Impact of Intergenerational Patterns on Coaching Effectiveness

Jan H. Schlüter¹

Accepted: 2 September 2021 / Published online: 8 November 2021
© The Author(s) 2021

Abstract

This exploratory study examined the influence of intergenerational family patterns and transgenerational transmissions on coaching effectiveness. It specifically focused on the potential impact of coaches' intergenerational patterns on their countertransference risks and development of coaching resources. Fifteen executive coaches were socioanalytically interviewed with a focused genogram and a self-as-instrument approach to understand the impact of intergenerational patterns and underlying family dynamics on coaching effectiveness. Results indicated a relationship between these factors and coaching effectiveness. This was especially the case with regard to the development of functional and adaptive coping behaviour rather than transmitting dysfunctional, maladaptive behaviour only. Analysing and debriefing live coaching situations with a focus on potential countertransference reactions would further validate these findings in future research. Given the results of this study, it seems essential to integrate the reflection of intergenerational patterns and related countertransference risks into the training and supervision of coaches.

Keywords Executive coaching · Coaching effectiveness · Countertransference · Intergenerational transmission · Intergenerational family patterns · Stressful life events · Coping

*I'm sorry I missed you
I had a secret meeting in the basement of my brain
Matt Berninger, The National (2005)*

1 Introduction

A review of the current research indicates that the research on the impact of intergenerational behaviour patterns and transgenerational transmissions is predominantly focusing on the fields of clinical and health psychology. At the same time, there seems to be a growing interest of researchers and practitioners to apply findings from the therapeutic field to the context of organisational and leadership development. Interestingly enough, however, no research seems to have been conducted on the impact of these dynamics on executive coaches and their effectiveness when working with clients. While practitioners and supervisors emphasise the

potential negative impact countertransference and dysfunctional behaviour patterns of coaches have on the coaching effectiveness and working alliance with coachees it appears, nonetheless, that to-date no research has been undertaken to understand whether behaviour patterns passed down family generations have an influence on how an executive coach interacts with a coachee.

1.1 Executive Coaching from a Psychodynamic-Systemic Perspective

The profession of executive coaching shows a broad variety of highly effective practices and approaches reaching from solution-focused brief coaching (Dierolf, Meier & Szabo, 2009), systemic and hypno-systemic coaching (Hawkins & Turner 2020; Leeb, Trenkle & Weckermann, 2017), behavioural and performance coaching (Goldsmith, 2007; Whitmore, 2017) to strength-based coaching (MacKie 2016). While there are many different approaches to executive coaching (Kilburg 2013a) this study looks at executive coaching from a psychodynamic perspective (Allcorn 2006; Kets de Vries 2008; Sandler 2011).

From a psychodynamic perspective the focus of executive coaching lies on the exploration of underlying drivers and root causes for the behaviour and the emotional reac-

✉ Jan H. Schlüter
js@focused-development.ch

¹ focused., Executive Coaching and Leadership Development,
Robert-Walser-Str. 8, 8820 Wädenswil, Switzerland

Fig. 1 Model for executive coaching from a psychodynamic-systemic perspective

tion of the client which is often biased by defence mechanisms to protect themselves from psychological pain and suffering (see Fig. 1). Kets de Vries and Korotov (2016) compare defence mechanisms like denial, repression, rationalisation, intellectualisation, projection as well as positive identification, sublimation or even humour with painkillers: “like physical painkillers, psychological defence mechanisms provide contemporary relief from suffering and discomfort. But if the underlying cause is left untreated, the pain will return” (Kindle location 1010). In this context they raise the important point that it is not only essential for executive coaches to recognise defence mechanisms of their clients, but it is also key that they are aware of their own defence mechanisms and learn how to deal with them effectively. Furthermore, from a systemic perspective coaching always takes place in an organisational context (Huffington 2007) and therefore, the influence of group dynamics and social defence mechanisms need to be considered for effective coaching (Kets de Vries 2008). Moreover, the coaching process is similar to a psychodynamic-therapeutic process, in which the complex interaction between transference and countertransference have a significant influence on the working alliance between coach and coachee.

While there are similarities between a psychodynamic coaching process and a therapeutic process it is important to recognise the difference between coaching and therapy (Grimmer and Neukom 2009; Kretschmar and Hamburger 2019). While therapy is focusing on helping clients with identified psychological dysfunctions and disorders based on the new ICD 11 classification system by the WHO (Reed, Ritchie, Maerker & Rebello in press) coaching is predominantly about performance improvement, learning, or development (Hullinger and DiGirolamo 2018). Compared to other coaching approaches the psychodynamic-systemic perspective pays additional importance to the in-

fluence of the client’s emotions and the personal history to understand and find solutions in the present.

Fig. 1 provides an overview of the complex interdependencies of the different factors that impact executive coaching from a psychodynamic-systemic perspective.

1.2 Coaching Effectiveness

Research on coaching effectiveness is still in its early stages and struggles with inconsistent standards of practice, a cohesive conceptional foundation and a stringent research base (Sonesh et al. 2015). However, the existing research indicates that coaching is an effective intervention in the workplace and helps to create positive organisational and individual outcomes (Theeboom et al. 2013; Jones et al. 2016). From a process perspective the relationship between coach and coachee is key. Here, specifically the working alliance and the mutual sharing of information play a crucial role. Together, these components moderated by the difficulty of the goal, influence the outcomes of the coaching process such as achieving initially identified goals or gaining insights and clarity with regard to own behaviour and thoughts (Sonesh et al. 2015).

Although empirical research implies that coaching creates positive outcomes more research needs to be undertaken to understand the underlying factors that contribute to the positive outcomes of coaching. Based on a review of the existing research and own studies Sonesh et al. (2015) propose an Input-Process-Output-Model for coaching effectiveness that captures the critical components that lead to coaching success (see Fig. 2). In this model the coach’s behaviour (e.g. capability to provide feedback, build relationship and communicate effectively) as well as the ability to self-regulate, sustain attention throughout the coaching process and reflect on his or her psychological state (“Psychological Mindedness”, p. 192) are crucial influence factors.

Fig. 2 Input-Process-Output model for coaching effectiveness. (Based on Sonesh et al. 2015)

From the perspective of the coachee it is specifically the motivational aspect (e.g. perception of self-efficacy, goal orientation or learning agility) that plays an important role for achieving a positive outcome. From a process perspective the relationship between coach and coachee is key. Here, specifically the working alliance and the mutual sharing of information play a crucial role. Together, these components moderated by the difficulty of the goal, influence the outcomes of the coaching process such as achieving initially identified goals or gaining insights and clarity with regard to own behaviour and thoughts.

1.3 Challenges for Executive Coaches

In contrast to the positive aspects of coaching and specifically the positive working alliance between coach and coachee Berglas (2002) raises the point that executive coaches can have quite a negative impact on the situation of the coachee if “by dint of their backgrounds and biases, they downplay or simply ignore deep-seated psychological problems they don’t understand” (p. 87). In this context Kets de Vries (2010) points out that dysfunctional behaviour patterns of coaches, e.g. the compulsive need to help their clients known as the “Rescuer Syndrome”, can limit their coaching effectiveness.

How deeply-seated psychological problems of coachees can be and how often they occur is exemplified in a study by Wasylyshyn et al. (2012): Based on an analysis of 300 business executive coaching cases they found in 20% of the cases executives displayed dysfunctional, toxic behaviour patterns such as significant interpersonal difficulties, inability to tolerate frustration, domination, arrogance and self-absorption. To build an effective coaching relationship and work with these dark sides of personality it is crucial for the coach to assess these dysfunctional characteristics or derailers adequately and to identify effective coaching strategies (Gaddis and Foster 2015; Kets de Vries 2016; Warrenfeltz and Kellett 2016). To be effective when working with such

clients, coaches need to be self-aware of their own dark sides and potential derailers. They also need to be able to support the coachee on this difficult journey. As Kets de Vries (2016) points out: “You should be aware that the challenge you are up against could be daunting. Opening doors is one thing, but having clients walk through them is another.” (Kindle location 273).

