, and (e)

Table 1

*SME Interview Results: Coaching Critical Success Factors and Top Coaching Failure Factors*

Factor	Percent of SMEs mentioning ( <i>N</i> = 27)
Coaching critical success factors (factors most associated with positive coaching outcomes)	
Quality of coach—expertise (knowledge, skills, techniques), insight, personal effectiveness, mindfulness, adaptability, self-management	16 (59%)
Coaching relationship quality, strength (trust, rapport)	13 (48%)
Coachee readiness—including motivation, self-awareness, willingness to learn, openness to feedback	11 (41%)
Quality/clarity of objectives, goal setting, visioning	8 (30%)
Coach's understanding of and sensitivity to context—the system within which the coachee functions	7 (26%)
Organizational readiness, support, reinforcement	5 (19%)
Aligning and balancing client and organization needs, goals, agendas	4 (15%)
Nature/quality of inquiry process	4 (15%)
Coach credibility	4 (15%)
Boss support/reinforcement	3 (11%)
Focus on results/accountability	3 (11%)
Quality of coach feedback	2 (7%)
Clarity/understanding of data (input, assessment)	2 (7%)
HR facilitation	1 (3%)
Cross-cultural agility	1 (3%)
Deliberate practice (by coachee)	1 (3%)
Top coaching failure factors	
Coachee attributes—including faltering, unready, unmotivated, uncommitted, or inappropriate	13 (48%)
Coach characteristics or behaviors—including making premature judgments/conclusions (failing to take time to understand how client frames issues); ego/dogmatism or self-righteousness; overestimating own ability to influence client; overinvestment in outcome that the coach wants; not listening to the client or acting as if the coach knows better than the client; too much advice-giving; and putting own interests/agenda above that of client	13 (48%)
Organizational context factors—including lack of readiness for coaching, insufficient support (i.e., coaching not well understood/valued), and not enough sustained organization commitment)	8 (30%)
Coach's perceived lack of expertise or poor coaching skills/knowledge/technique, failure to diligently manage the process, follow up, or sufficiently engage key others	6 (22%)

previously developed coaching competency models. The draft online survey, built on a Survey-Gizmo platform with support from APA Science Directorate's Center for Workforce Studies, was pilot tested by 12 coaching psychologists with prior project familiarity. The pilot participants provided feedback on content, format, navigation, and timing. The survey was revised based on their feedback, then reviewed/vetted by the CPCC and members of the executive boards of SCP and SIOP.

The final survey was composed of 7 sections and 31 items (presented in Table 2). Estimated completion time based on the pilot survey was approximately 30 min.

**Sample and survey administration.** The estimated size of the target population of psychologists who do executive coaching and who are members of SCP and/or SIOP was approximately



Table 2  
*PAS Content by Section*

PAS section	Items
1. Professional background and experience	<div>a. APA Division Membership</div> <div>b. Years of psychology-related work experience/practice</div> <div>c. Years of coaching experience</div> <div>d. Level/type of highest degree</div> <div>e. Field of highest educational degree</div> <div>f. Psychology licensure status</div> <div>g. Coaching-related certifications held</div> <div>h. Professional role (practitioner, educator, scientist/researcher) percent allocation</div> <div>i. Current employment setting</div> <div>j. Role/level in current employment setting</div> <div>k. Self-rated level of coaching practice knowledge/expertise</div>
2. Coaching practice process	<div>a. Percentage of total work/practice engaged in coaching</div> <div>b. Types of organizations for which coaching services are provided</div> <div>c. Types/levels of individuals clients for which coaching services are provided</div> <div>d. Typical duration of coaching engagements</div> <div>e. Most influential theoretical/conceptual frameworks (“check all that apply” from list of 27 options)</div> <div>f. General purposes, goals, objectives of coaching practice frameworks (“check all that apply” from list of 7 options)</div>
3. Coaching practice process	<div>a. Frequency (% of engagements) and</div> <div>b. Importance ratings on each of 8 broad coaching performance dimensions<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Initial needs analysis and client qualification</li><li>• Contracting</li><li>• Assessment and data gathering</li><li>• Feedback provision</li><li>• Goal setting and action planning</li><li>• Plan implementation and coaching</li><li>• Evaluation and reporting of results</li><li>• Coaching-engagement termination and transitioning</li></ul><div>[Additional important coaching activities or process steps: supplemental free response item]</div></div> <div>c. Frequency-of-use ratings on 21 individual coaching assessment tools/methods</div> <div>d. Frequency-of-use ratings on 23 individual coaching methods/techniques</div>
4. Coaching-related competencies/KSAPs	<div>Importance ratings on</div> <div>a. 32 individual knowledge variables</div> <div>b. 15 individual skill variables</div> <div>c. 24 individual personal attribute/ability/experience variables</div>
5. Personal opinion	<div>a. Desirability of SCP-sponsored/SIOP-sponsored advanced coaching/certification</div> <div>b. Likelihood of pursuing such a credential if offered</div>
6. Demographics	<div>a. Country of residence</div> <div>b. Gender</div> <div>c. Age</div> <div>d. Race/ethnicity</div>
7. Comments	<div>Survey-related comments or suggestions</div>

1,400 (1,000 from SIOP and 400 from SCP). A request for participation by all those whose professional practice and/or research includes coaching was e-mailed to all members and fellows of SCP and SIOP, along with a link to the survey. The definition of coaching provided was the working definition of coaching psychology described above, with some revisions based on input from the SME interviews, as follows:

An area of professional practice and research within psychology, coaching psychology is an individualized process of professional development in which a psychologist works with individuals one-on-one to help them enhance their effectiveness in their organizational roles and environments. Coaching psychologists may also work with leadership teams to enhance their effectiveness in leading together.

