

**Developing Culturally and Contextually Sustainable Curricula within Professional Coach  
Training Programs**

by

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## **Abstract**

This study sought to understand how changes to the core coaching competencies that were outlined by the International Coach Federation (ICF) were being implemented within coach training programs, specifically the competencies that pertain to culture and context. In order to achieve ICF's organizational performance goal of leading the global advancement of the coaching profession, this qualitative study utilized the Clark and Estes' (2008) gap analysis, a systematic, analytical method that clarifies organizational goals and identifies the knowledge, motivation and organizational influences on performance. The stakeholder group for this study consisted of instructional designers within coach training programs. The research data included responses from 45 surveys and 10 interviews. Culturally and contextually sustainable coaching is anchored by four key competencies: cultivating awareness, attending to culture and context in the coaching engagement, developing integrative complexity, and comprehending positionality, privilege, and power. In addition, culturally and contextually sustainable instructional design involves a heightened awareness of cultural differences, reflective practice and self-awareness, and continued professional development. The results of the study show that the ICF has an opportunity to serve in a translational capacity and offer resources to provide clear guidance and examples on how coaches can integrate the topics of culture and context within the coaching relationship.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

The International Coach Federation (ICF) defines coaching as, “partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential” (ICF, 2021c, p.1). In recent decades, professional coaches have increased their work with participants across geographic and cultural boundaries. These increases can be attributed to the cross-border trade from globalization as well as the diversification of the workforce (Coulter et al., 2011) as well as the ubiquity of technology that allows for real-time contact between coach and participant (Otte et al., 2014). According to the 2019 International Coach Federation Annual Report, of the over 35,000 members within the organization, more than 25,000 are based in North America and Western Europe (ICF, 2020b). In addition, The World Trade Organization (2019) shows that 70% of the US\$308B in cross-border transactions pertaining to professional consulting services, of which professional coaching is a part, originate in developed economies. The ICF estimates that the total global revenue for coaching is \$2.849 billion (ICF, 2020a), of which the United States captures the lion’s share of the total with over \$2 billion in revenue (Smith, 2014). Since worldview and intersectional lenses may shape how both a coach and participant may view a coaching topic, the problem of practice explored through this research focuses on how professional coaches are trained around the topics pertaining to culture and context. This study evaluated the implementation of the new ICF core competencies that were announced in 2019 with the expectation that coach training programs would make modifications to their curricula by 2021. In particular, this study examined the updated competencies addressing culture and context. How different types of coach training programs interpret these new competencies, and how their instructional designers create curricula that addresses culture and context will be examined through qualitative means of data gathering.

## **Background of the Problem**

Professional coaching is thought to have its origins dating in the 1960s (Palmer & Whybrow, 2008), while Rosinski (2003) suggests that coaching as a formal profession within organizations started in the 1990s. It is a discipline that can trace elements of its origins back to multiple sources such as sports (Gallwey, 1974), the Human Potential Movement and its emphasis on self-development, as well as the various elements of humanistic and positive psychology (Palmer & Whybrow, 2008). As a discipline, coaching is considered to be an interdisciplinary field and professional coaches enter into the discipline and draw from a multitude of backgrounds (Lee & Bush, 2013). In many ways, since the word coaching can be used to describe both a set of skills as well as an entire profession, it might be easier to identify what coaching does not encompass, namely therapy and consulting (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2015; Peltier, 2010). Finally, another distinctive trait that sets the coaching field apart from other disciplines is that formal academic research and academic interest came after the profession began as a practitioner-driven discipline (Rosinski, 2010). While there are a multitude of specializations within coaching encompassing the world of business, leadership, health, career, parenting, spirituality, fitness, life choices, the easiest segmentation within the coaching world boils down to who is paying for the services: an organization or an individual.

At present, the coaching industry is not subject to regulation (Fillery-Travis & Collins, 2016; George 2013). As a result, anyone may begin offering their services as a coach without any formal training (Gray et al., 2016). There is debate on how to define professionalization in the context of coaching and what needs to happen to raise the profile of the coaching profession (Fillery-Travis & Collins, 2016; Gray, 2011; Gray et al., 2016). One of the primary benefits of professionalization is that it provides consumers with the reassurance that the services are being

provided by an individual who received professional training and conducts themselves competently, skillfully, and ethically (Gray et al., 2016).

Professional associations offer a signal to the market at large of a formal recognition of the profession and offers a support structure for those in the profession (Markova et al., 2013). Fillery-Travis and Collins (2016) state that the associations not only set standards and best practices for their members, but also serve as the voice of the profession at both the national and international level to ensure that their interests are being represented. Another characteristic of a profession is that there exists a common body of knowledge and that the status within a profession is due, in large part, to the attainment of a unique set of skills and expertise not commonly attained by the general population (Gray et al., 2016). Within coach training programs, there a significant variation in the quality and experiences offered. These training institutions mainly focus around building the necessary skills and delivery to ensure competence (Lane, 2016).

There are multiple forces that have been instrumental in the increase of coaching across national and cultural boundaries. The first is the globalization and the opening up of trade across borders. Globalization can be defined as the interconnectedness across national borders in areas such as trade, education, politics, technology, and culture and information (Jones, 2006). Sherman and Freas (2004) highlights that globalization and increased competition forced multinational firms to examine their employee engagement strategies moved to decentralized leadership structures. George (2012) further argues that this structural change forced leaders into independent decision-making about the operations of their business. Matveev (2017) also indicates that the participants and beneficiaries of globalization has shifted away from large, well-resourced multinational organizations that exported goods. This shift opened the door to small businesses and service-oriented businesses. This increase of cross-border and cross-

cultural activity among these new entrants were driven through the emergence of the “usage and the sophistication level of information technology” (Matveev, 2017, p. 4), and were adapted by the coaching profession (Otte et al., 2014).

In addition to globalization, the composition of the workforce within countries has rapidly changed over the past 20 years due to migration (Matveev, 2017; United Nations, 2019). Diversification amongst the workforce where workers come from different racial, ethnic, religious, and generational identities are increasing countries like the United States are responsible for a need for cultural sensitivity in coaching. (Rosinski & Abbott, 2006; Passmore & Law, 2013; Wilson, 2013; Stout-Rostron, 2016)

The past decade witnessed a shift in power dynamic within the context of globalization and business practices. How companies conducted business was very much a Western construct in the 20th century, and coaching, particularly executive coaching, followed a Western (particularly American) lens. However, as the countries that constituted former “emerging economies” gain in economic strength and gain confidence in their culturally unique business practices, Western leaders will need to adapt across cultures in order to access those desirable markets (Haghirian, 2011).

The nature of work, what constitutes work, and how work is performed in the 21st century increased the need for coaches and provides the ability for coaches to expand their impact and reach. The biggest paradigm shift in this area over the past 20 years is the emergence of VUCA, which stands for volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. This new paradigm creates an opportunity for coaches to partner with participants to help them navigate these forces by demonstrating open-mindedness, inclusivity, and an investment in shared best practices toward a better world (Plaister-Ten, 2016). According to the World Economic Forum (2020a), this era, also known as the Fourth Industrial Revolution, will be a period of both job

creation and job displacement and that the professions of the future will place ever-increasing importance on human interaction.

In addition to the challenges around finding a singular, universal definition around the coaching profession, trying to find a single, unifying definition around culture in relationship to coaching can offer challenges. While culture can be defined as “a lens through which to view a situation.” (Plaister-Ten, 2017, p.xix), it can also be described as “collective mental programming” (Hofstede, 1983, p. 76), as well as “the way a group of people solve a problem and reconcile dilemmas” (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012, p. 6). While culture has both visible and invisible parts, it influences and informs worldviews. (Haghirian, 2011). Much of the early literature focused on national culture (Hofstede, 1983; Lewis, 2015). As the world becomes more integrated, an ever-growing subset of the world’s population could be raised, educated and work in environments that are truly intercultural. Lennard (2010) states that a shift has taken place where the focus is less about national culture and identity and more of leveraging cultural intelligence to understand and celebrate the perspective that a participant may bring to the coaching engagement. Coaches then can better understand their own cultural lens in which they approach the work that they do with each participant.

Formal literature on the coaching profession (Gallwey, 1974; Palmer & Whybrow, 2008) evolved in parallel to that of culture (Hofstede, 1983; Lewis, 2015; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012) until a new perspective argued for the importance of incorporating cultural awareness into the coaching profession (Rosinski, 2003). This new perspective drew upon literature from “cross-cultural psychology, intercultural communication, cultural values and dimensions, international business, and anthropology” (Rosinski & Abbott, 2006, p. 255). Rosinski and Abbott (2006) offers a positive view where the incorporation of a cultural lens would only enhance, rather than detract, from a coaching engagement. This shift ushered in the

need for new competencies in order to effectively coach across cultural boundaries. The most important competency for a coach to be able to effectively coach across cultural boundaries is the ability to build awareness of their own cultural lens as well as an appreciation of the cultural lens of the participant without generalizing or stereotyping. Roth (2017) also notes the culturally subjective role of the coach in the engagement. Plaister-Ten (2016) and Abbott and Salomaa (2016) argue that Western philosophies and approaches to coaching may also not align with the values of a culture, especially those of Eastern philosophies, and that awareness of this on the part of the coach is tantamount. Closely aligning with self-awareness is the ability to develop competencies around cultural intelligence (CQ). Cultural intelligence does not necessarily mean becoming a subject matter expert in individual cultures, but more the ability to build awareness and adapt among different cultures (Early & Ang, 2003; Livermore et al., 2010; Molinsky, 2013). Finally, Lennard (2010) cites the importance of for a coach to understand the individual cultural orientation, or the unique intersectionality of multiple cultures in order to make a meaningful impact in an engagement.

Four main themes emerge as the foundational competencies for culturally and contextually sustainable coaching. They include the ability for a coach to cultivate their own cultural awareness, along with the appreciation of the participant's cultural lens; the ability to attend to culture and context within the coaching engagement; developing integrative complexity to integrate competing worldviews; and the ability to comprehend the influences of societal power, positionality, and privilege within the engagement. Culturally sustainable coaching begins with culturally sustainable curricula. There are three important factors for creating culturally and contextually sustainable instructional design. First, culture influences perceptions about learning and teaching (Rogers et al, 2007). Since instructional designers are the primary instrument through which content is created, it is essential to have a heightened awareness of



cultural differences and the context in which the training is being delivered (Rogers, 2007). Second, it is important to incorporate reflective practice and self-awareness on the part of the designer (DeLorme, 2018). Finally, as the field of instructional design continues to evolve, instructional designers must evolve with it. This can be accomplished through some form of professional development such as communities of practice or formal training to support designers (Sharif & Cho, 2015).

### **Importance of Addressing the Problem**

The importance of addressing the problem involves an understanding of the monumental scale of impact that coaching can present. The instructional designers who create the curricula determine what content is offered within training. Since culture and context represent the intersectional lens in which they view the world, how these concepts are introduced to an aspiring coach during training will impact how these topics will be attended to in the hundreds, if not thousands of coaching engagements throughout the professional life of a coach. As Shoukry and Cox (2018) argue, coaching is a social process which serves as a catalyst for change. Plaister-Ten (2016) emphasizes that attending to culture and context leads to deeper, more meaningful coaching, which in turn, has positive implications of the choices offered to the participant. It is also important to note that the ultimate beneficiary of culturally and contextually sustainable coaching are those who participate in the coaching, and all those they impact. Coaching participants may demonstrate an interpersonal or leadership style that has a cascading effect, not only through an organization, but throughout an industry and greater society (Carter & Greer, 2013). What's more, positive, transformational leadership has a direct effect on employee health and wellbeing (Zwingmann et al., 2013). Because of the ripple effect that a coaching engagement may carry, it is essential for a coach to not only demonstrate competency in

advanced coaching skills and interventions, but to also be able to coach with a high level of cultural sensitivity.

Because instructional designers are the primary instrument through which content is created, it is essential to have a heightened awareness of cultural differences and the context in which the training is being delivered (Rogers, 2007). In addition, a coach that is trained with culturally and contextually sustainable methods has the potential to know when they are upholding or challenging systemic inequities. The lack of an equity-based or culturally sensitive lens by a coach might create misunderstandings on the part of the coach, and leaves the coach without the necessary tools to provide the highest level of coaching that a participant deserves. By not addressing culture and context, many coaches may be uncomfortable or unprepared of working within a culturally or contextually complex environment. Lack of adequate training may lead to unintended consequences that can range from a minor cultural misunderstanding on the part of a coach, or could lead to the misinterpretation of a problem and therefore cascade into inadequate or incorrect intervention or a breach of trust during the engagement. This, in turn has its own cascading effect, not only on the coaches in terms of potential loss of business, but also potentially viewed with suspicion as an instrument of pushing a Western social agenda. Another consequence of any lack of cultural and contextual understanding is the perception within organizations that professional coaching does not have an adequate return on investment. The lack of cultural understanding may impact the profession's standing, as it could be perceived to be something that is not culturally translatable. For these reasons, it is important to focus on the training that aspiring coaches receive as they substantially influence the future of the profession.

### **Organizational Context and Mission**

Founded in 1995, the ICF is “the leading global organization dedicated to advancing the coaching profession by setting high standards, providing independent certification, and building

a worldwide network of certified coaches.” (ICF, 2019, p. 1). As of 2018, the ICF had over 35,000 members in 145 countries (ICF, 2019). Headquartered in Lexington, Kentucky, the ICF is recognized as being the largest global organization of professionally trained coaches (ICF, 2019, p. 1) and oversees activities that advance the coaching profession such as the accreditation process for individual coaches, coach training programs from all over the world, and conducts both academic and industry research that furthers the profession.

The mission of ICF is to “lead the global advancement of the coaching profession.” (ICF, 2020b). This is accomplished through five overarching purviews that outline the broader mission and goals for the ICF. These five are as follows:

- Developing coaching core competencies
- Establishing a professional code of ethics and standards
- Creating an internationally recognized credentialing program
- Setting guidelines through accreditation for coach-specific training programs
- Providing continuous education through world-class events, Communities of Practice (CPs) and archived learning.” (ICF, 2019, p.1)

The first purview that is listed by the ICF is the organization’s commitment to developing core coaching competencies. In October 2019, the ICF announced a revised competency model. The new model, which took effect in 2021, has two major implications for the coaching community. First, coach training programs will need to adapt their curricula in order to comply with this new model. Second, coaches seeking certification will need to be familiar with these core competencies in order to pass the Coach Knowledge Assessment (CKA). Previously accredited coaches seeking the next level of certification will need to re-take the CKA. In 2020, the ICF announced the launch of six unique family organizations, each with its own dedicated board. The ICF global board still oversees the strategic direction of the entire ICF ecosystem.

## **Organizational Goal**

Based on the changes that were made to the core competencies, the organizational performance goal guiding this study was to examine how these changes to the core competency model are being implemented within coach training programs. Attention was given to the new language around culturally and contextually sustainable coaching. In particular, this study examined how the instructional designers within these programs have been implementing new competencies. Finally, how the ICF itself is communicating and collaborating with these training programs will be examined.

## **Description of Stakeholder Groups**

For this study, three stakeholder groups have been identified who are critical to achieving the organizational goal. The first stakeholder is the ICF Credentialing and Accreditation Committee, which was responsible for a large-scale research initiative that surveyed more than 1,300 coaches worldwide. The survey results led to updating the ICF core competencies.

The second stakeholder group consists of the instructional designers within coach training programs that train professional coaches in a range of coaching skills and methodologies to help further their coaching practice. Accredited Coach Training Programs (ACTP) and Approved Coach Specific Training Hours (ACSTH) both deliver “foundational coach specific training” (ICF, 2021d, p.1), while Continuing Coach Education Programs (CCE) “provide advanced learning opportunities for trained and credentialed coach practitioners.” (ICF, 2021d, p.1). These programs continue to iterate their courses and curricular offerings to model the ICF core competencies, and are responsible for the training and continuing development of coaches. Depending on the type and size of the training program, the individuals who are designing the curricula may consist of the owner/operators of the program, faculty members within the program, or professionally trained instructional designers who may or may not have a

background in coaching.

The third stakeholder group consists of the professional coaches are individuals whose primary responsibilities and income are derived from contracting with individuals and organizations to deliver coaching. For the purposes of this study, professional coaches will also be defined as coaches who have been certified by the ICF. Professional coaches are responsible for their ongoing training and development, and are responsible for ensuring that they are keeping abreast of all the recent developments in coaching, including the updated ICF core competencies.

While all three stakeholder groups provide different perspectives into examining this problem of practice, it is ultimately the participants (also referred to as a client or coachee) within coaching engagements that benefit the most from culturally and contextually sustainable coaching. Being able to coach with a high level of cultural and contextual competence provides the coach with a more complete picture of the participant, and in turn, provides the participant with the necessary tools for seeing the full potential of their situation. This results in more meaningful coaching, a positive feedback loop between the coach and participant, which can lead to greater change and impact.

### **Stakeholder Performance Goals**

The following Table 1 presents an overview of the organizational mission, global goal and stakeholder performance goals of all three stakeholder groups.

**Table 1***Organizational Mission, Global Goal and Stakeholder Performance Goals*

Organizational mission		
ICF exists to lead the global advancement of the coaching profession.		
Organizational performance goal		
By the end of 2022, 100% of coach training programs will have updated their curricula to align with the new core competencies		
ICF Credentialing and Accreditation Committee	Instructional designers goal	Professional coaches goal
By June 2021, the ICF Credentialing and Accreditation Committee will find additional ways to continue to inform the ICF membership of the new competency models.	By December 2021, instructional designers within coach training programs will update their curricula to be more culturally and contextually sustainable.	By December 2022, coaches undergoing training or credential updates will have access to information on cultural and contextual competencies through the ICF.

**Stakeholder Group for the Study**

While each stakeholder has an integral role in the ability to better incorporate cultural awareness into coaching, this study evaluated how instructional designers implement the new standards, particularly the standards with language pertaining to culture and context, into the curricula of coach training programs. How instructional designers interpret the new competencies and implements these changes was instrumental to identifying any knowledge and motivation gaps around the areas of culture and context. After gaining understanding of the gaps, this study examined the organizational supports needed by the ICF to these institutions.

### **Purpose of the Project and Questions**

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the needs for ICF to meet its goal of the global advancement of the coaching profession through updating its coaching competencies. The analysis focused on knowledge, motivation and organizational influences related to achieving this organizational goal. While a complete evaluation project focused on all ICF stakeholders, for practical purposes the stakeholders in this analysis were the instructional designers who were responsible for designing the curricula for the training programs.

As such, the questions that guide this study are the following:

1. What knowledge, skills, and organizational support do instructional designers need to design curricula that is culturally and contextually sustainable?
2. What are the recommendations for organizational practice in the areas of knowledge, motivation, and organizational resources that training programs need to help them update their curricula?

### **Conceptual and Methodological Framework**

Clark and Estes' (2008) gap analysis, a systematic, analytical method that helps to clarify organizational goals and identify the knowledge, motivation and organizational influences on performance, was adapted to the evaluation model and implemented as the conceptual framework. The methodological framework is a qualitative study. Assumed knowledge, motivation and organizational influences that impact ICF's organizational goal achievement was generated based on related literature and professional knowledge. These influences were assessed by using surveys, interviews, literature review and content analysis. Research-based solutions were recommended and evaluated in a comprehensive manner.

### **Definitions**

- *Accredited Coach Training Programs (ACTP) and Approved Coach Specific Training Hours (ACSTH)*: Standalone programs that teach coaching skills and methodology. While their curricula may align with ICF core competencies, they are not managed by the ICF.
- *Coach Knowledge Assessment (CKA)*: A tool that can be used to measure coaches' understanding of the knowledge and skills important in the practice of coaching. The CKA tests coaches on their understanding of the body of knowledge that includes the ICF definition of coaching, Core Competencies and Code of Ethics. (ICF, 2021a)
- *Continuing Coach Education (CCE)*: Provide advanced learning opportunities for trained and credentialed coach practitioners
- *Coaching*: Partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential. (ICF, 2021c, p.1)
- *Culture*: A lens through which to view a situation. (Plaister-Ten, 2016, p.xix)
- *ICF Core Competencies*: Knowledge to support greater understanding about the skills and approaches used within today's coaching profession as defined by the International Coach Federation. (ICF, 2021b)

### **Organization of the Project**

Five chapters are used to organize this study. This chapter provided the reader with the key concepts and terminology commonly found in a discussion around cultural competency and coaching. The organization's mission, goals and stakeholders and the framework for the project were introduced. Chapter Two provides a review of current literature surrounding the scope of the study. Forces impacting the growth of coaching across cultural boundaries and the importance of culture within coaching will be addressed. Chapter Three details the knowledge, motivation and organizational influences to be examined as well as methodology when it comes



to the choice of participants, data collection and analysis. In Chapter Four, the data and results are assessed and analyzed. Chapter Five provides solutions, based on data and literature, for closing the perceived gaps as well as recommendations for an implementation and evaluation plan for the solutions.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

This chapter provides an overview of the existing literature pertaining to the topics of culture and context within coaching. The literature covers the professional coaching industry as well as the associations and infrastructure that support the profession as a whole. In addition, this chapter provides a background around the forces that contributed to the need for cultural and contextually relevant coaching. Finally, this chapter addresses the knowledge, motivation, and organizational influences that contribute to the instructional designers' ability to create culturally and contextually sustainable curricula.

### **The Coaching Profession**

The ICF defines coaching as, “partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential” (ICF, 2021c p.1). Professional coaching is thought to have its origins dating back to the 1960s (Palmer & Whybrow, 2008), while Rosinski (2003) suggests that coaching as a formal profession within organizations started in the 1990s. One important and distinguishing characteristic that sets the coaching field apart from other disciplines is that formal academic research and academic interest came after the profession began as a practitioner-driven discipline (Drake, 2008; Rosinski, 2010). Therefore, much of the formal literature pertaining to coaching has traditionally been concentrated in practitioner-oriented handbooks, primarily because the field is new and lacks the depth of empirical and experimental studies that are found in a more mature discipline like psychology (Fillery-Travis & Collins, 2016). In addition, Abbott et al. (2013) acknowledged that few large-scale empirical studies pertaining to both culture and coaching have been conducted.