In recent years the focus shifted towards paying more attention to how executives can effectively leverage their strengths instead of working on their weaknesses (Brook and Brewerton 2016; MacKie 2016; Theeboom et al. 2013). Despite the general orientation towards a strength-based approach it became clear that even strengths, if they are overused, can turn into weaknesses or even derailers (Kaiser and Kaplan 2013).

A complex interrelationship between strengths and derailers seems obvious. To understand the dynamic between both aspects Ofman (2001) proposed the core quadrant model (see Fig. 3), in which the *Core Quality* represents a strength that is unique to the person. However, if this strength gets into overdrive it turns into a *Pitfall* or a derailer. The *Challenge* represents the development goal, i.e.

Fig. 3 Core Quadrant Model including Decisiveness as example for a core quality. (Based on Ofman 2001, p. 34)

the behaviour the individual needs to learn to counter-balance the *Core Quality* and to mitigate the overdone strength of the *Pitfall*. The *Allergy* is the negative opposite of the *Core Quality*. Most people are allergic to their own *Challenge* recognised in other persons. Furthermore, they can get into conflict with people that are in their allergy zone, especially when that person is the personification of the behaviour the person detests. Therefore, the *Allergy* zone can be seen as a trigger to unleash the derailing overdrive behaviour of the *Pitfall*. According to De Haan and Kasozi (2014) the core quadrant model can be helpful to explore the shadow sides of the own leadership style shadow and serve as a linking pin to understand how experiences in the family and related transference patterns relate to critical relationships at work. In this context an allergy can be interpreted as a (counter)transference trigger and the pitfall could be seen as a (counter)transference reaction, as soon as a (counter)transference related situation takes place.

1.4 Working Alliance, Transference and Countertransference

The working alliance and relationship between coach and coachee play a crucial role for coaching success. Establishing a working alliance, “a relationship of mutual respect between coach and client” (Kets de Vries 2008, p. 265), is the foundation for any effective coaching.

To further understand the underlying factors and dynamics that influence the working alliance at the coach’s end, the clinical paradigm of changing people and organisations (Kets de Vries 2008) is very helpful. According to the clinical paradigm the way we grew-up and the experiences we had with significant caregivers during our childhood play a crucial role in how we relate and interact with others. These early experiences have a strong influence on shaping specific response patterns and biases that determine the way we think, feel, or behave and guide our social interactions throughout our lives. These “psychological imprints of primary early caregivers—particularly our parents—are so strong that they cause a confusion in time and place, making us act towards others in the presence as if they were significant people from the past” (p. 11). This phenomenon of a “confusion in time and place” (Kets de Vries and Korotov 2016, Kindle location 955) is widely known as the fundamental psychodynamic concept of “transference” (Kets de Vries 2008, p. 11). Transference-related response patterns can be activated through particular cues or “transference-related triggers” (Kets de Vries and Korotov 2016, Kindle location 969) without our awareness: “We meet someone who subconsciously reminds us of a nagging older sister, and we react as if she really were that older sister” (Kindle location 969). Helping the coachee to understand the unconscious transference-related dynamics in leader-

Table 1 Categories of countertransference reactions. (Derived from Van de Loo 2016, Kindle location 3158–3172)

Turning away	Activated Countertransference	Unconscious Enactments
States of boredom	<i>Positive activated countertransference:</i>	Forgetting an appointment
Indifference	Unusually strong emotional bond	Deviating from a well-established professional routine
Apathy	Sexual desire	
Depression	Admiration	
Sleepiness	Rescue fantasies	
Repugnance	<i>Negative activated countertransference:</i>	
Forgetfulness	Aggressive feelings	
	Arguments	
	Fantasies of getting rid of the client	
	Behaving tactlessly	

ship situations is a key intervention for psychodynamic-oriented coaches (De Haan 2011). It is equally important that the coach, too, permanently reflects upon their own unconscious dynamics that may relate to earlier experiences with significant caregivers and could therefore influence their perception and behaviour patterns. This is known as countertransference (Kets de Vries 2007).

Like transference, the phenomenon of countertransference originated from a therapeutic background and “refers to a situation in which an analyst’s feelings and attitudes towards a patient are derived from earlier situations in the analyst’s life that have been displaced onto the patient” (Van de Loo 2016, Kindle location 3134). It basically reflects the dynamic coaches create when they project their own unresolved unconscious conflicts and experiences from a past relationship into the relationship with their clients. Some emotional or behavioural reactions of the coach while interacting with the coachee can serve as indicators to detect an underlying countertransference dynamic. These so-called countertransference reactions can range from “subtle responses such as vague feelings of anxiety, sleepiness, boredom ...; to more blatant responses such as becoming angry, feeling intimidated ...; to dramatic forms of acting out such as blowing up a fellow member, leaving the room in a huff ...” (Kets de Vries 2008, p. 237). According to Van de Loo (2016, Kindle location 3158) they can be grouped into three categories: *Turning away*, *positive and negative activated countertransference*, and *unconscious enactments* (see Table 1).

Both transference and countertransference phenomena influence and distort the encounter of the coach with the client. The stronger this dynamic the more challenging it becomes for the coach to maintain the working alliance and to ensure that the transference-countertransference dynamic can be leveraged for effective coaching interventions.

1.5 Intergenerational Patterns and Transgenerational Transmission

While the concepts of transference and countertransference are established and essential frames of reference for psychodynamic-oriented coaching and consulting approaches (Allcorn 2006; De Haan 2011; Kets de Vries 2008; Lohmer 2000; Vansina and Vansina-Cobbaert 2008) it seems to be a new perspective, however, that intergenerational patterns and transgenerational transmissions can have a strong influence on countertransference reactions and hence, coaching effectiveness. The review of the relevant literature indicates that research to-date is limited to the areas of clinical and health psychology with a focus on exploring transgenerational trauma (De Mendelssohn 2008; Dekel and Goldblatt 2008; Fossion et al. 2015; Lehrner and Yehuda 2018; Letzter-Pouw et al. 2014; Frosh 2013; Schwab 2010; Volkan 2015; Zerach and Salomon 2016), multigenerational stress (Klever 2005), transgenerational therapy (Mucci 2018; Reddemann 2015; Schützenberger 2010), and the development of attachment (DeMaria et al. 2017). It seems only recent that a growing number of practitioners and researchers have been interested in applying findings from the field of clinical and health psychology to a business or organisational context. Coaches and consultants started to include a family dynamic and systemic perspective into their work with individuals (Kantor 2012; Kilburg 2013b; Schreyögg 2017; Urnova 2013), family businesses (Carlock 2009; Kets de Vries et al. 2007), and supervision (Donnelly and Gosbee 2009). Moreover, two studies took a closer look at the effects transgenerational traumas had on leaders (Bagchi 2017; Tcholakian 2016). Interestingly enough, however, no research seems to have been conducted on the impact these dynamics have on executive coaches and their effectiveness when working with clients.

