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The impact of group coaching on leadership effectiveness for South African women managers

M. Alison Reid

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management.

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ABSTRACT

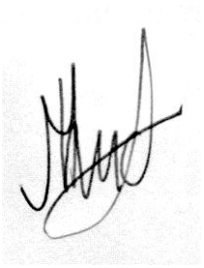
Effective leadership is crucial for organisational survival and growth, especially in demanding modern business environments. It is particularly challenging for women leaders who may function in gendered organisations that do not necessarily support their development. Group coaching is more time and cost-effective than individual coaching, is scalable and sustainable and is appropriate for the relational context of leadership. It is, however, in its infancy in terms of cohesive and differentiated research. This study investigated the impact of group coaching on leadership effectiveness in South African women managers.

Data was gathered from pre-and-post questionnaire administrations as well as interviews and was analysed using mixed methods in comparative t-tests and thematic analysis. The findings indicated that leadership effectiveness did change significantly over a six month leadership development programme, most notably in the areas of enabling self, enabling others and self-confidence. Specific impacts of group coaching on leadership effectiveness were by increasing awareness of self and values; enabling learning through external input; enabling sharing and support through safety and a sense of direction. These themes relate to factors inherent in a group context: multiple interactions to explore identity and self, multiple feedback inputs and collective sharing and support. The respondents reported less impact in the achievement of personal goals or results. It is possible that there is a trade-off in focus on the individual's objectives for the learning advantages of multiple interactions and exchanges in group coaching. The effects of group coaching, however, appear to be relevant for current business realities that demand modern leaders to be authentic and confident in complex and hyper-connected social environments. Women who work in male-dominated organisations may benefit particularly from alternative groups that provide safe feedback, validation and a sense of identification with similarly positioned women.

This study deepened understanding of how group coaching adds value in a leadership development context. The results add to the body of knowledge on group coaching and leadership effectiveness and help to inform the practice of effective leadership in organisations, particularly for women managers.

DECLARATION

I, (Margaret) Alison Reid, declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.



(Margaret) Alison Reid

Signed at ……Sandton, South Africa, ……

On the ……20th…….. day of ……September…… 2012

DEDICATION

This research study is dedicated to my family: they are and have always been the most important ‘thing’ to me.

It is also dedicated to an idea: that as people we have a deep capacity to learn and change- more than we think we do. We have social problems to face of an unimagined complexity. But in productive, effective groups, we can produce (as yet) unimagined solutions to these challenges and reach unimaginable potentials. This is to the groups who change destinies and the people who work in them.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of group coaching on leadership effectiveness in South African women managers. The research process aims to investigate changes in women's leadership effectiveness after attending a Business School leadership development programme, which included a substantial group coaching component. It then aims to explore what impact the group coaching process had on changes in the women's leadership effectiveness. The results will add to the body of knowledge on group coaching and leadership effectiveness. They will also help to inform the practice of effective leadership in organisations, particularly for women managers.

1.2 Context of the study

After the industrial revolution, the growing size and complexity of organisations made it necessary to manage and influence large groups of people towards a common goal (Amagoh, 2009; McCallum & O'Connell, 2008). In reality, the practical challenges of achieving this are compounded by globalisation, high rates of change and demanding, competitive organisational environments (Amagoh, 2009; McCallum & O'Connell, 2008; Quatro, Waldman, & Galvin, 2007). Strong leadership is a requirement in businesses trying to survive these challenges (Amagoh, 2009) and the need for quality leaders is often an organisation's number one concern (Cormier, 2007). This is important in South Africa, where there are particularly diverse and challenging social contexts to leadership (Stout-Rostron, 2009; Wakahiu, 2011). It is also important for women managers in often male dominated organisational cultures, as there is an increasing need for stronger leadership in general, as well as leadership competencies traditionally regarded as feminine (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Hayward, 2005).

This need for strong leadership raises many questions about how to best develop the skills associated with it. The literature provides some answers to these questions. There is a gap in the literature, however, about the emerging practice of group coaching and its use in business education programmes. This form of intervention is efficient in terms of economies of scale, it incorporates some established one-on-one coaching techniques and offers additional benefits such as multiple learning partners (Cook & Viedge, 2011; Florent-Treacy, 2009; Kets-de-Vries, 2010; Thornton, 2010; Vidmar, 2005; Ward, 2008). It is also particularly congruent with emerging and current theories on leadership development (Hernandez, Eberly, Avolio, & Johnson, 2011).

A study of the impact of group coaching on leadership effectiveness in a business school learning environment will add to the literature concerning leadership and coaching. The results of this analysis will be valuable in guiding leadership development practice within organisations and for graduate education service providers. In post-apartheid South Africa this could support the solving of particularly complex social problems. The findings will specifically support the leadership development of women managers, which is a social and business imperative.

1.3 Problem statement

1.3.1 *Main problem*

Assess the impact of group coaching on leadership effectiveness in South African women managers.

1.3.2 *Sub-problems*

The first sub-problem is to evaluate how leadership effectiveness in South African women managers changes pre and post a six month leadership programme.

The second sub-problem is to assess the impact of the group coaching component of the leadership programme on leadership effectiveness in South African women managers.

1.3.3 *Research Question 1*

How does leadership effectiveness in South African women managers change pre and post a six month leadership programme?

1.3.4 *Research Question 2*

How does a group coaching process impact on changes in leadership effectiveness in South African women managers?

1.4 Significance of the study

Several studies have investigated specific interventions and activities for developing leadership effectiveness (George, Sims, Mclean, & Mayer, 2011; Ibarra, Snook, & Ramo, 2010), however there is little research on group coaching approaches and the roles they could play in enhancing leadership effectiveness. Whilst the available literature does indicate that it is an effective model in learning environments, much more research is needed. This study fills a gap in the research literature by addressing group coaching and its impact on leadership effectiveness. This approach deserves attention for three primary reasons: it is more cost-effective than individual coaching, it offers similar benefits to individual coaching and it is an opportunity for experiential learning in socially interactive and relational group context (Hawkins, 2011; Thornton, 2010; Ward, 2008), which is what so much of modern leadership is about.

Business schools develop leadership effectiveness in business people for application in the workplace to achieve organisational results. Organisations rely on effective leadership to perform well in the current business environment. This study provides guidance to education institutions which need to understand effective leadership and the interventions which best improve it, including professionals such as coaches and graduate education faculty. It also provides guidance to organisations investing in external leadership programmes or creating internal leadership development programmes for their staff. Finally, it provides guidance to women managers in gendered organisational cultures and support for the practice of developing authentic leadership in women.

1.5 Delimitations of the study

This research focuses on middle-to-senior managers who attended a leadership programme for women at the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS), in Johannesburg, South Africa. It does not address leadership at other levels of management (junior management or executive and board level). It also does not evaluate leadership effectiveness in men. The study assesses aspects of leadership effectiveness that can be addressed through a 360 degree questionnaire from the perspectives of participants and those they work with (respondents). The research does not observe the application of new skills in the work environment or measure its impact on organisational results.

The questionnaire used in the research has items relating to four sub-categories of leadership effectiveness. The first three categories are known as 'head' oriented leadership behaviours (e.g. strategic items like path-finding and culture-building), 'heart' oriented leadership behaviours (e.g. inspiration factors like beliefs, feelings, vision and purpose) and 'hands' oriented leadership behaviours (e.g. capability and commitment) (Nicholls, 1994). An additional category was later added on 'impact' oriented leadership behaviours, referring to a leader's 'felt' impact on his/ her followers (Cook, Muller, & Cutler, 2005).

Finally, the research explores the subjective impact of a group coaching process on leadership effectiveness for the women managers through interviews. In this section of the study, the participants' own perceptions are explored, but not those of people they work with. The group coaching process is part of a broader leadership programme but this study does not address the other leadership development activities (panel sessions, guest speakers and case studies).

1.6 Definition of terms

- Leadership: the use of influence to encourage subordinates' participation in achieving set goals and organisational effectiveness (Amagoh, 2009; McCallum & O'Connell, 2008).

- Leadership effectiveness: the success in influencing or encouraging subordinates' participation in achieving set goals (Amagoh, 2009; McCallum & O'Connell, 2008).

- Leadership development: planned and systematic efforts to improve the effectiveness of leadership (Amagoh, 2009, p. 989).

- Impact: A measure of the tangible and intangible effects (consequences) of one thing's or entity's action or influence upon another (BusinessDictionary.com, 2010).

- Management: Achieving results through others (Peel, 1993).

- Coaching: A one-on-one partnership using thought-provoking and creative processes and practices to support the achievement of change and results for clients and to develop and maximise their performance and potential (ICF, 2011; Rock & Page, 2009; Stout-Rostron, 2006; Whitworth, Kimsey-House, & Sandahl, 1998).

- Executive coaching: Links individual and organisational performance. It is regarded as a process of learning that is aimed at helping executives and business individuals to enhance their personal growth and improve their performance in order to improve the performance of the overall organisation (Chapman, 2010; Joo, 2005; Kahn, 2011; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001).

- Group coaching: A small group of people meeting together in active participation for the purpose of learning and developing new capacities and skills through exchange and interaction with each other (Thornton, 2010; p. 9).

- Business School: Educational facility that specialises in the teaching of material relevant to businesses or business services (BusinessDictionary.com, 2010).

1.7 Assumptions

a. The participants and their respondents will have the time to answer questionnaire items and will answer them truthfully and honestly. Incomplete, dishonest or biased answers will affect the study's results and therefore the credibility of the study.

b. The selected participants for the interview process will have enough time and enough insight into the group coaching processes and into leadership effectiveness to be able to clearly articulate answers to the interview questions. Lack of understanding the context of leadership effectiveness and group coaching will negatively affect the quality of the study findings.

c. The sample selected in both components of the research will generally reflect the population the study refers to, and their responses will reflect the general experiences for woman managers after a group coaching intervention. Responses that differ notably from the views of women managers in general will skew the findings and reduce the study's external validity.

1.8 Ethical considerations and issues

Full participation information forms and consent forms were given to the participants and only those who signed consent were included in the research.

The participants' and their respondents' responses on questionnaires were kept confidential and will not be reported in any other way aside from those associated with this research.

At each interview, the participant was again reassured of confidentiality and the anonymity of their interview responses.

They were asked if they were prepared to have the interview voice recorded and informed that they may decline if they wish.

All use of participant's data was anonymous: questionnaire responses were not associated with participant names, and interview transcriptions were coded by number.

The information was held securely and confidentially while the research was being collated. All notes were kept securely. Following the completion of the research all material collected will be shredded and destroyed.

There are no costs to the participant or their respondents associated with this research. No negative consequences are expected for the participants or their respondents as a result of taking part in this research. Participants were offered summaries of the findings on request.

All participants were informed that they retain the right to have their contributions withdrawn at any time prior to the submission of the research. In addition the contributor had the right to refuse to answer any question asked on the questionnaire or during the interview, or to ask to end the interview at any time.

The researcher had input on the design process for the leadership development programme. The programme design, however, was created initially four years ago and any recent changes were finalised before this research commenced.

2 CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter contains a literature review of the central themes relating to the study. It situates the approach to the literature review within a specific paradigm and conceptual framework. It then discusses the available literature with respect to the importance of leadership in current business realities, theories of leadership effectiveness and leadership development and specific leadership issues for women managers. Executive coaching is then discussed as one leadership development tool. Finally, the available literature on group coaching is examined in relation to leadership. The section concludes with a summary of key learnings obtained from the literature review and a statement of the study's research questions.

2.2 Paradigm

Paradigms are belief systems that reflect and guide the decisions that researchers make (Armitage, 2007). In the social and behavioural sciences these have traditionally fallen into two camps known as positivist and constructivist. They are associated with quantitative and qualitative approaches respectively, although these relationships are not fixed (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Positivism, in its most basic form, is based on the assumption that a researcher is an independent observer of the object of enquiry (Chia, 2002). Post-modern constructivism refers to the idea that social reality is constructed and the researcher is involved with and affects the capturing of real-world happenings (Chia, 2002). This study is based within a pragmatist paradigm. Pragmatists link the choice of approach directly to the purpose and nature of the research questions posed, which is congruent with the mixed approach of both quantitative and qualitative methods taken in practitioner-based research, such as this study (Armitage, 2007; Welman & Kruger, 2001). Leadership effectiveness is a key component of the study and is a socially constructed reality, in that what may be perceived to be effective in one context may not be perceived as effective in another. This study therefore lent itself to a post constructivist approach.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework followed in the literature review is: to introduce the area of practice that is of interest as a context to this study; to discuss three key areas of the literature that are of importance to this context and to describe the gap in the literature that emerges. This gap prompts a specific research question, which, if appropriately answered, will contribute to the literature and therefore the area of practice.

The area of practice that this study is concerned with is leadership development in business. The literature is first explored with regard to leadership, women in leadership and coaching in leadership. Group coaching is identified as a gap in the literature and a practice that could have benefits for leadership development. It therefore leads to this study's research question. The study aimed to collect the data, analyse it, interpret it and yield findings that help to fill this gap and thereby contribute theoretically and practically to leadership development in business. This is displayed in Figure 1 and described in more detail below.