Grounded in scientifically established psychological theories, principles, frameworks, and methods, coaching psychology is designed to benefit both the individual and the organization. Qualified coaching psychologists have a graduate degree in a psychology discipline from an accredited university, plus relevant postgraduate qualifications, and they regularly undertake relevant continuing professional development.

A total of 342 surveys were received, 282 of which were completed through the survey's end (although may have had one or more omitted items) and 60 of which were partially completed (that is, completed at least through section 3, thereby providing substantively useful coaching practice information), for a usable return rate of approximately 25%, generally considered to be a better-than-average return rate for APA Division voluntary surveys such as this.

## PAS Results

**Demographics.** Tables 3, 4, and 5 show the demographic characteristics of the PAS respondents. In general, the demographic profile of the respondents reflects the populations of

Table 3

*PAS Participant Demographics: Ethnicity, Gender, Country of Residence, Division Membership*

Demographic dimension	Category	Number (%)
Country of residence	United States	261 (89%)
	Canada	21 (7%)
	(1 each) Belgium, China, Europe, India, Japan, Lebanon, Singapore, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Venezuela, and 2 others	12 (4%)
	Total responding	294 (100%)
Gender	Male	154 (55%)
	Female	128 (45%)
	Total responding	282 (100%)
Ethnicity	White, not Hispanic or Latino	245 (92%)
	Hispanic or Latino	5 (2%)
	Black or African-American	5 (2%)
	Asian	4 (1%)
	Two or more races, not Hispanic or Latino	7 (3%)
	Total responding	266 (100%)
APA Division Membership	SIOP only	132 (39%)
	SCP only	99 (29%)
	SCP and SIOP only	58 (17%)
	SCP and SIOP plus one or more other Division	53 (15%)
	Total responding	342 (100%)

Table 4  
*PAS Participant Demographics: Education, Licensure, Coaching Certification*

Demographic dimension	Category	Number (%) (Total N = 342)
Highest degree earned (“Check all that apply,” so sum of %s > 100)	PhD	314 (92%)
	PsyD	17 (5%)
	MBA	13 (4%)
	EdD	12 (4%)
	MA	5 (2%)
	MS	4 (1%)
	Other	4 (1%)
Area of highest degree (“Check all that apply,” so sum of %s > 100)	Industrial & organizational psychology	147 (43%)
	Clinical psychology	66 (19%)
	Counseling psychology	50 (15%)
	Organizational psychology	16 (5%)
	Organizational behavior/Organizational development	15 (4%)
	Social psychology	15 (4%)
	Other	15 (4%)
	Educational psychology	10 (3%)
	Developmental psychology	3 (1%)
	Cognitive psychology	2 (.6%)
	Experimental psychology	2 (.6%)
	Consulting psychology	1 (.3%)
Licensed as a psychologist?	Yes	178 (52.5%)
	No	161 (47.5%)
	Total responding	339 (100%)
Coaching certifications?	Yes	82 (24%)
	No	257 (76%)
	Total responding	339 (100%)

SCP and SIOP relative to gender, ethnicity, level and type of degree, and percentage of practitioners who are licensed and/or possess some form of coaching certification (Tables 3 and 4). Table 5 shows the participants’ work/practice roles, current employment setting, primary role within current setting, and self-rated level of practice expertise. It illustrates, for example, that the largest segment of the sample (42%) was employed in independent practice, followed by employment in a consulting firm (26%), academic institution (14%), private-sector organization (9%), or public-sector organization (5%).

The mean number of years working or practicing in a psychology-related field was 24.3 (*SD* = 9.4). The mean number of years that coaching has been a part of respondents’ practice was 14.75 years (*SD* = 8.57).

**Types of organizations and individual coaching clients served.** As shown in Table 6, survey respondents’ client organizations are primarily large for-profits (82%); to a lesser extent they work in small-business private-sector or nonprofit (42% and 41%, respectively). Public-sector (government or military) organizations were served by 28% and academic institutions by 24% of respondents. Respondents’ individual coaching clients are predominantly mid- to upper-level managers (84%) or executives (77%).

The distribution of responses (number mentioning and percentage; *N* = 340) relating to the typical duration of coaching engagements with a single coachee was as follows: 3 months or less (50, 15%), 4 to 6 months (125, 36%), 7 to 12 months (99, 29%), 1 to 2 years (51, 15%), 3 to 5 years (13, 4%), 6 to 10 years (0, 0%), and more than 10 years (2, 1%). The modal engagement duration