The exploration of intergenerational family patterns and their potential impact is rooted in systemic family therapy. Invisible loyalties (Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark 1984), family constellations (Toman 1976), multigenerational processes of self-differentiation (Tilman 2014) as well as dynamics caused by ancestors (Schützenberger 2010) are fundamental concepts to understand hidden family dynamics. According to the nature of this phenomenon it is not easy to unravel these underlying dynamics and to make them accessible for a conscious examination. There are many ways how the family system can ensure that any underlying forces do not become apparent to the family members, e.g. the exclusion of a family member, the creation of taboos and secrets, or unconscious defence mechanisms like denial (Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark 1984; DeMaria et al. 2017; Schützenberger 2010).

The concept of transgenerational or intergenerational transmission refers to “the idea of unconscious transmis-

sion from the past to the present, from one generation to another, and from one person to another” (Frosh 2013, p. 118). Specifically, large scale traumatic events like war, genocide or migration have a significant impact not only on the groups, societies or countries directly affected but they can also handover the impact of trauma from one generation of a family to the next (Schwab 2010; Volkan 2015, 2017). Volkan (2015) offers an explanation to the question why events which people did not even personally experience can still have an impact on them. He describes the underlying mechanisms of how psychodynamic patterns are handed over from one generation to the other as *identification* and *deposition*.

Another way of looking at the transmission of trauma is the phenomenon of secondary traumatisation which refers to “people who have come in close contact with a traumatized person and may indirectly experience emotional distress and display PTSD [posttraumatic stress disorder] symptoms (PTSS) similar to those exhibited by the trauma survivor” (Zerach and Salomon 2016, p. 298). In this context Dekel and Goldblatt (2008) as well as Letzter-Pouw et al. (2014) emphasised the role of parenting to mitigate the impact of a traumatisation.

In contrast, other authors stress the fact that traumatic events can serve as a resource for resilience and actually become “narratives of resilience” (Denham 2008, p. 391) or “healing narratives” (Salberg 2017, p. 247). Giladi and Bell (2013) found out that the ability to regulate anxiety and to better cope with stressful situations as well as the ability and willingness to openly talk about traumatic experiences in the family are protective factors. Their study specifically indicated, that these capabilities contributed to reducing secondary traumatic stress for intergenerational transmission of trauma among second and third generation Holocaust survivors.

Schofield et al. (2014) point out that positive parenting, beliefs about parental efficacy, and active coping can serve as sources of intergenerational resilience. The following chapter describes how parenting plays a crucial role in coping with stressful life events.

1.6 Role of Stressful Life Events and Family Stress on Health and Well-Being

The transmission of transgenerational trauma can have a severe impact on the behaviour pattern of family members across generations. At the same time there are significant differences on how individuals and families deal with stressful life events and traumatic events. For some, they are a source of resilience and for others a source for maladaptive behaviour and severe health issues. Stressful life events are defined “as occurrences that [are] likely to bring about readjustment-requiring changes in people’s usual activities”

Fig. 4 Coping with stressful life events as transactional process. (Based on Schwarzer and Luszczynska 2012, p. 32)

(Dohrenwend 2006, p. 477). In reference to the constitutive checklist developed by Holmes and Rahe (1967) they include events such as the death of a close person, divorce, major illnesses or a significant change in the financial situation. Additionally, Schwarzer and Luszczynska (2012) distinguish between normative and non-normative events. While normative events like marriage or death of the parents naturally happen to many individuals during their life, non-normative events refer to unexpected events like disasters, accidents or diseases. Natural disasters like floods

or hurricanes or human-made-disasters such as war or terror attacks “represent one of the most threatening situations a person can experience. They are usually defined as devastating stressors that cause major damage and impose threat and loss of life and goods” (Schwarzer and Luszczynska 2012, p. 33). Interestingly enough, although “people exposed to disaster show myriad psychological problems, including PTSD, grief, depression, anxiety, stress-related health costs, substance abuse, and suicidal ideation” (Bonnanno et al. 2010, p. 1) there are in fact only around 30%

Fig. 5 Impact of family stress on maladaptive coping and resilience. (Simplified model by the author based on Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck 2018, Kindle location 5993)

of exposed individuals who do show severe levels of these problems. The vast majority, however, seems to recover from disaster in a resilient way with stable healthy functioning (Bonanno et al. 2010).

This phenomenon of resilience can be explained by the transactional stress model of Lazarus (1999). According to this model the impact of stressful life events on health and well-being is significantly depending on how the individual appraises the event and how he or she copes with it (see Fig. 4). To explain how stressful life events and family stress can have an impact specifically on the health of children Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck (2018) developed a multi-factorial model (see Fig. 5). The model illustrates how family stress and differences regarding the child's temperament (i.e. patterns of neurophysiological processes that influence an individual's reactivity and regulation), the quality of attachment, and parental style cascade into either maladaptive or adaptive coping.

1.7 Summary and Research Model

In summary, the results of the review of the current research indicate that the impact of intergenerational family patterns and transgenerational transmissions on the effectiveness of executive coaches has not been a focus of the discussion among coaching practitioners and researchers to-date. However, if the above-mentioned findings are transferred to the situation of executive coaches with their clients it can be assumed that the *transmission of functional/adaptive and dysfunctional/maladaptive behaviour or coping patterns* have an impact on the effectiveness of coaches. Depending on how family members across the generations had been coping with stressful life-events this must have had an influence on the development of *intergenerational behaviour patterns* and *underlying family dynamics*. These patterns and dynamics must furthermore influence the development of *core qualities*, *pitfalls*, and *allergies* of the coach. In a coaching situation with an underlying countertransference dynamic,

i.e. a confusion in time and place by the coach as a reaction to the client's behaviour, the pitfalls (i.e. derailers) together with the allergies (i.e. behaviour triggers) can turn into countertransference reactions. Hence, they form a potential *countertransference risk* that might have a negative impact on the working alliance and the *coaching effectiveness*.

At the same time, the intergenerational behaviour patterns and underlying family dynamics can positively impact the development of specific strengths that the coach can leverage as *coaching resources* to increase the effectiveness of coaching.

These assumptions are summarised in an overarching framework and depicted in Fig. 6. This framework serves as the underlying research model.

1.8 Research Aims and Objectives

The objective of this exploratory study is to understand the potential impact of intergenerational family patterns and transgenerational transmissions on the effectiveness of executive coaches. Therefore, this study aims to explore the following question:

How do intergenerational family patterns and transgenerational transmissions influence the effectiveness of executive coaches?

Moreover, the following sub-questions are investigated:

- How do intergenerational behaviour patterns and experiences with family members in the past influence countertransference reactions of the coach, and hence, increase the countertransference risk?
- What impact do intergenerational patterns and experiences with family members in the past have on the development of specific strengths of the coach?

Fig. 6 Overarching framework: Impact of the transmission of intergenerational behaviour patterns and underlying family dynamics on coaching effectiveness

2 Methodology

2.1 Overall Approach: Socioanalytic Interviewing and Self-As-Instrument

To explore the impact of intergenerational family patterns and transgenerational transmissions on the effectiveness of executive coaches based on the research questions and the research model mentioned a mixture of two qualitative research approaches was chosen to collect and analyse the data based on semi-structured interviews with 15 executive coaches: Socioanalytic interviewing (Long and Harding 2013) and self-as-instrument (Eisner 1991; Erickson 1986; Glesne and Peshkin 1992; Mulholland 2007; Van de Loo and Lehman 2016). According to Long and Harding (2013) socioanalytic interviewing goes beyond the phenomenological approach (Creswell and Poth 2018) of trying to understand the essence of a phenomenon. It encompasses two interrelated areas that are relevant when exploring the intergenerational experience of the participants which are potentially linked to systemic events (e.g. World War II) or individual stressful life events that had an impact on the overall family system:

1. “The systemic processes within a group, organisation, or society ... evidenced through the experiences and behaviours of individuals and interactions.
2. The in-depth discovery of unconscious processes that affect the group, organisation or society” (p. 91)

Compared to other interviewing methodologies (Gubrium et al. 2012) socioanalytic interviewing provides the advantage according to Long and Harding (2013) to understand “each person’s experience as a set of representative dynamics that contain meaning about the whole system, leading us to understand behaviour of group members not as idiosyncratic to the individual, but, at least in part, resulting from interaction between the individual and the organisation [... group or society]” (p. 93).