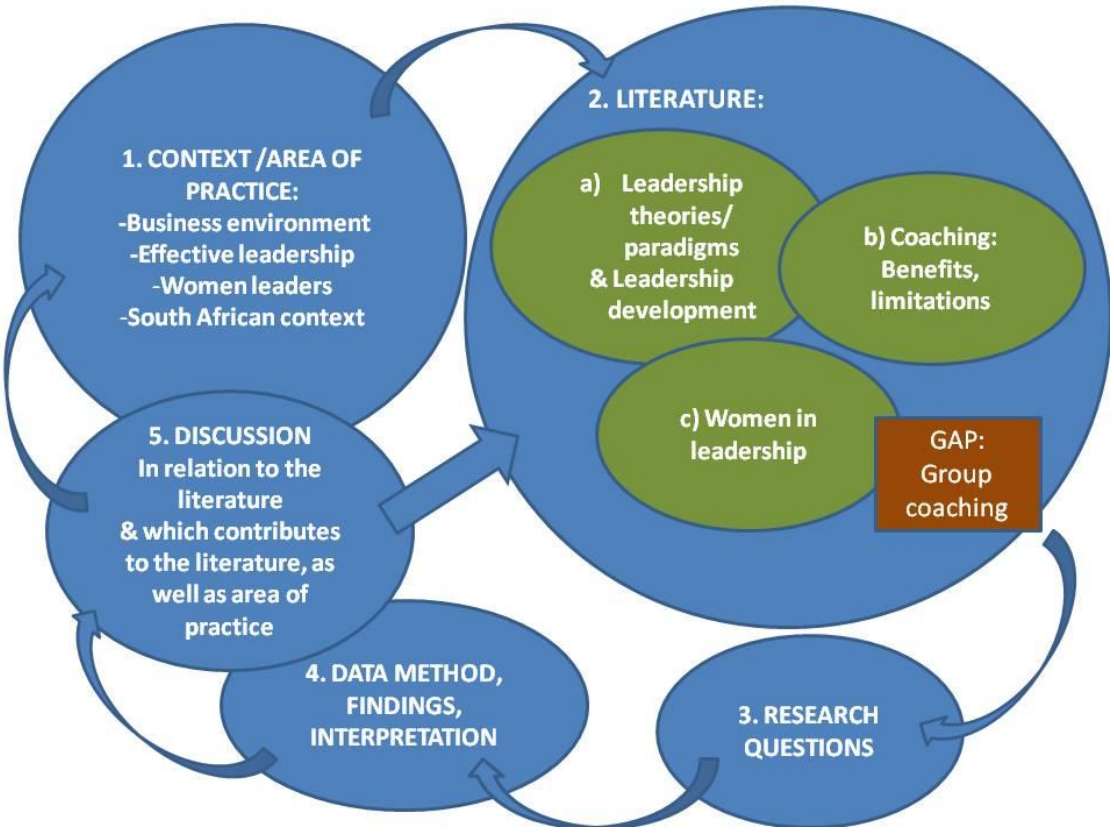

Figure 1: Diagrammatic model of conceptual framework

The area of practice is leadership development in business environments (see point 1 in Figure 1). Business today has a certain context that requires strong and effective leadership. Therefore organisations and education providers are interested in how best to develop effective leadership. This is important in South Africa where the socio-political and economic landscape makes effective leadership even more complex.

The literature (see point 2 in Figure 1) is first explored with regard to theories, paradigms and philosophies of leadership, as well as various components of effective leadership (see point a in Figure 1). Practices and approaches to developing effective leadership are also discussed. Secondly, the literature with regard to women in leadership is investigated as a specific context that deserves attention in modern business environments (see point b in Figure 1). This area of literature therefore also adds to the contextual framework that underpins this research study. The third area of literature to be discussed is coaching in terms of its benefits and limitations for developing effective leaders (see point c in Figure 1). Following this, group coaching is highlighted as a useful leadership development approach that has similar benefits to individual coaching and some additional benefits, but is not yet well researched. Therefore it represents a gap in the literature that leads to this study's research question (see point 3 in Figure 1). This research aims to collect the appropriate data, analyse and interpret it correctly (see point 4 in Figure 1) and yield findings that contribute to this gap in the literature (see point 5 in Figure 1) and which therefore make a significant contribution to the selected area of practice: leadership development in business (see point 1 in Figure 1).

2.4 Background discussion

There is a rich body of literature discussing the strategic and critical imperative of effective leadership for organisations. This literature explores effective leadership as crucial for competitive advantage (Day, 2001) and for organisational performance and growth (Amagoh, 2009): it is essential to enable organisations to both survive and to thrive. Effective leadership is linked to organisational innovation, responsiveness to change, creativity and sustained high performance (Amagoh, 2009). The increase in recent high-profile corporate failures and the economic

recession has raised many questions about quality leadership, including the challenge of developing holistic and ethical leaders who are equipped to deal with the demands of today's dynamic business environments (McCallum & O'Connell, 2008).

There has thus been increasing interest from education practitioners and organisations in actively developing leadership effectiveness. This can be seen in increased research output and investment into leadership programmes by organisations: the annual spend in 2000 was $50 billion (Day, 2001; Hannum, 2010; McCallum & O'Connell, 2008). There are factors specific to the context of women managers and their leadership effectiveness, which are just as critical and important to understand in order for organisations to succeed (Cormier, 2007; Hayward, 2005; Stout-Rostron, 2012).

There is a gap in the literature on group coaching as a tool to enhance leadership effectiveness. Whereas it seems intuitive that group coaching is cost-effective, scalable and well-suited to developing leaders, there is not much empirical evidence to support this. There is no literature that refers to group coaching as a particularly useful developmental tool for women managers. Some key claims about both leadership effectiveness and group coaching are, however, obtained from reviewing the literature which is described below.

2.5 Leadership and leadership effectiveness

2.5.1 *Theories of leadership and leadership effectiveness*

Theories of leadership have evolved through several key stages, which to some degree parallel changes in society (Alban-Metcalfe & Alimo-Metcalfe, 2009a). Initially, leadership was seen to be individualistic and non-systemic (Dalakoura, 2009). Leadership paradigms moved from those based on trait theories in the 1930s to behavioural theories in the 1950s, both emphasising the attributes of the individual leader (Alban-Metcalfe & Alimo-Metcalfe, 2009a). Also emerging between the 1950s and 1970s, cognitive approaches to leadership emphasised the processes of sense-making and thinking related to leadership (Hernandez, et al., 2011). More recently,

leadership theories focussed on effect and the emotions involved in leadership (Goleman, 2003). These theories all emphasised either the mechanism by which leadership was theorised to be enacted or the processes by which leaders influenced their followers (Hernandez, et al., 2011). In this sense, leadership was regarded as something one was born with, or something one does.

Contingency and situational theories arose in response to criticism that trait and behaviour models neglected contextual factors. Situational models describe leadership effectiveness as dependent on the readiness and abilities of those being led (Amagoh, 2009). Contingency models position leadership effectiveness as dependent on contexts like global, organisational and social context (Amagoh, 2009). The 1980s saw the emergence of transformational leadership theories that positioned leadership as being about transforming both themselves and their followers, moving beyond self-interest for the good of the group, and in that process, defining (new) organisational realities (Amagoh, 2009; Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004). Engaging and social leadership theories emerged, which emphasised the relational value of engaging with followers (Amagoh, 2009; Kemp, 2009b). These latter theories described leadership as something that emerges as a result of interactions between the leader, the follower, and their broader contexts. In fact, modern theories have extended thinking about the loci or source from which leadership arises, from leader, follower and context, to include leader-follower dyads, with the focus on the relationship, and the collective. This last loci includes theories that focus on the interconnected relationships of people within specific groups (e.g. work teams) and which see leadership as a group-level phenomenon (Hernandez, et al., 2011).

Contemporary leadership theories focus on nuanced and complex themes such as the leaderplex - a leader's ability to integrate and differentiate cognitively, behaviourally and socially, while taking context into account. These include social network theory (LMX), which also focuses on the relationships connecting individuals, and the social identity model of leadership effectiveness (SIMOL), which explores how leaders are perceived as being leaders within group settings (Hernandez, et al., 2011). There are also more recent, emerging theories of leadership based on value-driven leadership; including cross-cultural leadership and

authentic leadership theory (George, et al., 2011; Ibarra, et al., 2010). Transcendent and spiritual leadership theories highlight interconnected orientations and meaning creation, self-transcendence and leadership that leads from all levels of self, others and organisation (Crossan, Vera, & Nanjad, 2008; Howard, Guramatunhu-Mudiwa, & White, 2009; Koltko-Rivera, 2006).

Today, leadership is regarded as a complex multifaceted form of performance (Mumford, 2011). Whichever paradigm is used, leadership requires enactment for it to have any practical meaning (Day, 2001) and needs to be viewed in an integrated way, including both loci (where leadership is 'located' or where it comes from) and mechanism (how is it transmitted) (Hernandez, et al., 2011). Hernandez et al (2011) proposed that integration across theoretical perspectives is necessary, viewing leadership across leaders, followers, context and collectives in a comprehensive leadership system. It is still most commonly defined, however, in terms of the exercise of interpersonal influence to encourage others to participate in achieving set organisational goals (Amagoh, 2009, p. 989; McCallum & O'Connell, 2008; Mumford, 2011).

2.5.2 *Components of leadership effectiveness and factors that impact leadership effectiveness*

From the above discussion, leadership effectiveness can be regarded as the degree to which there is success in influencing people to strive willingly for group goals. Because this is critical to organisations (Amagoh, 2009; Day, 2001; McCallum & O'Connell, 2008), they need to understand how to develop successful leadership. It is not surprising, given the diversity in leadership theory, that there are also various assertions on what and how to influence leadership. Some research focuses on the development of the individual leader's competencies and behaviours, whilst other studies emphasise the context, roles and processes of leadership, including interpersonal and relational processes (Connelly et al., 2000; Pearce, 2007).

In several studies there is a suggested need to distinguish between developing leader effectiveness as building human capital and developing leadership effectiveness as building social capital (Dalakoura, 2009; Day, 2001; McCallum & O'Connell, 2008). In this context, human capital refers to intrapersonal competencies

such as self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-motivation. Social capital refers to relational aspects of leadership like social awareness (empathy, developing of others) and social skills (collaboration, open-systems mind-set, building internal and external networks and conflict management) (Day, 2001; McCallum & O'Connell, 2008; Stout-Rostron, 2006). The distinction can be important because social capital (interpersonal skills) have sometimes been undervalued in developing leadership effectiveness in the past and are especially appropriate for the more modern conceptualisations of leadership as collective, relational, contextual and a group-level phenomonon. Intra-personal and inter-personal competencies are complementary, interactive and mutually-reinforcing and both are required for effective leadership (Alban-Metcalfe & Alimo-Metcalfe, 2009b; McCallum & O'Connell, 2008). Processes designed to develop leadership effectiveness should therefore improve both intra-personal skills and real-time follower-leader dynamics (Pearce, 2007). Some useful leadership development processes include 360-degree feedback, executive coaching, networking, mentoring, job assignment, experiential learning, simulations, action learning and classroom training (Dalakoura, 2009; Day, 2001; Solansky, 2010).

An integrated model of leadership effectiveness such as the ‘head, heart and hands’ model (Nicholls, 1994) is a useful way to regard leadership behaviours. This model presents three categories of leadership behaviours in head themes, hands themes and heart themes (Nicholls, 1994). 360 degree questionnaires on leadership are sometimes based on this model as it encompasses a fairly comprehensive set of leadership behaviour components (Cook, 2011). The model has also been extended by some practitioners to include ‘impact’ factors: how the follower experiences or is impacted by the leader (Cook, 2011).

Recently, identity based leadership models describe leadership development as experiences which facilitate identity transitions related to the changing role of leader (Ibarra, 2004; Ibarra, et al., 2010). Factors that support these transitions are a safe space to participate in social experiences that help individuals experiment with possible identities in the presence of a coach and peers (Ibarra, et al., 2010). Authentic leadership (AL) and the need for a genuine and values-based expression of effective leadership is also emphasised today, partly spurred by concerns about

ethical leadership as a result of government and corporate misconduct (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner, Cogliser, Davis, & Dickens, 2011). Supportive factors in authenticity-based leadership development are encouraging awareness and demonstration of personal context through, for example, one's life story, values, purpose and actions to empower others (George, et al., 2011). Post-apartheid South Africa has diversity-related complexities, including race, gender, religion, culture, values, beliefs and language (language often informing worldviews). Leading in this multicultural and diverse context calls for particular skills in handling complexity, exercising empathy, perspective, restraint in judgement and open mindedness (Stout-Rostron, 2009).

Finally, as leadership is defined as influencing others towards group goals, there has to be an interpersonal and organisational context to the application for it to be regarded as effective (Day, 2001). Therefore, a critical aspect of successful leadership development initiatives is how they encourage participants to reflect on what they've learnt and transfer that learning to others and integrate it into work contexts (Amagoh, 2009; Dalakoura, 2009). In general, leadership activities need to be integrated and applied by organisations and inside organisations to be relevant (Amagoh, 2009; Day, 2001; McCallum & O'Connell, 2008). This study focuses on developing leadership effectiveness in the context of a business school learning environment and does not deal specifically with organisational implementation. However, leadership development within the business school environment is designed in such a way that an underlying assumption is that the learning and leadership effectiveness would extend to the organisational context.