Table 5  
*PAS Participant Demographics: Professional Background and Expertise*

Demographic dimension	Category	Number (%) (Number responding = 341)
Roles encompassed by work/ practice ("Check all that apply," so sum of %s > 100)	Practitioner	330 (97%)
	Educator (academic setting)	123 (36%)
	Scientist/Researcher	93 (27%)
	Other	36 (10%)
Current employment setting	Independent practice	140 (42%)
	Consulting firm	89 (26%)
	Academic institution	47 (14%)
	Private-sector organization	29 (9%)
	Public-sector organization (government or military)	15 (5%)
	Nonprofit organization	8 (2%)
	Other	8 (2%)
	Total responding	336 (100%)
Primary role within current employment setting	Owner/Proprietor	86 (26%)
	External consultant (independent)	58 (17%)
	Executive officer	45 (13%)
	Professor/Faculty	37 (11%)
	Partner/Managing partner/Principal (professional- services firm)	32 (10%)
	Manager/Director/Department head	30 (9%)
	Internal consultant or Individual contributor (professional/technical)	28 (8%)
	External consultant (in a consulting firm)	19 (6%)
	Total responding	335 (100%)
Level of coaching practice expertise	Advanced (broad and deep expertise and knowledge)	191 (56%)
	Intermediate (working or functional level of expertise, knowledge)	128 (38%)
	Basic/Novice (general familiarity with fundamentals and basic knowledge)	20 (6%)
	Little or no coaching practice expertise or coaching research/theory knowledge	0 (0%)
	Total responding	339 (100%)

was 4 to 6 months, with 29% of the sample reporting a typical engagement duration of 7 to 12 months and 19% reporting a typical duration of between 1 and 5 years.

**Coaching purposes and goals.** Survey respondents reported their coaching as being directed toward the purposes or goals of enhancing clients' current performance (cited by 315, or 92%) or individual development (295, or 87%); helping clients adapt to recent role transitions (210, or 62%); and/or as part of a broader organizational-change strategy (181, or 55%).

Remediation of current performance was cited as a focus of some coaching by 175 (52%); career coaching was cited by 116 (36%); and population- or situation-specific was cited by 29 (10%).

Twenty-five of the 342 respondents to this item mentioned some other reason.

**Theoretical frameworks primarily used.** Consistent with survey respondents' diverse psychology graduate training and backgrounds, the range of theoretical frameworks used in coaching was broad. The top six theoretical or conceptual frameworks that respondents checked (with instructions to "check all that apply") as the most influential in their coaching practice were the following: Leadership theory ( $n = 247$ ; 72%); emotional intelligence ( $n = 188$ ; 55%); organizational theory ( $n = 173$ ; 51%); cognitive-behavioral theory ( $n = 160$ ; 47%); behavioral psychology

Table 6  
*PAS Results for Typical Types of Client Organizations and Typical Types of Individual Coaching Clients*

Client type	Category	Number (%)
Typical types of client organizations ("Check all that apply," so sum of %s > 100)	Large for-profit	280 (82%)
	Small, private sector	142 (42%)
	Nonprofit	140 (41%)
	Public sector (government or military)	97 (28%)
	Academic institutions	83 (24%)
	Other	20 (6%)
	Total responding	327
Typical types of individual coaching clients served ("Check all that apply," so sum of %s > 100)	Mid- or upper-level managers or directors—including division or business-unit leaders, functional area or department heads, senior managers, professional- services firm partners, etc.	288 (84%)
	Executives—including c-suite, senior executives, board members, professional-services firm managing partner, etc.	262 (77%)
	Business owners or entrepreneurs	111 (32%)
	Supervisors/technical line managers	107 (31%)
	Nonmanagement professionals or individual contributors	85 (25%)
	Other	19 (6%)
	Total responding	342

(behavior change;  $n = 154$ ; 45%); and positive psychology ( $n = 150$ ; 44%). Table 7 presents the complete set of these results.

**Coaching performance dimensions.** Survey respondents were asked to indicate the importance to successful coaching outcomes of eight broad dimensions of coaching performance. Table 8 displays the data, showing that 90% or more of the respondents who rated a given dimension indicated that (a) initial needs assessment, (b) contracting, (c) assessment and data gathering, (d) provision of feedback, (e) goal setting and action planning, and (f) plan implementation and coaching were “very important” or “critical or essential.” Evaluating and reporting of results and coaching-engagement termination and transitioning activities were rated as “very important” or “critical or essential” by 64% and 68% of those who responded to the dimension, respectively. Table 8 includes example activities that define each of these dimensions.

Respondents were also asked to indicate the frequency with which they engaged in each of those same eight coaching performance dimensions in their coaching engagements. As Table 9 shows, between 89% and 91% of respondents indicated that they engage in goal setting and action planning, feedback provision, and plan implementation and coaching in 66% to more than 90% of their coaching work. Evaluation and reporting of results and coaching-engagement termination and transitioning received the lowest percentage of respondents (60% and 65%, respectively), indicating that they engage in these activities in 66% to more than 90% of their typical coaching work.

**Use of assessment tools and methods.** Using a 5-point scale to indicate the percentage of engagements (where 1 = less than 10%, 2 = 10% to 35%, 3 = 36% to 65%, 4 = 66% to 90%, and 5 = more than 90%), survey respondents were asked to indicate the frequency with which they used various assessment tools/methods. Table 10 shows the percentage of each tool/method listed in the survey that was rated either “4” or “5” (i.e., used in more than two thirds of coaching engagements). By far the assessment methods most frequently used by these respondents were coachee interview, key stakeholder interviews, standardized personality assessment instruments, archival contextual materials, and multisource feedback. Note that although fewer than 25% reported using structured/standardized or commercially available assessments of values, motivational drivers, leadership

Table 7

*PAS Results for Predominant Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks*