To understand whether any critical family incidents or collective trauma may have impacted the coaches’ effectiveness, a focused genogram served as a starting point of the socioanalytic interviews. Furthermore, the principles of using self-as-instrument based on the “night vision” paradigm (Van de Loo and Lehman 2016, p. 209) were applied both when gathering and when analysing the data. A potential underlying dynamic in the intergenerational patterns of the individuals could be revealed this way. It also helped to leverage or control potential countertransference reactions of the researcher as well as to analyse and interpret the data. As the research was likely to be dealing with topics and dynamics that were close to the researcher’s own family patterns, experiences, and countertransference reactions he re-minded himself before starting each interview that

he should focus on what the interviewees actually said and revealed as well as to critically reflect any countertransference reactions or potential biases at his end that might have an impact on how he gathered, interpreted and categorised any material provided by the interviewees (Demir 2015). In case of any strong emotional reactions on his part before, during, or after the interview he reflected his experience with a fellow psychologist trained in psychodynamics with anonymised examples to protect the confidentiality of the information provided by the participants.

2.2 Core Qualities, Pitfalls, and Allergies of Coaches: Core Quadrant Model

To gather information about the individual strengths, derailers, and behaviour triggers of the executive coach the core quadrant model was used. Compared to other approaches to assess strengths and derailers (e.g. Hogan 2007), explore transference dynamics (Luborsky and Crits-Christoph 1990; De Haan and Kasozi 2014) or behaviour in critical situations (De Haan 2008a, b; Flanagan 1954) the core quadrant model provides a condense, systematic and idiosyncratic approach to capture the core qualities and risk factors an executive coach brings to the work with clients. Based on the case examples provided by de Haan and Kasozi (2014) the key idea of the original model was expanded so that it could be used as a frame of reference to explore countertransference reactions as well. In this context it was assumed that an *allergy* can be interpreted as a potential trigger for countertransference reactions if a connection to the behaviour of a person in the past could be revealed. Following this assumption, the countertransference reaction would equal the *pitfall* or derailer behaviour of the core quadrant model. Furthermore, based on the experience in the interviews with the first three coaches the model was further reduced by collapsing both *allergy* and *challenge* aspects into one overarching *Allergy* category. This was done as both aspects seem to serve as triggers for derailing behaviour. Furthermore, the interviewees did not explicitly distinguish between both categories in their answers (e.g. they had an allergic reaction towards specific people because they were perceived as being the complete opposite or for showing behaviour that the interviewee aspired to but was struggling with).

2.3 Intergenerational Family Behaviour Patterns: Focused Genogram

The intergenerational behaviour patterns and transmissions were explored by analysing the participants’ genograms (DeMaria et al. 2017; McGoldrick 2016; McGoldrick et al. 2008). To reduce the complexity of this endeavour the analysis focused on selected aspects of the genogram only, i.e.

solely the parts, which were directly related to the research questions of this study were considered. As a result, the interview followed the key ideas of a *focused genogram* approach as suggested by DeMaria et al. (2017). A focused genogram (FG) is “a method for exploring the family, multicultural, and contextual topics, as well as the intergenerational dynamics” with the goal to help “the therapist and the client-system see the connections between their current problem and other aspects of their life of which they may not be fully aware” (p. 46). The methodology helps to explore how specific themes like abuse, violence, and trauma are represented and connected across the four domains (1) individual behaviour, (2) couple behaviour, (3) intergenerational behaviour, and (4) contextual/external influences. In order to reduce the complexity of this model for the interview process, the four domains were reduced to three, i.e. the individual and the couple domain were merged

as both areas are interrelated and influence one another (see Fig. 7).

2.4 Coaching Effectiveness: Countertransference Risks and Coaching Resources

Based on the data collected through the interviews it was expected to be able to identify countertransference risks and coaching resources which potentially could have an impact on the coaching effectiveness of the coaches interviewed. As the research design did not include any observation or debriefing of real, critical coaching situations it was assumed based on the underlying research that *countertransference risk*, *coaching resources*, *coaching effectiveness* could be operationalised as followed:

1. *Countertransference risk*: Potential probability that a countertransference reaction (i.e. occurrence of pitfall-be-

Fig. 7 Focus topics for the exploration of intergenerational behaviour patterns and transmissions

Fig. 8 Overview on research steps, methods, and overall approach

- behaviour in a countertransference related situation) might be triggered based on the amount of family members who were related to specific allergies and the amount of related stressful life events mentioned in the genogram
2. *Coaching resources*: Potential strengths that the coach can leverage for effective coaching interventions
 3. *Coaching effectiveness*: Potential impact of both countertransference risk and coaching resources on the working alliance with the client

Fig. 8 illustrates a high-level overview on the research methodology, steps and elements of this study.

2.5 Sample

For the study semi-structured interviews with 15 executive coaches were conducted. In addition to working with senior leaders of a wide variety of organisations as executive coaches all of them worked either as consultants, trainers, or lecturers in both the commercial or non-commercial field. With regard to specific coaching approaches or methodologies the sample represented a broad spectrum across different coaching practices and disciplines. In terms of professional background, the sample comprises coaches with studies in Social Sciences, Engineering or Economics. Self-awareness due to working with their genograms and/or engaging in own psychotherapeutic/supervisory processes varied across the participants. Except for one coach who just started his practice a few months ago all coaches had between ten and thirty years of experience and were between 43 and 62 years old. All of them live in Europe and the vast majority works in a global environment. With regard to their cultural and family history backgrounds seven have a German, two an Indian, one a Belgium, one a French, one a Swedish, one a French-Swedish, one a Russian-Turkmenian, and one a Swiss-Algerian background. Overall, the sample consisted of ten women and five men.

The participants were selected out of the researcher's broad and diverse network ensuring a wide variety of different approaches across the wide spectrum of the executive coaching practice. Only one participant was referred to him by a colleague and hence, previously unknown to him. The rationale to choose familiar participants was based on the assumption that they might feel more comfortable and hence be more willing to open up and therefore, provide deeper insights into their individual family backgrounds.

2.6 Data Analysis

To analyse the data gathered through the semi-structured interviews, the content of the interviews was analysed following the principles of an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA, Pietkiewicz and Smith 2012) and elements

of a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006). Two approaches to identify content clusters and themes for the individual coaches as well as for the comparison across the coaches were applied. The first one was a deductive, theory driven approach (Braun and Clarke 2006) to leverage the theoretical frameworks of the core quadrant model as well as the 43 life events of the social readjustment rating scale (SRRS) of Holmes and Rahe (Holmes and Rahe 1967; Scully et al. 2000). Furthermore, to create hypotheses with regard to the underlying dynamics that influence coaching effectiveness, i.e. countertransference risks and coaching resources, an inductive approach (Braun and Clarke 2006) to identify themes was applied using the self-as-instrument-approach.

3 Findings

3.1 Influence of Intergenerational Patterns on the Effectiveness of the Individual Coach

To answer the question of this research, namely how intergenerational family patterns and transgenerational transmissions influence the effectiveness of executive coaches, the individual patterns of the participants were assessed. This also allowed to answer the sub-questions (a) and (b) which were related to how these patterns impacted the development of specific strengths and countertransference risks.