## **What Coaching Encompasses**

Coaching can trace elements of its origins back to multiple sources such as sports (Gallwey, 1974), the Human Potential Movement (Bachkirova et al., 2017) and various elements of humanistic and positive psychology (Palmer & Whybrow, 2008). Coaching draws upon a multitude of backgrounds such as psychology, behavioral and social sciences, adult development, organizational change and development, and business and economics (Lee & Bush, 2013). In many ways, since the word coaching can be used to describe both a set of skills as well as an entire profession, it might be easier to identify what coaching does not encompass, namely therapy and consulting (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2015; George, 2013; Peltier, 2010). George (2013) states that since coaching lacks a unified set of knowledge and theoretical frameworks, the result is that a broad range of services are marketed as coaching.

## **The Professional Coaching Ecosystem**

While there are a multitude of specializations within coaching encompassing the world of business, leadership, health, career, parenting, spirituality, fitness, life choices, the easiest segmentation within the coaching world boils down to who is paying for the services: an organization or an individual. Regardless of the coaching topic or specialization that is brought in to the coaching arrangement, if the organization is paying for the services, the coach may need to manage relationships with the multiple stakeholders at once to reach an outcome that is balanced by both the participant and the organization. Rosinski (2003) refers to this as the “triangular contract.” (Rosinski, 2003, p. 10) When the participant is paying for the services, the arrangement is typically between the coach and the participant. In the 2019 Global Coaching Study, the ICF introduced the Coaching Continuum, which segmented professional coaches that offer their services both within and outside of organizations from managers and leaders who use

coaching skills, which include human resources managers along with manager/leader using coaching skills as part of their role (ICF, 2020a).

### **Professionalization of Coaching**

Drake (2008) poses a fundamental question: “What is coaching (e.g. an industry, field, profession, philosophy and/or set of tools) and what are the implications of our answer(s)?” (Drake, 2008, p. 17) Globally, it is estimated that there are over 71,000 coaches, with the largest increase in Latin America, Eastern Europe, and the Caribbean (ICF, 2020a). At present, the coaching industry is not subject to regulation (Fillery-Travis & Collins, 2016; George 2013). As a result, anyone may begin offering their services as a coach without any formal training (Gray et al., 2016). In the 2016 Global Coaching Survey conducted by the ICF, 44% of respondents identified untrained individuals as the biggest obstacle for coaching in the marketplace, followed by 28% who cited marketplace confusion as the biggest obstacle. While there is discussion in the literature around raising the level of the coaching profession, there is debate on how to define professionalization in the context of coaching and what needs to happen to raise the profile of the coaching profession (Fillery-Travis & Collins, 2016; Gray, 2011; Gray et al., 2016). One of the primary benefits of professionalization is that it provides consumers with the reassurance that the services are being provided by an individual who received professional training and conducts themselves competently, skillfully, and ethically (Gray et al., 2016). Gender also plays a role in the professionalization of coaching. In North America, 75% of coach practitioners identify as female, while the worldwide percentage of female-identifying coaches is 67% (ICF, 2020a). George (2013) notes that the high percentage of female coaches, particularly in life coaching fills a unique subset of service occupation that is part of a greater trend within the commercialization of needs that were once filled by family or friends. This gendered profession, in turn has implications of how the profession is viewed since historically female-dominated occupations

struggle with professional legitimacy. There are two types of entities that have a direct impact on the professionalization of coaching: professional associations and coach training programs.

### **Professional Associations**

Professional associations offer a signal to the market at large of a formal recognition of the profession and offers a support structure for those in the profession (Markova et al., 2013). However, there is a fundamental distinction between a professional association and a professional regulatory body. What distinguishes a professional association from a regulatory body is that professional associations are not necessarily responsible for the actions of their members and is responsible for serving the best interests of their membership, while regulatory bodies operate have greater accountability and oversight over their membership in service of the general public (Balthazard, 2017). There are four major professional associations worldwide that support coaching: Association for Coaching (AC), the Association for Professional and Executive Coaching and Supervision (APECS), the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC), and the ICF (Gray, 2016). Fillery-Travis and Collins (2016) state that the associations not only set standards and best practices for their members, but also serve as the voice of the profession at both the national and international level to ensure that their interests are being represented. While coaching "...clearly possess all the attributes required for a modern service based managerial craft...coaching associations are not yet influential enough with national and international governmental organisations to achieve the regulation needed for a degree of market and social closure" (Fillery-Travis & Collins, 2016, p. 4). Associations will also need to balance the needs of the multiple stakeholders they have within their ecosystem. While eventual regulation may limit the number of coaches that enter into the marketplace, this may pose an existential threat to the coach training programs that are incentivized to maximize their revenue through increased enrollment.

## **Coach Training Programs**

Another characteristic of a profession is that there exists a common body of knowledge and that the status within a profession is due, in large part, to the attainment of a unique set of skills and expertise not commonly attained by the general population (Gray et al., 2016). There is also an underlying assumption that entry into a profession is attained through extensive training and education, usually through higher education (Gray et al., 2016). While there are some institutions in Australia, Europe and North America that offer coach training in affiliation with institutes of higher education, coach training is also offered through non-academic private training institutes (Gray, 2011). Many Fortune 500 organizations also offer in-house certified coach training programs. There is also a significant variation in the quality and experiences offered within these training programs. George (2013) shares that the training experience can range from two-hour training sessions all the way to a rigorous training curriculum requiring hundreds of hours of training, coaching supervisions, and examinations. George continues by stating that these organizations can draw from various theoretical orientations and make the connection to their own selected group of coaching pioneers. These training institutions mainly focus around building the necessary skills and delivery to ensure competence (Lane, 2016). In response to the wide variation within these training experiences, the ICF offers multiple routes with their accreditation process. Looking at the training requirements for entry-level accreditation, which is the Associate Certified Coach (ACC), the most direct pathway is through the ACTP, which is considered to be the “all-inclusive training program” (ICF, 2021d, p.1) and includes 125 hours of ICF-approved instruction around core competencies, ethics, supervision and culminates in a final exam. The pathway through the ACSTH is more of an a la carte pathway requiring at least 60 hours of ICF-approved coach-specific training and 10 hours of mentor coaching (ICF, 2021d). Finally, the Portfolio Pathway involves the ability to obtain

accreditation that includes Continuing Coach Education (CCE) units or non-approved training (ICF, 2021d p.1). Due to the diverse variation in training and the tension between the freedom in which to practice their craft against the oversight that comes with additional credentialing and standardization (George, 2013), there will continue to be challenges pertaining to the professionalization of coaching.

### **Forces Driving Coaching Across Cultural and Contextual Boundaries**

There are multiple forces that have been instrumental in the increase of coaching across national and cultural boundaries. These forces include globalization, migration, diversification of the workforce, the ubiquity of technology, and a shift in what defines work. Understanding how each force contributes to the need for coaching, and how coaches have responded to these needs will be examined.

#### **Globalization as a Catalyst**

One of the early drivers of growth pertaining to coaching across national and cultural boundaries is globalization and the opening up of trade across borders. Globalization and the subsequent trade across national borders accounted for under 40% of the world's GDP in 1980 and has increased to over 60% in 2020 (Garrett, 2020). Sherman and Freas (2004) highlight the changes that came from globalization and increased competition that forced multinational firms to examine their employee engagement strategies and drove more decentralized leadership structures. As a result, leaders were forced into independent decision-making about the operations of their business (George, 2012). Matveev (2017) also indicates that the participants and beneficiaries of globalization has shifted from the space that was exclusively the realm of large, well-resourced multinational organizations that exported goods and has opened the door to small and service-oriented businesses.

This wellspring of cross-border and cross-cultural activity were driven through the emergence of the “usage and the sophistication level of information technology” (Matveev, 2017, p. 4), and were adapted by the coaching profession (Otte et al., 2014). St Claire-Ostwald (2007) indicated that the proliferation of the Internet added another level of social and cultural context for individuals in which coaches need to be responsive. Other technology such as digitization and the ease of cross-border payments have also led to an increase in professional services (World Trade Organization, 2019). Abbott and Salomaa (2016) noted that due to advances in information and communication technology, organizations are experiencing an increase in multicultural and virtual teams without any one particular national culture.

The composition of the workforce within countries have rapidly changed over the past 20 years due to migration (Matveev, 2017, United Nations, 2019). According to the United Nations’ Report on International Migration (2019), there were over 272 million international migrants mainly due to forced displacement. Passmore and Law (2013) state that while the United States has experienced migration throughout its history, there continues to be consistent migration from Central and South America. The United Kingdom has also experienced immigration from Eastern Europe, Africa, and South Asia, while Australia continues to receive migrants from not only Europe but Asia.

Globalization and migration have also contributed to an increase in the diversification of the workforce (Coultras et al., 2011). Abbott (2010) also noted that migration has increased diversity in countries that were monocultural for long periods of history. Stout-Rostron (2016) states the importance of adapting to multicultural diversity within the context of rapid change that takes place in corporate environments. Abbott, et al. (2013) talks about diversity as a positive asset to be celebrated and that as organizations increasingly work globally on virtual teams, diversity will continue to be a part of professional life.



As influential as globalization has been in the way the world has opened up its borders to trade and travel, since the turn of the millennium there has been a shift in power dynamic within the context of globalization and business practices. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, how companies conducted business, and the extent to which standard business practices were executed was very much a Western construct and coaching followed a predominantly American-centric lens. However, as the countries that constituted former “emerging economies” gain in economic strength and gain confidence in their culturally unique business practices, Western leaders will need to adapt across cultures in order to access those desirable markets (Haghirian, 2011).

The years preceding the 2008 financial crisis has been understood to be the time where globalization peaked, and global investment, along with supply chains had started to slow (Garrett, 2020). The onset of the Fourth Industrial Revolution has also rewritten the narrative on what constitutes work, and how work is performed in the 21st century. This is a period of transition to a fully digitized economy and will be a period of both innovation, disruption, and job displacement and that the professions of the future will place ever-increasing importance on competencies such as creativity and empathy that are uniquely human (McGowan & Shipley, 2020; World Economic Forum, 2020a).

While globalization has provided coaches with the opportunity and technical infrastructure to expand their reach across geographic and cultural boundaries, the slowing of globalization has continued to create opportunities for coaches. Both periods in history create uncertainty and complexity for their clients. During this new period of VUCA, coaches can help participants navigate this unpredictability and complexity (Abbott & Salomaa, 2017). Abbott and Salomaa (2017) also stressed the interconnectedness of cultural influences with other contributing factors to VUCA such as economic, social, and demographic changes combined with rapid technological shifts within the world.

## Understanding Culture and Context

In addition to the challenges around finding a singular definition around coaching, attempting to find a singular definition around culture in relationship to coaching can be equally elusive. “Culture has been defined in so many ways that it is almost indefinable” (Abbott, 2010, p. 326). What makes the process of defining culture frustrating is that much of it is unconscious and continues an ever-evolving, dynamic process (Rueda, 2011). Shoukry and Cox (2018) state that both culture and context are intertwined.

While culture has both visible and invisible parts, culture can deeply influence an individual and form their worldview (Haghirian, 2011). How culture is defined in context to coaching within professional literature follows a sociohistorical approach that parallels the Western business perspective of the world (Abbott, 2010). Some of the most referenced sources around the topic of culture can be attributed to works by Geert Hofstede as well as Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner. Hofstede’s seminal work in 1983 focused on the cultural differences amongst work-related values in 50 different countries. Hofstede (1983) argued that identity and thinking are conditioned through national cultural influences. At that point in history, the prominent worldview emphasized the geopolitical state through the 20<sup>th</sup> century (World Economic Forum, 2020). Within this lens, culture was described as “collective mental programming” (Hofstede, 1983, p. 76), as well as “the way a group of people solve a problem and reconcile dilemmas” (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2012, p. 6).

As of 2019, there are over 272 million international migrants (United Nations, 2019). In addition, the expatriate population is forecasted to exceed 87 million by 2021 (Finaccord, 2018). As the world became more integrated, an ever-growing subset of the world’s population could be raised, educated, and work in intercultural environments. As a result, a shift has taken place where the discourse is focused less on national culture and identity and more about leveraging

cultural intelligence to acknowledge the multiple cultural influences that exist. Earley and Ang (2003) introduced the concept of cultural intelligence which examined culture from a multidimensional lens that included nationality, ethnicity, and race. Cultural intelligence does not necessarily mean becoming a subject matter expert in individual cultures, but more the ability to build awareness and adapt among different cultures (Livermore et al., 2010; Early & Ang, 2003; Molinsky, 2013). Rosinski (2003) offered a working definition of culture for coaching practitioners that highlighted both invisible and visible factors by stating, “A group’s culture is the set of unique characteristics that distinguishes its members from another group.” (Rosinski, 2003, p. 20) and offered that as individuals, we often affiliate ourselves with multiple groups.

A reflection of an ever-evolving nature of culture, Plaister-Ten (2016 defined culture as “a lens through which to view a situation” (Plaister-Ten, 2016, p.xix), and encouraged coaches to view culture dynamically. What this shift in perspective for culture in context to coaching means that it allows the coach to move away from prescribed notions of national culture and allows the engagement to celebrate the unique perspective that a participant may offer. In addition, this allows coaches to understand their own cultural lens in which they approach the work that they do with each participant (Lennard, 2010).

To fully comprehend the impact that culture holds, it is also important to understand the contextual influences that impact the intersectional lens that influences worldview. Sociocultural theory imparts that “social context is the mediator of all thinking and learning” (Malloy, 2020, 5:47), and that cultural contexts are a fundamental aspect of cognition (Malloy, 2020). As adults, our contextual worldview is shaped by an amalgamation of identities, which includes family (biological or chosen), religion, gender, ethnicity, community, and national identity (Merriam & Bierema, 2013). Lennard (2010) also factors in the importance of the context within one’s professional industry, organization, teams, and current events as influencing one’s worldview.

### **Culturally and Contextually Sustainable Coaching**

Abbott (2010) highlights a paradox that emerges around culture and coaching. Due to the fact that since individuals are impacted by the all influences around them, but that because so many cultural influences may impact the coaching engagement at once, it might be futile to focus solely on culture within an engagement. In this scenario, “all coaching is cross-cultural; and yet no coaching is cross-cultural.” (Abbott, 2010, p. 324) Moore (2016) highlighted a need for both leaders and coaches who are aware of cultural, generational, and global differences in the workplace. Rosinski and Abbott (2006) offer a positive view where the incorporation of a cultural lens would only enhance, rather than detract, from a coaching engagement. This perspective ushered in the need for new competencies in order to effectively coach across cultural boundaries.

### **Culturally and Contextually Sustainable Coaching Competencies**

The literature to this point has addressed the fundamental drivers that lead to a need for culturally and contextually sustainable coaching. It is also worth noting the intentional choice of the word *sustainable*, versus a safer term such as culturally and contextually *competent* coaching. While competence implies a satisfactory, but not outstanding performance, sustainable practice implies a higher level of practice that needs to be upheld. To define the competencies that are necessary to practice culturally and contextually sustainable coaching, it helps to supplement the existing coaching literature with the competencies that are outlined in complementary professions, such as intercultural competencies for counseling psychologists, along with competencies that address cross-cultural training, and cultural intelligence. Four main themes emerge as the foundation for these competencies. They include the ability for a coach to cultivate their own cultural awareness, along with the appreciation of the participant’s cultural lens; the ability to attend to culture and context within the coaching engagement; developing integrative

complexity to integrate competing worldviews; and the ability to comprehend the influences of societal power, positionality, and privilege within the engagement.

### *Cultivating Awareness*

The most important competency to effectively coach in a culturally and contextually sustainable manner is the ability to build awareness of their own cultural lens as well as an appreciation of the cultural lens of the participant without generalizing or stereotyping. Closely aligning with self-awareness is the ability to develop competencies around cultural intelligence (CQ). Roth (2017) notes the culturally subjective role of the coach in the engagement, while Lennard (2010) cites the importance for a coach to understand the individual cultural orientation, or the unique intersectionality comprised of culture and context to make a meaningful impact in an engagement. Perspectives are shaped through one's cultural background, core values, individual traits, as well as communication, behavior, and norms. A purely intellectual understanding of the concepts of culture and context only scratches the surface of a coach's capability, and that learning through experience is essential for development (Sue & Sue, 2016). Awareness also demands that the coach builds a level of comfort with integrating cultural and contextual differences, but also build enough awareness for critical examination, and to challenge many of the norms, expectations, and assumptions that operate within a cultural system (Shoukry & Cox, 2018). Cultivating awareness can be accomplished through reflective practice and critical thinking which challenges established structures and norms (Cox, 2013), and through continuing education.

### ***Attending to Culture and Context in the Engagement***

While awareness is one competency, it is meaningless until the coach attends to culture and context during the course of the engagement. Plaister-Ten (2009) notes that the coach is the key instrument in determining how an issue within a coaching engagement is impacted by culture. Plaister-Ten (2016) highlights the importance of the “cultural self” (the internal guide that defines the culturally appropriate way to do things) and that a coach that is aware of this framework has the potential to operate at a deeper emotional level, which results in the ability for the participant to surface more options during the course of their engagement. Shoukry and Cox (2018) notes the more than just driving change within the individual, that it is equally important for the coach to understand how the individual’s social environment is impacted by these changes. Attending to culture and context can happen formally through intake forms or structured intake interviews that explicitly ask questions that heightens the cultural self, or “in the moment” during a coaching session when a participant makes a comment that implies a culturally held assumption.

### ***Developing Integrative Complexity***

Integrative complexity is the ability to accept different worldviews, followed by the ability to develop schemas that integrate these competing worldviews (Tadmor et al., 2009). Rosinski (2010) states, “Intercultural coaching assumes a ‘multiple realities’ view of the world. Culture, from this perspective, is highly contextual, dynamic, and fluid” (Rosinski, 2010, p. 129). It is up to the coach to adapt and work with culture and context in service of their clients, rather than use culture and context as rigid tools for categorizing and limiting the potential of the coaching engagement. Abbott (2010) warns that examining culture could provide clarity within complexity but can also become a means of simplistic interpretations that lead to stereotyping. Plaister-Ten (2016) offers that a coach can gain an understanding of the participant’s cultural

norms ahead of the engagement, but that this awareness must be set aside in order to fully engage in the coaching relationship. Cultivating integrative complexity also means checking one's own schema about an observation in the moment of a coaching session, while having the ability to hold that observation as an equal perspective on the truth, without forcing the direction of the coaching in a way that merely serves to confirm their version of that truth.

### ***Comprehending Positionality, Privilege, and Power***

Equally important in the process of building awareness is to understand positionality, privilege, and power (Merriam & Bierema, 2013). In order to be fully effective, a coach will need to be cognizant of these three factors. Positionality is how our unique cultural and contextual attributes intersect to determine our position within the world and how the world interacts with us. Privilege is positionality that creates unearned power differentials. Power is the ability to change or influence others (Merriam & Bierema, 2013). Singh et al. (2020) emphasize that it is critical to be conscious of how the power dynamic influences a helping relationship, and that power is key to the system of colonization that a profession perpetuates. Abbott (2010) further comments that the field of cross-cultural coaching has been the realm of Western perspectives and business practices. Plaister-Ten (2016) and Abbott and Salomaa (2016) argue that Western philosophies and approaches to coaching may also not align with the values of a culture, especially those of Eastern philosophies, and that awareness of this on the part of the coach is tantamount. Shoukry and Cox (2018) challenge the position of neutrality that is espoused within the coaching profession, stating that the profession itself is a cultural device that is heavily influenced by Western ideology with a bias toward individualism while dismissing collectivism. An example of this might move away from asking a participant "what do you want?" and inquire about how this impact the participant's role within the societal system in which they operate. Shoukry and Cox further state that while the profession heralds itself as a

means of growth and development, it can serve as a vehicle for social control, especially in an organizational environment where the triangular relationship exists between the organization, participant, and the coach. A coach within the triangular relationship often finds themselves in a situation of how much to prioritize the goals and feedback that comes from the organization, and they need to decide how to act on this information without compromising the participant. Finally, Sue and Sue (2016) invites helping professionals to explore their racial and cultural identities, acknowledge that cultural conditioning has normalized certain societal prejudices, and to comprehend the fact that certain professionals may still be benefitting from the actions of their ancestors. With an understanding of the four themes that contribute to culturally and contextually sustainable coaching, it is important to examine the factors that determine culturally and contextually sustainable instructional design.

### **Culturally and Contextually Sustainable Instructional Design**

Culturally sustainable coaching begins with culturally sustainable curricula. Barosa-Pereira (2014) argues for the importance of coach training around cultural awareness through advanced training programs. Lane (2016) notes that the majority of coaches are trained in a linear fashion that begins with the introduction of a model, namely from a psychological perspective, then evolves to the integration of that model from multiple perspectives. At that point, coaches are then encouraged to then construct their own model based on their own experiences. The challenge with this means of teaching, Lane argues, is that coaches may focus on the content of which tools and models to use, and may miss the rich contextual nature of the client sitting across from them. While cultural competency is arguably important for a coach to incorporate within their coaching practice, their first official endeavor into the coaching profession usually occurs through participation in coach training. The instructional designers who create the curricula determine what content is offered within training. Much like the



coaching profession, instructional design as a standalone field is still a new and relatively undefined area of study (Sharif & Cho, 2015). Also similar to the coaching profession, innovations in technology offered new opportunities to approach instructional design and learning (Sharif & Cho, 2015). Rogers (2007) stresses the importance of cultural competence as a matter of fairness due to the volume of content being developed and exported out of the West, and emphasizes the tension that instructional designers often feel between acknowledging cultural differences in their work verses what they are being compensated to produce. Western models of instructional design provide inadequate strategies for self-examination on the part of the designer for addressing culture during the process (DeLorme, 2018). Delorme (2018) adds that since the designer is an instrument in the overall process, that a simultaneous cycle of inward self-reflection is needed in concert with the outward process of design. Since instructional design draws from pedagogical practice, the discussions around culture within pedagogy shows relevance. Paris (2012) describes the evolving goals of pedagogy in the United States from one of assimilation within the dominant culture, to a culturally sustaining pedagogy, that calls for cultural awareness and competence for teaching in a pluralistic society. Ladson-Billings (2014) emphasizes that most practitioners offer a superficial interpretation of culture where courses on multiculturalism emphasize static artifacts of cultural history, traditional practices and customs. To fully embrace a more dynamic understanding of culture within education, there is an evolution from cultural competence, which is an understanding of one's own culture while celebrating other cultures, to one of culturally sustainable pedagogy which actively celebrates and supports multiculturalism and cultural pluralism (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris, 2012).