Theoretical or conceptual frameworks most influential in coaching practice ("Check all that apply," so sum of %s > 100)	Number (%) naming the framework (Total N = 342)
Leadership theory	247 (72%)
Emotional intelligence	188 (55%)
Organizational theory	173 (51%)
Cognitive-behavioral theory	160 (47%)
Behavioral psychology (behavior change/modification)	154 (45%)
Positive psychology/Appreciative inquiry	150 (44%)
SME's own personally based or business-experience-based approach	143 (42%)
Pragmatic, problem solving, evidence-based, action-research-based	135 (40%)
Action learning	127 (37%)
Systems theory—including family systems, cybernetic systems	114 (33%)
Control theory—goal setting, feedback, self-regulation, self-efficacy	112 (33%)
Cognitive psychology	108 (32%)
Learning theory/Social learning	98 (29%)
Social psychology	87 (25%)
Self as instrument of change	84 (25%)
Intentionality/Mindfulness-influenced approach	79 (23%)
Developmental psychology	74 (22%)
Humanistic—including person-centered, nondirective)	69 (20%)
Psychodynamic/Psychoanalytic	42 (12%)
Gestalt theory	27 (8%)
Narrative-collaborative approach	27 (8%)
Complexity theory	22 (6%)
Existential/Phenomenological	15 (4%)
Congruence theory	10 (3%)
Neurolinguistic programming	9 (3%)
Grounded theory	8 (2%)
Other	8 (2%)

judgment, needs drivers, interests, or skills in two thirds or more of their engagements, the percentages of those who use these assessments in at least 36% of their coaching engagements (i.e., who rated the item either 3, 4, or 5, not shown in Table 10), as listed here, do indicate a considerable degree of usage of such tools: values (46%), motivational drivers (41%), leadership judgment (38%), needs drivers (32%), interests (31%), and skills (28%).

**Use of coaching methods or techniques.** The top six most frequently used coaching methods/techniques that respondents reported using in 66% or more of their coaching engagements were: communication/conversation techniques (82%); goal setting (75%); self-reflective homework assignments (72%); brainstorming (67%); ongoing feedback and consultative problem-solving (65%); and cognitive restructuring (60%). Table 11 provides the full set of these results.

**Competencies (KSAPs)—importance ratings.**

**Knowledge.** Respondents were asked to rate each of 32 knowledge areas, determined from the coaching literature and our SME interviews to be potentially relevant to coaching effectiveness, on a 5-point scale (1 = *not important*, 2 = *of minor importance*, 3 = *somewhat important*, 4 = *very important*, 5 = *critical or essential*). Eight knowledge areas were rated by 70% to 88% of respondents as either "very important" (rating of 4) or "critical or essential" (rating of 5) to effectiveness as a coach; these were led by ethical, legal, professional guidelines (88%); leadership/management training and development (88%); individual psychological assessment (80%); organizational development (75%); and consulting theory and practice (75%). Table 12 displays these



Table 8  
*PAS Results for Ratings of Importance to Effective Coaching Outcomes for Each of Eight Broad Dimensions of Coaching Performance*

“Please rate the following eight broad coaching performance dimensions in terms of their importance to a successful or effective outcome in your typical coaching practice.” (1 = <i>not important</i> , 2 = <i>of minor importance</i> , 3 = <i>somewhat important</i> , 4 = <i>very important</i> , 5 = <i>critical or essential</i> )	Number and percentage rating the dimension a 4 or 5— <i>very important or essential</i>	
	Number responding	Number and percentage who rated 4 or 5
1. Initial needs analysis and client qualification: activities related to determining whether coaching is the appropriate intervention and whether to accept/pursue the coaching engagement, based on preliminary assessment.	325	284 (87%)
2. Contracting: activities related to establishing an agreement with the coachee and his/her organization regarding coaching expectations, roles, boundary conditions, processes, ground rules, and fee/payment structure.	324	273 (84%)
3. Assessment and data gathering: activities related to gathering relevant data and information to inform and guide the coaching process.	326	288 (88%)
4. Feedback provision: activities related to providing feedback to the coachee, and perhaps other stakeholders, regarding the results of the assessment and data-gathering process	326	288 (88%)
5. Goal setting and action planning: activities related to the creation of developmental coaching goals and action plans based on the outcomes of the assessment and feedback processes.	328	307 (94%)
6. Plan implementation and coaching: active coaching activities designed to facilitate realization of coachee’s development goals and action plans.	327	294 (90%)
7. Evaluation and reporting of results: activities related to the measurement, evaluation, and reporting on the impact of the coaching engagement/intervention.	321	219 (64%)
8. Coaching-engagement termination and transitioning: activities related to effectively concluding the coaching engagement, ensuring adequate closure, and providing for necessary transitions.	328	223 (68%)

complete results. These results show a very broad range of importance judgments (as reflected in the percentages of 4 or 5 ratings), from a high of 88% to a low of 7%.

**Skills.** Table 13 shows the percentages of “very important” or “critical or essential” ratings (i.e., ratings of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale) for the skills included in the PAS, as suggested by the coaching literature and SME interviewees. By this index, the skills rated as most important were active/open listening (98%), relationship building and maintenance (97%), information gathering (96%), oral communication (95%), strategic thinking (85%), conflict resolution (85%), process facilitation (81%), and collaboration/teamwork (80%). The skills domain resulted in a somewhat narrower range of importance values than the knowledge domain, with the lowest rated skill still being regarded as either very important or critical/essential by 40% of survey respondents.