Fig. 9 shows an example of the core quadrant qualities, the related intergenerational patterns, as well as the influencing factors for coaching effectiveness, i.e. countertransference risk and coaching resources of one participant of the study. The strongest core quality of this participant is *relationship building*. Seven family members across generations had displayed this strength. Taking into account the individual stressful life events this amounts to 27. This means that on average every family member experienced approx. 4 stressful life events. The other two core qualities, i.e. *resource-orientation* as well as *creativity and enthusiasm* turned out to have a strong intensity level and had been displayed by 3 or 4 family members with 14 or 16 related stressful life events. In terms of pitfalls and allergies the same logic applies with *avoiding confrontation* as the strongest pitfall and the *black and white thinking* as the strongest allergy.

In terms of coaching effectiveness these results together with the analysis of the underlying dynamic indicate that this participant may potentially have a significant countertransference risk to avoid confrontation, especially with black and white thinking, challenging clients who focus on the negative. The interview indicated that the underlying dynamic for this could be related to the intergenerational pattern of having had to suppress aggressive emotions and

		Intergenerational patterns							Underlying dynamic		
		Participant 1		Across Generations		Grandparent Generation		Parent Generation		Coaching Effectiveness	
		Core Quadrant Qualities	Description	People	Life Events	People	Life Events	People	Life Events	Countertransference Risk	Coaching Resources
Strengths	1	Core Quality	Relationship Building	7	27	3	10	4	17	Risk to avoid confrontation especially with black and white thinking, challenging clients who focus on the negative potentially based on the underlying dynamic of suppressing aggressive emotions and feelings of injustice and having to overly-adapt to social conformity both in maternal and paternal lineage in order to either survive or belong to a social group with rigid views and values	Strong relationship building, resource-orientation and high creativity due to intergenerational pattern of coping with colonisation, racism, and emigration
	2	Core Quality	Resource-orientation	3	14	1	2	2	12		
	3	Core Quality	Creativity and enthusiasm	4	16	1	4	3	12		
Derailers	1	Pitfall	Avoiding confrontation	4	20	2	8	2	12		
	2	Pitfall	Ignoring negative	2	11	1	4	1	7		
	3	Pitfall	Losing focus	2	12	0	0	2	12		
Triggers	1	Allergy	People who challenge	4*	9	1	4	2	5		
	2	Allergy	Focus on negative	4*	10	1	4	2	6		
	3	Allergy	Black and white thinking	6*	18	2	8	3	10		
		*incl. brother or sister									

Legend

Intensity	Amount of People	Amount of Critical Life Events
No apparent	0	0
Light, moderate	1-2	1-8
Strong	3-4	9-18
Very strong	5+	19+

Fig. 9 Example of core quadrant qualities related intergenerational patterns, and coaching effectiveness of one participant

feelings of injustice as well as having to overly adapt to social conformity. This became apparent in both the maternal and the paternal lineage. In the maternal lineage this pattern was displayed in order to cope with rigid views and values in the context of sect-alike religious groups and the expectation to keep up appearances despite betrayal, alcohol abuse and exclusion of family members. In the paternal lineage this dynamic was related to surviving in the context of war, colonisation and migration. On the other hand, the paternal dynamic seems to have had the strongest impact on the capacity to build relationship, to focus on positive resources of the client and to find creative solutions.

Like with this exemplary case the impact of the intergenerational patterns on their strengths, pitfalls and allergies as well as their countertransference risks and coaching resources could be found across all participants, albeit with a varying degree of intensity. The reason for this variation

could be many-fold: it could be that the influence is varied due to the perceived intensity of the respective stressful life events or the participants may not have been aware of specific family patterns or life events. Additionally, it could also be possible that defence mechanisms came into play so that they could not yet see or express the underlying unconscious patterns. Another reason could be a methodological artefact in the sense that the applied methodology could not reveal the underlying patterns in specific cases, i.e. time-restrictions and limitation to three core qualities.

3.2 Strengths and Coaching Resources Related to Intergenerational Patterns

On average 6 (mean = 5.9, minimum = 3, maximum = 9) out of the 9 core quadrant components were lightly, strongly or very strongly related to an intergenerational pattern. Most

of the intergenerational patterns were related to a core quality (i.e. strength) of the coach. In 13 out of 15 cases a very strong relationship between at least one core quality and an intergenerational pattern could be found. This indicates that the vast majority of the intergenerational patterns had a positive impact on creating behaviours that the coaches can use as coaching resources in their interactions with clients. Furthermore, the strong relationship between strengths and intergenerational patterns was related to the fact that they either had a role model for this strength in the family or were able to transform a dysfunctional behaviour of a family member into a personal strength as a coping mechanism. An example for was the case of one participant who was able to turn confrontational and disrespectful behaviour of family members in the past into providing challenging feedback while maintaining a positive work alliance with the client at present.

3.3 Countertransference Risks Related to Intergenerational Patterns

In contrast to the findings related to strengths and coaching resources listed in the previous chapter there were only 8 cases in which a very strong relationship between an intergenerational pattern and at least one pitfall could be found. With regard to allergies only 7 showed a very strong relationship. In each of these cases severe critical life events could be identified, which seem to have had a significant impact across the generations. With German participants the critical life events were strongly related to World War II and the Nazi-regime. It turned out that specifically the exposure of the grandfathers to captivity as prisoners of war (POW) or the experience of escape as war refugees especially for grandmothers caused significant traumata. Interestingly, many of the grandparents decided not to share these experiences with the rest of the family. As a result, talking about any of these events was a taboo. However, for most of these grandparents the existence of these traumatic experiences became visible through maladaptive and dysfunctional behaviour such as depression, suicide, alcohol abuse, as well as mental and physical violence of the children or the spouse. In contrast, looking at participants from other cultural backgrounds stressful life events such as migration, racism, genocide, suicide, early loss of care givers, loss of wealth and status in the grandparent and parent generation had a more significant impact on the development of dysfunctional behaviour patterns than World War II and the Nazi-regime.

With participants where there was no or only a light relationship between a pitfall or allergy and an intergenerational pattern an inductive thematic analysis was applied to define an underlying family dynamic. This helped to understand the countertransference risks for these participants beyond

the pitfalls and allergies that had been identified through the core quadrant framework.

4 Discussion

The aim of this exploratory study is to understand the potential impact of intergenerational family patterns and transgenerational transmissions on the effectiveness of executive coaches. Therefore, this study takes a closer look at how intergenerational behaviour patterns influence countertransference reactions of executive coaches. Furthermore, it explores what impact intergenerational patterns have on the development of specific strengths of a coach.

Practitioners and supervisors emphasise the potential negative impact countertransference and dysfunctional behaviour patterns of coaches have on their coaching effectiveness. However, so far, no research has been undertaken to understand how behaviour patterns passed down family generations have an influence on the countertransference reactions of an executive coach. To explore this question, an adapted framework of the core quadrant model was applied (Ofman 2001; De Haan and Kasozi 2014). In the adapted model an *Allergy* is interpreted as a (counter)transference trigger to unleash derailing behaviour and a *Pitfall* as a (counter)transference reaction to this trigger event. The results show that a relationship between potential countertransference triggers and reactions as well as intergenerational patterns could be identified for each participant. However, a strong link between countertransference triggers (i.e. *Allergies*) and countertransference reactions (i.e. *Pitfalls*) and stressful life events of family members could be found only for approximately half of the participants. For the other half this relationship only became apparent when analysing the underlying dynamic of each participant. This deeper analysis revealed e.g. that situations that reminded the coach of an early feeling of abandonment and exclusion from the core family served as counterreactions triggers that negatively impacted his ability to challenge the client and maintain an independent perspective.