2.5.3 *Women and leadership effectiveness*

There is a context to being a woman manager in current business environments that deserves to be highlighted. Women still occupy fewer senior management jobs than men globally (Hayward, 2005; Karelaia & Guillén, 2011; Stout-Rostron, 2012) and the higher the level, the more men there are comparatively (Zenger & Folkman, 2012). The gendered organisation is a term that refers to organisational cultures based on values and norms that are male dominated (Clark & Kleyn, 2011; Hayward, 2005; Stout-Rostron, 2012). The glass ceiling is still a real phenomenon which for

many women is a source of career frustration and keeps them in jobs seen as less valued (Hannum, 2010; Stout-Rostron, 2012).

Women can experience unfairly prejudiced assessments of their leadership abilities in these masculine contexts (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Schein, 2007; Schein & Davidson, 1993). Moreover, many women feel they have to adopt a traditionally masculine style of leadership to be competitive rather than developing their own authentic skills (Hayward, 2005; Stout-Rostron, 2009). Fewer positions at senior levels means fewer opportunities for women to learn and grow from experience and fewer relevant role models and mentors to guide their growth (Noe, 1988). Women are, however, highly rated as leaders in studies comparing their leadership competencies to men (Zenger & Folkman, 2012), and yet often opt out to join entrepreneurial ventures as a result of relatively little structural support and the pressure to prove themselves against corporate gender biases (Clark & Kleyn, 2011; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; Stout-Rostron, 2012; Zenger & Folkman, 2012).

Africa also has traditional customs and norms which associate women with being homemakers, which makes it more difficult for them to progress to senior levels in business (Stout-Rostron, 2009). The development of leadership skills in women in developing countries like those in Sub-Saharan Africa are essential for community-building and progress in these countries (Wakahiu, 2011). South Africa is regarded as one of the most progressive countries in terms of gender representation, but it is still a serious issue (Stout-Rostron, 2009).

This could impact negatively on organisations. Women may be particularly effective in some modern work environments where traditionally feminine leadership skills are essential for companies to succeed (for example self-development and integrity, developing others, relationships and sensitivity to diverse needs) (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Hayward, 2005). Aside from more feminine competencies however, women are also rated as exemplary leaders generally, including in some traditionally masculine competencies like taking initiative and driving for results (Zenger & Folkman, 2012). In an economy struggling with issues of ethics, sustainability, turbulence, productivity and profitability, we simply cannot afford not to leverage this talent. There may be specific approaches to developing leadership effectiveness that

are particularly useful for women. It is important that learning institutions focus attention on enabling and leveraging authentically expressed leadership in women.

2.6 Coaching and leadership effectiveness

2.6.1 *Executive coaching and leadership effectiveness*

Individual coaching has its roots in several fields that emerged following the enlightenment and in (and alongside) the shift from mechanistic to systemic ways of thinking (Rock & Page, 2009). These include social sciences such as anthropology, sociology, early 20th century psychology and psychotherapy, adult learning, sports coaching and organisational development (Stout-Rostron, 2006). Discoveries in neuroscience, complex systems and quantum physics highlighted the concept of volition and the possibility that an individual's observational attention could affect the outcome of neuronal activity. Advanced findings in neurobiology also highlighted a major function of the brain as enabling social participation (Rock & Page, 2009). These findings and theories helped to inform what coaching is today and modern thinking about coaching is therefore built on paradigms of wellness creation, the power of choice and positivity (for example in solution-centred and positive psychologies), emotional intelligence and learned optimism as abilities that can be learnt and social learning (Rock & Page, 2009).

Executive and business coaching link individual and organisational performance and success: they are regarded as processes of learning that are aimed at helping executives and business individuals enhance their personal growth and improve their performance in order to improve the performance of the overall organisation (Chapman, 2010; Joo, 2005; Kahn, 2011; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001). Executive coaching emerged as a developmental activity for leaders and managers specifically in the late 1980s and is intended to help executives become more effective leaders (Nelson & Hogan, 2009; Stout-Rostron, 2006). With the transition from command-control management styles of the past to an emphasis on managing interpersonal relationships, coaching became a strategic imperative to business and a crucial leadership development tool (Dalakoura, 2009; Day, 2001; Kets-de-Vries, 2010; Solansky, 2010). Classroom teaching and coaching may form an effective

combination for leadership development; where teaching might focus on the 'knowing' component of leadership, coaching is well designed to focus on the 'doing' and 'being' components of leadership (Cook & Viedge, 2011).

In more modern contexts, with the global economic crash of 2008 and governance of some global organisations being questioned, sustainable, ethical and courageous leadership is being demanded (Kemp, 2009). There is now compounded pressure on executives to accommodate the pace of change and present-day realities while still achieving bottom-line targets (Kets-de-Vries, 2010). Executive coaching may identify dysfunctional dispositions that could result in destructive behaviours and may also use structured assessments and work with strengths to achieve positive, sustained change in behaviour for impact on the organisation (Goldsmith, 2009; Linley, Woolston, & Biswas-Diener, 2009; Nelson & Hogan, 2009). Its success in doing so seems indicated by the uptake in organisations: the coaching industry generates approximately $1.5 billion annually and 25%-40% of Fortune 500 companies regularly use executive coaches (Britton, 2010). The case for executive coaching in improving organisational and leadership effectiveness is certainly compelling (Wood & Gordon, 2009).

2.6.2 *Group coaching and leadership effectiveness*

Group coaching is a comparatively new mode of coaching with a relative lack of theoretical and practical guides (Brown & Grant, 2010; Thornton, 2010; Ward, 2008) and a measure of controversy that typically accompanies an emerging practice. It extracts and builds on value from three fields: individual executive coaching, learning facilitation, and group analysis or group process. It is defined as, "a small group of people meeting together in active participation on several occasions for the purpose of learning, including developing new capacities and skills. Participants learn through exchange and interaction with each other" (Thornton, 2010, p. 9).

The fundamentals are expressed in the above definition and in its name. The emphasis is on the word 'coaching', which expresses two points: Firstly that coaching principles and skills (especially a focus on goals) are core and differentiate group coaching from group therapy. Secondly, that individual learning is the focus of group coaching even though this occurs through group interaction and in fact relies

on the active involvement of the group as participants (Britton, 2010; Brown & Grant, 2010; Thornton, 2010; Woodhead, 2011). The group members become 'assistant coaches' to each other, supporting growth through trust and empathy and opportunities for learning can be multiplied by the number of individuals and relationships in the group and through collective wisdom and support (Florent-Treacy, 2009; Thornton, 2010; Ward, 2008). Group coaching provides a space where interpersonal dynamics can play out, boundaries are set, roles are adopted and patterns of interaction are explored (Kets-de-Vries, 2010). The word 'group' indicates the distinction from individual coaching and the implied inclusion of group dynamics and facilitated adult group learning principles with their concomitant philosophical roots in adult learning and group analysis. These are discussed in more detail below.

Historically theories about adult learning emerged with a focus on cognitive psychological functioning. These then evolved into specific ideas on active, experiential learning models and group facilitation as more effective ways of supporting adults to learn compared to traditional instructional training. Group facilitation theories (building on social identity theory, group analysis and therapy) emphasised the power of social learning (Britton, 2010; Brookfield, 2000; Rock & Page, 2009; Tusting & Barton, 2003).

Group dynamics, concerned with small group behaviour, may be a unique differentiator in group coaching from the more traditional dyadic coaching and is a well-researched and documented subject. Much has been learnt about group dynamics from group analysis, an internationally established discipline with 70 years of practice-based theoretical literature and which involves intangible aspects of human interaction (Goldberg, 2003; Nichol, 1997; Thornton, 2010; Ward, 2008). Specifically, group dynamics theory and practice has supported an understanding of interpersonal processes such as mirroring, transference, reflection, translation, condenser phenomena, projection and location (Thornton, 2010; Yalom, 1995). Skilfully implemented, a process involving group dynamics can significantly accelerate transformation (Ward, 2008). A group can also do what an individual coach cannot, by providing transpersonal network, that reacts and responds as an interacting unit (Thornton, 2010; Ward, 2008). Group coaching can use many of the

skills and approaches of coaching and can also make use of group dynamic processes to a greater or lesser degree. It is an elegant mix of these ways of thinking and is designed to support a solutions-oriented approach in a socially complex and hyper connected world.

Group coaching takes place either in organisational teams or in groups formed for the purpose of learning (Hawkins, 2011; Thornton, 2010). Research indicates that 60% of group coaching is designed for intact teams, referred to as team coaching, and 40% targets groups who come together for the purpose of learning, referred to as learning-group coaching (Hawkins, 2011; Thornton, 2010). In team coaching, members have shared goals related to their function as an intact working team. In learning-group coaching, members come together as relative strangers and the purpose is more explicitly self-directed learning of its members using the variety of individual goals in a cross-fertilising learning experience. For the purpose of this research the aim was not to see if there was a difference between team and learning-group coaching. There are four commonly referenced examples of learning groups: action learning sets, Balint groups, professional development groups and supervision groups (Britton, 2010; Thornton, 2010a). According to Britton, a pure group coaching model is one where each person also gets a certain amount of individual coaching time during the session, known as laser-coaching, although other authors differ on this point (Thornton, 2010a; Britton, 2010). Group coaching sessions are also increasingly popular additions to training and management development programmes and can focus on deepening, personalising, and making sense and meaning of learning material, as well as leveraging collective wisdom and social capital in new ways (Thornton, 2010).

Variations in group size, length of engagement, diversity, stability, membership and purpose all affect how the group coach can work and what tools and techniques they will choose to use. A coach's selection of tools may depend on whether they are coaching a group as a set of individuals, or coaching a group as an existing system. With the former, the recommended approach is that some design with themes is important as a common anchor for participants. With the latter, there may be more emphasis on group process, problem-solving or coaching the group towards the

group's vision, values and goals (Britton, 2010; Kets-de-Vries, 2011; Thornton, 2010a).

Many of the tools are shared with individual coaching models. Examples are 360 degree questionnaires, MAPP (Motivational Appraisal of Personal Potential), StrengthsFinder and the Myers Briggs Type Indicator. There are also tools that are particularly helpful in the context of team-coaching, either because they focus on team relationships or are well matched to the leadership and organisational context of work, for example the Leadership Practices Inventory, Team Diagnostic, Belbin Team Roles and systems analysis tools (Brown & Grant, 2010; Kets-de-Vries, 2011; Thornton, 2010). Some tools or concepts have also been developed especially for the context of group coaching, for example laser coaching and ORSC (Organisation and Relationship Systems Coaching) (Britton, 2010; Thornton, 2010).

Group coaching may be especially useful in modern business contexts and management and leadership theory has in turn become more concerned with effective team and organisational functioning and the application of learning to systemic workplace results. Business schools can make use of group coaching processes in small group syndicates which are designed to allow half-formed insights to mature, provide affirmation and clarity around taught knowledge and allow peers to collaborate and share ideas and observations (Cook & Viedge, 2011; Vidmar, 2005). Globalisation has also encouraged openness to diverse perspectives and along with more sophisticated understanding of systems, complexity and social cognitive neuroscience, has allowed an elaboration of how people function and learn in groups. More recently, the challenging economic circumstances of 2008-2009 led to a softening of funds for learning and development across most industries (Britton, 2010; Goldberg, 2003).

Given these contexts, there is an economic, business and learning case for group coaching. It is more time efficient and cost-effective than individual coaching, offers similar benefits to individual coaching and utilises the collective wisdom of a group (Brown & Grant, 2010). It generates scalability and reach with respect to both business and learning impact. Paradoxically, it may be in groups that we can learn to most fully be ourselves. As we become aware that other people differ from us but are no better or worse than us, our differences can define our individuality (Thornton,

2010). While group coaching is becoming more popular in North America, Europe and Australasia (Britton, 2010; Woodhead, 2011), there is a gap in the literature referring to its theory and practice, and traditional dyadic coaching is still the most pervasive format of delivery (Brown & Grant, 2010; Thornton, 2010; Ward, 2008). A literature and internet search for this study yielded only a handful of peer-reviewed journal articles and even fewer books dealing specifically with group coaching.

Despite this, research clearly demonstrates a link between interpersonal learning processes and an organisation's ability to learn (Senge, 1996; Thornton, 2010). In addition, sustainable changes in leadership behaviour have been shown to sometimes be more likely to occur in group leadership coaching settings than individual coaching settings (Britton, 2010; Ibarra, et al., 2010; Kets-de-Vries, 2010; Mthembu, 2007; Thornton, 2010). Since effective leadership is ultimately about the ability to interact with and influence others, groups are an effective way to develop these competencies, mirroring the relational context that leadership naturally occurs in (Thornton, 2010; Woodhead, 2011). Some of the factors in a group coaching format that can support leadership growth are mutual accountability and commitment and the presence of assistant coaches and 'sparring partners' to dialogue with, challenge and give feedback to. Group coaching provides a space where real interpersonal dynamics can play out (Kets-de-Vries, 2010) and provides members with opportunities to identify and set goals related to a purpose larger than their individual selves (Kets-de-Vries, 2010; Thornton, 2010).

