

# Research Question

How do people in the manager-as-coach population experience coach identity?

# Abstract

Modern managers are expected to be good coaches, even though the coaching discipline is growing faster than it can be regulated (Garvin, 2013; Sherman & Freas, 2004). This research used a constructivist grounded theory approach to investigate the lived experiences of managers who coach and their emergent concept of identity through the lens of manager as instrument. This work generated three novel contributions: 1) rich description of manager-coach identity experiences, 2) a framework for understanding related constructs that inform the context of the manager-coach’s identity experiences, and 3) a conceptual model that describes how manager-coaches experience coach identity.

# Constructivist Grounded Theory

This research used CGT to explore the phenomena of coach identity among managers who coach. GT is a "systematic method of conducting research" that unearths phenomena through the inquiry process. Constructivism posits multiple, understandable, equally valid realities, suggesting reality is constructed within an individual's mind and that meaning can be brought to the surface through reflection or dialogue. A central component of CGT is interaction between the researcher and participant, such that inquiry is a process of understanding lived experiences, including those beyond the subject's awareness that could be surfaced through discussion or contemplation.

# References

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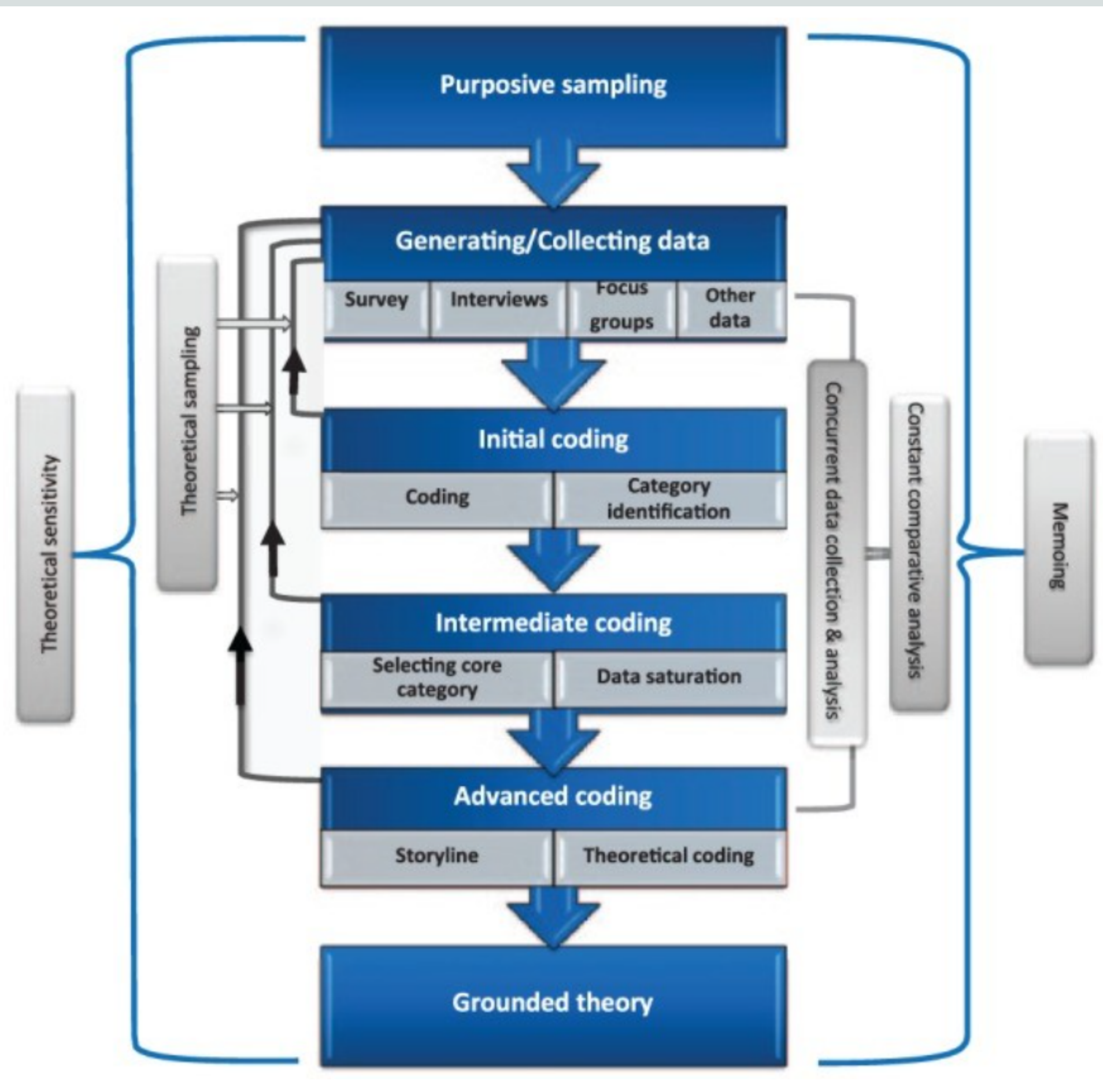
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# Me? Be a Coach?