These findings imply that especially those participants with a strong link between dysfunctional intergenerational patterns and their *Allergies* and *Pitfalls* may run a higher risk to experience countertransference dynamics with clients affecting their coaching effectiveness negatively. Considering the fact, that at least 20% of senior executives display exactly the behaviours most of the coaches described as being allergic to, such as being unclear, arrogant, and not relational (Wasylyshyn et al. 2012), these findings may be crucial for executive coaches. Due to this, they might trigger a countertransference reaction where the coach avoids confrontation, becomes detached or too confrontational as they may have done with family

members in the past and therefore undermine a productive working alliance. Here the crucial role of supervision, self-reflection, and even psychotherapy comes into play to help the coach to leverage their strengths and to contain any countertransference related reactions. As one coach pointed out it was essential for her to come to terms with her devastating family experiences through psychotherapy. Due to this, she is now exceptionally capable to deal with highly emotionally-detached executives and to find access to them beyond their walls of defence mechanisms.

Furthermore, the results of this study support the hypothesis that intergenerational family patterns and transgenerational transmissions have an impact on the effectiveness of the executive coaches interviewed. Specifically coaches with a strong link between dysfunctional intergenerational patterns and their *Allergies* and *Pitfalls* may run a higher risk to experience countertransference dynamics with clients. This countertransference risk can be mitigated by specific strengths that the coach can leverage as *coaching resources* for effective coaching interventions.

Based on the findings of this study it seems to be that especially the development of these strengths and *coaching resources* are strongly influenced by the experience of previous generations. Hence, the intergenerational patterns appear to have a stronger influence on creating functional an adaptive coping behaviour than transmitting dysfunctional, maladaptive behaviour only. It is surprising to find that intergenerational patterns seem to be a significant resource of resilience, considering that the research on the impact of transgenerational transmission focused on the negative influence of traumata (De Mendelssohn 2008; Dekel and Goldblatt 2008; Fossion et al. 2015; Lehrner and Yehuda 2018; Letzter-Pouw et al. 2014; Frosh 2013; Schwab 2010; Volkan 2015; Zerach and Salomon 2016). In fact, the results support Denham's (2008) and Salberg's (2017) point that traumatic events can serve as a resource for resilience and indeed become "narratives of resilience" or "healing narratives". Considering the sample of this study being executive coaches it can be assumed that these "narratives of resilience" result from an intense process of self-reflection and the willingness to talk openly about stressful situations as a core aspect of their professional identity. According to Giladi and Bell (2013) these capabilities serve as key protective factors to reduce intergenerational transmission of trauma.

Moreover, the findings of this study imply that specifically the grandparent generation had in fact a positive impact on the development of the participants' strengths and coaching resources. Therefore, another source of the "narratives of resilience" seems to have come directly from particular grandparents who the executive coaches positively identified with. They were perceived as resilient and founders of strong lineages of survival while their own chil-

dren, i.e. the parents of the executive coaches, obviously suffered and displayed maladaptive coping behaviour. Due to this, it can be assumed that those grandparents potentially served as positive attachment figures and caregivers who provided security and positive parenting, both key factors for adaptive coping with family stress (Schofield et al. 2014; Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck 2018).

The results discussed so far strongly support the perspective that "narratives of resilience" and positive identification figures or real caregivers in the grandparent generation significantly contribute to creating functional and adaptive coping behaviour rather than transmitting dysfunctional, maladaptive behaviour only. However, it may also be considered that the coaches were either not aware of their shadow-sides mentioned in their core quadrant analysis or unconsciously denied them (see Fig. 10). This could also apply to potential "blind spots" in their genograms whenever a family member or stressful life events was blank, not mentioned or tabooed (see Fig. 11). Additionally, there could have been a tendency to paint a too rosy, positive picture of the past and to neglect any negative implications. This tendency may specifically apply to coaches who described their families as "being resilient" and "always taking a challenge as an opportunity to overcome obstacles and to turn it into something positive" (as stated in some of the interviews). As mentioned earlier it is not easy to unravel the underlying dynamics of transgenerational traumata and make them accessible for a conscious examination. Here, specifically the role family taboos as well as unconscious defence mechanisms like denial must be taken into account for an alternative exploration of the results at hand (Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark 1984; DeMaria et al. 2017; Schützenberger 2010).

Fig. 10 Core Quadrants with potential shadow Core Quadrants

Fig. 11 Genogram with potential blind spot area

5 Limitations

The selection of the participants and the chosen research design imply some limitations to this study:

1. The participants are a clearly pre-selected group of individuals, and the size of the researched sample is very small due to the explorative character of the study in this new research field.
2. The interviews explored events in the past and their impact on the participants' behaviour today. This means that these past events may potentially be subject to a hindsight bias.
3. All results are solely based on the self-perception of the interviewees.
4. As an explorative study, the design is not appropriate to suggest any empirical causal relationships between intergenerational patterns on coaching effectiveness. Any hints in this direction are based on the personal constructions of the interviewees and should be used as a starting point for future research.
5. A general challenge was to identify the underlying dynamics related to the intergenerational patterns as they are *unconscious* by their nature. Due to this, they just could be identified from the data based on the theoretical assumptions of the clinical paradigm and the use of self-as-instrument approach.
6. Finally, a genuine exploration of the “real” individual components of the core quadrant model and the “true” relationships between family members can be affected by family taboos or defence mechanisms.

5.1 Future Research

Given the limitations mentioned in the previous chapter, future research should explore whether the intergenerational patterns and underlying dynamics can be found in a larger,

more diverse, and randomly selected participant group. Furthermore, to mitigate the risk of the bias of the researcher, the data analysis and interpretation should be cross-evaluated by at least one additional evaluator.

Based on the preliminary findings of this explorative study real coaching situations should be observed or debriefed to test the assumption that intergenerational patterns and the related countertransference risks actually affect coaching effectiveness.

Last but not least, future research should focus on the effect supervision and an increased awareness of underlying intergenerational patterns could have on increasing coaching effectiveness.

5.2 Conclusions

The chosen research approach of semi-structured socioanalytic interviews combined with the analysis of the core quadrants and the focused genograms of the participants proved to be a promising research approach to tackle the research questions of this study. Additionally, it helped both the coaches who were experienced to work with genograms and also the ones without any such experience to gain new and deeper insights relevant to their self-awareness and hence, to increase their coaching effectiveness.

When applying this research format, significant countertransference reactions of the researcher come into play. The same applies to the activation of potential defense mechanisms at the interviewee's end. The researcher needs to be able to deal with both dynamics consciously in order to ensure an effective working alliance with the interviewee and to minimise any related biases when gathering and evaluating the data.

Given the fact that this exploratory study found first indications for the impact of intergenerational patterns on the effectiveness of executive coaches it seems to be important to further validate the findings. However, an even more important factor from the researcher's perspective would be to integrate the reflection on intergenerational patterns into the training and supervision of coaches. May this help coaches to actually encounter the client in the *here and now* instead of the *there and then*.

Sikhona (“I am here to be seen”)—*Sawubona* (“I see you”)

Traditional Zulu greeting

Conflict of interest J.H. Schlüter declares that he has no competing interests.