Ward claims that coaching executives in groups to leverage their collective experience and support for each other is a powerful transformation tool for executives (Ward, 2008). Alternative reference groups may also be especially important for women who work in male dominated organisations, where existing role models may not be regarded as appropriate for their own development (Ibarra, et al., 2010).

2.7 Conclusion of literature review

The literature review highlights the nature of leadership as a complex and multifaceted concept. Key concepts in the literature about leadership explore it as

being about the individual leader and also about the relationship between leader and follower and collective interdependent relationships. It is dependent on context and situation, and is about transforming people and organisational realities and achieving relevant results. Leadership effectiveness is doing this successfully and is critical in complex modern business environments. Certainly, the literature points to the outcome that organisations are therefore investing time and money into programmes designed to improve leadership effectiveness.

These leadership effectiveness programmes vary, in part, as a result of the paradigms by which they are informed. Processes may focus on improving intra-personal competencies, the authenticity of the leader, their ability to manage change, context and multiple relationships, their social competencies or ability to achieve results. These are also explored as inter-related and diverse themes in the literature. Leadership is usually referred to in terms of the use of influence to encourage participation in achieving organisational effectiveness (Amagoh, 2009; McCallum & O'Connell, 2008; Mumford, 2011). One contemporary model: the 'Head, heart, hands' model (Nicholls, 1994), is highlighted as useful in a teaching environment and incorporates a comprehensive set of effective leadership behaviours (Nicholls, 1994).

Business schools are learning environments in which leadership programmes are designed and implemented. While these institutions cannot fully incorporate the systemic context of each participant, they are tasked with creating programmes that are appropriate to organisational contexts and will have business impact. They aim to do this by developing relevant leadership competencies that not only focus on the 'knowing', but also the 'doing' and 'being' of leadership and facilitate the transfer of learning onto others and into the workplace.

Leadership effectiveness may be contextually nuanced for women managers as a result of there still being fewer senior women managers than men, who often function in male dominated organisations with pressure to adopt masculine leadership styles (Hayward, 2005; Stout-Rostron, 2009, 2012). This is still the norm, despite a global need for general leadership competence and in some cases a specific need for more feminine leadership qualities (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Hayward,

2005). Women need development opportunities that will help them mitigate, be effective and shine in these contexts.

Specific practices have been explored as beneficial in supporting leadership development, including executive coaching and activities associated with coaching. The existing literature on group coaching suggests that it is cost-effective and supports leaders to become more effective in a social, relational context that informs so much of what organisational leadership is about today. In addition, it is suggested that there are several factors inherent to the design of group coaching processes that support leadership development. Despite the body of knowledge around leadership effectiveness and the connection of executive coaching to leadership effectiveness, there is little literature to provide evidence of the impact of group coaching on leadership effectiveness. There is a need to delve deeper into the concept of group coaching as a practice, to define it further and to clarify its value for specific contexts like leadership effectiveness and for specific population groups like women leaders.

2.7.1 *Research Question 1:*

How does leadership effectiveness in South African women managers change pre and post a six month leadership programme?

2.7.2 *Research Question 2*

How does a group coaching process impact on changes in leadership effectiveness in South African women managers?

3 CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodological approaches used in this study. The literature review formed a theoretical basis for asking the research questions posed in the previous chapter. This section now discusses the methodology utilised to investigate those questions. Literature on qualitative and quantitative methods is reviewed and the selected mixed methods research design is then outlined. The instruments used are described, followed by a discussion of the data collection, analysis and interpretation. Finally, a summary of the study limitations is presented and the issues of validity and reliability as they relate to this research are discussed.

3.1 Research methodology/ paradigm

This research study makes use of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies in a mixed methods approach, as the two methods appropriately operationalise the two sub-questions posed. Quantitative methods are used to investigate change in leadership effectiveness, while qualitative methods are used to deepen the perceived understanding of changes in leadership effectiveness and explore the impact of group coaching on leadership effectiveness.

The purpose of quantitative research is to determine the extent of a phenomenon numerically and deals with the numerical analysis of data (Blumberg, Cooper, & Schindler, 2005; Johnson & Harris, 2003). As the first sub-question in this research is to measure the average extent of change in leadership effectiveness after a leadership programme, a quantitative approach was selected (Blumberg, et al., 2005). Because quantitative research allows data to be collected and analysed as numbers it is regarded as more empirical; an advantage being that it is less dependent on the researcher's interpretative skill. A disadvantage is that there is a danger of the researcher becoming too focused on the numbers to the exclusion of their meaning (Johnson & Harris, 2003). This study could have aimed to describe the change in leadership effectiveness experienced by the women, however it is more concerned with numerical averages to indicate whether, and in what direction,

change occurred. It therefore makes use of a questionnaire that gives access to an average measure of change, across a large sample group (62 women) and their respondants.

Qualitative methods use data to provide a greater understanding of a concept rather than a precise measurement (Johnson & Harris, 2003). The focus is therefore not on numbers but on words, descriptions and interpretations to explore and clarify qualities associated with a situation (Blumberg, et al., 2005; Johnson & Harris, 2003; White, 2002). It is often used to generate theory where little concrete knowledge is available. It is also used in complex, causally ambiguous areas, which the field of business management often lends itself to (Johnson & Harris, 2003). Since the second sub-problem in this research is to interpret and describe the impact of group coaching on leadership effectiveness, a qualitative methodology was selected for this aspect of the study. The study could have made use of a questionnaire to assess a consistent measure of group coaching impact across all the women. However, there is relatively little known about group coaching so an interpretive methodology was chosen to gain deeper insights and develop some ideas about this area in order that they are available for future empirical testing.

A disadvantage of qualitative methods is that there are multiple interpretations available in the data. The challenge is to provide the most compelling interpretation of the data by paying attention to transparency and trustworthiness (Johnson & Harris, 2003). However, qualitative approaches are also better designed to see the world from the view of the participant. They can be executed in a relatively unstructured format to answer more than the questions originally posed, allowing further information to emerge (Johnson & Harris, 2003). They can therefore provide very rich datasets.

The Journal of Mixed Methods Research has defined mixed methods as research in which the researcher collects, analyses and interprets data using both qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Mixed Methods has emerged as an alternative to the dichotomy of qualitative and quantitative traditions and acknowledges the value that both approaches have to offer in studies where this is pragmatically appropriate, such as this one (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

3.2 Research Design

To assess change in leadership effectiveness, this study uses a basic comparative design in the form of a one-group pre-test-post-test, with the same group being pre-tested by a questionnaire before and after the intervention (leadership development programme). The 62 women who completed the Leading Women programme were given an information sheet and a letter of consent to complete if they chose to take part in the study. Summated scores were calculated for each questionnaire administration for all the participants who gave consent (51) to take part in the questionnaire study. Summated scores were also calculated for the chosen respondents (those who work with them) who responded to the 360 degree aspect of the questionnaire for each participant. The proportion and degree of change was then statistically computed between the two questionnaire instances, which occurred six months apart.

This comparison was computed for the difference in self-scores, the difference in manager respondent scores (the participant's line managers), and the difference in 'other' (subordinates, peers and colleagues) scores between the two instances. There are therefore three average scores of change calculated. Questionnaires allow for structured data and direct comparisons, but only collect data for the questions asked (Johnson & Harris, 2003). Causal associations cannot be attributed specifically to any one aspect of the leadership programme, as these variables are not controlled for in this study. However the aim of this design is to be able to describe how leadership effectiveness changes, not to attribute causality. The design is therefore appropriate for the aim of this part of the study - to yield data that provided for descriptive statistical analysis, not for inferential statistical analysis.

To answer the second research sub-question, a simple interpretive design was used with semi-structured interviews on a sub-sample of the participants. Twelve percent (six) of the women were invited to take part. The disadvantages of this include the potential impact of the researcher on the research, causal ambiguity and multiple interpretations available in the data (Johnson & Harris, 2003). Semi-structured interviews however, allowed for rich interpretive datasets from the perspective of the interviewees.

3.3 Population and sample

3.3.1 *Population*

The population frame consists of upper-middle to senior level women managers in business organisations in Johannesburg, South Africa.

3.3.2 *Sample and sampling method*

All 62 of the participants who completed a leadership programme called 'Leading Women' at GIBS in 2010 were invited to take part in the questionnaire part of the study. The criteria for selection onto the programme when it began in April 2010 included: being upper-middle to senior level managers in organisations; at least five years' experience at this level; demonstrated potential to serve in leadership capacities and being able to commit to one three-hour session in the late afternoon, once a month. The programme at the business school was also designed specifically for women and only women were accepted to take part. Therefore the sample is a convenience sample obtained in such a manner that it is regarded as representative of the relevant population (Johnson & Harris, 2003; White, 2002).

The sampling procedure used in this research is non-probability sampling as the probability that any element from the population frame will be included cannot be specific (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The women were invited to take part in the questionnaire process for their own growth as part of the leadership programme. However only the data of those who gave their consent to have their responses used in this research (51) were analysed in the study.

In the qualitative section of this research, a sample of six women, corresponding to an acceptable 12% proportion, were randomly extracted from the group of women attending the programme, to be interviewed. The sample was checked to ensure it proportionately reflected the characteristics of the broader group from which it was drawn (Johnson & Harris, 2003).

Table 1: Profile of women participants at a leadership programme designed for women managers at GIBS

Company represented	Number
Adonis Events	1
Anglo Platinum	2
Angloplat	9
Barloworld	1
Being a Woman Development Practitioners	1
Catholic Medical Mission Board	1
Electronic Media Network	1
Ernst & Young	1
Eskom	2
FNB	3
GIBS	1
Grinaker-LTA Civil Engineering	1
IDC	6
M-Net	1
MultiChoice	6
Nampak Tissue	1
National Business Initiative	1
Neotel	6
Nestle	1
NetPartnering	1
Oracle Airtime Sales	2
SAB	6
SABMiller	3
SARS	1
Sasol Polymers Technology Service Centre (PTSC)	1
Standard Bank	1
Supersport International	1
Technology Innovation Agency	1
Vodacom	1

3.4 The research instrument

A questionnaire (administered online and by email) and a semi-structured interview schedule were used as instruments in this research (White, 2002).

3.4.1 *Questionnaire*

A questionnaire is a data gathering device that consists of a series of questions with a number of alternative answers to choose from, which generates data in a systematic and ordered fashion (Johnson & Harris, 2003; White, 2002).

The questionnaire used in this study was a self-completion Likert-style questionnaire, and was used in both the pre-test and the post-test. It consisted of a 50-item self-report questionnaire that has been used many times in the GIBS learning environment to assess leadership effectiveness. The items were originally designed using a 'head, heart and hands', model, assessing leadership behaviours that fall into head themes (strategic direction, path-finding and culture-building), hands themes (capability and commitment) and heart themes (inspiration, beliefs, feelings, vision and purpose) (Nicholls, 1994). The questionnaire was designed by Jonathan Cook (Executive Director at The Gordon Institute of Business Science) and Thornhill Associates. The same 50-item questionnaire was reworded, and with an additional 12 items, was used to provide 360-degree feedback to the participants from colleagues that work with them. The 12 additional items were to do with impact: how the follower experiences the leader's impact (Cook, 2011).

In several questionnaire development sessions held with Jonathan Cook and a programme management team at GIBS, the items were tested against the leadership effectiveness constructs that this study aimed to investigate. The items included constructs on intra-personal competencies, inter-personal competencies, contextual intelligence, ability to transfer learning, authenticity, and capacity to implement changes and achieve results. The questionnaire was then adapted slightly for this specific study: The language was changed to refer to women only ('she' as pronouns) and certain items were adapted for use with a women-only group of managers. Two items that refer to authenticity were also added as they were felt to be missing.

In all 62 items, respondents were asked to respond on a seven-point Likert scale, the points being seldom effective, sometimes effective, adequately effective, effective, very effective, often a strength, always a strength. The questionnaire took approximately 15 minutes to complete. An introduction was also included to fully describe the purpose, objectives, instructions and contact details for the researcher. The items of the full 360-degree version of the 62-item questionnaire are listed in Appendix A.

An advantage of questionnaires is that they are relatively inexpensive and are quick and easy to administer and distribute. The questionnaire development process, however, can require time and attention and needs to be done correctly (Remenyi, 2011). This questionnaire is not a validated instrument but there were no leadership effectiveness questionnaires available that suited the research agenda, and this one was more suitable to yield data relevant to the research question. The questionnaire has been field tested many times in a business school learning environment. Response rates can sometimes be low on questionnaires, but this questionnaire was also being used in a self-development session on the leadership programmes, and it was expected that this incentive would improve response rates without skewing responses.

3.4.2 *Interviews*

In the qualitative research section of this study, semi-structured face-to-face individual interviews were conducted to assess perceived impact of a group coaching process on leadership effectiveness. This is a research technique where verbal data is gathered from a knowledgeable informant in order to obtain insightful data about the research problem (Remenyi, 2011). Nine semi-structured questions were asked in each interview. Seven open questions and two ranking questions were asked. The disadvantages of interview methods are that data depends on the recollections of past events (Remenyi, 2011) and could be affected by researcher bias. The data collected was reflected on to limit any researcher bias in the reporting of the interviews (Remenyi, 2011). The interviews were also written up immediately after each interview to minimise recall errors.