There are three important factors for creating culturally and contextually sustainable instructional design. First, culture influences perceptions about learning and teaching (Rogers,

2007). Since instructional designers are the primary instrument through which content is created, it is essential to have a heightened awareness of cultural differences and the context in which the training is being delivered (Rogers, 2007). Second, it is important to incorporate reflective practice and self-awareness on the part of the designer (DeLorme, 2018). Finally, as the field of instructional design continues to evolve, instructional designers must evolve with it. This can be accomplished through some form of professional development such as communities of practice or formal training to support designers (Sharif & Cho, 2015). All three of these factors can be the catalysts for culturally and contextually sustainable design. While keeping in mind the necessary competencies for culturally sustainable instructional design, it is also imperative to examine the knowledge, motivation and organizational influences of the instructional designers to better understand how culture and context are prioritized within coach training curricula.

### **Instructional Designers' Knowledge, Motivation and Organizational Influences**

At both the individual and organizational level, "...it is impossible for any real change to occur without...diagnosing the human causes and identifying appropriate solutions" (Clark & Estes, 2008, p. 41) In order for the coaching profession to offer training to align with the new ICF core competencies, it is important to start by examining the different types of influences that exist and how they play a role in addressing how the instructional designers create culturally and contextually sustainable curricula.

Clark and Estes (2008) stressed the importance of identifying three critical factors that must be examined while analyzing a problem in service of achieving a goal. These factors include the following: 1) knowledge and skills, 2) motivation around achieving the identified goal, and 3) organizational factors that may contribute to or prevent that goal from being achieved. All three factors combined can offer a comprehensive overview of any performance gaps that may need to be addressed.

## **Knowledge and Skills-Related Influences**

Knowledge and skills are foundational factors in goal attainment (Clark & Estes, 2008). Rueda (2011) pointed out that while knowledge may present as a simple matter, it may be far more complex when examined. Clark and Estes (2008) added to this argument by stating that the factors contributing to this complexity may be lack of awareness on the part of the person, or lack of communication within the organization. Therefore, it is important to be able to accurately identify the knowledge gaps that may prevent the attainment of a goal. Equally important is for the instructional designers to successfully take the construct of culture and context and identify tangible competencies that will guide the identification of the culturally sustainable knowledge and skills that are necessary for coaching.

Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) presented a comprehensive approach to categorizing knowledge by presenting four knowledge types: factual, conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive. Factual and conceptual knowledge can both be categorized as “the knowledge of the ‘what,’ or declarative knowledge” (Seli, 2020, 2:10). Declarative knowledge focuses primarily on facts and concepts, along with an integration of those concepts within a knowledge area (Schraw et al., 2015). The instructional designers’ knowledge of the newly revised ICF core competencies, along with the instructional designers’ knowledge of the conceptual frameworks around coaching across cultural boundaries is declarative knowledge that are categorized as conceptual.

Procedural knowledge is described as the knowledge of the “how,” and more specifically, the knowledge of how to do something, specifically around skills, techniques, and methodology (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Schraw et al., 2015). Procedural knowledge can include the instructional designers’ skills related to incorporating cultural competencies into a coaching engagement. More specifically, these competencies include the following: cultural intelligence,

complexity theory, metacognition, and cultural orientations framework (Plaister-Ten, 2016; Rosinski, 2010).

Finally, metacognitive knowledge is “the awareness of one’s own cognition and particular cognitive processes” (Rueda, 2011, p. 28). Within learning, this knowledge also includes an understanding of how individuals learn, metacognitive awareness, along with a knowledge of how learners will control and monitor their learning, metacognitive control (Mayer, 2011). Metacognition is important for complex problem-solving as it not only allows individuals to use knowledge to apply it in unique ways across different situations, but it allows for individuals to seek out additional ways to connect their knowledge (Klafehn et al., 2013). Metacognitive processes and skills are necessary for intercultural interactions (Klafehn et al., 2013). When culture becomes a construct within metacognition, the ability to monitor one’s cultural knowledge, assumptions, and behavior are key components of cultural intelligence (Ang et al., 2007; Goh et al., 2011). Metacognitive knowledge also extends not only to awareness of others, but awareness of one’s own cultural biases and how these biases may impact their behavior when working across cultural differences (Sue & Torino, 2005). Sue (1998) uses the term “dynamic sizing” as a metacognitive process in psychotherapy as the ability to adapt to either generalize or individualize cultural knowledge and experience when appropriate to do so. Klafehn, et al. (2013) stress that while metacognition has been highlighted in both cognitive and educational studies, the importance of metacognition within cross-cultural contexts has been overlooked. This could be attributed to the continued challenge of assessing cultural metacognition within research (Chiu et al., 2013).

Van Der Horst and Albertyn (2018) state that through coaching, clients can build their skills pertaining to pattern recognition and systems awareness, which builds the metacognitive traits of abstract conceptualization. They assess that metacognition in cross-cultural coaching has

two important applications for practice. The first application is the focus on awareness, mindfulness, and perspective-taking, which are techniques that are commonly used in coaching. The second is the use of metacognitive strategies to be cognizant of the implicit biases that emerge from complexity and cultural differences. Van Der Horst and Albertyn continued that very little literature exists around the meaningful application of metacognitive cultural intelligence (CQ) into the reflective practice of culturally sustainable coaching, and that most of the literature draws upon work that defines and categorizes cultural artifacts. While progress is being made to integrate metacognitive CQ into coaching, its' importance is still being described only within the context of cross-cultural coaching. The next sections will present the instructional designers' assumed knowledge references needed to make revisions to their training curricula to reflect the newly revised core competency.

### ***Instructional Designers' Knowledge Pertaining to Culture and Context***

This study will explore the extent to which instructional designers have the foundational understanding of the competencies around culture and context. To fully translate the core competencies into their curricula, instructional designers will need an understanding of how to update or revise their curricula to define concepts such as context and culture for the learners. There are four distinct pieces of declarative knowledge that instructional designers may need to familiarize themselves with when developing curricula.

### ***Defining Culture and Context in Relationship to Their Curriculum***

How culture and context are defined and prioritized determines how these topics are introduced into both the direct instruction and experiential learning curricula. This can include defining what culture and context is for both the coach and participant and how context and culture are attended to during a coaching engagement. There may also be nuances on how culture and context are defined within different coaching specializations. A program that focuses

exclusively on executive coaching may have a different approach from a program the focuses exclusively on life or health coaching.

### ***Understanding Intersectionality Within a Greater System***

Understanding the intersection of race, culture, ethnicity, gender, and ability creates a unique lens in which to view the world, which influences the viewpoints of both coach and client (Sue et al., 1992). To complement the importance of intersectionality, it is equally important that an understanding that multiple realities of the world may exist (Rosinski, 2010). Culturally sustainable coaching employs a constructivist approach to the engagement, acknowledging the interdependencies and interconnectedness of culture within a greater system (Plaister-Ten, 2016).

### ***Key Frameworks and Tools for Culturally Sustainable Coaching***

Understanding one or more frameworks pertaining to cultural intelligence or intercultural coaching is fundamental for culturally and contextually sustainable coaching. Examples of these include Rosinski's (2003) Cultural Orientations Framework, Earley and Ang's (2003) concept of cultural intelligence (CQ), and the Cross-Cultural Kaleidoscope model by Plaister-Ten (2016). While understanding the frameworks is an important competency for the instructional designers, how this knowledge is incorporated into their unique training programs is part of procedural knowledge.

### ***Cultural Knowledge***

Cultural knowledge gained through both education and personal experience creates an understanding of the norms and values amongst different cultures (Ang et al., 2007). Goh et al. (2009) describe that understanding the social dynamics of interacting with a particular culture is put into use by culturally appropriate behaviors and interactions around specific beliefs, practices, and forms of communication. This understanding extends to an awareness that both

coach and client may live and operate in different sociopolitical systems with respect to how marginalized groups are viewed and treated (Sue et al., 1992).

### ***Instructional Designers' Ability to Incorporate Culture and Context Into a Coaching***

#### ***Engagement***

The ability to take the conceptual frameworks around culturally sustainable coaching and translate them into tools that coaches can leverage during their coaching engagements is a procedural knowledge. Because culture can be subconsciously or unconsciously integrated into how both the coach and participant operate, there are three specific groups of competencies that the instructional designer may need to draw upon to train emerging coaches in cultural awareness and competency. These competencies focus around techniques, training activities, and direct instruction.

#### ***Techniques***

Educating coaches on the importance to attending to culture and context within the coaching engagement is fundamental to raising awareness. Without adequate acknowledgement and attention on the part of the coach to the cultural worldview that the client operates, the engagement may not produce the results they seek. Some examples of techniques may involve the choice of language such as verbal and non-verbal cues and the use of silence as a form of communication.

#### ***Activities***

There are some activities that helps individuals increase their cultural perspective and shifts their awareness-building. LoFrisco and Osbourne (2012) stress the importance of experiential activities in deepening the learning of students when it comes to building cultural awareness. These can involve but are not limited to, guided immersive activities, practice coaching sessions, and group reflections. Van Der Horst and Albertyn (2018) focused on the

metacognitive strategies of awareness, perspective-taking, and mindfulness within an experiential learning environment in order to heighten the learning for students.

### ***Direct instruction***

Creating content for facilitators to deliver culturally sustainable instruction is important. This content can cover, but is not limited to: How choice is viewed within coaching (Plaister-Ten, 2016), definitions of context and culture, the importance of context and culture within a coaching engagement, respect for differences, and the constructs of unconscious bias and stereotyping.

### ***Instructional Designers' Awareness of Their Own Level of Cultural and Contextual Competencies***

Self-awareness is identified as a metacognitive knowledge type, and is one of the most critical pieces of knowledge necessary for designing curricula for emerging coaches. Because instructional designers are in the position of designing learning experiences for others, they not only need to build their own self-awareness around their own cultural perspectives and biases in relationship to coaching clients from different cultures and context, but they also need to be able to help individuals build their awareness and control around culture and context. Curriculum that challenges aspiring coaches to build in a reflective practice that builds their awareness, checks their assumptions and challenge their biases is essential for culturally sustainable coaching (van Der Horst & Albertyn, 2018). What instructional designers consider to be important will inevitably end up in the curricula. If cultural context, frameworks and skills are not considered fundamental to the process, then the content may be de-emphasized or not included at all. Sue et al. (1992) as well as van Der Horst and Albertyn (2018) stressed the importance of developing awareness and sensitivity to one's own heritage, uncover any blind spots and examine one's own biases and prejudices in context to different backgrounds and intersectional lenses. Without this



work on the part of the instructional designers and later the coaches who take part in the training, challenges emerge. By not understanding oneself or the developing cultural awareness, there are the potential dangers of, “personal and professional frustration, an inability to build trust and achieve consensus, wasted time, missed business opportunities and loss of revenue” (van Der Horst & Albertyn, 2018). Table 2 presents the necessary declarative, procedural, and metacognitive knowledge influences that are necessary for the instructional designers at the training programs to successfully integrate the cultural competencies into their training curricula.

**Table 2**

*Assumed Knowledge Influences*

Assumed Knowledge Influence	Knowledge Type
Instructional designers’ knowledge of the newly revised ICF core competencies	Declarative
Instructional designers’ knowledge of the conceptual frameworks around coaching across cultural and contextual boundaries.	Declarative
Instructional designers’ knowledge of incorporating cultural and contextual competencies into a coaching engagement. These competencies include: cultural intelligence, complexity theory, and metacognition.	Procedural
Instructional designers’ self-awareness around their own cultural and contextual perspectives in relationship to coaching clients from different backgrounds.	Metacognitive

## **Motivational Influences**

Clark and Estes (2008) described both knowledge and motivation as complimentary psychological systems that serve as key influencers in human performance. While knowledge allows individuals to recall facts and procedures in order to attain their goals, motivation plays upon the processes of active choice, persistence and mental effort in order to start the activity and determine the level of energy that is sustained in that activity towards completion (Clark & Estes, 2008). Motivation is influenced by psychological constructs such as attributions, goal-orientation, self-efficacy and values (Rueda, 2011). To explore the motivational forces that influence how the concept of culture is incorporated into the instructional design of coach training curricula, it is pertinent to examine the motivation-related influences on the instructional designers.

Sociocultural influences such as culture and context are important in motivation (Graham & Hudley, 2007; Rueda, 2011). These sociocultural influences can either heighten or dampen motivation, due to the concepts of self-efficacy and utility value. If an instructional designer from the majority culture is aware of culture as a construct, but lacks the motivation to incorporate it into curricula because it is perceived as too esoteric, or removes it from the facilitation guides due to a misperception that it is too difficult to explain to emerging coaches, it alters the training experience for the coaches, and eventually impacts the thousands of coaching engagements that a coach may conduct throughout the course of their professional career.

### ***Instructional designers' value for incorporating cultural competencies***

The ability for an individual to determine the perceived value of a task, along with their perception of how successful they will be at performing that task, defines what Eccles (2015) described as Expectancy Value Theory. Values are a powerful driver of motivation because they define an individual's views on their reasons for engaging with the task (Clark & Estes, 2008).

Of the four dimensions of value outlined by Eccles (2015), intrinsic, attainment, utility, and perceived cost, attainment and utility value will be examined in relation to the research questions.

Attainment value examines the connection between an individual's preferences and identities, and weighs the importance of the activity against an individual's values. Attainment value is directly tied to the aspects of identity, including an individual's goals, socially constructed narratives of norms and behaviors, and an idealized image of self (Eccles, 2015). In concert with attainment value, utility value examines the external benefits of completing the task, and how well the task aligns with an individual's short- and long-term goals (Clark & Estes, 2008; Eccles, 2015). In the case of the instructional designers, this study explores how much the topics of culture and context are valued in comparison to other foundational coaching skills, such as active listening, perspective-shifting, or asking powerful questions.

### ***Instructional Designers' Confidence in Their Ability to Effectively Create Culturally Sustainable Curricula***

The self-confidence behind an individual's ability to see a task to completion is the cornerstone of self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 2018). Bandura (1995) also stated that an individual's motivation is based more on their beliefs and perceptions, rather than what may be objectively taking place. In addition, Rueda (2011) emphasized that factors such as knowledge as well as prior successes and failures create the beliefs that will be instrumental in determining success, especially when there is difficulty in completing the task. As an individual's self-efficacy functions within their own intersectional lens, culture and context plays a vital part in self-efficacy theory. As Bandura noted, "Perceived self-efficacy is not a global trait but a differentiated set of self-beliefs linked to distinct realms of functioning. Therefore, self-efficacy measures should be tailored to the selected actuary domain rather than cast as a one-size-fits-all

trait” (Bandura, 2018, p. 133). Clark and Estes made one important point about motivation in relation to culture and context. They stated that while motivation plays a role in service of completing a task, equally important is the danger of creating barriers to motivation by mishandling cultural differences and stereotyping (Clark & Estes, 2008). An individual’s self-efficacy leads to an increased motivation to not only engage in, but persist at a task (Rueda, 2011). If an instructional designer perceives the topic of culture to be too nuanced or challenging around which to effectively design a curriculum, there may be a risk of their self-efficacy around the task being compromised, leading to either designing an ineffective program that offers a superficial approach to the topics of context and culture, or worse yet, a curriculum that engages in broad stereotyping in order to easily explain the differences between cultures.

For instructional designers, it will be important to explore their motivation in several areas. First, it is important to understand their level of self-efficacy around designing curriculum that not only presents the concepts of context and culture, but deepens the learning for coaching students by creating activities that model culturally sensitive and culturally sustainable coaching skills and behaviors. Second, it is important to understand the beliefs they have about a heavily contextual and nuanced topic like culture. Finally, it is important to understand how they perceive the topic of culture based on their prior instructional design experience, combined with any formal or informal learning they have acquired around the topics of culture and context. Table 3 presents the motivation constructions as well as the assumed motivation influences that address culture and context in coaching.

**Table 3***Assumed Motivation Influences*

Motivation Construct	Assumed Motivation Influence
Attainment value	The instructional designers' value for incorporating cultural competencies into their curricula
Utility value	The instructional designers' perceived benefits of incorporating cultural competencies into their curricula
Self-Efficacy	The instructional designers' confidence in their ability to effectively create culturally sustainable curricula

**Organizational Influences**

The role that the organization plays is the final key influencer that exists when examining any problem of practice (Clark & Estes, 2008). An organization's ability to perform well can be attributed to the processes, materials, and the inter- and intra- departmental interactions within the organization (Clark & Estes, 2008). Organizations are complex interconnected systems with their own cultures which can impact how an organization can perform and react in relationship to effectiveness and change (Clark & Estes, 2008). Organizational culture is a "...conscious and unconscious understanding of who we are, what we value, and how we do what we do as an organization" (Clark & Estes, 2008, p. 107). Schein (2010) identified the tangible and intangible forces of an organization such as: behavior, group norms, values, rules, skills, habits, meanings, and rituals. Because cultural knowledge can be up to 90% unconscious, it is important to approach any change with not only shifting the knowledge, skills, and motivation of its employees, but also understand which aspects of the organizational culture will need to be addressed for that change to be successful (Clark & Estes, 2008). There are two types of influences that impact organizational change: cultural models and cultural settings (Gallimore & Goldenberg, 2001). Cultural models and settings are an interconnected and ever-evolving set of

processes that continue to be influenced by the individuals and groups that identify with them (Rueda, 2011).

Cultural models are a shared understanding of how the world works. They are not visible and are expressed through rules, norms, and behaviors and shapes the way an organization is structured in terms of values and policies (Gallimore & Goldenberg, 2001; Rueda, 2011). Two cultural models that are highlighted by the ICF in its core values statement include values placed on integrity and excellence as well as a commitment to inclusivity and diversity.

### ***ICF's Culture of Integrity and Excellence Sets a High Standard for Coaching Quality and Competence as Reflected in Its Core Competencies***

By updating its core competencies that reflects its understanding of the role of the coaching profession in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the ICF strives to set high standards for quality and competence (ICF, 2020b). Gray et al. (2016) states that all professions draw upon principles that encompass responsibility, competence, integrity, and respect, and that the training and status that professional associations provides ensures continued affinity to the profession. George (2013) argues that since coaching is an ambiguously defined profession, standards and credentialing creates allows for the coaching profession to develop their own set of values, rules, and norms for the profession, as well as an opportunity for coaches to differentiate themselves from non-credentialed coaches in the marketplace.

### ***ICF's Commitment to Inclusivity and Diversity***

In its commitment to putting people first without compromising quality (ICF, 2020b), the ICF values its commitment to being an international organization through inclusive policies and practices. Markova et al. (2013) notes that professional associations offer members a sense of professional identity and a shared set of norms. By articulating a commitment to inclusivity and

diversity, the ICF sends a signal to its membership that inclusivity is valued by its organization, and thus becomes a norm amongst its membership.

The other organizational influence happens through cultural settings. Cultural settings are a more concrete manifestation of the cultural model that adds contextual layers within an organization such as a physical location (Rueda, 2011). Rueda continues that organizational challenges are often the root cause that create other gaps but when there is clarity around cultural models and settings, then it is easier to understand the thinking and behavior amongst those who are part of the organization. Studying the ICF's rollout of the new core competencies, cultural models around new headcount and communications emerge as they signal concrete investments in building the relationships between ICF and the coach training programs.

### ***ICF's Investment in the Relationship With the Coach Training Programs***

Markova et al. (2013) found that members continue their affiliation with professional associations due to a perception of value for being part of the association as well as the delivery of good customer service for the membership. In the case of coach training programs, the ICF serves as a means of validation of the legitimacy of their programs, as well as a conduit by which the programs are promoted and advertised on the ICF website. Therefore, proactive and effective communication between a professional association and its stakeholders is critical. One way the ICF created a cultural setting in its commitment to good service to coach training programs came through its appointment of a Vice President of Coach Training. This newly created role manages the relationships with the training programs. This ensures that a line of communication will be opened up in order to inform the programs of any developments and updates to the core competencies. In December 2019, the ICF held informative webinars for representatives of training programs to learn about the updated competencies, during which information on culture

and context was shared. Table 4 outlines the assumed organizational influences as it pertains to the ICF and its support of the training programs.

**Table 4**

*Assumed Organizational Influences*

Organizational influence category	Assumed organizational influences
Cultural Model Influence 1	ICF's culture of integrity and excellence sets a high standard for coaching quality and competence as reflected in its core competencies.
Cultural Model Influence 2	ICF is committed to inclusivity and values the diversity of its global stakeholders.
Cultural Setting Influence 1	ICF's investment in a new position that manages the relationship with coach training programs that leads to increased communication and relationship-building.



## **Reflection and Transition**

This chapter focused on the key theories and conceptual frameworks in which this study is based. As the existing coaching profession will need to adapt to an increasingly culturally diverse world, it also needs to determine what training and experience will best position future coaches for professional success. Chapter three will discuss the process of recruitment and data collection amongst the training programs that will help provide greater understanding around the topic of context and culture in professional coaching.

### Chapter Three: Methods

The purpose of this study was to evaluate how coach training programs develop curricula that trains aspiring coaches to incorporate culture and context into their coaching practice. Understanding how these programs design curricula that trains coaches in language and techniques to effectively attend to a participant's cultural, racial, language, and gender identities will be examined. This analysis focused on the knowledge, motivation, and organizational influences related to achieving this organizational goal.