**Personal attributes and experience.** Eleven personal attributes (a category encompassing personality/temperament/character attributes, personal abilities, and selected types of life/personal experience, as suggested by the coaching literature and SME interviewees) were rated as “very important” or “critical or essential” by at least 90% of respondents (see Table 14). At the top of the list were integrity/honesty (98%), self-awareness (98%), professional credibility (96%), adaptability (96%), critical thinking (96%), openness (96%), and empathy (95%). Table 14 presents the full list of 22 personal attributes with corresponding percentages of respondents’ ratings each as either “very

Table 9

*PAS Results for Ratings of Frequency of Use by the SME Coach for Each of Eight Broad Dimensions of Coaching Performance*

“For each of the following eight broad dimensions of coaching performance (the same as those in the previous item), please indicate the frequency with which you engage in this type of activity in your typical coaching practice.” (1 = < 10% of engagements, 2 = 10–35% of engagements, 3 = 36–65% of engagements, 4 = 66–90% of engagements, 5 = > 90% of engagements)	Number and percentage rating the dimension a 4 or 5— indicating use in 66% to > 90% of coaching engagements	
	Number responding	Number and percentage who rated 4 or 5
1. Initial needs analysis and client qualification: activities related to determining whether coaching is the appropriate intervention and whether to accept/pursue the coaching engagement, based on preliminary assessment.	313	248 (79%)
2. Contracting: activities related to establishing an agreement with the coachee and his/her organization regarding coaching expectations, roles, boundary conditions, processes, ground rules, and fee/payment structure.	313	262 (84%)
3. Assessment and data gathering: activities related to gathering relevant data and information to inform and guide the coaching process.	317	272 (86%)
4. Feedback provision: activities related to providing feedback to the coachee, and perhaps other stakeholders, regarding the results of the assessment and data-gathering process	315	282 (90%)
5. Goal setting and action planning: activities related to the creation of developmental coaching goals and action plans based on the outcomes of the assessment and feedback processes.	317	287 (91%)
6. Plan implementation and coaching: active coaching activities designed to facilitate realization of coachee’s development goals and action plans.	313	278 (89%)
7. Evaluation and reporting of results: activities related to the measurement, evaluation, and reporting on the impact of the coaching engagement/intervention.	312	186 (60%)
8. Coaching-engagement termination and transition: activities related to effectively concluding the coaching engagement, ensuring adequate closure, and providing for necessary transitions.	312	202 (65%)

important” or “critical or essential.” It can be noted that all the attributes listed in this survey section were so rated by more than half of the respondents, thus representing a narrower range of importance values than either the skills or knowledge areas.

### **Toward a Foundational Coaching Psychology Competency Model**

The results of this practice analysis were intended to serve as the basis for development of a model of foundational coaching psychology competencies for the purposes of informing (a) graduate students and psychologists wishing to prepare themselves for doing coaching, (b) graduate psychology programs interested in helping to prepare students for coaching, (c) psychologist credentialing bodies (e.g., American Board of Professional Psychology—ABPP) that may wish to update their examinations and/or courses based on these identified key competencies, and (d) professionals responsible for the revision of the *Education and Training Guidelines for Consulting Psychologists and for I-O Psychologists*.

Toward this end, the core project team developed an initial draft of such a model on the basis of the PAS results, while also drawing from the SME interviews to help define and clarify the

Table 10  
*PAS Results for Most Frequently Used Assessment Tools/Methods by Percentage of Engagements*

Assessment tools/methods	Number and percentage rating tool/method 4 or 5, indicating use in 66–90+ % of engagements	
	Number responding	Number and percentage who rated 4 or 5
Initial intake interview with coachee	298	262 (88%)
Interviews with key stakeholders of coachee	299	196 (65%)
Standardized or commercially available personality assessment	302	162 (58%)
Archival contextual materials—e.g., organizational structure, job descriptions, competency models	297	171 (54%)
Multisource feedback survey	296	153 (51%)
Archival coachee data—e.g., performance evaluations, developmental history	302	131 (41%)
Coach-customized, ad hoc, or self-developed assessment tool	297	111 (37%)
Existing organization employee/climate/culture/leadership survey	302	102 (34%)
Structured/standardized or commercially available cognitive/intellectual assessment	296	86 (29%)
Structured/standardized or commercially available style assessment	295	85 (29%)
Structured/standardized or commercially available emotional intelligence assessment	299	82 (27%)
Critical incident or case vignette review and analysis	293	73 (25%)
Structured/standardized or commercially available values assessment	296	70 (24%)
Structured/standardized or commercially available motivational drivers assessment	301	70 (23%)
Structured/standardized or commercially available leadership judgment assessment	298	68 (23%)
Role plays	293	56 (19%)
Structured/standardized or commercially available needs drivers assessment	299	50 (17%)
Structured/standardized or commercially available interests assessment	294	48 (16%)
Quick feedback (“pulse”) survey	291	47 (16%)
Structured/standardized or commercially available skill assessment or simulation	299	39 (13%)
Shadowing/observation of coachee	291	35 (12%)

constructs and to build definitions and behavioral examples. This process also involved combining some competencies that appeared to cluster together on the basis of both empirical (correlational) survey data and rational analysis, and with reference to SME interview input and examples. In addition, minor reconfiguring or rewording was made for clarity or consistency.