## A Grounded Theory Investigation of Coach Identity Among Managers who Coach

Sara Cannon, Kira Marshall, Alyssa Lopez

# Research Design



(Tie et al, 2019)

# Participants

Manager-Coach	Title, Industry	Years as Manager across career	Years coaching direct reports as a Manager	Age	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Country
Steven (1)	Self-Employed, Consulting	20	15	51	Man	Asian	Singapore (India)
Elaine (2)	Vice President, Healthcare	30	3	60	Woman	White	USA
Oscar (3)	Vice President, Travel	15	3	50	Man	White	Spain (France)
Kate (4)	Director/Owner, Technology	24	8	58	Woman	Asian	England (Spain)
Lucy (5)	Vice President, Technology	20	20	55	Woman	White	USA (France)
Michele (6)	Digital Innovation Manager, Financial	11	3	46	Woman	Black or African, White	Jamaica
Joy (7)	Coach & Learning Consultant, Life Sciences	8	8	49	Woman	Middle Eastern	USA
Sloane (8)	Director, Consulting	20	15	46	Woman	White	Australia
Rosie (9)	Business Program Manager, Technology	9	5	46	Woman	White	USA
Laura (10)	Senior Manager, Technology	15	4	N/A	Woman	Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin	Spain

Note: The table contains pseudonyms to protect participant confidentiality

# AAA Framework

This framework informs the context that manager-coach identity experiences happen within. It consists of three sets of 3 key constructs: Actors, Activities, and Agreements.

Set	Work Environment Constructs			Explanation of Interrelatedness
Actors	Organization	Manager-Coach	Direct Report	These actors must be present for manager-coach identity experiences to occur. The presence/absence of any actor determines if the coach identity experience is intrapersonal, interpersonal, or indirect.
	The place that the Manager-Coach and Direct Report both work at.	The person who: 1) has formal coach training, 2) manages the direct report, and 3) is coaching one or more direct reports on the team they manage at the organization.	The person who is being coached by their manager at the organization.	
Activities	Mentoring	Coaching	Performance Management	Three developmental processes used by organizations. The actor’s definition, understanding, and application or engagement with each process inform the context of manager-coach identity experiences.
	The exchange of role and/or topic specific information and advice from an experienced professional to a professional with less experience in the specific topic.	A partnership between an individual with formal coach training and another individual who is seeking support for working on specific goals, objectives, or behavior changes.	The process of evaluating if a specific employee is exceeding, meeting, or not meeting their job responsibilities, and subsequent addressing of outcomes from the evaluation.	
Agreements	Consent	Boundaries	Expectations	Each of the three agreements must be communicated from one actor to another. Manager-coaching identity experiences are impacted by the quality of communication about the three agreements.
	The permission granted by a direct report prior to engaging in a coaching conversation with their manager-coach.	The limits of what is in-scope for a manager-coach to discuss in a coaching conversation with their direct report.	The required behavior, process, or outcome that is communicated from one actor to another in the context of work.	

# Findings

# Coach Identity Experiences

The eight themes below describe the coach identity experiences of manager-coaches

Theme	Sub-Theme	Definition
Inciting Incident	Learning and Improvement	Participant became a manager-coach after identifying an opportunity for new learning, skill acquisition, or area of improvement.
	External Encouragement	Participant became a manager-coach after receiving encouragement from other people, such as friends or in-group members (coaches or manager-coaches).
“Aha” Moment		Participant’s initial realization about the transformative application of coaching as a manager.
Growing Pains		The manager-coach makes an error in their work.
Trials of Building Trust		The manager-coach works to earn the trust and consent of their direct report.
Direct Report Transformations		The direct report has a significant transformation or realization as a result of <u>working with the manager-coach</u> .
Influencing the Workplace Environment		The participant works with others outside of their direct team, becoming known for their manager-coach skills.
Recognition		The participant is recognized by others at their organization for their work as a manager-coach.
Participant Insight	Paradigm Shift	The participant experiences an insight that influences or alters their internal state, such that their external behavior reflects this change.
	Meta Moment	The participant experiences a realization about their work as a manager coach through the process of the research interview.