While a complete evaluation project would focus on all three stakeholders (the ICF Competencies and Standards Committee, instructional designers working within the programs, and the professional coaches themselves), for practical purposes, the stakeholder of focus was the instructional designers working within the programs. As each institution may have a unique approach to coaching and their own proprietary methodologies in which to train participants, a qualitative approach using realist questions honored these diverse approaches to training. As Maxwell (2013) emphasizes, the purpose of qualitative study is less about generalizability and more about understanding, describing, and interpreting the problem of practice. As such, the overarching questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. What knowledge, skills, and organizational support do instructional designers need to design curricula that is culturally and contextually sustainable?
2. What are the recommendations for organizational practice in the areas of knowledge, motivation, and organizational resources that training programs need to help them update their curricula?

Using a qualitative approach, a survey was generated for instructional designers, and interviews were conducted with representatives who oversee the curriculum development of the training programs. In addition, original artifacts from the ICF were gathered and studied. This

chapter presents the research design and methods for sampling, data collection and analysis, as well as outlining the measures and caution taken around trustworthiness, ethics, credibility, and any underlying limitations pertaining to the study.

### **Participating Stakeholders**

The stakeholder population of focus were the instructional designers who work within the training programs. Coach training programs are broadly categorized in a few ways. These include independently-run non-profit or for-profit institutions that promoted their proprietary coach training methodologies. Universities also offer training programs, namely through their extension or executive education programs. Finally, there are in-house certification programs within organizational settings. As coaching became increasingly professionalized and the ICF required the completion of the CKA for ICF certification, it is assumed that training programs needed to align with the core competencies outlined by the ICF. With the introduction of the new core competencies in October 2019 that contains language around context and culture, this study examined the knowledge and motivators of the instructional designers around designing culturally and contextually sustainable curricula. It is also important to note that within smaller institutions, the instructional designer role was filled by one person, usually the founder of the institution.

This study involved using a purposeful, criterion-based sampling approach. Purposeful sampling is a non-random sampling technique by soliciting participants who meet a certain pre-determined criteria to participate, and recruitment continues until enough participants have been recruited (Johnson & Christensen, 2015) Purposeful sampling is “based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned.” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 96) There was an assumption surrounding this study that instructional designers have the motivation to stay abreast

of the most recent updates to the ICF core competencies. Another assumption is that the instructional designers have the knowledge on how to implement these new competencies into their respective curricula.

### **Survey Sampling Strategy**

As of April 2020, there were 313 ACTP and 516 ACSTH programs in the United States that have a relationship with the ICF (L. Davis, personal communication, June 4, 2020). Participating programs were identified through the ICF's database of existing training programs. ACTP and ACSTH programs were selected for this research as they offered comprehensive training to pass the CKA. The survey was administered at the beginning of the study. The ICF vice president who manages the relationships with the coach training programs worked with the internal communications team with the ICF to email to the contacts within the ACTP and ACSTH programs with an invitation to participate in the study (Appendix E). The email invitation contained information about the study along with a request for instructional designers to participate by clicking on an embedded link to enroll. This survey remained open for two weeks. Survey responses were kept anonymous, and questions about the programs were limited to the type of training program and the respondent's role within the organization.

### **Interview Sampling Strategy**

At the end of the survey, participants were presented with a separate link so that they could opt-in to participate in an hourlong interview to better understand how context and culture were being introduced into their curricula. Eighteen survey participants indicated an interest in participating in the interview. Email invitations with a Calendly link were sent to those 18 participants. Of those 18, 10 participants completed the registration process for an interview.

### **Sampling Criteria and Rationale**

The following criteria guided the sampling for this research.

***Criterion 1***

All participating institutions must offer an ACTP or ACSTH program in compliance with the standards met by the ICF.

***Criterion 2***

A representative from an institution who designs coach training curricula, irrespective of their title.

***Criterion 3***

All participating institutions must be based in North America, although they may offer training in other countries. This is due to an established history of coaching in North America and the highest proportion of ICF member coaches being based there.

***Criterion 4***

All participating institutions must have been operating for at least five years before the 2019 update to the core competencies in order to have stabilized its curriculum and to be able to see how the curriculum will evolve with the new core competencies.

Once a potential participant provided their contact information after the survey, an email invitation from my USC email account was sent, thanking them for their willingness to participate, along with a link to schedule their interview. This email outlined the purpose of the study and had a copy of the informed consent form attached (Appendix E). A link to my calendar was included to begin the scheduling process. Also included in the message was an offer to provide a summary of the findings of this study in hopes that it will be beneficial in the further development of their curricula. Finally, the recruitment letters and the informed consent letter addressed any concerns that the participating institution may have around their intellectual property will be addressed – particularly, 1) that specific identifying information will not be contained in the study, 2) that the purpose of this study is to collect information around culture

and context in their curriculum, and any proprietary techniques or knowledge will not be revealed through the course of the study.

### **Data Collection and Instrumentation**

This study utilized two primary methods of data collection: surveys and interviews. A survey was used to collect demographic information and determine how culture and context are prioritized when compared with other core competencies. Interviews with instructional designers were leveraged to gain an in-depth understanding of the knowledge, motivation, and organizational factors around incorporating the new ICF core competencies into their curriculum design. Interviewing provided depth and richness and context to better understand what changes have been made in the curricula, and why particular theories, approaches and techniques were leveraged in instruction. Collecting data through both the survey and interviews provides context and allows the opportunity to view the problem of practice from different lenses.

#### **Surveys**

Maxwell (2013) states that utilizing different methods to collect information is a common practice in qualitative research as it affords researchers the ability to better support their conclusions and allows to understand multiple aspects of the phenomena. Since there are 829 coach training programs in the United States, (L. Davis, personal communication, June 4, 2020) surveys are also a means of capturing information from a broad range of the sample population as quickly as possible. The survey will be administered using Qualtrics. The link to the survey will be embedded in the introductory message being sent out by the ICF. There are seven questions (Appendix A). Once the participants complete the survey, they will be provided with a brief message thanking them for their participation and will be offered an option at the end of the survey to click another link to share their contact information in case they are willing to

participate in an hourlong interview as well as participate in a drawing for an opportunity to win one of four gift cards.

## **Interviews**

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state that interviewing as a primary means of data collection is based on understanding what information is needed and then deciding if interviewing is the best way to collect the data. To better understand the knowledge and motivational choices that instructional designers make in their curriculum design, along with gathering insights about how each program is being supported by the ICF, interviewing offers an opportunity to examine not only their final decisions, but to work through their reasoning behind these decisions and gain an understanding of the thought process behind these choices. Using a semi-structured interview allows for the questions to be asked in a more flexible manner than a highly structured interview, and will allow some freedom to follow up with probes that explore their decisions behind the types of theoretical frameworks to promote, why specific activities and tools are introduced to an aspiring coach to enable the necessary skills to not only just pass the CKA, but to flourish in their profession. Probes allow for an interviewer to make adjustments to the interview in the moment so that something more may be learned (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The probes may be used to better understand and gain context around the topics of utility value, motivation and metacognitive awareness experienced by the instructional designers in relationship to their choice of topics and activities for designing curriculum pertaining to culture and context.

Each participant was invited to one interview of about 60 minutes in length. At the end of each interview, I asked each participant if they would be open to a shorter follow-up interview for any clarifying questions. Interviews with the participants were conducted via the Zoom videoconferencing platform. Collecting data through online interviews served two purposes: online interviewing allows for the purposeful sampling across a wider geographic range, and

allows for the sessions to be recorded with permission (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). All interviews were conducted in English. In order to establish trust and rapport with the participant, adopting a flexible approach to interviewing was paramount (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Seidman, 2013). Since these interviews took place over Zoom, I took a few minutes at the start of the interview to exchange pleasantries, set clear expectations for the interview, and allow space for the participant to ask questions while paying attention to their non-verbal cues.

Five study-related interview questions were prepared, with an additional three demographic questions (Appendix B). Interview questions pertaining to knowledge focused around a designer's declarative and procedural knowledge around the topics of culture and context, followed by probes that ask for examples of how specific content was incorporated into the instructional design. Questions pertaining to motivation centered around the self-efficacy and utility value of incorporating cultural competencies and context into their curricula. There was one question that focused on cultural setting to connect back to the organizational influence and the relationship between the ICF and the programs.

During the interview itself, I took notes to record any particular insights or observations that take place during the interview. Taking notes during the interview is beneficial as it allowed for a researcher to note a reaction to something the participant says, or to signal an important point, and to even help pace an interview (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

### **Data Analysis**

The preferred way to analyze data in a qualitative study is to conduct it simultaneously with data collection simply because a qualitative investigator is aware of the research questions and has determined a purposeful sample in which to collect the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Maxwell (2013) offers three strategies for qualitative data analysis: coding, memos, and narrative analysis. Coding and memos were the most prevalent methods of analysis for this



study. While a deductive approach utilizing a priori codes that map along the knowledge, motivation and organizational questions will be developed, there were emergent codes that appeared, and will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Four. Harding (2013) states that a priori and emergent codes are not entirely separate and that there will be themes that emerge that a researcher did not anticipate beforehand.

Harding (2013) outlines a straightforward process of data analysis, which involves the following steps: 1) Identifying categories, 2) Coding transcripts, 3) Reviewing codes, 4) Finding themes.

### **Identifying Categories**

Since this study contained both a survey and interviews, both data sources were instrumental in identifying any categories and initial themes in the data. The survey results provided both demographic information on the types of programs which participate in this study as well as preliminary insights into how culture and context are prioritized in curriculum development. This survey data complemented the insights gathered during the interviews.

In terms of the data collected from interviews, the initial step in the process included reading through any interview transcripts and correct any errors in transcription from the transcription software, and reference any notes that were taken during the interview. During this listening and reading, additional notes were taken and tentative ideas pertaining to categories and relationships started to be formulated (Maxwell, 2013).

### **Coding Transcripts**

Harding (2013) recommends that there are three elements to coding: summarizing, selecting and interpreting, and that there will be multiple iterative cycles during the course of coding to search for commonality which then helps in summarizing the codes. While going through the coding process, I took memos on what I was observing in the transcripts. Memos

were not only a way to capture thinking; they also facilitate thinking and analytic insights (Maxwell, 2013).

### **Reviewing Codes**

This stage was important to find commonality within the themes (Harding, 2013). Harding (2013) also states that this will be an iterative process, one that is rarely completed during the first pass at the data. This was also the stage for creating any sub-categories or discovering new categories in the data to provide any contextual clues to answer the question of how culture and context are addressed within coach training.

### **Finding Themes**

As a new researcher, finding similarities and differences was the primary objective (Harding, 2013) to build out themes. Codes around the knowledge influence included a definition of culture and context, procedural knowledge of how a culturally and contextually sustainable coaching engagement was addressed, and specific techniques around the choice of language as well as verbal and non-verbal cues. Codes around motivation focused on three factors. The first motivating factor was the instructional designers' utility value around context and culture. The second factor pertains to the level of self-efficacy around creating curricula that addresses culturally and contextually sustainable coaching. The final factor included the organizational influences that addresses the communication around the new core competencies between the ICF and the training programs.

### **Credibility and Trustworthiness**

In qualitative research, human beings are the primary instrument of data collection, and thus, the data is assessed in context to the researcher's subjective constructions of reality and how they interpret the world (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In response to this phenomenon, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) outline four safeguards to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness

of the data and how it is interpreted. They are: triangulation, respondent validation, reflexivity, and saturation of themes.

### **Triangulation**

Triangulation is a “powerful strategy for increasing the credibility or internal validity of your research” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 245). During the course of this study, data will be collected through surveys and interviews. Documents in the form of position statements, marketing materials, and the ICF website were used to provide additional context.

### **Respondent Validation**

Maxwell (2013) cites respondent validation, or the process of soliciting feedback about the data and conclusions directly from the study participants. Offering participants an opportunity to review the transcripts and allowing them to clarify or refine any of their statements, served as an important way of eliminating the possibility of misinterpretations on the part of the participants as well as any potential misinterpretations on my part from the data. Once the transcripts from each interview were completed and reviewed, a thank you email, along with the copy of the transcript was sent to each participant.

### **Reflexivity**

Reflexivity involves any assumptions, biases, and relationship to the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). There are two perspectives that I brought to this study. The first involves my identity as a professional coach with an educational background in psychology, and who has been working with directly with clients for 15 years. During the course of this process, I encountered different theoretical orientations on what constitutes effective coaching, and challenged myself to separate out the means of instruction from being able to identify and address the research questions. Of equal importance is for me was to reflect on any underlying assumptions or biases that could have impacted the collection and analysis of the data. For the

purposes of this research, it was important to reflect upon my own identity and worldview. As someone who is biracial, carries dual identities as both Okinawan-Japanese and American, was born, raised, and educated outside of the United States, I had to be acutely aware that I viewed the world with a different intersectional lens, and while the concept of context and culture is something that is very much part of my worldview, I approached this research with an understanding and respect for other worldviews around this topic.

### **Saturation of Themes**

Saturation of themes are reached when no new information emerges as new data is collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). When a consistency of themes arises around both the areas around procedural knowledge and motivation as it pertains to culture and context within coach training, it indicates a true saturation of themes.

### **Ethics**

The means of data collection within this study was to administer surveys and conduct interviews with instructional designers working within coach training programs based in the United States. Ethical considerations are paramount in working with human participants. Since I was the primary instrument of data collection during the course of a qualitative study, it was essential to take into consideration the responsibilities of conducting myself in a manner that upholds the ethical boundaries in order to maintain trust and integrity with the participants throughout the course of this study.

Informed consent was critical to the interview process. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) highlight, the researcher-participant relationship creates ethical dilemmas around the collection of data and the dissemination of findings, particularly in the area of how informed the consent should be in revealing the purpose of the study. In both the informed consent and recruitment letters (appendix D and E), participants were informed of the study and that their participation

was voluntary. This was reiterated verbally at the beginning of the interview. In addition, verbal permission was granted by participants in advance to record the interviews as they were conducted over Zoom. The initial permission was worded to reflect that participants could view the recording icon on the screen itself to serve as a reminder that the session was being recorded, and had the authority to stop the interview at any given time. Recordings of the interviews were stored on a password-protected computer.

ICF is the organization of study and the training programs are the stakeholder group of focus; therefore, it was important to consider my relationship as a dues-paying member of the organization. The primary relationships that I cultivated with the ICF was maintained through their research division and their training programs contact. This ensured that I was not trying to exert any influence on the organization as a member of the organization, and that my membership status was not called into question by the organization by conducting this research. In addition, the relationship between the ICF and the coach training programs were kept intact. While the ICF provided contact information for the coach training programs through their database, the outreach letters were clear that participation will not be mandatory.

Confidentiality of the research participants were ensured by stating that any identifying information of the participant organization is limited to two categories (independent and institutional). The names of the participants would be replaced with pseudonyms (Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.). In addition, no specifics or identifying information are to be shared with the ICF, only broad general concepts which will respect the ICF's interest in the findings while maintaining the confidentiality of the programs and participants. This will keep the focus "away from particular individuals and toward the general discussion of general concepts" (Glesne, 2011, p.172). Finally, since the focus of the research focused on how context and culture is

addressed in the curriculum, every effort was made to prevent the sharing of proprietary techniques in this research.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

One of the biggest delimitations experienced during this study was balancing between the quest for gaining knowledge around how context and culture is introduced during coach training, contrasted against the parameters outlined by the Clark and Estes gap analysis in order to identify effective performance interventions. Removing the Clark and Estes framework could have shifted the research in a more conceptual direction and further explored the metacognitive culture and identity formation, especially in relation to coaching and change. However, the advantage of having a gap analysis is the ability to recommend practical interventions that may positively impact thousands of coaches and their clients.

There were limitations of an interview-led approach to data collection; namely, how truthful the participants were around the topic, and how forthcoming the participants were around sharing any techniques that could be perceived as their intellectual property. Care was taken to set expectations around how this information was treated, and stated that the sharing of materials and their participation in the study was completely voluntary.

There were also some limitations that may arise from my personal and professional experiences. As a professionally trained coach, I had to be cognizant of any biases that came from my own experiences from undergoing coach training as well as the insights gained from years of experience working directly with participants. I was aware of the fact that within the coaching profession, there are many different types of training and that the training that I underwent as a coach is not necessary the *only* or *right* way to train. In addition, through my training and experience, I was aware of the techniques around open-ended questioning as well as keeping the balance of attending to a client while maintaining neutrality through unconditional

positive regard. However, my intersectional lens as a biracial person, along with my lived experience in intercultural environments influences and shapes my perspective of the world. This viewpoint may reinforce a bias that places importance on culture as a factor that needs to be addressed in coaching. I had to continually be mindful of these points when conducting the interviews and subsequent data analysis.

This chapter focused on the methods and procedures that will support the data collection in order to better understand how instructional designers introduce the competencies of culture and context into coach training program curricula. In addition, this chapter focused on the points around ethics and limitations around being the researcher as instrument in this qualitative study and its potential implications for this study. Chapter Four will focus on the data analysis from the surveys and interviews.

## **Chapter Four: Results and Findings**

This study evaluated the needs of the ICF to meet its goal of the global advancement of the coaching profession through the recent update to the coaching competencies. This evaluation model utilized the Clark and Estes' (2008) gap analysis framework, a systematic, analytical method that helps to clarify organizational goals. The analysis focused on knowledge, motivation and organizational influences related to achieving this organizational goal. An online anonymous survey and interviews were the primary means of data collection.

Chapter Two offered an in-depth review of the existing literature around culturally and contextually sustainable curricula and coaching. Chapter Three presented an overview of the conceptual framework, research plan, and methodology for the study. This chapter shares an overview of the data analysis, along with results and findings. Two primary questions that guide this study are as follows:

1. What knowledge, skills, and organizational support do instructional designers need to design curricula that is culturally and contextually sustainable?
2. What are the recommendations for organizational practice in the areas of knowledge, motivation, and organizational resources that training programs need to help them update their curricula?

### **Participating Stakeholders**

This study focused on the instructional designers who are responsible for designing the curricula within their respective training programs. As of 2020, there were 313 ACTP and 516 ACSTH programs based in the United States. Any of these institutions may also offer CCE credits. with the assistance of the vice President, Coach Training Programs for the ICF and the ICF marketing team, an email with the survey link was sent out to all ACTP and ACSTH



programs. There were 45 responses to the survey. From the survey participants, 10 opted to participate in an hourlong interview.

### Survey Participants

Data was collected from 45 ( $n = 45$ ) fully and partially completed anonymous online surveys over a two-week period. Demographic information of survey participants ( $n = 45$ ) by type of program and title are listed in Table 5. Sixteen of the 45 participants were affiliated solely with a training program that offered only the ACTP, while 14 of the 45 were affiliated only with an ACSTH program. Three were affiliated with both an ACTP and ACSTH program. The remaining participants offered a combination of ACTP, ACSTH, and CCE programs.

**Table 5**

*Descriptive Statistics of Survey Participants (N = 45)*

Variable	Number	
Type of program	ACTP Only	16
	ACSTH Only	14
	ACTP + ACSTH + CCE	6
	ACTP + CCE	4
	ACTP + ACSTH	3
	ACSTH + CCE	2
Role within program	Owner/Operator	9
	Owner/Operator, instructional designer, trainer	8
	Instructional designer, trainer	7
	Owner/Operator, instructional designer, administrator, trainer	6
	Administrator only	4
	Instructional designer, trainer	4
	Administrator, trainer	2
	Instructional designer, administrator	2
	Instructional designer only	1
	Owner/Operator, instructional designer, administrator, trainer	1
	Other (faculty)	1

There were a wide range of functions represented among the survey participants. Nine of the participants identified themselves as an owner/operator, while the remaining participants identified themselves in more than one role. This included those who identified as administrators only (4), administrator & trainer (2), instructional designers only (1), instructional designers and administrator (2), instructional designer/administrator/trainer (7), instructional designer/trainer (4), owner/operator, administrator, and trainer (1), owner/operator, instructional designer, administrator, and trainer (6), owner/operator, instructional designer & trainer (8), and other (1). It is inferred that owner/operator are also responsible for a variety of tasks that encompasses instructional design.

### **Interview Participants**

Out of the 45 participants, 18 indicated a willingness to participate in a follow-up interview. Of the 18, 10 scheduled time for an interview using Calendly. Nine of the 10 participants were affiliated with privately-owned, independently-operated training programs. One was affiliated with an institution of higher education. Seven of the 10 identified themselves as a founder of the institution. All 10 of the programs had been operating for more than five years. Of the 10 participants, nine identified as female, while one identified as male. Within the 10, one identified as a person of color who was, in their words, “White-passing,” and one identified as LGBTQ.

The following sections will discuss the findings and themes that were generated from survey and interviews. Each subsection will cover the assumed influences under knowledge, motivation, and organization that were covered in Chapter Two. The end of this chapter will include a synthesized analysis of the findings.

**Table 6***Demographic Information of Interview Participants (N = 10)*

Alias	Role	School type	Curriculum	Year started
Participant 1	Founder + CEO	Independent	ACSTH	2012
Participant 2	Co-Founder, instructional designer, facilitator, assessor	Independent	ACTP, ACSTH, CCE	1996
Participant 3	Partner, instructor, mentor, assessor	Independent	ACTP	2000
Participant 4	Director	Institution	ACTP	2005
Participant 5	Founder, training director, facilitator, assessor	Independent	ACTP	2003
Participant 6	Founder, facilitator	Independent	ACTP	2006
Participant 7	Instructional designer	Independent	ACTP	2014
Participant 8	Founder, instructional designer, facilitator	Independent	ACSTH	2010
Participant 9	Founder, instructional designer, facilitator	Independent	ACTP	2009
Participant 10	Founder, instructional designer, assessor	Independent	ACTP, ACSTH	2005

### Knowledge Results and Findings

Knowledge, and incorporating knowledge around culturally and contextually sustainable coaching into practice, comprise the bulk of this study's findings. The updated core

competencies that were introduced by the ICF included language around culture and context. How this language was interpreted by the instructional designers, and how that translated into curricula, tools, activities, and resources for aspiring coaches is also an area of focus. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) categorize knowledge by presenting four knowledge types: factual, conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive. The majority of findings focus on the factual and conceptual knowledge, also known as declarative knowledge. Within the findings, several key themes emerged around the knowledge influences. While training programs emphasize the importance for a coach to become aware of their own identity so that they can effectively coach across differences, there was broad variation amongst the participants of how they define culturally and contextually sustainable coaching. This broad variation was also reflected amongst participants as they experienced challenges around incorporating these topics into their curricula.