The draft model went through numerous iterations of review and editing by the members of the core project team, ultimately resulting in a version of the model that we judged suitable for circulation to select SMEs (including many of the SME interviewees, along with four members of an extended project team that had both served as SME interviewers and provided input and review of the PAS) for review, vetting, and further refinement by means of a carefully structured review process. The model was then finalized based on thorough analysis of the SMEs’ input and suggestions by the core project team. A high-level overview of this final version of the model is presented in [Table 15](#). (This process will be detailed, and the complete version of the model presented, in a separate publication. In its complete form, the model includes narrative definitions

Table 11

*PAS Results for Most Frequently Used Coaching Methods/Techniques*

Coaching method/techniques	Number and percentage rating tool/method 4 or 5, indicating use in 66–90+ % of engagements	
	Number responding	Number and percentage who rated 4 or 5
Communication/conversation techniques—e.g., active and empathetic listening, Socratic questioning, clarification	288	236 (82%)
Goal setting	284	212 (75%)
Homework assignments involving self-reflective exercises	289	207 (72%)
Brainstorming—e.g., strategies, methods, approaches, hypothesis testing, worst-case-scenarios	285	191 (67%)
Ongoing feedback, consultative problem solving	284	188 (65%)
Cognitive restructuring techniques	286	172 (60%)
Feedback/progress checks among coachee, boss, and HR	287	165 (57%)
Homework assignments involving specified readings	286	150 (52%)
Coach-customized, ad hoc, or self-developed coaching tool or technique	286	139 (49%)
Behavioral or skills development tools, training—e.g., time management, assertiveness	283	136 (48%)
Provision/recommendations of learning- and development-relevant education, instructional reading materials, resources (mentors, tutors), and opportunities (in-place stretch assignments)	285	136 (48%)
Homework assignments involving behavioral and cognitive “experiments”	284	132 (46%)
Appreciative inquiry or positive psychology techniques	270	118 (44%)
Homework assignments involving observational exercises	284	103 (36%)
Emotion management/regulation techniques	283	97 (34%)
Action learning	262	85 (32%)
Role plays—including behavioral rehearsal/practice, behavior modeling	283	69 (24%)
Work relationship interventions with key subordinates, superiors, peers	283	61 (22%)
Daily action planning	282	47 (17%)
Personal mission statement creation	283	44 (15%)
Journaling	284	42 (15%)
Psychological relaxation techniques	282	36 (13%)
Focus groups	287	7 (2%)

of all the listed KSAPs, as well as behavioral examples of all the skills and personal attributes.) It consists of the following components:

1. Coaching psychology context—comprising characteristics of the organization, coachee, and coach; coaching purposes, goals, and objectives; and duration of coaching engagement.
2. Coaching psychology process components—comprising needs assessment and client qualification; contracting; assessment and data gathering; feedback provision; goal setting and action planning; plan implementation and coaching; evaluation of progress and reporting of results; and coaching-engagement termination and transitioning.
3. Foundational coaching psychology competencies—comprising KSAP lists within each of the categories of knowledge (with theory/discipline knowledge and professional/business knowledge subcategories), skills (with both cognitive/analytical/technical

Table 12  
*PAS Results for Knowledge Area Importance*

Knowledge areas	Percentage indicating very important or critical or essential—Rating 4 or 5	
	Number responding	Number (%) who rated 4 or 5
Ethical, legal, professional guidelines	283	250 (88%)
Leadership/management training and development	282	247 (88%)
Individual psychological assessment	286	230 (80%)
Organization development	283	214 (75%)
Consulting theory and practice	283	211 (75%)
Group process theories/models	282	202 (72%)
Personality theory	276	199 (72%)
Client industry and organization knowledge	286	199 (70%)
Business fundamentals	283	191 (67%)
Learning theory	284	189 (67%)
Motivation theory	281	184 (65%)
Adult development theory	283	180 (64%)
Organization theory	281	174 (62%)
Individual and group-process consultation	281	169 (60%)
Individual differences	277	158 (57%)
Cross-cultural knowledge	283	157 (56%)
Cognitive behavioral/psychotherapy	280	131 (47%)
Social psychology	282	124 (44%)
Positive psychology	281	119 (42%)
Clinical or counseling psychology	281	112 (40%)
Geopolitical awareness—including knowledge of current events, world affairs, etc.	282	100 (35%)
Biological and neurobiological bases of behavior	283	94 (33%)
Self-regulation theory	282	87 (31%)
Group/family dynamics (clinical and counseling psychology)	284	81 (28%)
Family systems theory	282	61 (22%)
Psychodynamic theory	280	41 (15%)
Chaos/complexity theory	281	37 (13%)
Psychophysiology	284	35 (12%)
Political theory/research	278	25 (9%)
Gestalt theory	281	21 (7%)

skills and relational and intrapersonal skills subcategories), and personal characteristics; plus a separate category of coaching-beneficial experience, consisting of the “experience-oriented” attributes listed in Table 14 and rated of considerable importance.

The revised working definition of coaching psychology that has emerged from the SME-reviewed study results is as follows:

An area of professional practice and research within psychology, coaching psychology is a process of professional development in which a psychologist works with individuals and/or groups to help them enhance their performance and effectiveness in their organizational roles and/or develop their potential for future roles.