Open Access This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes

were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

References

- Allcorn, S. (2006). Psychoanalytically informed executive coaching. In D.R. Stober & A. Grant (Eds.), *Evidence based coaching handbook: putting best practices to work for your clients* (pp. 129–149). Hoboken: Wiley.
- Bagchi, B. (2017). *Social unconscious and transgenerational trauma from colonial past in Asian leaders*. EMCCC Master Thesis. INSEAD.
- Berglas, S. (2002). The Very Real Dangers of Executive Coaching. *Harvard business review*, 80, 86–92, 153.
- Berninger, M. (2005). *Secret meeting. On Alligator [CD] by The National*. London: Beggars Banquet.
- Bonanno, G. A., Brewin, C. R., Kaniasty, K., & La Greca, A. M. (2010). Weighing the costs of disaster: consequences, risks, and resilience in individuals, families, and communities. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 11(1), 1–49.
- Boszormenyi-Nagy, L., & Spark, G. M. (1984). *Invisible loyalties. Reciprocity in intergenerational family therapy*. London: Routledge. Kindle Edition (2013).
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Brook, J., & Brewerton, P. (2016). *Optimize Your Strengths. Use your leadership strengths to get the best out of you and your team*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd. Kindle Edition.
- Carlock, R. S. (2009). A tool to spark a meaningful family dialogue. *Family Business*, 2009, 52–55.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design* (4th edn.). London: SAGE. Kindle Edition.
- De Haan, E. (2008a). I doubt therefore I coach: critical moments in coaching practice. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 60(1), 91–105.
- De Haan, E. (2008b). I struggle and I emerge: Critical moments of experienced coaches. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 60(1), 106–131.
- De Haan, E. (2011). Back to basics: How the discovery of transference is relevant for coaches and consultants today. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 6(2), 180–193.
- De Mendelssohn, F. (2008). Transgenerational transmission of trauma: guilt, shame, and the “heroic dilemma”. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, 58(3), 389–401.
- De Haan, E., & Kasozi, A. (2014). *The leadership shadow*. London: Kogan Page. Kindle Edition.
- Dekel, R., & Goldblatt, H. (2008). Is there Intergenerational transmission of trauma? The case of combat veterans' children. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 78(3), 281–289.
- DeMaria, R., Weeks, G. R., & Twist, M. L. C. (2017). *Focused genograms. Intergenerational assessment of individuals, couples, and families*. New York: Routledge.
- Demir, A. M. (2015). Transference and countertransference in qualitative research. In *Conference: psychoanalysis, culture & society*. Conference Paper, Vol. 3. London: Centre for Psychoanalysis, Middlesex University.
- Denham, A. R. (2008). Rethinking historical trauma: narratives of resilience. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 45(3), 391–414.
- Dierolf, K., Meier, D., & Szabo, P. (2009). *Coaching Plain & Simple: Solution-focused Brief Coaching Essentials*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. Kindle Edition.
- Dohrenwend, B. P. (2006). Inventorying stressful life events as risk factors for psychopathology: toward resolution of the problem of Intra-category variability. *Psychological Bulletin*, 132(3), 477–495.
- Donnelly, H., & Gosbee, M. (2009). Family of origin supervision in the workplace: impacts on therapist and team functioning. *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 30(4), 300–314.
- Eisner, E. W. (1991). *The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*. New York: Macmillan.
- Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (3rd edn., pp. 119–161). New York: Macmillan.
- Flanagan, J. C. (1954). The critical incident technique. *Psychological Bulletin*, 51(4), 327–358.
- Fossion, P., Leys, C., Vandeleur, C., Kempnaers, C., Braun, S., Verbanck, P., & Linkowski, P. (2015). Transgenerational transmission of trauma in families of Holocaust survivors: the consequences of extreme family functioning on resilience, sense of coherence, anxiety and depression. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 171, 48–53.
- Frosh, S. (2013). *Hauntings: Psychoanalysis and ghostly transmissions*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Kindle Edition.
- Gaddis, B. H., & Foster, J. L. (2015). meta-analysis of dark side personality characteristics and critical work behaviors among leaders across the globe: findings and implications for leadership development and executive coaching. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 64(1), 25–54.
- Giladi, L., & Bell, T. S. (2013). Protective factors for Intergenerational transmission of trauma among second and third generation holocaust survivors. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 5(4), 384–391.
- Glesne, C., & Peshkin, A. (1992). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. New York: Longman.
- Goldsmith, M. (2007). *What got you here won't get you there: How successful people become even more successful*. New York: Hachette Books. Kindle Edition.
- Grimmer, B., & Neukom, M. (2009). *Coaching und Psychotherapie: Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede – Abgrenzung oder Integration?* Wiesbaden: VS.
- Gubrium, J. F., Holstein, J. A., Marvasti, A. B., & McKinney, K. D. (Eds.). (2012). *The SAGE handbook of interview research: the complexity of the craft*. London: SAGE.
- Hawkins, P., & Turner, E. (2020). *Systemic Coaching. Delivering value beyond the individual*. London: Routledge. Kindle Edition.
- Hogan, R. (2007). *The Hogan guide*. Tulsa: Hogan Assessment Systems.
- Holmes, T. H., & Rahe, R. H. (1967). The social readjustment rating scale. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 11, 213–218.
- Huffington, C. (2007). A contextual approach to coaching. In H. Brunning (Ed.), *Executive coaching. Systems-psychodynamic perspective* (pp. 41–77). London: Karnac. Kindle Edition.
- Hullinger, A. M., & DiGirolamo, J. A. (2018). Referring a client to therapy: A set of guidelines. <https://coachfederation.org/app/uploads/2018/05/Whitepaper-Client-Referral.pdf>. Accessed 9 Sept 2021.
- Jones, R., Woods, S., & Guillaume, Y. (2016). The effectiveness of workplace coaching: A meta-analysis of learning and performance outcomes from coaching. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 89, 249–277.
- Kaiser, R. B., & Kaplan, R. E. (2013). Don't let your strengths become your weaknesses. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2013/04/dont-let-your-strengths-become>. Accessed 2 Aug 2018.
- Kantor, D. (2012). *Reading the room. Group dynamics for coaches and leaders*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Kindle Edition.
- Kets de Vries, M. F. R. (2007). Are you feeling mad, bad, sad, or glad? *INSEAD Working Papers Collection*, 2007(9), 1–32.