**Table 7***Assumed Knowledge Influences & Themes*

Assumed knowledge influences	Themes
Instructional designers' knowledge of the newly revised ICF core competencies (declarative)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Instructional designers were familiar with the updates to the core competencies.</li> <li>2. Varied levels of adaptation within curricula of new core competencies</li> </ol>
Instructional designers' knowledge of the conceptual frameworks around coaching across cultural and contextual boundaries. (declarative)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Variation in responses on how much the topics of culture and context were incorporated since the updates to the core competencies</li> <li>2. Culture &amp; contextual competence anchored by differences, awareness and understanding</li> </ol>
Instructional designers' knowledge of incorporating cultural and contextual competencies into a coaching engagement. (procedural)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Struggle with incorporating culture and context into coach training</li> <li>2. Power, Positionality, Privilege</li> </ol>
Instructional designers' self-awareness around their own cultural and contextual perspectives in relationship to coaching clients from different backgrounds. (metacognitive)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Self-awareness as foundation within curricula</li> </ol>
Emergent Influence: Language & consciousness around culture and context	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conflation of culture and context with diversity and inclusion</li> <li>2. Self-affirming language</li> <li>3. Beyond differences: unconditional positive regards</li> <li>4. Social justice lens</li> </ol>

## **Knowledge Influence 1: Instructional Designers' Knowledge of the Newly Revised ICF Core Competencies**

This study explored the extent to which instructional designers have the foundational understanding of the competencies around culture and context. Before examining the specific competencies around culture and context, it was important to understand how instructional designers were responding to the updates in the core competencies. Question three in the survey asked participants to what extent the programs updated their curricula in response to the new competencies. An interview question specifically asked participants how familiar they were with the new core competencies, along with probe that asked what they believed to be the most impactful changes that were made to the competencies. These questions were mainly focused on addressing declarative knowledge, specifically around their factual understanding of the core competencies. The survey and interview findings showed validation pertaining to the participants' declarative knowledge around the ICF updates to the core competencies. In addition, the findings were able to confirm the procedural knowledge pertaining to the knowledge and struggles around the instructional designers' ability to incorporate the topics of culture and context into the curricula and into a coaching engagement. Finally, the findings confirmed the designers' metacognitive awareness around their own cultural and contextual perspectives.

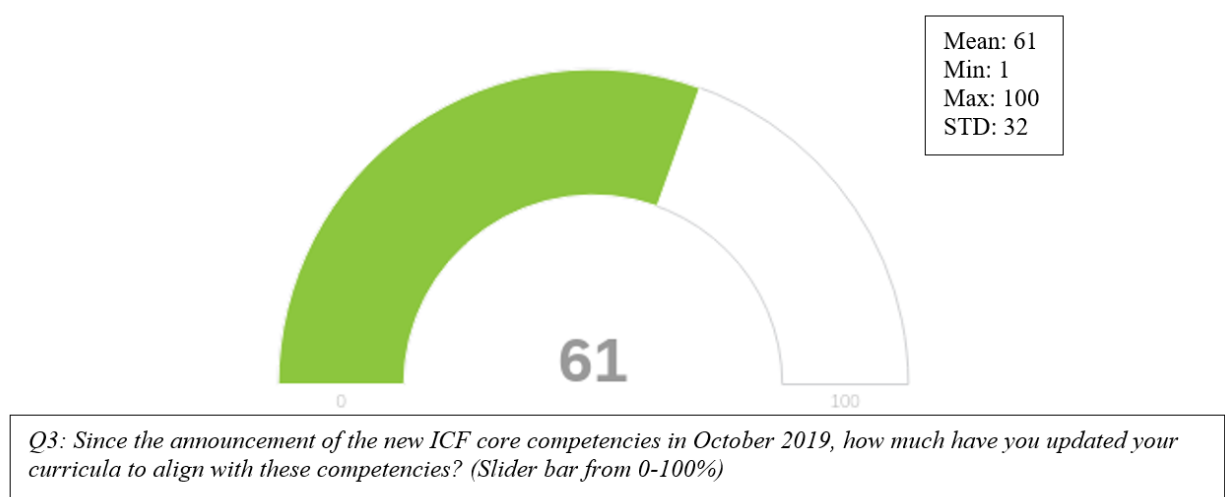
Since the announcement of the new core competencies, training programs have had an opportunity to align their curricula with these updated competencies in order to better prepare their students for ICF credentialing. Question 3 in the survey asked, "Since the announcement of the new ICF core competencies in October 2019, how much have you updated your curricula to align with these competencies?" Participants could approximate the percentage of the curricula they updated by using a slider bar in the survey. Out of 39 responses to the question, the

minimum was 1.00, while the maximum was 100.00, with a mean score of 61.00, and a standard deviation of 32.02. The high standard deviation indicates a significant variation in responses.

Figure 1 provides an overview of the updates to curricula that were made to coach training programs.

**Figure 1**

*Updates to Curricula Made by Coach Training Programs*



The responses from the interviews support these findings. Nine out of 10 interview participants stated that they were either “very familiar” or “familiar” with the new core competencies. However, when asked a follow-up question around what they felt to be the most significant changes, there were five references about an updated focus on the coaching mindset, four references to the grouping of the competencies into fewer categories, and three references about no real changes being made. There were also a range of other references that received one or two mentions about the change in engagement structure, the removal of gendered pronouns, and the removal of wording around powerful questioning. Two of the participants explicitly stated that the new competencies already aligned with their curricula. As Participant 1 stated, “So when the new core competencies came out, I was like, ‘Oh I felt really good about myself.’ I was like, ‘we’re kind of doing all those things.’” Since the question asked how much the designers have updated their curricula since the competencies came out, the wide variance in the responses may indicate that some programs may not have seen a need to update their curricula due to the perception that the competencies already aligned with their curricula.

### **Knowledge Influence 2: Instructional Designers’ Knowledge of the Conceptual Frameworks Around Coaching Across Cultural and Contextual Boundaries**

Both the survey and interviews addressed how instructional designers defined and prioritized the topics of culture and context, and how these topics were introduced into both the direct instruction and experiential learning curricula. Understanding how instructional designers viewed culture and context for both the coach and participant and how context and culture are attended to during a coaching engagement were of particular focus within the data gathering process. Question four in the survey asked, “In the training you have designed, what is the approximate percentage of training time allocated exclusively to culture and context?” while interview questions focused on asking how participants defined culture and context, along with a

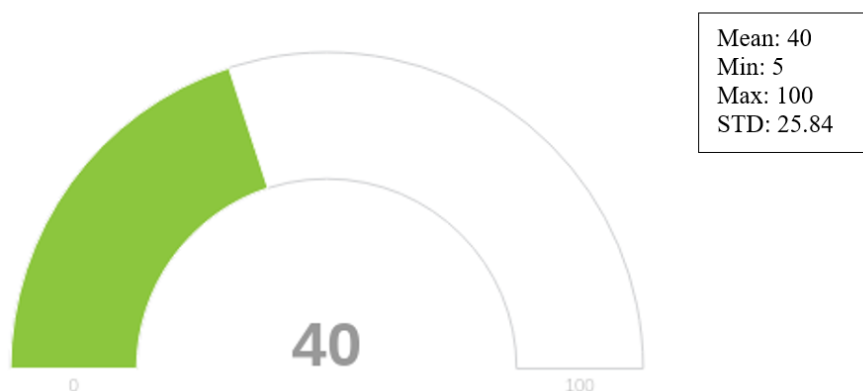


follow-up question regarding how that definition was formed for them. These questions were mainly focused on addressing declarative knowledge, specifically around their factual understanding of culture and context, along with their understanding of the conceptual frameworks around culture and context.

Similar to the question regarding the changes that were made to the curricula since the new core competencies were introduced, there is wide variation among the responses pertaining to how much the topics of culture and context are incorporated into the coach training programs. Of the 41 responses to the question in the survey, the minimum value was 5, and the maximum was 100. The mean value was 40. The standard deviation was 25.84, which signaled a substantial variation in the responses. Seven of the 41 participants responded that 50% of the curricula focused on culture and context. More than half ( $n = 26$ ) of the responses stated that less than 50% of their curricula focus on culture and context.

## Figure 2

*How Much Culture and Context Are Incorporated Into Coach Training Curricula*



*Q4: In the training you have designed, what is the approximate percentage of training time allocated exclusively to culture and context? (Slider bar from 0-100%)*

### *Differences, Awareness, and Understanding Define Cultural and Contextual Competence*

Question 5 in the survey asked participants to define culture and contextual competence. From the survey results, the frequency of terms that were used to describe cultural and contextual competency were measured. The word “differences” appeared 22 times, while “understanding” appeared 19 times and “awareness” appeared 13 times.

In Chapter Two, four main themes were identified as the foundation for cultural and contextual competencies. They include the ability for a coach to cultivate their own cultural awareness, along with the appreciation of the participant’s cultural lens; the ability to attend to culture and context within the coaching engagement; developing integrative complexity to be capable of working with competing worldviews; and the ability to comprehend the influences of societal power, positionality, and privilege within the engagement. Aligning these foundational competencies against the responses yielded a wide variation in the data. One survey response came close to the framework:

I believe that cultural competence includes: A) self-awareness— knowledge of one’s own biases and blind spots; B) basic understanding of cultural processes, and C) the ability to see the individual client as affected by those process, and yet, still as an individual (sic) with unique personal experiences that may or may not conform to cultural stereotyping.”

Another response that came close stated, “Awareness of self and other – with empathy, compassion, and deep care and regard for differences among us. Particular attention on where a student is from, what is their background, who is their support system, etc.

Coaching is a process of inquiry, self-discovery and curiosity. To do this well requires coaches who are impeccably self-aware, continuous learners, and able to see all sides.

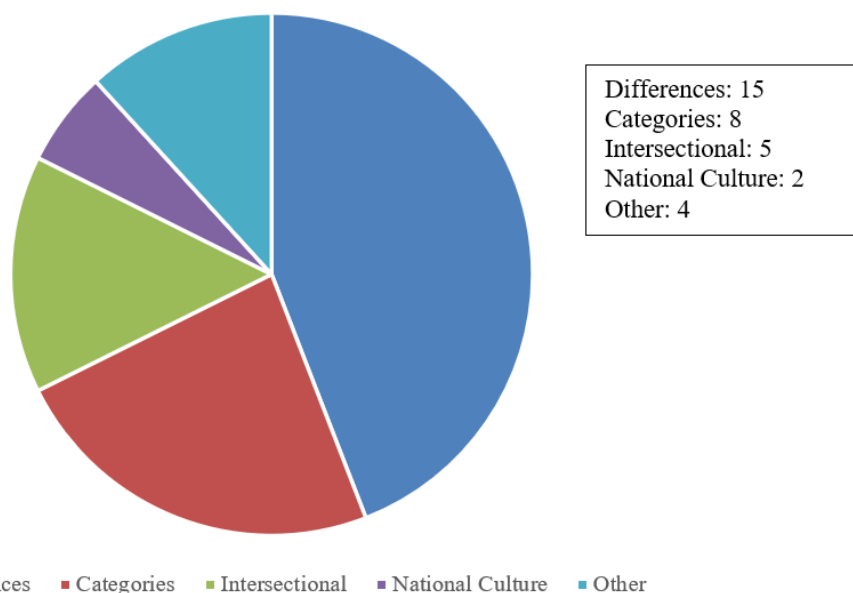
Some survey participants’ answers lacked clear understanding of cultural and contextual competencies. One response failed to address the question entirely by stating, “There is so much

to this. Fortunately our trainers and class participants are very diverse so we have rich discussions.” Another put the focus of cultural and contextual competency as the responsibility of their students with, “it’s all in the listening and how my students define their own culture.” Once final answer stated, “apply culture and contextual competence to coaching awareness.”

Answers from question 5 ( $n = 34$ ) were also categorized as under the following classifications: Differences (client-focused differences from the coach), Categories (listing physical/social/cultural categorizations of race, gender, religion, etc.), National culture (leading with national culture differences), and Intersectional (focused on self-awareness in relationship to the other). The majority ( $n = 15$ ) led with differences, while the second most frequent set of responses focused on categories ( $n = 8$ ). Intersectional yielded 5 responses, and National culture yielded 2 responses. The remainder ( $n = 4$ ) were unable to be categorized.

**Figure 3**

*Defining Cultural and Contextual Competence*



*Q5: How do you define cultural and contextual competence?*

Responses from the interviews supported this diverse set of classifications. While three of the interviews addressed culture and context from an intersectional viewpoint, the remaining responses touched upon a varied set of responses such as differences, social context, race, age, and national culture. A follow-up question during the interviews about how the participant's definition of culture and context were formed revealed that four drew upon their international experience through work and travel, while three drew upon their status as an "outsider" to help form their definition.

Chapter Two emphasized awareness as the most important competency to effectively coach in a culturally and contextually sustainable manner. This is the ability to build awareness of their own cultural lens as well as an appreciation of the cultural lens of the participant without generalizing or stereotyping. This position is supported in the responses to question 6 in the survey ( $n = 30$ ) that asked participants what skills and knowledge are necessary to be able to coach in a culturally and contextually sustainable manner. Self-awareness appeared 11 times in the responses, along with cultural awareness and understanding appearing 10 times in the responses. After that, the frequency of responses declines significantly, with 37 unique categories of responses. The most common themes that appear include skills and knowledge that focus on the internal awareness of the coach such as self-awareness, self-regulation ( $n = 3$ ), and cultural understanding. Client-facing skills that were most frequently listed include empathy ( $n = 6$ ), compassion ( $n = 3$ ), curiosity ( $n = 5$ ), listening ( $n = 5$ ), and presence ( $n = 4$ ).

**Table 8***Necessary Skills and Knowledge for Culturally and Contextually Sustainable Coaching*

Internal/external	Skill	Frequency
Internal awareness	Self-awareness	11
	Cultural awareness & understanding	10
	Self-regulation	3
Client-facing skills	Empathy	6
	Compassion	3
	Curiosity	5
	Listening	5
	Presence	4

*Q6: What are some of the necessary skills and knowledge that a coach needs to possess in order to be able to coach in a culturally and contextually competent manner?*

### **Knowledge Influence 3: Instructional Designers' Knowledge of Incorporating Cultural and Contextual Competencies Into a Coaching Engagement**

The ability for instructional designers to incorporate culture and context into a coaching engagement focuses on procedural knowledge. As discussed in chapter 2, procedural knowledge addresses the skills, techniques, and methodology pertaining to the knowledge of how something is done (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Schraw et al., 2015). How the topics of culture and context were addressed, and then how these topics could be incorporated into a coaching engagement were addressed in the interviews. The responses yielded information on the types of activities that were used during the training programs, along with information on the competencies that were introduced during the training. Programs drew from a combination of direct instruction and experiential exercises for aspiring coaches to build self-awareness around

their own identity, with the intent that heightened awareness would lead to greater cultural sensitivity in their coaching.

Direct instruction and awareness-building activities were prominent methods of delivering content on culture and context in training programs. Many of the programs offered more than one method of delivery. Activities that were categorized as direct instruction included lectures, reading assignments, videos, and prework ( $n = 8$ ). Of those, one participant indicated that they offer a standalone module on culture and context. Activities for the purpose of building self-awareness specifically around one's own identity were also mentioned as a prominent means of deepening the knowledge ( $n = 5$ ). These activities included proactively sharing one's identity, or working with resources such as an identity wheel. Two different interview participants shared that they utilized diversity or identity wheels to build self-awareness among coach training participants. These activities are meant to help raise awareness of one's own identity with the hope that they can discover their own foundational identity, but to also use this awareness when working with clients from different cultural backgrounds. These wheels cover aspects of identity, such as race, family, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, and religion. Both interview participants noted that identity was viewed as both static and fluid. These activities. As Participant 9 noted, "And so it kind of conveys the notion, this isn't just about me coaching and what is in my ground, but also who I'm with and what is in their ground. And that's kind of a basis for how we need to pay attention and build what we call the relational field with a different other."

Experiential activities such as directed coaching in "fishbowls" and triads, along with skills groups on a specific topic involving self-awareness and identity were less prominent at four responses, and finally, creating space for open discussion around the topics of self-awareness and identity were identified twice.

Interview participants noted that the top competencies for culturally and contextually sustainable coaching include not only building awareness of themselves in relationship to others, but then taking the next step to remove judgement. Interview participants were asked to describe how they structure and deliver the curriculum to build the participants' competencies around culture and context. Along with describing the actual activities, there were some themes that emerged around the type of competencies these activities were meant to instill in participants. Among survey responses, one theme focused around the competencies pertaining to removing judgement, assumptions, and bias on the part of the coach during an engagement ( $n = 13$ ). This theme was supported by using terms such as "no judgement," "no bias," "unconditional positive regard," and "cultural humility." Participant 7 noted that consciously removing judgement was an important part of coaching as it conflicts with an instinctual reflex to keep oneself safe. This is important because, "...while you're coaching, your judgment will be triggered. And you don't always notice, but it's going to impact the way the questions that you ask and the reflections you use." Allowing participants to build their own self-awareness by elevating issues around identity while being cognizant of their propensity to judge were clear themes within this study. What was less clear were specific techniques that a coach could draw upon in the moment to be able to call out their own judgement and redirect the coaching. While these techniques may be shared within training programs, specific techniques were not shared as part of the survey or interviews.

#### **Knowledge Influence 4: Instructional Designers' Self-Awareness Around Their Own Cultural and Contextual Perspectives in Relationship to Coaching Clients From Different Backgrounds**

Metacognition is a fundamental principle within training curricula. The other prominent theme centered around awareness of the self and other ( $n = 11$ ). This theme was supported with terms such as "self-awareness," "awareness of the other." Among interview participants, self-

awareness was a theme covered in eight of the programs. Participant 5 explained that their program offers a module around social justice. Within that module, there are exercises around “awareness of the self” and “awareness of the other.” This culminates in exercises around learned empathy using cognitive, emotional and somatic techniques. Similar to the previous knowledge influence, the findings show that the programs rely heavily on building self-awareness in hopes that aspiring coaches could make the inferential leap into culturally and contextually sustainable coaching in their own practice.

One important point to note is that many of these activities were meant for coaches to build their own awareness, along with awareness of the “other” in context to their own self. It was unclear from the interviews that there were any specific activities that were meant to build skills in order to attend to, and effectively coach across cultural and contextual boundaries. The prevailing thought was that if they build that self-awareness, combined with the general coaching competencies of curiosity, inquiry, presence, and creating space for the client, that will lead to culturally and contextually sustainable coaching. When asked about the self-awareness exercises and how it translates into coaching engagements, Participant 7 responded, “Yeah, it's a great exercise. Yeah, for coaches to do, because I think it creates more empathy. Could they do it with their clients? I don't know how, if it were something that the client needed to do, then sure they could. But it's more for coach training.”

Equally important to procedural knowledge is understanding the struggles around developing curricula to teach culturally and contextually sustainable coaching. Half of the programs specifically did not have dedicated instruction around culture and context. The programs that did touch upon the topics of culture and context cited some of the challenges of addressing these topics in the training experience. The first challenge was around the Professional Certified Coach (PCC) markers, which are the markers that ICF assessors use to



determine certification of experienced coaches with more than 500 hours of coaching experience. Participant 7 articulated that it is difficult for the ICF to create specific markers to assess culture and context, adding that cultural awareness isn't about the behaviors that can be measured in the moment, stating "I think that they are not anywhere close being able to really assess cultural awareness unless somebody were to do something wrong."

Participant 8 offered a different perspective on the PCC markers. They shared that within the PCC Assessors community, there was an active discussion taking place on whether or not the markers were effectively addressing diversity. They argued that a coach acts in response to the "...whole of the client. That includes who they are...which is their culture...and whatever their context is, if you will." Participant 8 argued that reading through the core competencies that use the wording around the whole of the client, that culture and context were being addressed. How these core competencies are subject to interpretation is a fundamental challenge within the profession. A professional difference of opinion exists in pertaining to how much culture and context plays a role within the PCC markers. Participant 7 discussed the challenges of measuring culture and context against behavioral markers that may not emerge during assessment. Participant 8 discussed how their interpretation of the markers already made space for culture and context, and they address these markers with a diversity lens in their training. Two instructional designers/assessors with different interpretations of how the markers address culture and context serves as an indicator of how these more nuanced competencies may be challenging to incorporate into curricula. Without clarity around how these markers are interpreted, these markers are subject to interpretation based on the value placed on the markers by the assessor. The lack of clarity also creates a cascading effect on how the programs approach these competencies, and then how these competencies are translated into curricula. Much of what takes place during a coaching session is arguably "in the moment" where the coach makes both conscious and

unconscious decisions that can impact the direction of not only the session, but an outcome of an engagement. If the interview participants are reflective of the greater industry in that half of training programs do not train their participants to coach in a culturally and contextually sustainable way, an argument can be made that the lack of awareness on the part of those uninformed coaches could have consequences beyond the coaching relationship.

The second set of challenges focuses on how exactly to address these competencies as part of the coach training program, especially when it comes to addressing differences. This challenge is also mentioned as part of self-efficacy in the metacognitive section later in this chapter. Being able to operate outside of one's comfort zone when discussing what is perceived to be sensitive topics around race and socioeconomic status proves to be difficult. Participant 6 mentioned that there are practical challenges for a White coach to work with a client of a different race or socioeconomic status, and in particular, calling it a "big mandate" to train around raising consciousness around race and class due to the complexities of training White coaches to be able to comprehend the nuances of clients of color because "what your client needs around race and class or whatever is going to be very individualistic." Similarly, Participant 8 referenced a time when they received internal resistance from their trainers when they went to introduce an activity called the Cultural Bio because the activity was perceived by the trainers as being ineffective in the corporate world and felt that it was not a topic worth addressing in training.