Grounded in scientifically established psychological theories, principles, frameworks, and methods, coaching psychology is designed to benefit individuals, their teams, and their organizations. Qualified

Table 13  
*PAS Results for Skill Importance*

Skills	Percentage indicating very important or critical or essential—Rating 4 or 5	
	Number responding	Number (%) who rated 4 or 5
Active/open listening	285	278 (98%)
Relationship building and maintenance	284	275 (97%)
Information gathering—including interviewing/assessment skills	284	274 (96%)
Oral communication—including presentation skills, persuasion, communication-style flexibility, etc.	284	269 (95%)
Strategic thinking	281	240 (85%)
Conflict resolution	281	241 (85%)
Process facilitation	278	225 (81%)
Collaboration/teamwork	284	228 (80%)
Management of ambiguity/complexity/uncertainty	284	225 (79%)
Leadership	281	220 (78%)
Organizing and planning	284	218 (77%)
Writing	278	157 (56%)
Business development	283	141 (50%)
Project management	284	117 (41%)
Technology-mediated communication	282	112 (40%)

coaching psychologists have graduate degrees in a psychology discipline from a regionally accredited university and relevant psychological training in coaching/coaching psychology, and they regularly undertake relevant continuing professional development.

At the present time the core project team is further integrating the SMEs' feedback and input and making final adjustments to the model based on SME consensus. Once finalized, the model of foundational coaching psychology competency will be accessible on SCP's website at [www.div13.org](http://www.div13.org).

### Discussion, Conclusions, and Suggestions for Future Research

Because coaching is an area of psychology that has emerged from professional practice, this initial study sought to codify the foundational domain of KSAPs as identified by psychologists within the two APA Divisions of which many psychologists who practice coaching are members. Strengths of the two-phase methodology we used include: (a) eliciting first the perspectives and practices of recognized SMEs about such things as influential theoretical frameworks, coaching practice process steps, important coach KSAPs/competencies, and critical coaching success (and failure) factors in order to establish the structure and content of the phase-2 PAS; (b) standardization of the process with which the interviews were conducted and the responses interpreted; (c) the qualification/expertise level and diversity of the SME interviewee sample with respect to type of psychology background and employment setting; and (d) a robust and representative survey sample and good survey return rate.

From the perspective of the psychologists doing this work, their training in psychology and use of theories and related empirical research influences is regarded as valuable to their coaching.

The KSAPs rated as most important in this study are similar to many of those identified in other coaching competency models as mentioned above. This study did not include nonpsychologists, and



Table 14  
*PAS Results for Personal Attributes and Experience Importance*

Personal attributes	Percentage indicating very important or critical or essential—Rating 4 or 5	
	Number responding	Number (%) who rated 4 or 5
Integrity/honesty	280	276 (98%)
Self-awareness—including self-reflection, self-monitoring, self-control	279	273 (98%)
Professional credibility—including self-presentation, social presence/maturity, breadth of professional global knowledge/perspective/mindset	280	270 (96%)
Adaptability	276	265 (96%)
Critical thinking	282	271 (96%)
Openness—including intellectual curiosity, willingness to learn	276	265 (96%)
Empathy	281	266 (95%)
Judgment—including situational awareness/analysis, observational skills, political savvy	281	265 (94%)
Self-confidence	279	262 (94%)
Learning agility and ability	282	257 (91%)
Dealing with ambiguity, uncertainty, complexity	278	250 (90%)
Humility, “nonjudgmentalness,” acceptance of others	279	242 (87%)
Sense of humor	280	230 (82%)
Courage	279	223 (80%)
Personal reading/study from varied professional disciplines/literatures	275	209 (76%)
Service orientation	278	208(75%)
Achievement orientation—i.e., goal/results orientation, work ethic, perseverance, stamina/energy	282	211 (75%)
Mindfulness	278	200 (72%)
Varied background and life experience—e.g., both success and failure, exposure to different regions/countries/cultures	279	187 (67%)
Leadership role experience	279	171 (61%)
Supervised coaching experience—e.g., internships, externships	278	149 (54%)
Client-related industry-specific or business-specific/organization-specific experience	282	147 (52%)

further research is needed to determine the extent to which and how psychologists and nonpsychologists differ in their competencies. What is most different across the competency models we reviewed is the range and diversity of knowledge areas identified in different models, ranging from few or none to highly elaborated knowledge structures. Our proposed model attempted to strike a balance in this realm by including a considerable (but not overwhelming) number of substantively meaningful knowledge areas that have both empirical and logical support.

Although the KSAP lists in our proposed model may seem extensive, many of these knowledge and skill areas are part of the “core” of psychology knowledge and skills that psychologists are expected to have, as documented in the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards’ (ASPPB) “A Competency Model for the Practice of Psychology” (Rodolfa et al., 2013). These are the competencies around which the Examination for the Professional Practice of Psychology (EPPP) is developed and continually updated. Many of these competencies are acquired in graduate training and internships. Therefore, in the U.S., if one first obtains an advanced degree in psychology from a regionally accredited university, then the remaining coaching-related knowledge and skills that still need to be acquired are a smaller subset of the domain of foundational coaching psychology competencies. For example, clinical and counseling psychologists might need further study in organizational theory, consulting practice approaches and models, business fundamentals, social-