The advantages of interviews are that the participants are able to talk through issues and topics in their own time and explore other subjects, giving access to their perspectives and meanings (White, 2002). In addition, the researcher can re-word or re-order the questions if unexpected information emerges (White, 2002). A further advantage is that the researcher should be learning and improving their technique as the interviews progress, yielding richer data in subsequent interviews (Remenyi, 2011). The interview questions were designed to explore the perceived impact that group coaching had on leadership development for the women participants and to assess which sessions and processes had the greatest impact. The ranking questions, which ask for items to be ranked numerically, also strengthened the descriptive data obtained (Remenyi, 2011). The questions for the semi-structured interview are listed in Appendix B.

3.5 Procedure for data collection

3.5.1 *Questionnaire*

The leadership development programme at GIBS is designed as a session once a month over six months. Each session consists of a plenary section (case studies and guest speakers), followed by a structured group coaching session. At the start of the programme, the women managers were each invited to identify several respondents to complete the online 360 degree leadership effectiveness questionnaire described above. They were asked to include their direct manager, peers and subordinates in their group of respondents. They also completed the questionnaires themselves. Those women who chose to take part in the research study were also given an information sheet and consent form to sign. The same raters were approached for the post-test ratings, which were conducted six months after the leadership programme came to an end. The ratings of only those raters whose data was available for both administrations of the questionnaire was used. The questionnaire is provided in Appendix A.

3.5.2 *Interviews*

After completion of the leadership programme, six women were selected using random number tables to take part in interviews. These women were approached and given an information form and a consent form and an interview was scheduled with each. At each interview, the participant was again reassured of confidentiality and anonymity and six interview questions were asked. The researcher took notes and voice recorded the interviews unobtrusively. The questions were also fine-tuned as the interviews progressed. Field notes and observations were recorded at each interview. The interview data was stored securely after the interviews and anonymised (Remenyi, 2011). The interview schedule is provided in Appendix B.

3.6 Data analysis and interpretation

The quantitative section of this research employed a questionnaire with ranked ordinal data. Survey questionnaires are the most common form of quantitative management research and they are often of a higher level than ordinal data. They cannot be considered interval and are therefore sometimes referred to as scalar data (Johnson & Harris, 2003).

Hennie Gerber from Statistical Consulting Services was consulted for assistance on the quantitative analyses. Item analysis was conducted on the average responses of the pre-programme questionnaire items to assess the reliability via Cronbach's Alpha values of the different dimensions or constructs ('Head, 'heart-enable self', 'heart-enable others',' heart-enable group and organisation', 'leadership impact') in the questionnaire. Reliability refers to the consistency, stability or reproducibility of measurement: the degree to which an instrument consistently measures what the designer needed to measure, the same way each time it is used under the same condition with the same subjects (Blumberg, et al., 2005).

Mean and standard deviations were then computed for each construct for self-ratings and for respondent ratings and for both the pre-programme and post-programme questionnaire administration. These were then compared statistically using two t-tests to determine if there was a difference between the means of the pre-group and post-group summated scores for self-perceptions and perceptions of 'other'

respondents (Johnson & Harris, 2003). The analysis therefore yielded two average mean change scores: one describing change in self-rating over the two administrations, and one describing change in 360 degree respondents ratings over the two administrations. The scores of respondents who identified themselves specifically as the participant's managers were also compared over the two administrations.

In the qualitative (descriptive interview) section of this research, a simple interpretative approach was taken and thematic analysis conducted to uncover repeated patterns of meaning (themes) (Johnson & Harris, 2003). Thematic analysis is a process of searching across a dataset to identify, analyse and report on repeated patterns of living and/ or behaviour within a dataset (Aronson, 2011; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Once data was collected from the six interviews a transcript was created from each interview. Patterns of experience and features of interest (codes) were then listed from the transcribed conversations and all data that related to these was identified across the entire dataset and all participants' datasets (Aronson, 2011; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Codes refer to the raw data in the most basic segments that can be meaningfully assessed and that relate to the phenomenon of interest (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

These codes were then combined and catalogued into sub-themes or groups that capture related patterns of experience and meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Sub-themes were then gathered together as themes (Aronson, 2011). A theme "captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents a patterned response or meaning within the dataset and across the participants" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 10). Essentially the data was at this point beginning to be analysed and some level of interpretation was therefore inherent (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data was then read and re-read exploring thematic relationships between themes and levels of themes in an on-going reflexive researcher dialogue (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Once a broad level of themes was extracted, they were checked for coherence and identifiable distinction in relation to the whole dataset, the research questions, and the literature dataset (Aronson, 2011; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

These themes were therefore not regarded as residing in the data to be uncovered by the researcher, but rather were extracted from the data as the researcher linked and tested their nature as they were understood against the dataset and the literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This is an insightful and intuitive process which is both the core strength and the weakest point (Johnson & Harris, 2003) so care was taken to guard against the effect of interpretive biases. However researcher judgement is necessary to determine what a theme is (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the case of theoretical thematic analysis such as in this study, analysis is guided by the researcher's analytic interest in the area and is more analyst-driven, coding for quite a specific research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.7 Limitations of the study

The questionnaire that was administered was not a standardised instrument and internal consistency of items had not previously been established. Using a total summated score in the analysis does however add to the validity of the findings (Johnson & Harris, 2003). Further research should be conducted to establish the validity and internal consistency of the instrument itself. The honesty of both the participants and their chosen respondents was assumed, but may of course vary. Since participants chose their questionnaire respondents there may also have been biases in these responses. Using only raters that responded to both questionnaire administrations reduced the response numbers, but also limited the effect of any biases on the assessment of change across the two measurement instances.

Finally, the qualitative aspect of the study relied on interviews and there was a chance of cancellation. Given the size of the overall group on the programme, every effort was made to ensure a large enough interview sample despite cancellations. Quantitative analyses should also be conducted in future on the effects of group coaching on leadership development to support findings empirically.

3.8 Validity and reliability

Validity refers to the notion that the design of the research addresses the research questions and reliability is concerned with consistency in the research (White, 2002).

Internal validity (whether it can be reasonably assumed that A causes B) is difficult to establish in most management studies, which typically use an ex-post-facto (retrospective) approach (Johnson & Harris, 2003). In the quantitative aspect of this study, internal consistency of the items in the questionnaire that are used had not been previously established, but was calculated as part of the research analysis in this study. Many questionnaire items had also been crafted, each tapping into an aspect of leadership effectiveness, and a summated score composed of these items was used to provide a more reliable and valid overall measure (Johnson & Harris, 2003). Although external validity can never truly be established in research (Johnson & Harris, 2003), a thorough review of the literature was conducted to ensure content validity in the questionnaire items (that they do reflect aspects of leadership effectiveness).

Reliability and validity change their meaning somewhat in qualitative work such as in the second part of this study. The data needs to be what is referred to as confirmable (maximise the chances that others would reach the same conclusions) and transparent (ensure that someone else can follow the trail of evidence) (Johnson & Harris, 2003). Every effort was made to do this and render this study confirmable and transparent, or in the language of qualitative research: trustworthy (Krefting, 1991).

3.9 Conclusion

The research design, methodologies and procedures were intended to meet the objectives for this research. Qualitative, quantitative and mixed method designs are discussed in terms of their applicability for operationalising this study's research questions. A questionnaire and a semi-structured interview schedule were indicated as the data collection instruments in this research and item analysis, statistical t-tests and thematic analysis were outlined as the data analysis techniques utilised.

4 CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses conducted within the context of the research question. First, the demographic profile of participants is described. Then the data and statistical analyses from the questionnaire pre-and-post programme administrations are presented. Internal reliabilities are reported to demonstrate internal item consistency. The means and standard deviations of the six leadership effectiveness constructs ('head', 'heart 1: enabling self,' 'heart 2: enabling others', 'heart 3: enabling the group/ organisation', 'hands', and 'leadership impact') are then presented for both the pre-programme questionnaire administration and the post-programme questionnaire administration. Finally, the results of paired t-tests used to test for differences between pre-programme and post-programme administrations in each of the construct categories are presented and significant differences reported, as well as the direction of those significances.

In the qualitative findings section, the responses from the interviews are presented as the conceptual themes extracted from the data collected. This thematic analysis was conducted in two broad areas for data relating to changes in leadership effectiveness ('changes in how leadership and leadership effectiveness was seen'), as well as for any impact of group coaching. This provided a deeper, subjective understanding of the experiences and perceptions of respondents on the impact of group coaching on their leadership effectiveness. Examples, descriptions and quotations extracted from the interview notes were used to illustrate the chosen themes in tables 7-14, and models were used to illustrate the relationships between sub-themes in figures 6-11, indicating the cohesiveness and differentiation of the themes.

4.2 Demographic profile of participants

This questionnaire study was conducted with one cohort of 51 delegates across a range of 29 companies, who attended a leadership programme called 'Leading

Women' at the Gordon Institute of Business Science in 2011. The delegates were upper-middle to senior level managers in organisations and had at least five years' experience at this level. 55 of the 62 delegates fulfilled the attendance criteria for the programme and 51 gave consent and were therefore included in the research sample (they identified themselves as 44% 'black', 21% 'white', 6.5% 'Indian' respectively). 16 participants were able to complete the post-questionnaire administration themselves and an average of 18 participants received sufficient respondent input to be able to include 'others' (subordinates, team members, peers) as a response category for the participant. This corresponded to an acceptable 31% and 35% response rate for 'self' and 'other' categories respectively. Only three managers who contributed to the pre-questionnaire administration also contributed to the same post-questionnaire administration and the comparison analyses on this category of respondents were therefore excluded from this study. The sample sizes for each category of respondents are included in table 3. The programme at the business school was also designed specifically for women and only women are accepted to take part. The sample is therefore a convenience sample.

In the qualitative section of this research, a sample of six women, corresponding to an acceptable 12% proportion, were randomly extracted from the group of women attending the programme to be interviewed.

4.3 Quantitative questionnaire findings

4.3.1 *Item analysis on questionnaire items to establish reliability*

Item analysis was conducted on the average responses of the pre-programme questionnaire items to assess the reliability of the different dimensions or constructs in the questionnaire via Cronbach's Alpha values. The constructs are 'head, 'heart-enable self', 'heart-enable others', 'heart-enable group and organisation', and 'leadership impact'. The questionnaire items were allocated the code classifications b1-b65 to identify the questions (see table 3).

Reliability refers to the consistency of measurement or the degree to which an instrument is stable and measures the same way each time it is used (Blumberg, et

al., 2005). It was assumed that the questionnaire items would be understood the same way by the same participants in the post-questionnaire administration and therefore reliability tests were only conducted on the pre-questionnaire items. Reliability was also only conducted on the 'self 'and 'manager' responses, as only the consistency across single respondents to several constructs could be tested. The 'other' category involved many responses from several categories of respondents and did not lend itself to reliability testing. The overall Cronbach's Alpha value for reliability can be interpreted as follows: Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.8 indicate good reliability; Cronbach's Alpha values between 0.6 and 0.8 indicate acceptable reliability; and Cronbach's Alpha values below 0.6 indicate unacceptable reliability. Some authors use another cut-off of 0.7 for acceptable reliability (Nunnally, 1978).

A reliable Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha value validates that the individual items of a dimension measured the same dimension (concept) in the same manner consistently. The individual Cronbach's Alpha values next to the items indicate what the improved value of the overall Cronbach's Alpha will be if this item is removed from the construct (dimension). If the individual Cronbach's Alpha is higher (usually at least 2%) than the overall Cronbach's Alpha of the entire dataset, then this individual item can be removed if it does not add anything substantial to the conceptual understanding of the construct (Nunnally, 1978).

The reliability estimates are displayed in Table 3 and all indicate good reliability. No additional items were therefore removed from the questionnaire for the statistical analysis. Three items (B14,33,46 in the category 'managers') could be reconsidered, as the Cronbach's Alpha values were more than 2% higher than the overall Cronbach's Alpha of the entire dataset and did not add anything further to the understanding of the construct from a statistical point of view. However, in each case the item did make a distinct conceptual contribution to the construct and the decision was made to keep the three items for further analysis. The 'manager' category was eventually excluded from t-test comparisons as a result of inadequate response numbers.