- Kets de Vries, M.F.R. (2008). *The leader on the couch. A clinical approach to changing people and organisations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Kindle Edition
- Kets de Vries, M.F.R. (2010). Leadership coaching and the rescuer syndrome: how to manage both sides of the couch. *INSEAD Working Papers Collection*, 2010(104), 1–27.
- Kets de Vries, M.F.R. (2016). *You will meet a tall, dark stranger*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. Kindle Edition
- Kets de Vries, M.F.R., & Korotov, K. (2016). The clinical paradigm: a primer for personal change. In M. Kets de Vries, K. Korotov, E. Florent-Treacy & C. Rook (Eds.), *Coach and Couch. The psychology of making better leaders* (2nd edn., pp. 904–1110). New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Kindle Edition
- Kets de Vries, M.F.R., Carlock, R.S., & Florent-Treacy, E. (Eds.). (2007). *Family business on the couch. A psychological perspective*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd. Kindle Edition
- Kilburg, R.R. (2013a). Toward a conceptual understanding and definition of executive coaching. In R.R. Kilburg & R.C. Diedrich (Eds.), *The wisdom of coaching. Essential papers in consulting psychology for a world of change* (pp. 578–816). Washington: American Psychological Association. Kindle Edition
- Kilburg, R.R. (2013b). *Executive wisdom. Coaching and the emergence of virtuous leaders*. Washington: American Psychological Association. Kindle Edition
- Klever, P. (2005). Multigenerational stress and nuclear family functioning. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 27(2), 233–250.
- Kretschmar, T., & Hamburger, A. (2019). *Coaching und Supervision: Psychodynamische Beratung von Führungskräften*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.
- Lazarus, R.S. (1999). *Stress and emotion: A new synthesis*. Berlin, Heidelberg, New York: Springer. Kindle Edition
- Leeb, W.A., Trenkle, B., & Wenkenmann, M.F. (2017). *Der Realitätseckelner: Hypnosystemische Konzepte in Beratung, Coaching und Supervision*. Heidelberg: Carl-Auer.
- Lehner, A., & Yehuda, R. (2018). Trauma across generations and paths to adaptation and resilience. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 10(1), 22–29.
- Letzter-Pouw, S.E., Shira, A., Ben-Ezra, M., & Palgi, Y. (2014). Trauma transmission through perceived parental burden among holocaust survivors' offspring and grandchildren. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 6(4), 420–429.
- Lohmer, M. (Ed.). (2000). *Psychodynamische Organisationsberatung. Konflikte und Potentiale in Veränderungsprozessen*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- Long, S., & Harding, W. (2013). Socioanalytic interviewing. In S. Long (Ed.), *Socioanalytic methods. Discovering the hidden in organisations and social systems* (pp. 91–106). London: Karnac Books. Kindle Edition
- Luborsky, L., & Crits-Christoph, P. (1990). *Understanding transference. The CCRT method*. New York: Basic Books.
- MacKie, D. (2016). *Strength-based leadership coaching in organizations. An evidence-based guide to positive leadership development*. London: Kogan Page. Kindle Edition
- McGoldrick, M. (2016). *The Genogram casebook: A clinical companion to genograms: Assessment and intervention*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co..
- McGoldrick, M., Gerson, R., & Petry, S. (2008). *Genograms: assessment and intervention* (3rd edn.). New York: W.W. Norton & Co..
- Mucci, C. (2018). *Beyond individual and collective trauma. Intergenerational transmission, psychoanalytic treatment, and the dynamics of forgiveness*. New York: Routledge. Kindle Edition
- Mulholland, J. (2007). Understanding the self as instrument. In P.C. Taylor & J. Wallace (Eds.), *Contemporary qualitative research. Science & technology education library*, Vol. 33. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Ofman, D. (2001). *Core qualities*. Schiedam: Scriptum Publishers.
- Pietkiewicz, I., & Smith, J.A. (2012). Praktyczny przewodnik interpretacyjnej analizy fenomenologicznej w badaniach jakościowych w psychologii [A practical guide to using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in qualitative research psychology]. *Czasopismo Psychologiczne*, 18(2), 361–369. (English version was used for this study).
- Reddemann, L. (2015). *Kriegskinder und Kriegsenkel in der Psychotherapie*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta. Kindle Edition
- Reed, G.M., Ritchie, P.L.-J., Maerker, A., & Rebello, T. (Eds.) (in press). *A psychological approach to diagnosis: using the Icd-11 as a framework*. Washington: American Psychological Association.
- Salberg, J. (2017). Introduction. In J. Salberg & S. Grand (Eds.), *Wounds of history. Repair and resilience in the trans-generational transmission of trauma* (pp. 245–248). New York: Routledge. Kindle Edition
- Sandler, C. (2011). *Executive coaching. A psychodynamic approach*. Maidenhead: Open University Press. Kindle Edition
- Schofield, T.J., Conger, R.D., & Neppl, T.K. (2014). Positive parenting, beliefs about parental efficacy, and active coping: three sources of intergenerational resilience. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 28(6), 973–978.
- Schreyögg, A. (2017). Life coaching: Family-of-origin dynamics. In A. Schreyögg & C. Schmidt-Lellek (Eds.), *The professionalisation of coaching* (pp. 6152–6463). Wiesbaden: Springer. Kindle Edition
- Schützenberger, A.A. (2010). *The ancestor syndrome. Transgenerational psychotherapy and the hidden links in the family tree*. London: Routledge. Kindle Edition
- Schwab, G. (2010). *Haunting legacies. Violent histories and transgenerational trauma*. New York: Columbia University Press. Kindle Edition
- Schwarzer, R., & Luszczynska, A. (2012). Stressful life events. In I.B. Weiner, A.M. Nezu, C.M. Nezu & P.A. Geller (Eds.), *Health psychology* 2nd edn. Handbook of psychology, (Vol. 9, pp. 29–56). New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Scully, J.A., Tosi, H., & Banning, K. (2000). Life event check lists: revisiting the social readjustment rating scale after 30 years. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 60(6), 864–876.
- Skinner, E.A., & Zimmer-Gembeck, M.J. (2018). Parenting, family stress, developmental cascades, and the differential development of coping. In E.A. Skinner & M.J. Zimmer-Gembeck (Eds.), *The development of coping. Stress, neurophysiology, social relationships, and resilience during childhood and adolescence*. Cham: Springer.
- Sonesh, S.C., Coultas, C.W., Marlow, S.L., Lacerenza, C.N., Reyes, D., & Salas, E. (2015). Coaching in the wild: Identifying factors that lead to success. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 67(3), 189–217.
- Tcholakian, L. (2016). *Transgenerational Trauma and Its Impact on Leadership Development: The Case of the Armenian Genocide*. Master Thesis. INSEAD.
- Theeboom, T., Beersma, B., & van Vianen, A.E.M. (2013). Does coaching work? A meta-analysis on the effects of coaching on individual level outcomes in an organizational context. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 9(1), 1–18.
- Tilman, P. (Ed.). (2014). *Differentiation of self. Bowen family systems theory perspectives*. New York: Routledge. Kindle Edition
- Toman, W. (1976). *Family constellations. Its effects on personality and social behavior* (4th edn.). Berlin, Heidelberg, New York: Springer. Kindle Edition
- Urnova, A. (2013). *Childhood Story as a Key to Individual Patterns of Team Behavior*. Master Thesis. Fontainebleau: INSEAD.
- Van de Loo, E. (2016). The art of listening. In M. Kets de Vries, K. Korotov, E. Florent-Treacy & C. Rook (Eds.), *Coach and couch. The psychology of making better leaders* (2nd edn., pp. 2893–3262). New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Kindle Edition
- Van de Loo, E., & Lehman, R. (2016). Conclusion: developing night vision and the night vision paradigm. In E. Florent-Treacy, M.F.R. Kets de Vries, R. Lehman & E. van de Loo (Eds.), *The*

- annals of psychodynamic-systemic practitioner research* (Vol. 1, pp. 205–213). Fontainebleau: INSEAD.
- Vansina, L. S., & Vansina-Cobbaert, M. J. (2008). *Psychodynamics for consultants and managers*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Volkan, V. D. (2015). *A Nazi legacy. Depositing, transgenerational transmission, dissociation, and remembering through action*. London: Karnac Books. Kindle Edition
- Volkan, V. D. (2017). *Immigrants and refugees. Trauma, perennial mourning, prejudice, and border psychology*. London: Karnac. Kindle Edition
- Warrenfeltz, R., & Kellett, T. (2016). *Coaching the dark side of personality*. Tulsa: Hogan Press.
- Wasylyshyn, K. M., Shorey, H. S., & Chaffin, J. S. (2012). Patterns of leadership behaviour: Implications for successful executive coaching outcomes. *The Coaching Psychologist*, 8(2), 74–85.
- Whitmore, J. (2017). *Coaching for performance. The principles and practice of coaching and leadership*. London: Nicholas Brealey. Kindle Edition.
- Zerach, G., & Salomon, Z. (2016). A relational model for the intergenerational transmission of captivity trauma: a 23-year longitudinal study. *Psychiatry*, 79, 297–316.

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.