Both participants articulated the challenges of addressing the topics of culture and context because both topics are nuanced and complex. For organizations that provide training in basic coaching skills, these topics also raise questions around the capability for the trainers to deliver content, as well as for program participants to be able to comprehend and digest nuanced and complex topics. For the ICF, it raises questions around their purview as a professional

organization, and the level of risk associated with having professionally certified coaches engage in behavioral interventions that ignore key elements of their client's identities.

### **Emergent Influence: Language and Consciousness Around Culture**

Beyond the knowledge, motivation, and organization influences by Clark and Estes (2008) that served as primary conceptual framework for this study, it is worth noting some emergent themes around the language that were used by the participants of this study which reflects the type of consciousness that the participants had around the topic of culture. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) highlight the role of the researcher as the primary instrument and analysis for qualitative research. During the course of the interviews, there were differences in how the participants interpreted culture and context, the language they used to describe culture, and how they viewed these topics within the context of their own programs. Chapter Two discussed the value-neutral words used to define culture. These words included: lens (Plaister-Ten, 2016), mental programming (Hofstede, 1983), and collective problem-solving (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998). While racial, gender, sexual, religious identities can contribute to the formation of a cultural lens, it is important to note that culture is a separate construct from diversity. Through the reflexive lens, the language that the participants used have been interpreted as the way many Americans focus on differences and the notion of "other." By looking closely at the language used, there were three emergent themes: 1) The conflation of culture with diversity and inclusion, 2) A sense of self-affirmation, and 3) The language of social justice within the context of the moment. Because each participant drew directly from their own life experiences and education to speak on the topics of culture and context, the language that the participants used during the interviews confirmed the challenges of a unified definition of culture that was highlighted in Chapter Two. Table 6 highlights these emergent themes around language and consciousness.

### *Conflation of Culture and Context With Diversity and Inclusion*

There were multiple instances when the discussion turned from culture and context to diversity and inclusion. One of the interview questions specifically asked how participants define culture and context. While two participants never directly answered the question and one participant answered purely from a national context, there were four participants that answered by referencing intersectionality through contextual constructs such as race, gender, age, and ability. Some participants conflated culture and context with diversity and inclusion. When asked the same question about how they defined culture and context, Participant 2 stated, “I don't know if I ever use the words diversity or inclusion in any of the things that I do... the language I do use is that every human being has something to offer and contribute to the world.” Participant 8 shared, “So, you know, I don't feel like I'm an expert. In terms of definition, I feel like I've done a lot of work. It has been 25, 30 years since I taught diversity.”

Within diversity and inclusion, the concept of intersectionality was frequently discussed. Participant 4 spoke of the contextual layers that arise when looking at coaching through the multiple lenses of age, gender, in the context of the volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and uncertainty of 2020. They noted that, “So culture is one aspect of context, it's one aspect of intersectionality.” Participant 6 suggests that a person's identity is influenced by the various contextual lenses of society, race, class, and family, and impacts how the client could react within each contextual circumstance.

These statements align with Eccles' Expectancy Value Theory (2015). While the perceived value of culturally and contextually sustainable coaching was high, the statements above signal uncertainty around the topics of diversity and inclusion, which arguably impacts their motivation around culture and context. During the data collection process, one step after the interview involves member-checking, where a copy of the transcript is sent to the participant for

them to review. One participant noted the conflation between diversity and inclusion with culture and context, and offered to conduct the interview again. By that point, there were other participants that had conflated the topics. As a result, a theme had emerged around the conflation between diversity and inclusion with culture and context; therefore, it was noted as an emergent theme.

### *Self-Affirming Language*

In relationship to the language participants used to describe culture and context, another theme that emerged during the interviews was how the participants described diversity in relationship to their own programs. All interview participants indicated that they work across different cultural groups, either internationally or across other cultural differences. In half the interviews, the participants would make a point of listing the various ways in which the program was diverse by providing a checklist of the different identities represented amongst students and trainers in terms of race, gender, sexual identity and ability. and others would intentionally point out that they considered their program to be diverse and inclusive. Participant 9 shared, “I started looking, and on my team, I have LGBTQ. I have Black. I have expats. I have male, female, different ages, I've got that. I've got the disability. So it's like we have a really diverse team.” Participant 9’s statement was reflective of at least four other similar statements made by interview participants that noted the diversity within their training programs.

It is important to note that none of the interview questions asked about diversity amongst students and instructors within coach training programs. The participants readily volunteered this information. While these statements sent clear signals around how interview participants perceived themselves, these sentiments did not directly translate into culturally and contextually sustainable curricula. As was mentioned earlier this chapter, only one out of the 10 programs offered a standalone module, and roughly half offered any exercise on self-awareness and

identity. Looking at the four dimensions of value (intrinsic, attainment, utility, and perceived cost) outlined by Eccles (2015), it was noted that attainment and utility value would be examined in relation to the research questions. Looking at the data, it is noted from these statements that there is attainment value around the topics of culture and context, it falls short of the utility value in comparison to other foundational coaching skills, such as active listening, perspective-shifting, or asking powerful questions.

### ***Beyond differences: Unconditional Positive Regard***

Another theme that arose from the perspective that coaching transcended differences such as race, gender, and class. A common theme in coach training is that coaching is about seeing and accepting the human-ness of the person, in the realm of unconditional positive regard. The responses from this viewpoint were in direct contrast to the responses that categorized diversity by race, gender, and sexual identity. When asked about how the ICF could support their institution, Participant 2 shared that the focus should go beyond recruiting for diversity, but to focus on compassion in order to “expand the conversation to be about humanity.” Participant 10 confirmed that their perspective of coaching is not about focusing on culture, but that coaching helps to examine the essence of a person’s humanity, and that there is a shared human experience of wanting to be happy and feelings of self-worth. Both viewpoints are worth noting, as they both distinctly mention the aspirational value of seeing beyond categories and to fully embrace the humanity and beauty of the individual. However, it was unclear if focusing on the aspirational came at the expense of focusing on the intersectional lens of the individual. Within the coaching profession, there is a tremendous amount of emphasis on mindset and overcoming limiting beliefs. Without acknowledgement of a person’s intersectional lens as a contributing factor to mindset, or the impact of culturally systemic influences, it can be argued that the aspirational may be challenging for a client to attain.

### *Social Justice Lens*

Interviews took place in the United States during the fall of 2020, following the murder of George Floyd and the mass demonstrations that took place around the world. One emergent theme that came from the interview data was the topic of power, positionality, and privilege. Six out of the 10 interview participants identified systemic inequity, racism, and bias as topics that were addressed in their training program. Three of the participants mentioned that they built social justice into their training. Two participants specifically called out their own privilege during the interviews. In the survey, Black Lives Matter, the #MeToo movement and anti-racism appeared twice. Participant 4 spoke of how the political environment of the moment was responsible for creating the space to be able to talk about power, positionality, and privilege. “...There was definitely that precipitated me taking a deeper look, with the, you know, the political environment, the issues of privilege and race, it's really hard for students to show up for a coach training program and not bring perspective around what's happening in the world...” They also acknowledged that while the program isn't directly issuing guidance on putting value on these topics, it is up to the program to provide space for participants to explore them. Participant 9 spoke of implementing a social justice lens from their program's inception, but that it was challenging for participants to comprehend the distinction between the greater narrative of institutional racism without personalizing it as an attack on their character. This particular narrative raises questions around whether or not aspiring coaches were trained with the capacity for integrative complexity, which was described in Chapter Two as a foundational competency for culturally and contextually sustainable coaching. The language used around power, positionality, and privilege also brought up questions about the level of consciousness raised in the moment, and whether or not this research would have yielded different results if the study had been conducted in the fall of 2019, rather than the fall of 2020.

## Summary of Knowledge Findings

Awareness of self and others emerged as a sustaining theme throughout both the survey and interview findings. Awareness was defined not only as a key competency within culturally and contextually sustainable coaching, but was also identified as a fundamentally important activity within the coach training experience. The survey questions that addressed how much the programs modified their curricula, along with how much their programs exclusively focused on the topics of culture and context yielded inconclusive results. Looking at the four factors of cultural competence outlined in Chapter Two, the survey and interviews show that coach training programs are addressing awareness-building, along with incorporating an understanding of power, positionality, and privilege. However, the data was less clear when it came to introducing knowledge and skills around attending to culture and context within the coaching engagement, along with developing integrative complexity to integrate competing worldviews. While it can be inferred that awareness of the self and others could allow for the coach to pay particular attention to addressing culture and context within the engagement, the interviews and the survey did not provide adequate insights into whether or not these topics were explicitly addressed in the curricula.

An interesting dichotomy emerges when studying the language used by the interview participants. While this study focused on culture and context, it was often conflated with the construct of diversity. This was reflected in the self-affirming language used by interview participants in describing their trainers and students, along with the intentional use of language around social justice. In many ways, the language used captured the global consciousness of the moment around power, positionality, and privilege while focusing on differences surrounding race, gender, and class. Conversely, other participants expressed the need to move beyond differences and explore the humanity behind the individual. In response to these differences,



both survey and interview participants emphasized the importance of leading with curiosity while removing judgement within the coaching relationship to demonstrate cultural competence. How the ICF balances these worldviews while creating policies and resources for coach training institutions will be examined in chapter 5.

### **Motivation Results and Findings**

Chapter Two introduced described both knowledge and motivation as complimentary influences on human performance (Clark & Estes, 2008). Motivation includes processes of active choice, persistence and mental effort in order to start the activity and determine the level of energy that is sustained in that activity towards completion (Clark & Estes, 2008). Psychological constructs such as self-efficacy, goal-orientation, and attributions influence motivation (Rueda, 2011). Two questions in the interview with discussed the perceived value of incorporating culture and context coach training curricula. One question that explored the perceived value of incorporating culture and context into curricula asked, “How important is it for coaches to be culturally competent?”. Another question explored the self-efficacy of the instructional designers when they designed their curricula by asking, “What are some areas where you struggled in designing the curricula around culture and context?” From these two questions, three influences have been identified and will be discussed in further detail during this section.

**Table 9***Assumed Motivation Influences*


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Assumed influences
The value for incorporating cultural and contextual competencies (Attainment Value)
The perceived benefits of incorporating culture and context into curricula (utility value)
The instructional designers' confidence to create culturally and contextually sustainable curricula.

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The findings show that instructional designers perceived the topics of culture and context to be valuable to coaching. The instructional designers also articulated the benefits of culturally and contextually sustainable coaching as it contributes to psychological safety and trust. However, despite the value placed on these topics, there was a noted lack of self-efficacy around how to incorporate these topics into their curricula.

### **Motivation Influence 1: Instructional Designers' Hold High Value for Incorporating Cultural Competencies Into Their Curricula**

Clark and Estes (2008) state that values drive motivation because they define an individual's views on their reasons for engaging with the task. The responses to the question that asked participants to outline how important it is for coaches to have competence around culture and context outlines what Eccles (2015) describes as attainment value. Eccles goes on to describe how attainment value is connected with identity, which includes a person's goals, socially constructed narratives of norms and behaviors, and an idealized image of self (Eccles, 2015).

Most instructional designers see the value in incorporating culture and context into curricula. The majority of interview participants ( $n = 7$ ) stated that it was very/extremely important for coaches to have competence around culture and context. One participant stated that competency around culture and context were not that important, while two responded without fully answering the question. Participant 5 stated, “Incredibly important. It's probably one of the most important things that we do is coach trainers is to...make these people facile, make them you know, so that they appreciate it, understand it and embrace it.” Participant 9 includes the importance of understanding not only culture and context of the client, but also the systemic forces behind prejudice and inclusive behavior. “I felt I couldn't understand how anyone could coach without an understanding of differences and how things are institutionalized and prejudice and inclusion... I literally could not understand how someone could coach without having some sense of awareness, and some self-mastery and some competence around dealing with these issues.”

### **Motivation Influence 2: Instructional Designers' Understand the Benefits of Incorporating Culture and Context Into Curricula**

While most responses showed that the attainment value of culturally and contextually sustainably coaching, the participants were less clear about its utility value. While a majority of participants shared the view that being culturally and contextually sustainable was important, even essential as it builds trust within the coaching relationship, it was less clear that all participants were answering that question with a unified definition around cultural and contextual sustainability. The utility value of a task takes into account the benefits of completing the task, and how well the task aligns with an individual's goals (Clark & Estes, 2008; Eccles, 2015). When participants expanded upon their responses to the importance for coaches to be culturally and contextually competent, four of the participants mentioned how these competencies were an

essential part of coaching. Participant 4 shared, “It's essential. I'm not a big fan of that term, culturally competent, because I cannot be competent in every culture, because I just, I'm ignorant in some cultures, but I can, as a coach, ensure that there's a level of openness and curiosity, and that we are creating trust and safety, so that our clients bring their best self and their full self to the coaching session.”

Three participants emphasized the importance of being culturally and contextually sustainable. Participant 7 addressed the importance through the change in the language around the core competency pertaining to trust and psychological safety. “That we're we have to maintain a safe, safe, psychologically safe, connection. So people feel comfortable enough to be vulnerable to go deep to explore, to face things that they've struggled facing before, to accept things that they didn't recognize that were in their blind spots. They have to feel safe. And so we have to be very aware of how we come across and again, and our judgment, that we maintain that energetic exchange.”

Participant 10 shared that cultural and contextual awareness is important only if coaches want to work with other cultures. “I think it's important if they want to work with other cultures. You know, I mean, it's choice, right? I mean, if they just want to do it, do coaching in their own language and their own culture, they're probably not going to need it.” Finally, two participants did not directly respond to the question. It is important to note that four out of the 10 interview participants either did not respond to the question, or interpreted the question from a narrow lens of “being competent in every culture” or working across national cultures. From this, it is inferred that on the surface, there is high utility value pertaining to cultural and contextual competencies. However, the caveat around this validation pertains to the lack of clarity around what factors fed into their perception of the utility value.

### **Motivation Influence 3: Instructional Designers Struggled to Effectively Create Culturally Sustainable Curricula**

Culture and context are nuanced topics that are subject to interpretation and ultimately impacts perception. How the topics of race and class were perceived, along with being able to create curricula in what was perceived to be a “blank space” impacted the level self-efficacy around designing culturally and contextually sustainable curricula. Bandura (1995, 2018) outlines self-efficacy as an individual’s confidence to see a task to completion, which is influenced by their perception and beliefs about the task. When asked about how they struggled in designing the curricula around culture and context, three broad themes of responses emerged. The first theme was driven by questions around self-efficacy, with three participants questioning if they had designed the content correctly. The second theme that arose among three participants were categorized as perceived complications when talking about topics of race and class. Three participants did not address culture and context, but discussed the technical challenges of designing within their own curricula. Finally, one participant – Participant 10 stated that there was no struggle in designing their curricula at all. This participant identified culture as being that of national culture, and decoupled coaching skills training from a fully integrated experience of self-awareness as being vital to the training experience. This viewpoint aligned with the participant’s other motivating perspective where they saw no attainment value in incorporating culture and context into coach training.

As Bandura (1995) states that one’s self-efficacy is shaped by perception, rather than what may be objectively taking place. Some of the phrases that were used by the participants included, “Am I doing it right?” or “What’s the right approach?” Entering into a perceived blank space gave the participants some pause when it came to designing and launch content around culture and context. Participant 1 struggled with the perception that holistic coaching might be

perceived as “woo-woo” which led to uncertainty around adding their own perspective and cultural identity into their content. This participant spoke of the fear that the ICF would think of the topics around culture and identity to be “too much” and was surprised when the ICF did not raise any objections around their curricula.

Participants 5 and 8 spoke of balancing the dynamic between having the confidence to provide the content for participants and also understanding that the participants themselves bring a wealth of knowledge to the experience. Participant 8 cited a particular instance when a question around culture and identity was raised during a class session, and how they questioned whether or not they had the right approach since it had been a long time since they taught topics around diversity and their perception was that the topic of diversity now is approached differently than it had been in the past.

And we're, we're one of the students asked me a question...And we where we ended up in the discussion, because it was about, you know, how does this apply the diversity piece and that kind of thing. And I brought it back to the whole idea of understanding the client, which is one of our classes in the program. And it's, you know, get rid of my filters. I got to know what they are, I got to know how to set them aside. And I've got to be able to really understand the client. - kind of thing. And of course, you know, most people can't even understand themselves or their partner much less somebody else. At the same time, to constantly be seeking that understanding and staying curious.

As participant 5 reflected on their own self-doubt around incorporating the topics of culture and context into their curricula by stating,

Am I doing it right? You know, kind of constant question, Is this enough? Is it – is it going to get through, you know, that kind of thing. Those are self-doubt questions.

There's no shortage of materials and getting the best, most accessible materials. You

know, I mean, there's a, there's tons of research, My students don't want to read a research paper on this but anecdotal is very powerful for me in, in presenting these kind of things. And so finding grounded qualitative pieces that are accessible, I guess has been a struggle. And it's getting easier all the time. I'm also finding that a lot of my participant, the students, the participants, bring their own wealth of awareness to this, that we can also use.

All of the participants who expressed self-doubt in addressing this content also acknowledged that they were able to take the step forward through some external validation from the ICF or students. Another point that was made in relationship to self-efficacy was their ability to embrace a growth mindset around these topics. At least two participants spoke of the ability to embrace constant learning and allowing for instructional design to be an iterative process.

The other notable theme that arose in the interview came from the perceived complications of how to design topics of race and class into the curriculum. These challenges arose due to the limitations of their own knowledge and training around race and class. Participant 6 expressed their struggles around how to address the topics of race in class in relationship to their specialized curriculum they offer. They noted that, "...If you're talking about how to deal with race and class, because it comes up as part of your clients' issue, like I'm I don't know, I don't really have, as I have as good ideas there as I do on [specialization], which have very strong ideas on how to do that. How to have difficult conversations with people around [the specialization], like, I- I'm really good at that. But I'm not good at...I don't really know the answers to this other thing."

Participant 7 shares their experience of learning about how their perspective had been shifted as they gained new insights about the experiences of how to better handle sensitive interactions across race. They shared an experience of how to respond in a culturally sensitive

manner if they accidentally offended someone from another culture. They shared two responses that risk deepening the rupture within the relationship, such as “Well, that’s not what I meant,” or the request for the coach to be educated by asking “Well, then would you teach me how to be with you.” Participant 7 continued that this knowledge helped to shift their perspective on working across cultural differences by shifting the question to, “So if you would tell me more about how you experienced this” without judgment. So, um, they've opened my eyes to all the, the deepness, the richness of, of a cultural awareness that we can implant into the coach training that I think is really critical.”

Both participants 6 and 7 were coming from a position of emerging awareness of the nuances involved in addressing the topics of race and class. Participant 9 offered a different perspective on working through the topics of race and class. This participant has training in both the medical field and psychology, combined with both professional and personal life experiences across race and class. Participant 9 spoke of the need for skilled facilitation around these topics within coach training programs in working through these topics, skills that not all facilitators possess.

You can traumatize people doing this without giving them a chance to talk it out and have conversations with the different other about this that are facilitated that don't get out of hand...Do and, and being able to facilitate those kinds of conversations, which is from a faculty point of view, not only do you need to have good group dynamic facilitation skills, but you really have to have done your own work on these topics that we're talking about, and have the skill of working with people and being authentic, even if acknowledging what you're saying is coming from White privilege. So the younger faculty have the understanding, because it's so much more prevalent in today. But they don't have the skills for managing groups at that level, which is, it's different, because it



evokes us. [It] can evoke all sorts of intense emotions that if you also can't help the group as a whole manage, but individuals manage it can get really out of hand.

As Participant 9 shared the risks around approaching topics around identity and the risk of trauma on participants, they shared an extreme case within a group where a training participant experienced a dissociative break. Participants 6 and 7 spoke of the importance around building awareness and competency to coach across cultural boundaries. Participant 9 cautioned of the importance of having experienced facilitators to manage challenging and complex topics that may evoke strong reactions. It may be that these exceptional cases feed the fear of addressing the topics of culture and identity. Furthermore, outside of these exceptional cases, there is a theme around the fear of offending others, of rupturing the coaching relationship, and apprehension around approaching sensitive topics without having the comfort that comes through expertise in being able to sustainably coach across cultural boundaries.

### **Summary of Motivation Findings**

A clear majority of participants signaled the attainment value of coaches having cultural and contextual competency. Eccles (2015) mentions that attainment value is directly tied to the idealized image of self that is shaped through social norms and behaviors. The notion of having cultural and contextual competency fits within pro-social norms of what it means to be a masterful coach. The majority of participants also saw the utility value of culturally and contextually sustainable coaching by stating that it was either an important or essential part of coaching.

Looking at the deeper motivational forces around self-efficacy showed some fragmentation about the instructors' confidence around actually incorporating these topics into their curricula. For the majority of these responses, the level of self-efficacy was connected with the level of awareness around the nuances of coaching around what participants perceived to be

sensitive topics around race and class. How much these participants and their trainers had in the way of knowledge and tools for approaching these issues varied which in turn impacted how much these topics were introduced into the curricula. As Rueda (2011) connects engagement and persistence of a task to motivation, it is important to provide trainers with the necessary skills and supervision to be able to address topics that are perceived to be nuanced, charged, and challenging.

### **Organization Results and Findings**

How an organization functions as a complex interconnected system in relationship to effectiveness and change is attributed to the organization's understanding of values, culture, and processes (Clark & Estes, 2008). As an association that represents professional coaches, oversees certification, and manages the relationship with the coach training programs, the ICF is in a unique position to influence how the profession as a whole understands and embraces culturally and contextually sustainable coaching. The survey and interview provided data and context for how the ICF can support coach training programs.