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha values for each questionnaire item as well as overall constructs to test for internal consistency of scale responses on the pre-administration

'Self' or 'Manager' respondents	***Construct***	***Cronbach's Alpha values for overall set (construct)***	***Cronbach's Alpha values for individual items/ questions***
SELF	HEAD	0.8618	**Excluded Col** / **α** b1 Self 0.8412 b2 Self 0.8599 b3 Self 0.8446 b4 Self 0.8418 b5 Self 0.8508 b6 Self 0.8634 b7 Self 0.8519 b8 Self 0.8464 b9 Self 0.8448 b10 Self 0.8418
	HEART-ENABLING SELF	0.8183	**Excluded Col** / **α** b11 Self 0.8094 b12 Self 0.8052 b13 Self 0.8078 b14 Self 0.8076 b15 Self 0.7951 b16 Self 0.8241 b17 Self 0.7880 b18 Self 0.7871 b19 Self 0.8050 b20 Self 0.7888

	HEART-ENABLING OTHERS	0.8053	**Excluded Col** / **α** b21 Self 0.7984 b22 Self 0.7984 b23 Self 0.7946 b24 Self 0.7588 b25 Self 0.7773 b26 Self 0.7906 b27 Self 0.7878 b28 Self 0.7985 b29 Self 0.8217 b30 Self 0.7805 b31 Self 0.7656 b32 Self 0.8118
	HEART-ENABLING GROUPS/ ORGANISATIONS	0.8066	**Excluded Col** / **α** b33 Self 0.7990 b34 Self 0.8041 b35 Self 0.7758 b36 Self 0.7821 b37 Self 0.7762 b38 Self 0.8021 b39 Self 0.7841 b40 Self 0.7964 b41 Self 0.7955 b42 Self 0.7780
	HANDS	0.7899	**Excluded Col** / **α** b43 Self 0.7728 b44 Self 0.7729 b45 Self 0.7492 b46 Self 0.7716 b47 Self 0.7701 b48 Self 0.7826 b49 Self 0.7857 b50 Self 0.7413 b51 Self 0.7880 b52 Self 0.7810

	LEADERSHIP IMPACT	0.8909	**Excluded Col** **α** b53 Self 0.8789 b54 Self 0.8799 b55 Self 0.8865 b56 Self 0.8880 b57 Self 0.8833 b58 Self 0.8789 b59 Self 0.8756 b60 Self 0.8908 b61 Self 0.8805 b62 Self 0.8799 b63 Self 0.8786 b64 Self 0.8746 b65 Self 0.8991
MANAGER	HEAD	0.8825	**Excluded Col** **α** b1 Managers 0.8695 b2 Managers 0.8696 b3 Managers 0.8690 b4 Managers 0.8589 b5 Managers 0.8619 b6 Managers 0.8908 b7 Managers 0.8777 b8 Managers 0.8743 b9 Managers 0.8799 b10 Managers 0.8561
	HEART-ENABLING SELF	0.7656	**Excluded Col** **α** b11 Managers 0.7347 b12 Managers 0.7570 b13 Managers 0.7407 Δ b14 Managers 0.7853 b15 Managers 0.7444 b16 Managers 0.7748 b17 Managers 0.7327 b18 Managers 0.7193 b19 Managers 0.7196 b20 Managers 0.7360

	HEART-ENABLING OTHERS	0.7926	**Excluded Col** **α** b21 Managers 0.7728 b22 Managers 0.7836 b23 Managers 0.7783 b24 Managers 0.7679 b25 Managers 0.8049 b26 Managers 0.7664 b27 Managers 0.7830 b28 Managers 0.7643 b29 Managers 0.7495 b30 Managers 0.7814 b31 Managers 0.7946 b32 Managers 0.7821
	HEART-ENABLING GROUPS/ ORGANISATIONS	0.7669	**Excluded Col** **α** Δ b33 Managers 0.7897 b34 Managers 0.7805 b35 Managers 0.7666 b36 Managers 0.7131 b37 Managers 0.6996 b38 Managers 0.7256 b39 Managers 0.7518 b40 Managers 0.6993 b41 Managers 0.7551 b42 Managers 0.7569
	HANDS	0.8328	**Excluded Col** **α** b43 Managers 0.8198 b44 Managers 0.8100 b45 Managers 0.8169 Δ b46 Managers 0.8545 b47 Managers 0.7961 b48 Managers 0.8108 b49 Managers 0.8155 b50 Managers 0.7925 b51 Managers 0.7966 b52 Managers 0.8485

	LEADERSHIP IMPACT	0.8670	**Excluded Col** **α** b53 Managers 0.8547 b54 Managers 0.8622 b55 Managers 0.8642 b56 Managers 0.8647 b57 Managers 0.8506 b58 Managers 0.8506 b59 Managers 0.8459 b60 Managers 0.8714 b61 Managers 0.8524 b62 Managers 0.8464 b63 Managers 0.8574 b64 Managers 0.8532 b65 Managers 0.8695

Δ Cronbach's Alpha values were more than 2% higher than the overall Cronbach's Alpha of the entire dataset

4.3.2 *Descriptive and significance statistics for questionnaire constructs*

Mean and standard deviations were computed for each construct in each of the groups ('self', 'manager', 'other') for both the pre-programme and post-programme questionnaire administration. The construct means ranged between 4.17 (±0.73) for the manager category and 'heart: enable group or organisation' construct and 5.86 (±0,66) for the manager category and 'leadership impact' construct (see Table 3).

Paired t-tests were then run on each pre-programme and post programme pair of means. The p-values were calculated and are reported below, with significant differences at the $p<0.05$ percent level indicated (see Table 3).

There were no significant differences between pre-programme and post-programme questionnaire scores for the self- scores of research participants.

The paired t-test results for the 'manager' group were excluded from analysis as the sample number of the managers who completed both administrations for a participant were too low for the statistical results to be regarded accurately with any confidence.

There were significant differences between all pre-programme and post-programme paired t-test calculations for the group ‘others’ (respondents of the participants).

Table 3: Mean (SD) values for constructs and p-values for each pre-and-post paired t-test indicating significance

GROUP (N)	***CONSTRUCT***	***PRE-TEST MEAN (SD)***	***POST-TEST MEAN (SD)***	***P-VALUE***
SELF (16)	HEAD	4.52 (0.87)	4.44 (0.97)	0.7319
	HEART-ENABLE SELF	4.82 (0.74)	4.85 (1.09)	0.9776
	HEART-ENABLE OTHERS	4.89 (0.70)	4.54 (1.07)	0.1110
	HEART-ENABLE GROUPS	4.39 (0.86)	4.40 (0.95)	0.9650
	HANDS	4.71 (0.70)	4.45 (0.78)	0.3911
	LEADERSHIP IMPACT	4.67 (0.79)	4.60 (1.05)	0.5231
MANAGERS (3)	HEAD	4.21 (0.83)	5.66 (0.73)	
	HEART-ENABLE SELF	4.60 (0.64)	5.25 (0.97)	
	HEART-ENABLE OTHERS	4.46 (0.63)	5.58 (0.76)	
	HEART-ENABLE GROUPS	4.17 (0.73)	5.34 (0.94)	
	HANDS	4.43 (0.74)	5.55 (0.83)	
	LEADERSHIP IMPACT	4.51 (0.68)	5.86 (0.66)	

OTHERS (18)	HEAD	4.90 (0.68)	5.29 (0.65)	0.0140 (*)
	HEART-ENABLE SELF	4.97 (0.68)	5.50 (0.49)	0.0025 (*)
	HEART-ENABLE OTHERS	4.96 (0.64)	5.41 (0.57)	0.0091 (*)
	HEART-ENABLE GROUPS	4.77 (0.67)	5.18 (0.59)	0.0060 (*)
	HANDS	4.93 (0.65)	5.26 (0.66)	0.0115 (*)
	LEADERSHIP IMPACT	5.08 (0.72)	5.62 (0.64)	0.0152 (*)

(*) Significant at $p < 0.05$ level

There were significant changes for all leadership constructs in the respondent category ‘other’ between the pre-programme questionnaire and the post-programme questionnaire. The most significant changes were for the constructs ‘enable self’, ‘enable others and ‘enable group and organisation’.

This study did not conduct factor-analysis, but for ease of reference, see Figure 2 for a graphical representation of the types of items in each questionnaire category.

'Head', 'heart', 'hands' and 'impact' categories of the 360 questionnaire.

HEAD	HEART: Enable self	HEART: Enable others	HEART: Enable groups	HANDS	IMPACT
Big picture Vision Business understand-ing Solutions Innovation Decisions	Self-awareness Openness & growth Energy, self-control, action Authenticity Confidence	Listen, respect, value, celebrate Support, display confidence Actively build, coach, support decisions	Self-confidence & influential Acts for the team (in thoughts, action, dealing with conflict, debate, power dynamics, networking) Inspires loyalty	High standards Delivery Clear objectives Consequences for poor performance Finds / enables resources, training, systems	Followers feelings/ experience: Respect, understand Energised, inspired, Urgency; Stretch, Growth Fun

Figure 2: Examples of items in each category of the 'Head', 'Heart', 'Hands' and 'Impact' 360 degree questionnaire

See Figures 3 and 4 for a graphical representation of pre-programme and post-programme differences in participant scores to indicate direction of significance. The graphs are displayed on X-axes of 0-6, representing the questionnaire's Likert-scale responses of 1-7.

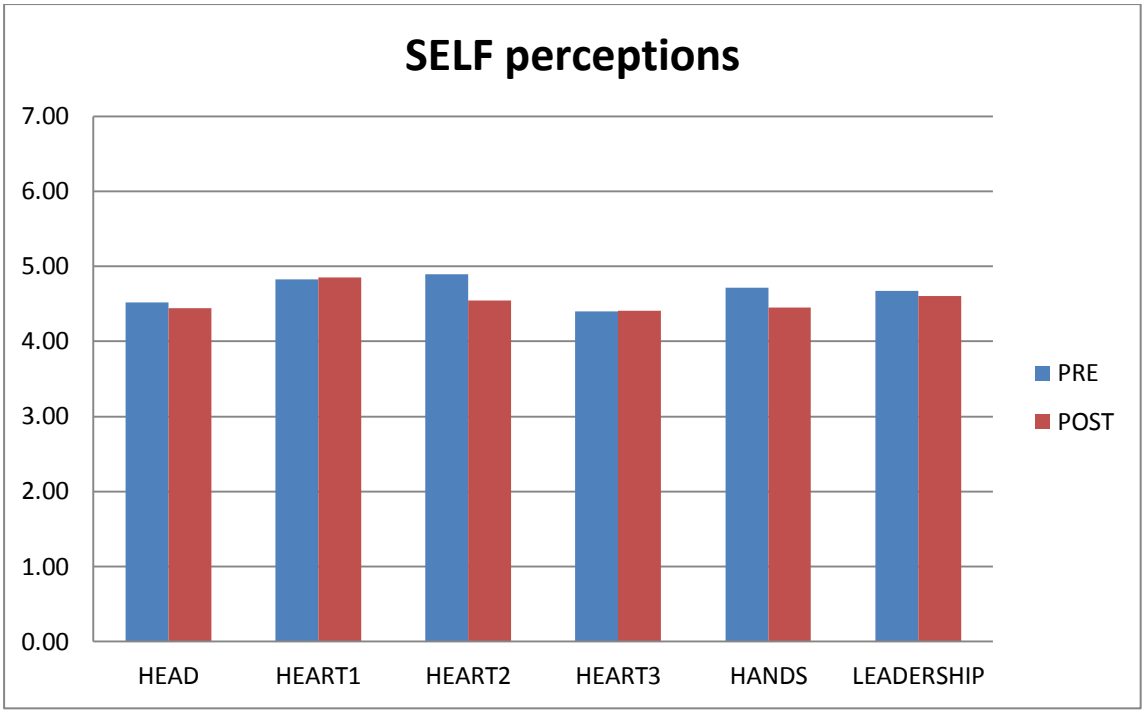

Figure 3: Graphical representation of pre-programme and post-programme differences in participant 'self' score (N= 16).

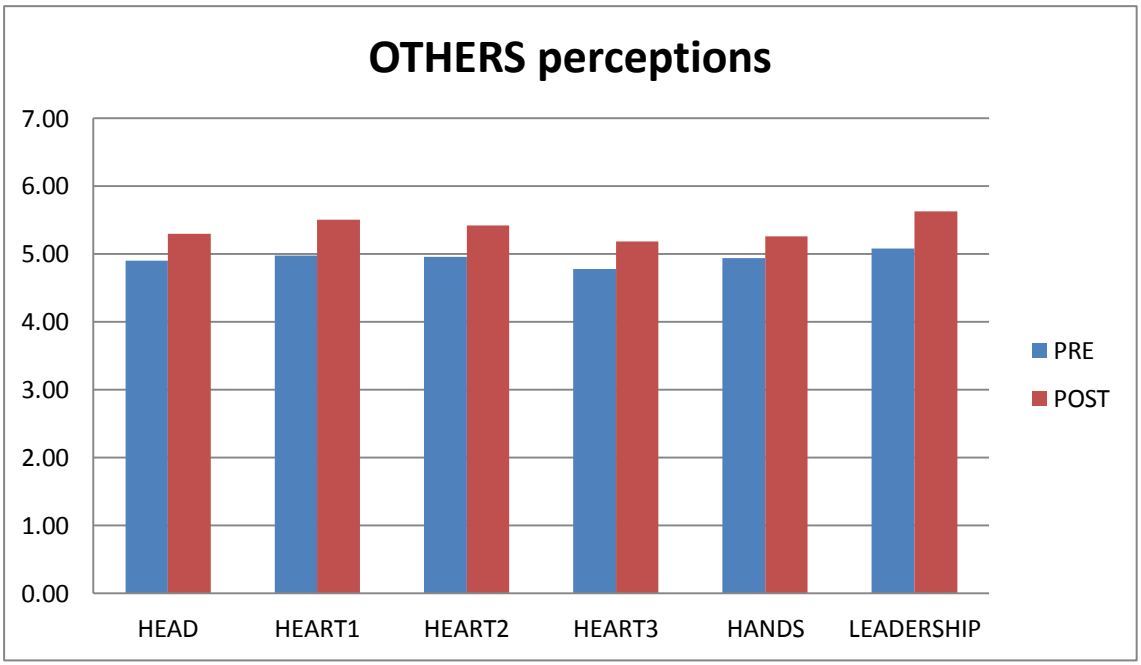

Figure 4: Graphical representation of pre-programme and post-programme differences in scores from 'others' (peers, subordinates, colleagues, etc.) as respondents (N=18).