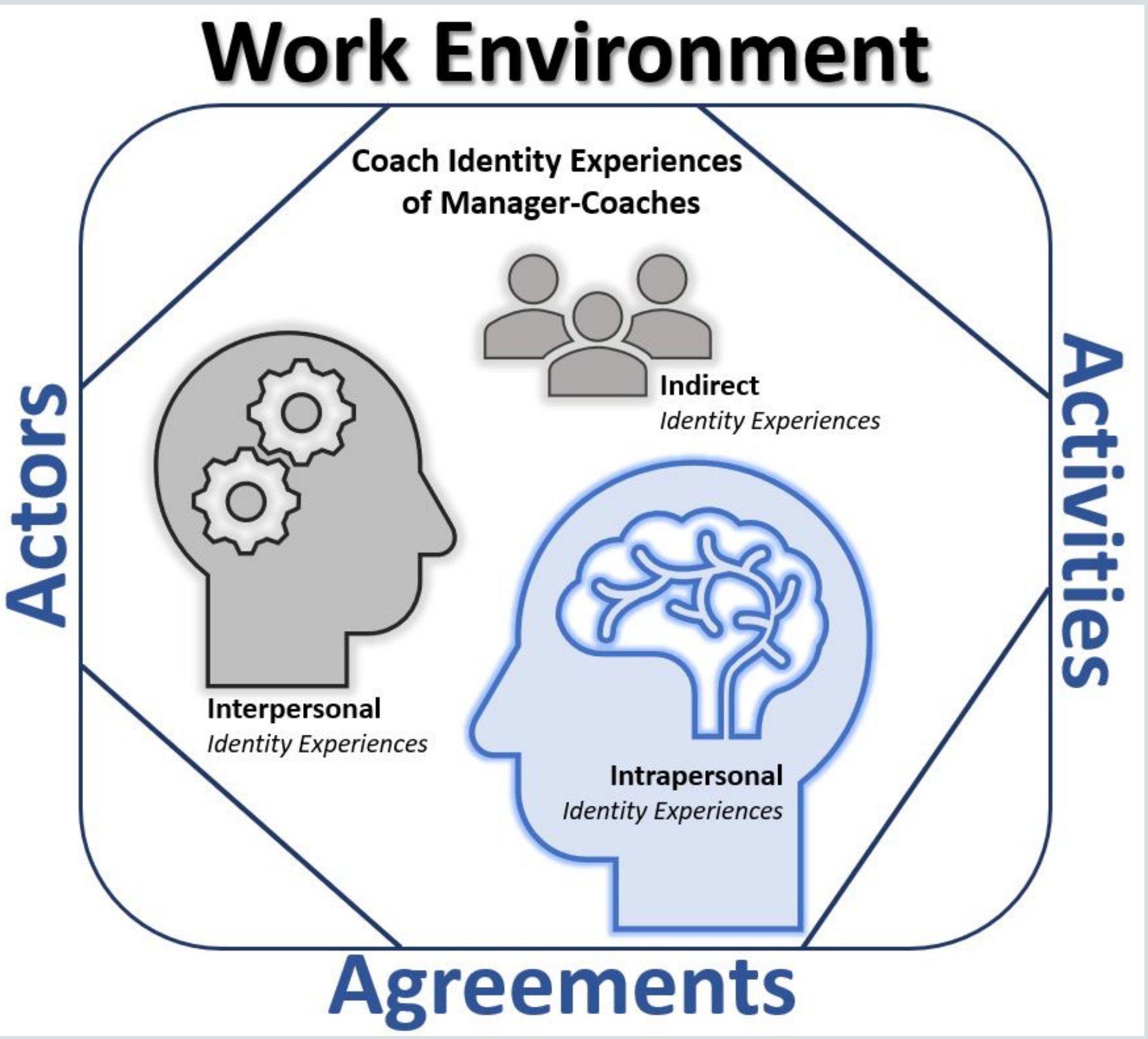
# Participant Quotes

“[Coaching] added a dimension to me. Before doing coach training, if I had listed out all of the things I am to all the people: I am a sister, I am a wife, I am a really good friend, I am a daughter, I am a manager... and I would never have said I’m a coach too. [Thinking about it now], **there are definitely parts of coaching that are just part of who I am.**” —Rosie

**“To coach someone, you need to have a personal journey of introspection to know yourself** in terms of how you understand emotions, rationale, and the body, [as well as] how you have enough resources to help others on a journey where you are not expected to push anyone nor give any advice.” —Oscar

# Model

This model combines findings to describe how manager-coaches experience coach identity.



# Key Takeaways

**For Organization and Manager-Coach:**

- Articulate expectations to your team
- Proactively model consent seeking
- Build boundaries for in- and out-of-scope
- Provide clear definitions of activities

**For Manager-Coach:**

- Assess the organizational coaching culture of your workplace environment
- Evaluate your own readiness for intrapersonal work

**For Organization:**

- Define manager-coaching, coaching, mentoring, and performance management
- Align assessment criteria with definitions
- Invest resources in either external training or in-house training that is aligned with activity definition and assessment criteria