#### **Table 10**

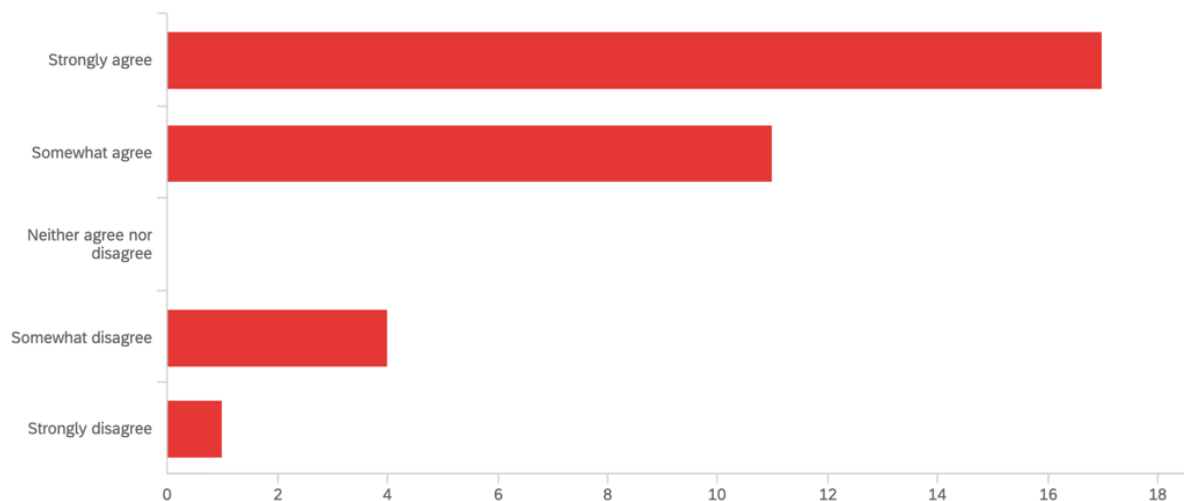
##### *Assumed Organization Influences and Validation*

<u>Assumed influences</u>
ICF's culture of integrity and excellence sets a high standard for coaching quality and competence as reflected in its core competencies. (Cultural Model 1)
Emergent influence: The role of ACTO in relationship to the ICF

The findings show that there is an opportunity for the ICF to serve in a translational capacity to provide policy guidance, frameworks, and resources to coach training institutions to help those institutions that seek to develop culturally and contextually sustainable coaching. Through the survey and interviews, there was not enough data to confirm the second cultural model and the cultural settings influences. A theme emerged around the role of the Association of Coach Training Organizations (ACTO) and its relationship to the ICF, especially in its ongoing discussions around the topics of culture and diversity.

### **Organization Influence 1: ICF's Culture of Integrity and Excellence Sets a High Standard for Coaching Quality and Competence as Reflected in its Core Competencies**

The survey and interviews provided information on the cultural models and settings around ICF's updated core competencies, along with identifying the investments that the ICF can make in building the relationships with the coach training programs. As Rueda (2011) emphasized, when an organization offers clear signals around their cultural models and settings, it becomes easier to understand its intent.

**Figure 4***The Importance of Coach Training Programs to Partner With the ICF*

Q7: *It is important for the ICF to work with coach training programs to incorporate the updated core competencies around culture and context into your curriculum.*

Overall, coach training instructional designers indicated that they want to work with the ICF to incorporate the updated core competencies around culture and context in their curriculum. Question 7 in the survey asked how much they agreed with the following statement: *It is important for the ICF to work with coach training programs to incorporate the updated core competencies around culture and context into your curriculum.* Of the 33 responses, 51.52% ( $n = 17$ ) of participants selected “strongly agree,” 33.33% ( $n = 11$ ) selected “somewhat agree,” 12.12% ( $n = 4$ ) selected “somewhat disagree,” and 3.03% ( $n = 1$ ) selected “strongly disagree.” The overwhelming majority of participants expressed a need to partner with the ICF on incorporating these competencies into their curricula, and the next theme provides some insight into how the ICF can help serve a translational purpose to incorporate these competencies.

The interview participants also expressed the need for the ICF to serve a translational leadership role to help coach training programs incorporate the core competencies around culture and context into their curricula. Participant 9 points out the unique leadership role that the ICF can serve, and also expressed skepticism about the effectiveness of including these competencies:

because ICF has such a educational and political reach at this point, if you want to get certified...The fact that they put them in means that people are going to get tested on it. In order to become certified, you're going to have to be able to see those competencies in somewhere. But if you see them, they're lumped in with a lot of other commas, environment, comma, culture, comma blah, blah. So you can also get away with not being with focusing on the other things in the commas without specifically focusing on culture and even kind of understanding what you would be looking for...So while I think it's good and I think it's, it is not going to guarantee that people really get competent...

As Participant 9 notes, noting culture and context as competencies is only one step in raising awareness and creating a case to make updates to curricula. Without clear guidance of what culturally and contextually sustainable coaching entails, these topics may be deprioritized in the process. This participant also noted that without any means of awareness on these topics by the coach, it may never get introduced into the coaching engagement as a catalyst for positive change.

When asked the question, "How can the ICF support you to incorporate these new competencies?", interview participants identified the need for communications and connection. Not all participants answered this question directly, with half of the participants providing some ideas for how ICF can provide assistance to coach training programs. Communications emerged as the first category, where participants shared a need for the ICF to create a unified definition of

cultural and contextual sustainability for their membership. This may involve creating definitions for terms like culture, intersectionality, power and positionality within the context of coaching. Defining these terms can be followed by providing clear markers and a resource guide for institutions to follow so that coaches can understand why these concepts are important within a coaching engagement. Participant 2 shared that the ICF can support coach training programs by "...taking the diversity and inclusion conversation and deepening it. Participant 4 expanded upon the need for a unified definition with,

What's missing for me is the framing. Like, are we all talking about the same thing?

When you use the word culture, and someone else uses the word culture. Are we in the right...are we are we sharing the same frame? Or when I use the word

intersectionality...And so there's so much happening, which is why I like context better, because we can all agree contextually, all these things are happening in the world. And all these contextually need to be addressed if I'm going to be an effective coach. But when we use words like D&I, diversity and inclusion, culture, competence, diversity, which is probably not a word that's even used all that much anymore, but I just I'm, I don't have a sense that we're all approaching the conversation with the same framework.

What is important about this comment points out the disparate definitions that most Americans have around the topics of culture and context. There is a conflation of culture with race, diversity, and inclusion, which are different constructs. A representative of the ICF stated that the definitions of culture and context were intentionally kept loose so that training programs and coaches could define it however they saw fit. Yet the challenge of keeping a policy ambiguous is that it either gets interpreted in unintended ways, or, in the case of this policy, defining it was considered too cumbersome so it is generally ignored.

In concert with communication, the ICF can create opportunities for connection. This involves offering demonstrations and resources for instructional designers to make the connection between the competencies and how these competencies would appear in actual coaching. The ICF could also facilitate connection points between representatives of coach training institutes to have meaningful dialogue around the topics of culture and context. Participant 5 shared that there is an opportunity for culture and social justice themes to be woven into “the entire tapestry of coach training” and that coach training programs could move from introducing the core competencies as standalone modules to a program that dynamically integrates multiple competencies at once. Coaching demonstrations could be a key element of this type of curricula. Participant 4 emphasized the need for tools such as recorded coaching sessions that the ICF could provide training programs. While they acknowledged that there may be some hesitancy on the part of the ICF due to issues around confidentiality, they argued that these concerns can be overcome by finding willing clients and coaches to record demonstrations. Ultimately, the benefits could outweigh any concerns.

Participants 4 and 5 highlight that coaching is dynamic, fluid, and “in the moment.” To adjust coach training modules so that culture and context are incorporated across an entire curriculum could be less restrictive than building out an entire standalone module. By having recorded sessions, complete with “freeze frames” and analysis available as resources for coach training programs, it is a benefit for aspiring coaches because they can see how a session can unfold in real time. Creating opportunities to raise awareness around culture and context will ultimately be beneficial for the coaching profession. Ultimately, there is an interest amongst the coach training programs for the ICF to be able to provide guidance and resources in order to clarify what culturally and contextually sustainable coaching means, and how it can benefit everyone within the coaching ecosystem.

### **Emergent Influence: The Role of ACTO in Relationship the ICF**

One emergent theme that arose from the interviews was the role of the ACTO with both the training programs and the ICF. Five of the interview participants indicated their participation in ACTO, either through their conferences, or by serving within the organization. A number of participants indicated that the topics around addressing culture, context, and identity were an ongoing topic of discussion. Participant 9 offered background on how culture and context were incorporated into the new ICF competencies with the influence of ACTO:

The other thing is that they [the competencies] 're better worded, they're fewer but also they are introducing the notion of culture, environment, inclusion several times actually during the different statements in the competencies. So I think those support and actually, I think that's an outcome of the evolution of the topic, because that you can see how it evolved in ACTO. And as far as I can see from my association with them, they were the ones that actually pushed ICF to consider the importance of those topics. And they were not reflected in the competencies at all prior to the new ones. And there's a couple of people in particular in ACTO that seemed to be the spearhead for that. And I'm sure there were other people in ICF.

Participant 8 shared their experience about the active discussions that took place within ACTO as they updated their code of ethics and the challenges around how to make meaning of culture and context within the realm of diversity and inclusion. Finding common language on how to discuss culture, such as the use of the term “inclusion” verses “cultural competence” versus “cultural humility” and the behaviors associated with each term was one active area of discussion.

Participant 7 added that in the ACT discussions, there were conversations around how to address differences that arise in cultures that are thought to be homogeneous, and referenced an exercise



that was introduced during a conference around that addressed both visible and invisible identities.

Understanding the discussions that took place in ACTO helped provide context on how the organization was able to advocate for the inclusion of language around culture and context within the new ICF core competencies. As this research has shown, there are still varying levels of adapting these competencies into their core curricula, and there is still more socialization and advocacy required for that to happen. As participant 6 points out, “ACTO has been really trying to get coach training programs to do this work and talking about it and not feeling like they're doing a very good job of, you know, that they're that the coaching programs are interested in it, but they're not making changes in their program.” In many ways, this statement echoes some of the points made earlier about the political reach of the ICF. While ACTO serves as a professional association for coach training programs, the ICF not only serves as a professional association for coaches, but also accredits coach training programs and oversees credentialing for individual coaches. Therefore, it can be argued that if the ICF determines that it is important for any change to be made to how any coaching intervention is introduced, they have the political means for driving change.

### **Summary of Organization Findings**

The survey and the interview findings show that there is an interest among coach training programs for the ICF to take a leadership role in providing clarity around the definitions of culture and context, and what that can look like within a coaching engagement. While ACTO provided the advocacy for incorporating language around culture and context into the new core competencies, there exists an opportunity to take the competencies and translate them into how it can appear in culturally and contextually sustainable coaching. The interview findings showed a desire for the ICF to model culturally and contextually sustainable coaching through

demonstrations. Serving this translational leadership role for coach training programs will help to eliminate any guesswork for these programs in defining culturally and contextually sustainable coaching within their program design.

### **Conclusion**

This study explored the knowledge, motivation, and organizational influences of instructional designers within coach training institutions, specifically around building training curricula that addressed culturally and contextually sustainable coaching. An update to the ICF core competencies in 2019, which addressed culture and context was the basis of this study. When examining knowledge influences, this study examined the key factors involved in culturally and contextually sustainable coaching, which are awareness of the self and others, the ability to attend to cultural differences, the ability to form integrative complexity, and finally, building awareness around power, positionality, and privilege. Both survey and interview participants revealed that the awareness of self, and awareness of self in relationship to differences was a key skill and knowledge influence being taught in training programs. However, it is also important to note that the majority of programs rely on participants to utilize their newfound self-awareness make their own interpretations on how they wish to translate this into their coaching practice. There were also specific areas of instruction highlighted beyond self-awareness on specific skills and techniques on how to attend to cultural differences. Removing judgement was also the key technique that was introduced in relationship to integrative complexity. Finally, more than half of interview participants mentioned power, positionality, and privilege were topics mentioned during training programs in hopes that it would raise awareness.

Motivational influences included the value that instructional designers felt around culturally and contextually sustainable coaching, as well as their self-efficacy around designing culturally and contextually sustainable curricula. The study revealed that instructional designers

saw the value in culturally and contextually sustainable coaching. Their levels of self-efficacy, specific around the confidence they to design culturally and contextually sustainable curricula was lower, thus identifying a gap that could be addressed. This gap was addressed in the organizational influences, which provided guidance on how the ICF could serve in a translational leadership capacity for coach training institutions. This translational role involves defining culturally and contextually sustainable coaching, as well as providing resources that coach training programs could access in an online resource center.

In addition, emergent influences around the language and consciousness in relationship to culture and context provided a glimpse into the worldview of interview participants. The consciousness around differences and categories, especially around racial, religious, gender, and sexual identity were very much an American-centric point of view. How this worldview is being exported beyond American borders, and how it may be interpreted outside of the United States is worth exploration. Chapter Five will discuss the policy considerations, suggested implementations, as well as implications for further research.

## **Chapter Five: Findings and proposed Solutions**

This study examined the impact of the assumed knowledge, motivation and organization influences for the ICF to meet its goal of the global advancement of the coaching profession through updating its coaching competencies by studying how the competencies around culture and context were interpreted and introduced in coach training curricula. Survey data from 45 participants and subsequent interviews with 10 participants found four knowledge influences, three motivation influences, and one organizational influence. In addition, two emergent influences were found within the survey and interviews that provided additional insights around how culture and context were addressed by owner/operators and instructional designers.

This chapter will provide a brief discussion of the findings and key takeaways from the research, followed by an overview of the influences, and the proposed solutions for the ICF. In addition, this chapter provides implementation and evaluation strategies for these solutions. Finally, this chapter will conclude with the considerations for future research as the ICF continues in its goal to professionalize the coaching industry.

### **Discussion**

Coaching is a profession that is still in its infancy that has been shaped by a world that rapidly became interconnected through globalization. In many respects, coaches and training institutes were able to benefit from the technological connectivity enabled through globalization in order to expand their reach beyond their immediate communities. While the first 25 years of the ICF's involvement as the professional association of the coaching profession were dominated by Western values and identity, the organization's leaders recognize that in order for the ICF to be a truly global organization, it needs to recognize non-Western and emergent perspectives on the profession.

Culturally and contextually sustainable coaching includes four main competencies. First, cultivating one's own cultural awareness in concert with an appreciation of the participant's cultural lens. Second, the ability for the coach to attend to culture and context within the coaching engagement. Third, the ability for the coach to develop integrative complexity to be able to hold and embrace competing worldviews. Fourth, the coach needs to comprehend the influences of societal power, positionality, and privilege within the engagement.

The social and economic fissures that existed in the United States ruptured in the first half of 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic and the publicized acts of police brutality served as flashpoints that exposed the systemic inequity and rising illiberalism within the United States and throughout the world. These flashpoints have created an environment of moral intensity (Jones, 1991) that opens up a policy window for the ICF to clarify what it means for a coach to be culturally and contextually sustainable. In addition, ethics and equity are interdependent within the coaching profession. For a coach to be ethical, they need to treat others equitably. In August 2020, the ICF released a statement outlining its position on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Providing coaches with the knowledge and training so that they can approach their coaching with a culturally and contextually sustainable lens compliments this position of equitable and inclusive coaching.

This study revealed that coach training institutions provided participants with an opportunity to increase their own awareness around the topics of culture and context, along with the introduction of unconditional positive regard and the active removal of judgement. Yet a gap exists in the curricula that bridges the development of awareness and how that translates into techniques and attention to culture and context. From a policy perspective, there exists an opportunity for the ICF to serve in a translational role to clarify what it means for coaches to employ culturally and contextually sustainable techniques. The new set of core competencies

that were unveiled in 2019 utilized inclusive language. However, the ICF has an opportunity to address how commonly accepted Western neoliberal worldviews around individualism and free will may not translate to other contexts and provide guidance on how coaches can attend to culture and context within their coaching engagements. By providing guidance and resources around culture and context, the ICF signals that coaching is a profession that provides its membership with the right training and resources to be successful in a globally interconnected world.

### **Key Findings**

The analysis of both the survey and interview data confirmed four influences around knowledge, two influences around motivation, and three factors pertaining to organization. There were also a number of emergent themes pertaining to the language used to describe how participants described differences along race, gender, and class in addition to a heightened awareness around these differences. The influences show an understanding of the procedural knowledge, as well as the value placed by instructional designers on culture and context within coach training curricula. Equally important were the identified gaps, primarily around the wide variance pertaining to how exactly the topics of culture and context were incorporated into coach training curricula, if at all. The lack of validation with these factors aligns with the data gathered from the interviews which indicated that the institutions hope to have the ICF serve in a translational capacity to provide clarity, resources, and examples on how coaches can integrate the topics of culture and context within the coaching relationship. Therefore, there is an opportunity for the ICF take a leadership position as a professional organization to provide clarity and assurance for the global marketplace of the quality of training knowledge, and experience of what an ICF-certified coach can offer. Table 11 provides an overview of the influences, along with the recommendations for the ICF to address these influences.

## Recommendations

In serving in a translational capacity for coach training programs to be better equipped to deliver culturally and contextually sustainable training, there are two solutions that can be developed in response to this opportunity. The first solution would be for the ICF to create a policy statement on culture and context, while the second solution would be to create a resource hub for training programs. Both solutions would involve reaching out to stakeholders for feedback and assistance, and would leverage existing infrastructure and resources.

**Table 11**

*Influences and Recommendations*

Gap analysis	Influences	Associated recommendations
Knowledge	Instructional designers' knowledge of the newly revised ICF core competencies (declarative)	1. ICF Policy Statement clarifying culture and context 1. ICF Policy Statement clarifying culture and context
	Instructional designers' knowledge of the conceptual frameworks around coaching across cultural and contextual boundaries. (declarative)	2. Resource hub for coach training programs
	Instructional designers' knowledge of incorporating cultural and contextual competencies into a coaching engagement (Procedural)	1. ICF Policy Statement clarifying culture and context 2. Resource hub for coach training programs
	Instructional designers' self-awareness around their own cultural and contextual perspectives in relationship to coaching clients from different backgrounds. (Metacognitive)	2. Resource hub for coach training programs
	Language and consciousness around culture and context	

Gap analysis	Influences	Associated recommendations
Motivation	The value for incorporating cultural and contextual competencies (Attainment Value)	1. ICF Policy Statement clarifying culture and context
	The perceived benefits of incorporating culture and context into curricula (utility value)	1. ICF Policy Statement clarifying culture and context 2. Resource hub for coach training programs
	The instructional designers' confidence to create culturally and contextually sustainable curricula.	
Organization	ICF's culture of integrity and excellence sets a high standard for coaching quality and competence as reflected in its core competencies. (Cultural Model 1)	1. ICF Policy Statement clarifying culture and context
	How ACTO has responded to the updated core competencies	1. ICF Policy Statement clarifying culture and context 2. Resource hub for coach training programs

### **Solution 1: Policy Statement on Culture and Context**

The first solution is for the ICF to clearly define culturally and contextually sustainable coaching through a policy statement. Similar to their position statement on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) that was published in August 2020, this statement would help to provide a unified definition of culturally and contextually sustainable coaching, the ICF's position on the importance of why culturally and contextually sustainable coaching is important and could point readers to resources that can be used by instructional designers as they update their curricula. This statement could be shared during a town hall-style meeting with coach training programs



and could be included as part of a resource hub, which will be listed as the second solution below.

### ***Strategies and Resource Requirements***

A working group of three volunteers could be recruited to help draft this policy statement. One option would be to form the working group from within an already existing task force on DEI as this statement supports the work that is already being performed. Leveraging the process that is already in place with the DEI task force, the policy statement would be presented to the global ICF board for review and approval. The resource requirements for this strategy would involve the time and mindshare of these volunteers, along with the time of the global board. Overall, the investment of time and resources would be minimal as this strategy would leverage existing systems and resources that are in place.

### ***Timeframe for Implementation***

This working group could meet one-to-three times over the course of one month to draft and update the wording, and present a draft statement to the board. The board would need to deliberate the draft and propose any updates. This could potentially take between one to 6 months, depending on the cadence between board meetings and when the working group would need to make updates, depending on the feedback.

### ***Constraints and Challenges***

For this solution, resource constraints would be minimal. It is important to note that challenges could arise from the board around the position statement as it involves shifting mindsets around how culture and context are approached in a coaching relationship. One approach may be to address upfront any resistance and questions about why a standalone or supplemental statement is necessary in relationship to the DEI statement. Doing this may help to provide clarity and alleviate any confusion amongst stakeholders.

### ***Key Indicators of Success***

Key indicators of success for this solution would be fairly straightforward. One success metric would include the number of training program representatives attending the town hall meeting as well as the number of times the recording was viewed. Another metric would be to measure how this statement would influence overall strategy around how the guidance given to coach training programs pertaining to core competencies. A “pulse-check” survey could be sent out to institutions roughly six months after the announcement to measure any increase in modifications to their curricula based on the announcement. One final measure of success would be that the majority (over 80%) of programs would address culture and context within their training.

### **Solution 2: Resource Hub for Coach Training Programs**

One theme that emerged from the research was that the instructional designers saw value in culturally and contextually sustainable coaching; however, there were lower levels of confidence in how culture and context were incorporated into a coaching engagement. To address this need, the second solution involves creating a resource hub for training programs. This resource hub would contain videos with sample coaching sessions with freeze frame options that point out culturally sustainable techniques that were used during the course of the session. In addition, there would be downloadable materials such as frameworks, intake forms, and assessments that could be provided to training programs.

### ***Strategies and Resource Requirements***

Creating a resource hub will require a partnership between training institute representatives and the ICF. Representatives from coach training programs can be recruited to form a task force and can work alongside a point person from within the ICF. In addition to a dedicated point person, other resources by the ICF may include instructional design,

videography, and professional editing for any videos, that already exist in some capacity within the ICF. Another resource would include the development of the hub on ICF's existing learning portal. During the course of creating the hub, it is estimated that there could be roughly three internal ICF resources dedicating five-to-ten hours/week for three months. The time commitment for the volunteer working group could be 40 hours total for instructional design and feedback. One final resource would be the launch and promotion of the resource hub, with announcements being made by the Vice President of Coach Training and a targeted email and social media marketing campaign by the ICF to reach representatives of coach training programs. The estimated time commitment would be five total hours. If this project is prioritized and run efficiently, this could be completed in as little as three months.

### ***Constraints and Challenges***

In comparison to the first solution, there would be a greater level of investment in the form of human and technical capital to ensure that this solution is implemented. To alleviate any resource constraints, one option would be to offer a phased implementation approach, with the first phase being the creation of any static materials such as frameworks and position statements. Based on the feedback offered, the team can decide what resources need iteration and whether or not to create online videos.