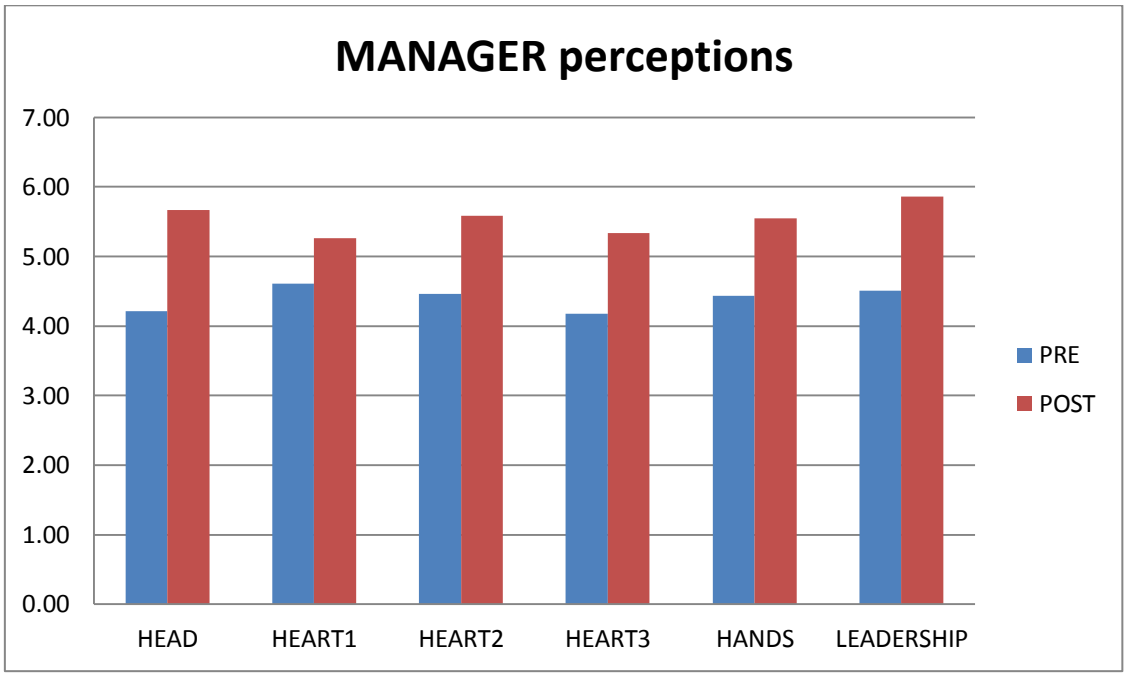

Figure 5: Graphical representation of pre-programme and post-programme differences in scores from managers as respondents (non-significant), (N= 3).

4.4 Qualitative interview findings

Nine semi-structured questions were asked in each interview with six women. Seven open-ended questions and two ranking questions were asked. The questions for the semi-structured interview are listed in Appendix B.

The code classifications listed in Table 4 were used to identify the interview respondents in order to assign descriptions, comments and quotations to them.

Table 4: Code classifications for interviewees

Interviewee	**Code classification**
Interviewee 1	I-001
Interviewee 2	I-002
Interviewee 3	I-003
Interviewee 4	I-004
Interviewee 5	I-005
Interviewee 6	I-006

The interview questions were designed to explore the perceived impact that group coaching had on leadership development for the women and to assess which sessions and processes had the greatest impact. The findings are presented in two sections. Firstly, the questions which asked for items to be ranked numerically are described. Secondly, the themes extracted from thematic analysis conducted across

the entire interview dataset are presented in their thematic clusters, with data extracts of descriptions, comments and quotations. Thematic analysis presents repeated patterns of meaning that are coherent and distinct in relation to the whole dataset and the research questions. It is important to note that in presenting thematic clusters, a level of interpretation is already evident. The impact of theoretical choices as well as the process undergone in the selection of themes will be fully described in chapter 5.

4.4.1 *Ranking of the six coaching sessions and coaching processes/ tools*

Each participant was asked to rank the coaching sessions from greatest impact to least impact. They were also asked to rank various coaching processes and tools as identified in the literature and used in the design of the coaching sessions. The rank orders for each are displayed in tables 5 and 6 below.

Table 5: Rank order as reported for six coaching sessions by the six interview participants

Group coaching session	Rank order in ranking (from highest to lowest)
My Leadership Impact session (with video)	1
360 degree administration	2
My Leadership Vision session	3
Personal Development objectives and planning session	4

My Values session	5
My Life story session	6

Table 6: Rank order as reported for six coaching processes/ tools by the six interview participants

Being video recorded	1
Peer feedback	2
Getting input from group	3
Being coached	4
Learning from the group	5
Telling my stories	6
Taking a role in the group	7
Giving feedback/ input	8
Being held accountable	9
Networking	10

4.4.2 *Thematic analysis of data extracts across entire dataset*

The themes extracted from thematic analysis across the entire interview dataset are presented in their thematic clusters with data extracts of descriptions, comments and quotations in the tables below. The process of analysis is briefly referred to in models that depict how sub-themes make up the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006), as well as referring to specific clusters of commentary in the tables. Thematic analysis was done in two parts. Firstly, themes relating to changes in leadership or leadership effectiveness were extracted. The second analysis was conducted in response to the impact (effect) of group coaching on leadership effectiveness. Several data extracts related to both research questions and were included in the thematic clusters for both if relevant. It is worth noting that in identifying and then modelling the relationships between sub-themes and themes, it is apparent that the researcher plays an active role in making judgements about patterns and themes in thematic research. Therefore a level of analysis is already evident in the presentation of findings below and the researcher's voice is more clearly a part of the study than in other methodologies (Aronson, 2011; Braun & Clarke, 2006). This is appropriate for thematic analysis and the distinction between the presentation of results and discussion of results will be clear in the discussion section of this study.

a. *Leadership changes - knowing authentic self*

Five of the six respondents in this study contributed to a differentiated theme around changes in leadership relating to 'knowing authentic self'. The theme cohered around participant responses relating to understanding and knowing or learning about themselves, this knowledge being a state of mind or internal quality in contrast to a hard set of skills, and finally, this knowledge being about their authentic, genuine, true selves.

There were three sub-components to this theme which are represented as a model in Figure six below (with the number of interviewees who contributed commentary in brackets).

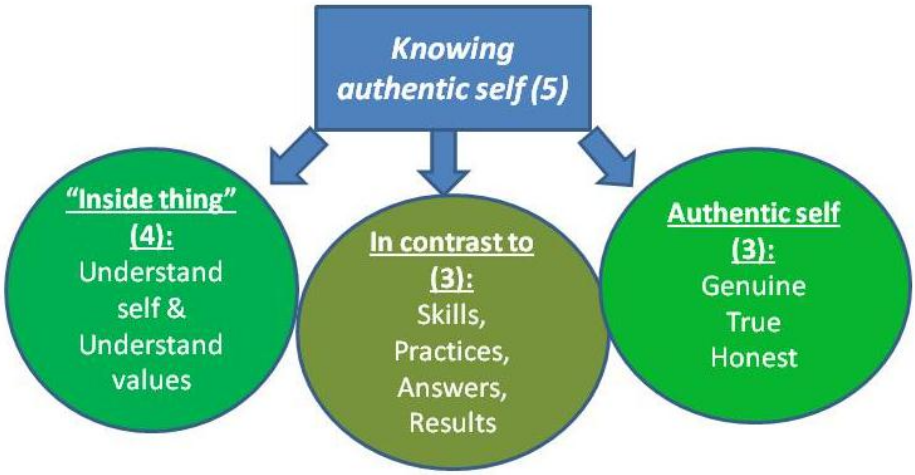

Figure 6: Graphical representation of the sub-themes that make up the theme: leadership changes- knowing authentic self

Table 7 summarises the typical responses of the interviewees that related to their views on changes in leadership effectiveness in relation to knowing their authentic selves. The first of the sub-themes was related to knowing self and own values and leadership being "an inside thing", and is expressed in the first six comment extracts in table 7 (with no shading). The contrasting of this 'knowing of self' with skills or numbers or results was expressed through comments four to six in table 7, and finally commentary on being authentic, genuine and honest is shown in the last four comments in table 7 (with light shading).

Table 7: Responses related to changes in perception of leadership in connection to 'knowing your authentic self'

1. "So with this course I started learning and understanding myself better, and my values..." I-002
2. "And I think if you understand as a leader, if you get to know who you are, then it is easy for you to deal with other people. So with this course I started learning and understanding myself better, and my values." I-002
3. "Yes numbers and results are important but a value driven leadership style is also important and it is important to integrate it into your day to day things, how you

conduct yourself, and not just pay lip service to it." I-003
4. "Before I had one idea or model of a leader, as somebody who is there in front with all of the answers and you look up to them to provide a vision and to drive it. But through the programme I also realised that actually leadership is more of a state of mind..." I-003
5. "I thought the course would help me with some skills but I think it is not so much skills as it is very much an inside thing, this leadership. ... it <leadership> is more about knowing yourself and getting to know the people around you and how you interact with people. And a lot of that can't really be taught, you can be guided or told what to look out for but ultimately you have to do, and learn from your own experiences." I-005
6. "... I initially thought that there is a set of skills and things that you need to learn and practice before you can lead but actually the one thing that the program taught me is going back inside yourself and asking 'what do I already have that makes me an influential leader and how can I use what I have already got ..." I-004
7. "...and I learned that authenticness means being true to people around you, …to do it in a true and honest form." I-001
8. "...as long as I have remained authentic to myself. I think that is what it does for me in a corporate environment." I-003
9. "It really did change, especially maybe the authenticity part of it. .... being authentic, being a genuine leader was the most important thing that I got from the course or learned from the course." I-002
10. "I know people have always respected me but I didn't realise it was because I was being honest, I was being genuine." I-002

a. ***Leadership changes - understanding, engaging and influencing others***

All six of the interviewees contributed to a core theme around understanding, engaging and influencing with others. There were also three sub-components to this theme which are represented as a model in Figure 7 below (with the number of interviewees who contributed commentary in brackets).

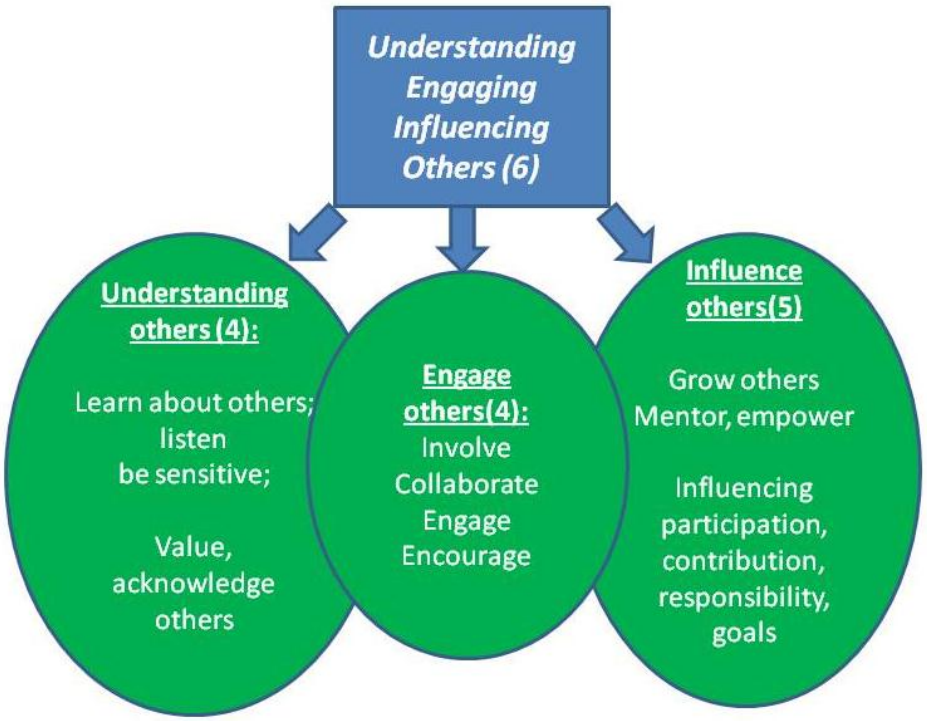

Figure 7: Graphical representation of the sub-themes that make up the theme: leadership changes- understanding, engaging and influencing others

These three sub-themes overlap conceptually with each other, which is discussed further in this study. The sub-theme on understanding others included comments on listening to, being sensitive to, learning about and valuing others (see comments one to six, with no shading, in Table 8 below). Engaging others referred to relating to, supporting and involving others to participate, giving input and collaborating (see

comments seven to eleven, with light shading, in table 8 below). Lastly, influencing others included influencing to set goals and contribute, as well as growing, mentoring and empowering them (see comments twelve to nineteen, with darker shading, in Table 8 below).