Table 15  
*Foundational Coaching Psychology Competency Model: Overview*

Coaching context	
<div>1. Organizational characteristics—e.g., size, type, industry segment; structure; financial/competitive position; culture/values; organizational expectations, support, readiness for coaching</div> <div>2. Coachee characteristics—e.g., job/role; organizational level; experience; KSAPs, prior experience with/readiness for coaching</div> <div>3. Coach characteristics—e.g., training and qualifications; “fit” with organization/setting/coachee; competencies/KSAPs; experience</div> <div>4. Coaching purposes, goals, objectives—e.g., enhancement of current performance; development for future roles; related to organizational strategy or organizational change</div> <div>5. Duration and stage of coaching engagement—e.g., length of time of engagement; stage of coaching (ad hoc, organized, extended, coaching culture)</div>	
Foundational coaching psychology competencies (The knowledges, skills, abilities, personal characteristics, and useful experience that, properly applied, are foundational for effectiveness in coaching by psychologists)	
Coaching psychology process components	
Knowledge	
Theory/Discipline	Skills
<div>• Consulting practice approaches, models</div> <div>• Leadership theory</div> <div>• Group-process theory</div> <div>• Personality theory</div> <div>• Learning theory</div> <div>• Emotional-intelligence theory</div> <div>• Lifespan human development theory</div> <div>• Motivation theory</div> <div>• Organizational theory</div> <div>• Individual differences</div> <div>• Cognitive and cognitive-behavioral psychological theory</div> <div>• Systems theory</div> <div>• Social psychology</div> <div>• Positive psychology</div> <div><b>Professional/Business</b></div> <div>• Applicable ethical, legal, professional guidelines</div> <div>• Client industry and organization</div> <div>• Business fundamentals</div> <div>• Leadership/management development</div> <div>• Individual psychological assessment</div> <div>• Individual and group-process consultation</div> <div>• Organization development</div> <div>• Cross-cultural understanding</div> <div>• Geopolitical awareness</div>	<div><b>Cognitive, analytical/technical</b></div> <div>• Verbal ability</div> <div>• Information gathering</div> <div>• Critical thinking</div> <div>• Strategic thinking</div> <div>• Systems thinking</div> <div>• Learning agility</div> <div>• Judgment and decision making</div> <div>• Organizing, planning, and management</div> <div>• Writing</div> <div>• Technology-mediated communication</div> <div><b>Relational &amp; intrapersonal</b></div> <div>• Active, open listening</div> <div>• Relationship building and maintenance</div> <div>• Oral communication</div> <div>• Conflict resolution</div> <div>• Process facilitation</div> <div>• Leadership</div> <div>• Collaboration and teamwork</div> <div>• Management of ambiguity, complexity, uncertainty</div> <div>• Stress management</div>
Personal characteristics	
<div>• Integrity/Honesty</div> <div>• Self-awareness</div> <div>• Empathy</div> <div>• Professional credibility</div> <div>• Adaptability</div> <div>• Openness</div> <div>• Self-confidence</div> <div>• Humility</div> <div>• Courage</div> <div>• Sense of humor</div> <div>• Service orientation</div> <div>• Achievement orientation</div> <div>• Resilience</div> <div><b>Coaching-beneficial experience</b></div> <div>• Personal growth/development work</div> <div>• Personal reading and study in various disciplines and/or literatures</div> <div>• Supervised coaching</div> <div>• Varied background and life experiences</div> <div>• Leadership roles</div> <div>• Client industry or internal organization experience</div>	

psychology theory, and psychometric theory and application, whereas industrial and organizational psychologists might need further study in individual process consultation, cognitive and cognitive-behavioral theory and methods, life span human-development theory, emotional-intelligence theory, and other psychological theories and methods related to work with individuals. The results of this study are intended to lay the groundwork for subsequent research to further our understanding, including understanding of how these identified KSAPs are used to make a positive difference in coaching outcomes.

Limitations of our methodology include the following: (a) an intentionally limited population sampled (SCP and SIOP members who do coaching) as a result of budget and time constraints, meaning that this work must be viewed as a “starter study,” with an unknown degree of SME and survey-sample representativeness of all psychologists who do coaching; and (b) a primary focus on coaching setting and coach expertise factors (i.e., coaching inputs such as context variables, KSAPs, theoretical frameworks used; see Kilburg, 2016) and not, for example, on how coaches use those KSAPs in a given setting to produce desired and effective outcomes (i.e., coaching outputs). (See Bachkirova, 2016, about the use of self as an instrument for change.)

Future research could usefully focus on the viability and appropriateness of alternative frameworks for representing competencies at progressive levels of proficiency and career development, such as (a) entry-level supervised training, (b) entry-level practice (years 1 to 3), (c) independent practice, and (d) advanced and master level of practice/proficiency, including the differentiating behavioral indicators for each level. The European Mentoring and Coaching Council’s (2009) taxonomy of coaching-proficiency levels (“foundation,” “practitioner,” “senior practitioner,” and “master practitioner”) is an example of such an approach. Kilburg’s (2016) description of levels of expertise also provides a promising framework for KSAP/competency representation.

In addition to research on alternative approaches to coaching-competency identification and representation, the field would additionally benefit from well-designed and well-conducted outcomes research (consisting of more than only client satisfaction ratings), as well as foundational competency research that (a) includes the perspectives of consumers of coaching services (i.e., in addition to providers) and (b) investigates coaching needs and coach foundational competencies in other cultures and settings. Such work would lay the groundwork for the eventual establishment of meaningful and broadly applicable standards for the professional practice of coaching by psychologists.

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