### ***Key Indicators of Success***

Similar to the first solution, key indicators of success include measuring any increase in the number of times the resource hub was accessed, along with capturing any direct feedback from the training program participants. Looking at how the ICF's organizational partnership strategy shifts in response to these resources, along with any improvement on how the ICF is perceived as a partner to these programs is another indicator of success. Ultimately, as coach training programs improve how culture and context are addressed, another measure of success

would be that the profession as a whole is embraced in areas outside of North America and Europe.

**Table 12**

*Implementation Plan Summary*

Proposed solutions	Action steps	Capacity & resource constraints	Timeframe	Indicators & measures; challenges
Solution 1: Policy statement on culture and context	Create working group	1–3 meetings to draft statement	Six months maximum	Times viewed
	Draft statement	Resistance to change		PCC Marker
	Announcement at town hall meeting			Shift in organizational strategy
	Board approval			Curriculum iterations
Solution 2: Resource hub for coach training programs	Create working group	120 total hours for dedicated staff	Ideal: Three month dedicated project; most likely closer to six months	
	Assign internal resources	40 hours		Number of views
	Instructional design and record demo sessions	Space on LMS system		Overall shift in strategy with coach training programs
	Post to LMS	Marketing and Social Media coverage		Feedback from member institutions
	Marketing to institutions			Iterations to coach training curricula

## Evaluation Plan

The recommendations for this study are evaluated using the four levels evaluation framework by Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006). Evaluation is a means of assessing an initiative's opportunities for improvement, its continuation, and justification for its existence (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). The four levels of reaction, learning, behavior, and results, are not only important by itself, but also directly impacts the level above it (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). It is also important to note that this study follows an argumentative, post-positivist approach to evaluation, with the understanding that any discussion around the topics of culture and context in policy evaluation is subject to competing interests, values, and worldviews (Bovens et al., 2008).

Reaction is the first level in the framework, and is a means of measuring how stakeholders react to a program or intervention (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). Reaction is linked with motivation, as a negative reaction to an intervention will result in resistance (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). The next level is learning, which is a means of evaluating how attitudes, knowledge, and skills shift as a result of the intervention (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006) also note that the primary aim of programs that involve diversity involve the changing of attitudes. The third level measures behavior – namely the change in behaviors associated with the intervention (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). Finally, the fourth level – results – examines the measurable impact of the intervention (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006).

The Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick model will be used as the foundation for evaluating the two recommendations that were outlined earlier in this chapter. One means of evaluating all the interventions would be to have a baseline multiple-choice question in the CKA around the definition of culture and context. The CKA is an assessment of basic coaching knowledge and

skills that is administered to all new coach certification candidates. For the purposes of evaluation, this question would not be factored into the final result of the assessment. Each multiple-choice answer can be given a numeric score, depending on how closely the answer aligns with the ICF core competencies on culture and context. This could be a behavioral question that asks how a coach would respond to a specific coaching situation. A sample question could be as follows: “During your second session, your client mentions that they are struggling with having conversation around a difficult topic with a colleague. As they describe the situation, they mention in passing that they never have had to deal with these topics in their culture. What do you do? A. Ask more about the topic and what makes it challenging B. Pause and inquire more about their cultural messaging in relationship to their topic C. Ask them to begin considering their options.” In this case, answer B would be the culturally responsive answer. One means of quantifying the progress would be to collect and aggregate scores from the ACC and the PCC assessments for the timeframe (one to two quarters) before the proposed interventions, and then after the interventions to see if there was a shift in culturally responsive answers. In addition, the ACC and PCC applications list the ACTP and ACSTH programs that were completed by the certification candidates, which can be cross-checked against the programs that are actively participating in the resource hub proposed in Recommendation 2.

### **Evaluating Recommendation 1: Policy Statement on Culture and Context**

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the ICF has a unique opportunity to serve in a translational role within the coaching profession. Success is evaluated through the clarity of the statement provided by the ICF for coach training programs around culture and context, along with the awareness of these definitions by the instructional designers of these programs. The Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006) model can be utilized to evaluate the success of this recommendation once the policy statement is completed and announced to the group. It is

assumed that the working group may take some time to agree upon the wording for this statement, therefore, including the question in the CKA at the start of the project may be important in the evaluation process. Once the ICF makes the announcement through a press release or a webinar eventually posted the website, the ICF can track how that question is answered on the CKA roughly six months after the announcements to determine if there is an increase in the number of culturally responsive answers. Finally, a quantifiable measure of success would include at least 80% of coach training programs reporting that the topics of culture and context are addressed in their curricula. This could be accomplished through a quick “pulse check” survey that is conducted by the ICF. Table 13 provides an overview of the evaluation plan for recommendation 1.

**Table 13**

*Evaluation Plan for Recommendation 1*

Evaluation Levels (Kirkpatrick, 2006)	Evaluation Plan
Level 1: Reaction Stakeholder reaction to intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial reaction to the policy statement by coach training programs</li> <li>• Motivation of ICF global board around the statement</li> </ul>
Level 2: Learning Shift in attitudes, knowledge, and skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capture baseline results from CKA question to measure what percentage of answers were culturally responsive</li> <li>• Measure CKA results 6 months after the announcement to see if there is any increase in the number of culturally responsive answers</li> </ul>
Level 3: Behavior Change in behaviors associated with intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow up with training programs to see if there were modifications to the training based on the announcement. This can be accomplished through a quick “pulse check” survey</li> </ul>
Level 4: Results Measurable impact of the intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 80% of coach training programs address culture and context within their curricula.</li> </ul>

## **Evaluating Recommendation 2: Resource Hub for Coach Training Programs**

The second recommendation focuses on the creation of a resource hub for coach training programs. This resource hub would address the lower levels of self-efficacy pertaining to the creation of culturally and contextually sustainable instructional materials and design reported by the instructional designers. A resource hub around culture and context allows for the reinforcement of the policy statement and ensures clear, quality, unified instruction around this highly nuanced topic. The ICF can capture initial reactions to the policy statement by coach training institutions, along with feedback on any additional resource needs that can be addressed through the hub. Success is evaluated through the increased awareness and utilization of the resource hub. It is also assumed that as the resource hub is introduced and the content is incorporated into the curricula, that there may be a shift in CKA scores. Conducting check-ins with participants of webinars on select topics to see if instructional designers made any changes to curricula would be a means of measure behavioral changes associated with each intervention. The measurable impact of this intervention would include a favorable perception on the part of the instructional designers that the ICF is their partner in their success, and continues the feedback loop from the programs to continue to improve the resource hub. Ultimately, by training culturally sustainable coaches, the coaching profession will grow exponentially in areas outside of North America and Western Europe. Table 14 provides an overview of the evaluation plan for recommendation 2.



**Table 14***Evaluation Plan for Recommendation 2*

Evaluation levels (Kirkpatrick, 2006)	Evaluation plan
Level 1: Reaction Stakeholder reaction to intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial reaction to the policy statement by coach training programs</li> <li>• Capture desired resources from coach training programs</li> <li>• Survey motivation level from coach training programs</li> <li>• Increased awareness of the resource hub</li> </ul>
Level 2: Learning Shift in attitudes, knowledge, and skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased utilization of the webinars on different topics around culture and context for instructional designers. Measure knowledge on key points at start and at end of the webinar</li> <li>• Measure CKA results to see if there are any shifts in how the question around culture and context is answered</li> </ul>
Level 3: Behavior Change in behaviors associated with intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check-ins with coach training programs six months after each new webinar to measure changes that were made to curricula around a specific knowledge and skill area</li> </ul>
Level 4: Results Measurable impact of the intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in satisfaction with the ICF amongst coach training institutions</li> <li>• Increased adaptation of coaching as a profession in areas outside of North America and Western Europe</li> </ul>

Evaluation is a critical step in the process that will allow the ICF to understand ways in which they can deepen the partnership with coach training programs. Feedback in the form of reactions and level of enthusiasm around the intervention from the instructional designers will allow the ICF to then create policies and initiatives that continue to increase the professionalism of the coaching community. These interventions will be offered in service of the advancing the coaching profession, and sends a strong signal to present and future clients that coaching is a worthwhile investment of their time and money.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

This study provided a small glimpse into the bigger questions facing the coaching industry. As the world continues to become more globally interconnected, the topics of culture and context will continue to play a role in the intersectional lenses of both coach and client. This research addressed culture and context from an organizational gap analysis, which provided recommendations for both the ICF in relationship to training programs. An in-depth analysis through actual participation in training programs could have offered a different means of data collection. This form of data collection could determine if there is alignment between what the instructional designers shared in the survey and interview responses in relationship to what is actually delivered in their programs. It is also important to note that because culture and context were a topic of interest to all participants, there may be an element of participation bias that may not be representative of all training programs. These responses can skew the levels of culture and context in the curricula to be higher than what is in the greater coach training community. Another key design consideration is that this was designed as a study of training programs in the United States. Although some programs had classes offered internationally, they were programs that were initially designed for an audience in the United States.

A future study into programs that originate from different geographic regions may also serve as an interesting contrast. It is also important to not ignore the importance of a researcher's reflexive lens within this process, and that another researcher may have interpreted the nuance of the data differently. Finally, it is critical to understand the moment in history, with its heightened awareness surrounding racial justice and equity. This moment may have impacted how the participants framed their responses. Therefore, it would be interesting to revisit this topic to measure if the sentiments of the participants withstand the test of time.

## Conclusion

This study sought to understand how these changes to the ICF core competency model were being implemented within coach training programs, specifically the competencies that pertain to culture and context. In order to achieve ICF's organizational performance goal of leading the global advancement of the coaching profession, this study identified a stakeholder performance goal that allows instructional designers within coach training programs to update their curricula by December 2021 to be more culturally and contextually sustainable. If coach training programs would meet this goal of culturally and contextually sustainable curricula, a secondary stakeholder goal of having professional coaches undergoing training or credential updates would have access to information provided by the ICF on cultural and contextual competencies by December 2022. Culturally and contextually sustainable coaching is anchored by four key competencies: cultivating awareness, attending to culture and context in the coaching engagement, developing integrative complexity, and comprehending positionality, privilege, and power. In addition, culturally and contextually sustainable instructional design involves a heightened awareness of cultural differences, reflective practice and self-awareness, and continued professional development. The research data included responses from 45 surveys and 10 interviews, and resulted in 10 influences that concludes that the ICF has an opportunity to serve in a translational capacity and offer resources to provide clear guidance and examples on how coaches can integrate the topics of culture and context within the coaching relationship. Chapter 5 identified two recommendations for the ICF to address these opportunities in the form of creating a position statement and resource hub, along with a means of evaluating any progress toward these goals.

In a recent essay, a question was posed of whether or not coaching helped to solve or merely contribute to the world's problems (Clutterbuck, D., personal communication, January 5,

2021). In addition to the threats to the profession posed by artificial intelligence and oversupply, the paper issued a challenge to decolonize the coaching profession by examining the practice of forcing a coach to abandon their own cultural lens in favor of US-dominated cultural assumptions under the guise of best practices (Clutterbuck, D., personal communication, January 5, 2021). Coaching is very much a behavioral and psychological intervention in service of positive change. Culture and context can be perceived as highly nuanced topics that might be too challenging to address in a time-constrained, goal-centered coaching relationship because not all cultural worldviews are readily visible or easily interpreted. A lack of appreciation or attention to a client's cultural lens by the coach can be detrimental to the coaching relationship, and will impact outcomes. If aspiring coaches are unable to grasp nuance and complexity, the training institution may be doing a disservice to the profession by sending these coaches into a complex and nuanced world. At this point, the market has outpaced policy. Coaches have been coaching across cultural boundaries since the inception of the profession. The first update of the ICF core competencies in 25 years that includes language around culture and context is a positive first step. However, in this era of VUCA, the ICF cannot wait another 25 years for the next update. The market is past the point of culture and context being taught as a separate and specialized form of coaching, or as a standalone module, if at all. Culture and context need to be fully integrated into all training curricula, and the ICF is in a unique position to help empower all training programs to create culturally and contextually sustainable training programs to help the profession flourish.

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## Appendix A: Survey Questions

### Research Questions:

1. What knowledge, skills, and organizational support do instructional designers need to design curricula that is culturally and contextually sustainable?
2. What are the recommendations for organizational practice in the areas of knowledge, motivation, and organizational resources that training programs need to help them update their curricula?

**Table A1**

*Survey*

KMO Construct	KMO Assumed Influence	Interview Question
	Demographic	What type of coach training does your institution offer? Select all that apply <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTP</li> <li>• ACSTH</li> <li>• CCE</li> </ul>
	Demographic	Which best describes your role(s) in the training program? (select all that apply) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Owner/Operator</li> <li>• Instructional Designer</li> <li>• Administrator</li> <li>• Trainer</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>
K-D	Instructional designers' knowledge of the newly revised ICF core competencies	Since the announcement of the new ICF core competencies in October 2019, how much have you updated your curricula to align with these competencies? (Slider bar from 0–100%)
K-D	Instructional designer's knowledge of the conceptual frameworks pertaining to coaching around culture and context.	In the training you have designed, what is the approximate percentage of training time allocated exclusively to culture and context? (Slider bar from 0–100%)



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K-D	Instructional designers' knowledge of the conceptual frameworks around coaching across cultural and contextual boundaries into their curricula	How do you define cultural and contextual competence? (short answer)
K-D	Instructional designers' knowledge of the conceptual frameworks around coaching across cultural and contextual boundaries into their curricula	What are some of the necessary skills and knowledge that a coach needs to possess in order to be able to coach in a culturally and contextually competent manner? (short answer)
O-CS	ICF's support of the training programs through training and webinars on techniques around culture and context that can be used by the Training Programs.	It is important for the ICF to work with coach training programs to incorporate the updated core competencies around culture and context into your curriculum (5 is strongly agree important, 1 strongly disagree)

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K – D (Knowledge – Declarative)

M – V (Motivation – Value)

O – CS (Organization – Cultural Setting)

\*These are a subset of the updated 2019 core competencies that have been outlined by the ICF.

## Appendix B: Interview Instrument

### Research Questions:

1. What knowledge, skills, and organizational support do instructional designers need to design curricula that is culturally and contextually sustainable?
2. What are the recommendations for organizational practice in the areas of knowledge, motivation, and organizational resources that training programs need to help them update their curricula?

**Table B1**

### *Interview Protocol*

KMO Construct	KMO Assumed Influence	Interview Question
	Demographic	Tell me about your role with this training program.
	Demographic	What type of programs do you offer? (ACTP/ACSTH/CCE)
	Demographic	How long has this program been conducting training for coaches?
K-D	Instructional designer's knowledge of the conceptual frameworks pertaining to coaching around culture and context.	How familiar are you with the new core competencies that the ICF announced last year?  Probe: What do you think are the most impactful changes that were made to the competencies?
K-D	Instructional designer's knowledge of the conceptual frameworks pertaining to coaching around culture and context.	Tell me about how you define the concept of culture and context.  Probe: How was this definition formed for you? (i.e., through education, training, life experiences)
K-P	Instructional designers' ability to incorporate cultural competencies such as using culturally appropriate language into a coaching engagement.	Please walk me through some examples of how you structure and deliver the curriculum for coaches to build their competencies around working with participants from different cultural or contextual backgrounds.
M-SE	Instructional designers' confidence in their ability to effectively create culturally competent curricula	What are some areas where you struggled in designing the curricula around culture and context?  Probe:

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		What support would you find helpful to effectively address these struggles?
M-V	The instructional designers' value for incorporating cultural competencies into their curricula	How important is it for coaches to be culturally competent?  Probe: Why is that important?
O-CS	ICF's support of the training programs through training and webinars on techniques around culture and context that can be used by the Training Programs.	How can the ICF support you to incorporate these new competencies?

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K-D (Knowledge-Declarative)

K-P (Knowledge-Procedural)

M-SE (Motivation-Self-Efficacy)

M-V (Motivation-Value)

O-CS (Organization-Cultural Setting)

## Appendix C: Interview Protocol

### Interview

Hello! How are you today?

As part of this interview, I will be recording this session. Do I have your permission to record?

(hit record button)

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. My research project as a whole will focus on how culture and context are introduced into coach training curriculum, and your insights as an instructional designer will be instrumental in this research. During this interview, there is no such thing as a “right” answer. I am also not judging or evaluating your expertise. I will also not be sharing any proprietary techniques – more to get an understanding of the general strategies that are used to introduce culture and context.

Just checking in to ensure you’re comfortable proceeding.

We’re going to start off with some general background questions.

- Tell me about your role with this training program.
- What type of programs do you offer? (ACTP/ACSTH/CCE)
- How long has this program been conducting training for coaches?

So now, I’m going to ask you some questions about your program’s curriculum.

1. How familiar are you with the new core competencies that the ICF announced last year?  
Probe: What do think are the most impactful changes that were made to the competencies?
2. Tell me about how you define the concept of culture and context.  
Probe:  
How was this definition formed for you? (i.e., through education, training, life experiences)
3. Please walk me through some examples of how you structure and deliver the curriculum for coaches to build their competencies around working with participants from different cultural or contextual backgrounds?
4. What are some areas where you struggled in designing the curricula around culture and context?  
Probe: What support would you find helpful to effectively address these struggles?
5. How important is it for coaches to be culturally competent?
6. How can the ICF support you to incorporate these new competencies?

That's the end of the study-related question. Thank you very much for your participation. I have two final housekeeping questions – is it ok to send you the transcript of this interview for you to review? Also, is it ok to follow up with you if I have 1–2 follow-up questions in the future?

Thank you very much!

### **Post-Interview Protocol**

1. Collect video and transcript from Zoom. Clean up any errors in transcription
2. Load video and transcript to password-protected folder
3. Send transcript to participant for member-checking
4. Send thank you note with gift card to participant's physical address
5. Begin initial coding of the transcript

## Appendix D: Informed Consent/Information Sheet

Dear Instructional Designers,

This letter is to request your permission for participation in a research project that explores how culture and context are incorporated into coach training program curricula. I am specifically interested in exploring how these concepts are introduced to aspiring coaches, including what techniques, information, and methodologies that you design into the training program. The ultimate goal will be to identify any themes and gaps in how these concepts are introduced and identify any opportunities for growth within the coach training profession.

This research project is based on survey and interview data with instructional designers from coach training programs. The interview is expected to last one hour and will be recorded using Zoom. While it is understood that no computer transmission can be perfectly secure, reasonable efforts will be made to protect the confidentiality of your transmission.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If at any time during the interview, you choose to withdraw from the project, interview data will be destroyed immediately. Although there are no foreseeable risks in participation of this study, you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. There is no penalty for not participating or withdrawing. Research data will be collected between September and December 2020. Intellectual property that is deemed proprietary will not be revealed in this study. Participation and records of participation will be confidential. To ensure that data collected cannot be linked back to participants, data will be kept in a secure location. In addition, names and identifiable information will not be included in the dissertation.

I am a doctoral student at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, CA. This research is part of my dissertation. I am working under the direction of my advisor, Dr. Mark Robison ([mrobison@usc.edu](mailto:mrobison@usc.edu)) at the Rossier School of Education. If you have any questions regarding my project, you can reach me at [vwilson@usc.edu](mailto:vwilson@usc.edu) or (408) 605-0523. You may also contact the University of Southern California Institutional Review Board at the Office of the Protection of Research Subjects at [irb@usc.edu](mailto:irb@usc.edu). This project has been reviewed according to the University of Southern California procedures governing your participation in this research.

Your signature indicates your willingness to participate in this study.

Sincerely,  
Victoria Shiroma Wilson

I have read the consent form above. I understand the parameters of this research study and I am a willing participant. (signature)

## **Appendix E: Recruitment Letters**

### **Recruitment Letter - Survey**

Coach training programs play a critical role in elevating the coaching profession by ensuring that aspiring coaches receive the necessary information and training to become certified ICF coaches to ultimately serve their clients with the highest levels of competency and professionalism. In October 2019, the ICF introduced an updated set of core competencies, which will take effect in 2021.

As a doctoral student at the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California, I am conducting a brief survey with representatives from ACTP and ACSTH training programs who are responsible for curriculum design to learn more about how specific competencies are introduced into the curriculum. The criteria for participation include programs headquartered in the United States and have been in operation for at least five years.

Your participation is completely voluntary. This survey will take roughly five minutes to complete. Once complete, you can enter your name and contact information for a chance to win a \$25 Amazon.com gift card. Four winners will be randomly selected.

Take the survey now! (embedded link to survey)

Or copy and paste the following (survey link)

### **Recruitment Letter – Interview (at the close of the survey)**

Thank you very much for participating in this survey. The purpose of this research is to better understand how core competencies pertaining to culture and context are addressed in coach training curricula. Your input is valuable to advance the coaching profession.

If you would like to be entered into the drawing for a chance to win a \$25 Amazon.com gift card, please enter your name and email address below. There will be four winners chosen at random.

Name:

Email:

I am also recruiting participants from ACTP and ACSTH training programs who are responsible for curriculum design for interviews to further understand how the competencies of culture and context are incorporated into coach training curriculum. By participating in this research, you will receive a summary of the findings that you may use in your curriculum development.

The interview is approximately one hour and will be conducted over Zoom. Safeguards will be in place to protect confidentiality and proprietary techniques will not be included in the study. If you are interested in participating, please enter your name and email address below:

Name:

Email:

**Recruitment Letter – Interview** (Once the participant has opted in)

Thank you for your willingness to be interviewed as part of this research study on how culture and context are incorporated into coach training programs. I am specifically interested in exploring how these concepts are introduced to aspiring coaches, including what techniques, information, and methodologies you design into the training program. The ultimate goal will be to identify any themes and gaps in how these concepts are introduced and identify any opportunities for growth within the coach training profession. By participating in this research, you will be able to receive a summary of findings that may help you in your curriculum development.

Please review the attached informed consent agreement, which outlines your rights as a participant in this study and how the information and your privacy will be safeguarded during this research.

As a next step, please book some time on my calendar ([Link to Calendly](#)). I look forward to meeting with you soon!

With gratitude,  
Victoria Shiroma Wilson