Table 8 summarises the typical responses of the interviewees that related to their changed views on leadership in relation to understanding, engaging and impacting others positively.

Table 8: Responses related to changes in leadership in connection to 'understanding, engaging and influencing others positively'

1. "...one thing that stood out completely for me was not so much the fact to be authentic only, but it is also about listening." I-001
2. "... I think it has changed my outlook on how I look at my subordinates, the fact that you need to be sensitive to where they are coming from, what the situation is. .... if you have people who are happy and who you can relate to as a human being." I-001
3. "... with that <being with diverse people> you also learn in your own team that you must never just box people into a certain kind of thing..." I-004
4. "..because they feel valued and they feel there is some acknowledgement for who they are. So that has been very key, critical to me" I-001
5. "..and understanding that is important in being inclusive, in fostering that type of leadership style where you value people's opinion." I-003
6. "So there the leadership comes in about knowing my style, trying to learn what their personality and style is so that I relate to them <team she manages> with

that in mind...” I-005
7. “So as a result what I have done is I engage, the moment I see or hear that somebody is doing something similar to me, I immediately link up with them...So in a way it has spun off even more and more collaboration between myself and different groups I would never have thought of before.” I-003
8. “I want the guys to come in and participate, I don’t feel I need to be the one that is handling everything so it is delegating and giving them freedom and opportunity.” I-005
9. “... where it reminded you that your subordinates might have a different way of seeing things so it is important to involve them.” I-002
10. “.. so through that you can give your input. So it is not only you getting the support but it is also a chance for you to give support...” I-005
11. “.. so it has taught me how to steer the meeting, to identify when people are derailing … every person in that room needs to participate. But you need to encourage input. So you need to get their input.” I-001
12. “Absolutely. And so to go a little bit further, it is the ability to be able to influence others to be as authentic and integris as they possibly can.” I-006
13. “.. talking directly to the question of how the programme impacted on my ability to influence others to set goals, ... which <setting goals on being present> creates a different energy within the environment.” I-006
14. “So I must just be aware of that and allow people to grow and giving them chance to contribute and to be seen in the organisation as contributing...to come in and participate.” I-005

15. “And if they <those she manages> are weak and they are not growing then I have failed as a leader. My end goal is not for my department to look great but about those people winning the deals and they can be proud of who they are.” I-001
16. “.. what true leadership is about is mentoring. You cannot proceed as an authentic leader if it is all about self and how you get up the corporate ladder. Sure I have mentored one or two people but when you can walk away from an organisation and people turn around say ‘it is because of you that I am in this position”. I-001
17 .“ ...I have a job to meet my own needs but it goes beyond that, that I also have an opportunity to change people’s lives, and so I must treat it with this utmost respect.” I-003
18. “... but also you weren’t just there to absorb but also to empower other people and improve your own skill, which I found quite powerful, ... and being able to influence people on that level I found pretty cool.” I-004
19. “But you have to give your, you have to be part of the cycle of life, if you are not planting seeds or you are not watering other people’s seeds, if you don’t know about it and how do other people grow?” I-005

b. *Leadership changes - increased confidence*

Four of the respondents in this study contributed comments relating to increased self-confidence. Confidence was described in various ways including certainty, confirmation, courage and awareness of (one’s own) power. In this theme, commentary referred also to a shift and this was described as moving from self-doubt, “fear of getting it wrong”, low confidence and fear to increased confidence or reclaimed confidence. Several changes resulted, including having the courage to

speak out, voicing opinions more, doing what they believe in, bringing strengths forward and concentrating on where their passion lay. It was felt that all these comments referred cohesively to the theme of 'confidence', although they were inclusive of comments about a shift over time and on behaviours that resulted from this shift, as depicted in the model in Figure 8 below (with the number of interviewees who contributed commentary in brackets).

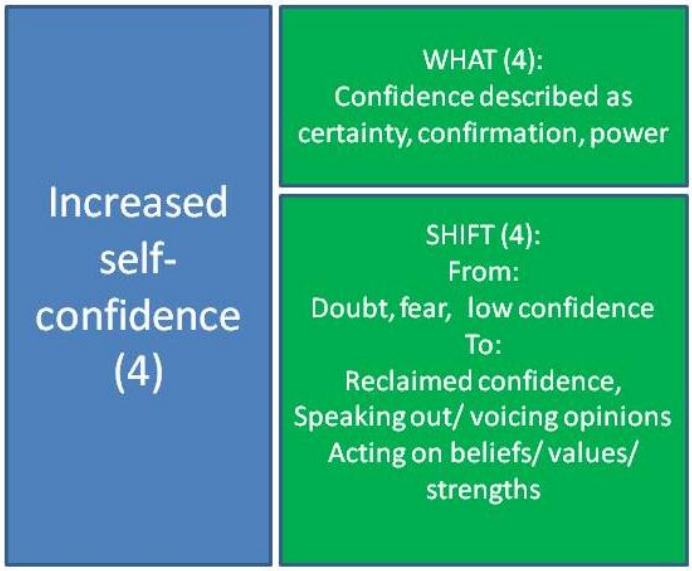

Figure 8: Graphical representation of the elements of the theme on leadership changes: increased confidence

Table 9 summarises the typical responses of the interviewees that relate to their changed views on leadership in relation to increased confidence.

Table 9: Responses related to changes in leadership in connection to 'increased confidence'

1. "But now there is this certainty that it in me and I can stand in front of them <referring to the team she manages> and say 'I know who I am and I know what I am talking about." I-004
2. "I found I lost confidence. But after attending the course I gained my confidence back, re-claimed my position, I did what I believed in and if I didn't believe in something I wouldn't go ahead and do it; ... So I had lost my confidence and the course has allowed me to claim my confidence back..." I-002
3. "...it has given me the confirmation I needed that I have as the leader over the past three years done what I needed to do with <her company> in terms of empowering other people, enough to be confident enough ...kind of concentrate on being a woman, which is where my passion lies." I-006
4. "I know I think one thing is that I thought of myself as a kind of a no. 2 kind of leader. But actually I now sit here and I am like 'hm, I can lead." I-004
5. "I think how I am leading now is I am less afraid of getting it wrong, where it is more about… ... I can say ''I know these are my strengths and I am not afraid'' and I am bringing them forward." I-004
6. "I think it has made me much more aware of my power. I think women don't always have that strong belief in oneself; I think that is like a common problem that I have picked up – that confidence, are we good enough really – that self-doubt. ... So I think I am more courageous, it really helped me, and I voice my opinions more." I-005
7. "...I don't agree with then I just have to find the courage to speak out." I-005

c. *Group coaching impact - increased awareness of self and what matters*

Four of the respondents in this study contributed comments relating to increased awareness or learning about themselves and what matters. Increased awareness was described in terms of ‘learning more’, ‘delving into self’ or ‘learning about whole self’, ‘unlocking self’ and ‘opening my eyes’ (see comments one to three, no shading, in table ten below). In this theme, commentary referred also to a specific aspect of knowledge of self - that of values - ‘what is meaningful’ and ‘what is important to’ self. Comments four to six in table 10 below (with light shading) include aspects of both ‘learning about self’ and ‘about what is valuable’, while comments seven to nine are specifically about ‘what is valuable or meaningful to self’ (dark shading, table 10 below). It was felt that all these comments still referred to the theme of ‘knowing or learning about oneself’ (simply with a larger overall emphasis on what is valuable to the individual), so were included in the same theme as depicted in the model in figure 9 below (with the number of interviewees who contributed commentary in brackets).

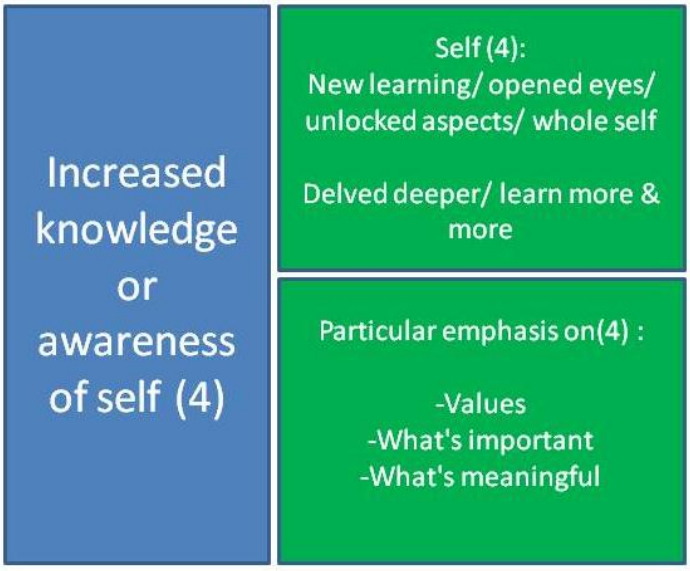

Figure 9: Graphical representation of the contributing elements of the theme on increased awareness of self and what matters (as an impact of group coaching)

Table 10 summarises the typical responses of the interviewees that related to how group coaching increased awareness of themselves and what matters to them.

Table 10: Responses related to group coaching impact in connection to 'awareness of self and what's important or valuable to me'

1. "...So it really opened my eyes a lot more, ...it is important because it makes part of your life story." I-002
2. "... <the coaching> sessions were great because I got to know more and more about myself; the characteristics I have that I never knew I had. Every time we had a session I learned something new about myself, which I really, really enjoyed." I-002
3. "I think when I approached the course it was about how it would improve my impact in the work place, but in the end it is more really about yourself and how you interact as a person, as a whole, in your entire life. So that what it was for me – work was just part of it." I-005
4. "I have now unlocked that side of my persona and this is important to me; having an impact in society is one of the things I value." I-004
5. "So with this course I started learning and understanding myself better, and my values ...." I-002
6. "Because that <particular coaching session> is where one had to delve into myself, what is important to me..." I-003
7. "...which is < values> when I think, when I act, when I am unhappy: what is it based on, and looking at your values is I think one of the most critical parts before you start leading. Because we all lead from what our values are and how people

perceive us, based on their own values. I found that to be the strongest." I-004
8. "What I liked about that <a specific session> was it answered the 'so what' question: ... how do I take it forward for myself in a way that is meaningful for me." I-003
9. "But it is really about values and living your values. And that really underpins everything." I-005

d. *Group coaching impact - learning through receiving external input*

Five of the respondents in this study contributed comments relating to learning through receiving external input. External input was defined in two primary ways: receiving feedback from others and seeing oneself (it is assumed that these relate approximately to the processes of 360 degree and verbal peer feedback and to seeing oneself on video respectively). This is depicted in the model in Figure 10 below (with the number of interviewees who contributed commentary in brackets).

Receiving feedback included commentary about 'what peers think and feel, 'honest face to face feedback', 'an objective view', 'great insight into how you're perceived', 'learning about my role in the group', 'feedback as a mirror of self' and 'hearing how you behave, listen etc.'. These are represented by extracts in comments one to eight in table eleven below (with no shading).

Seeing oneself included commentary about 'seeing how you interact', 'seeing demeanour, body language, gestures and use of voice', 'observing conduct' and 'showing leadership style', as described through comments nine to thirteen in Table eleven below (with light shading).

There was also commentary on some of the effects of this input (what learning occurred), which included ‘causing one to reflect on’, ‘keep at the back of their mind’, and ‘acknowledge’ something and also to be more actively “challenged’ and ‘set objectives’. These are also displayed in Figure 10 below and in the mixed comments (inclusive of extracts about feedback, observations and learning) in comments fourteen to twenty-two in table eleven below (dark shading). The received feedback, observation of self and learning were all felt to relate cohesively enough to ‘learning through external feedback’ to be included in one differentiated theme.

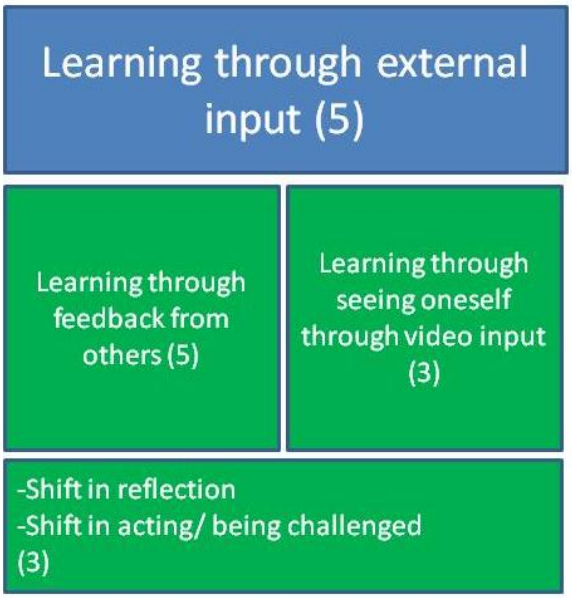

Figure 10: Graphical representation of the contributing elements of the theme on learning about self through external input

Table 11 summarises the typical responses of the interviewees that relate to how group coaching helped them learn through external input.

Table 11: Responses related to group coaching impact in connection to 'learning through input/ feedback'

1. "And getting input from the collective knowledge of the group was a big one for me." I-004
2. "...which makes it <leadership> quite tough. ... and if you don't have someone who can give you an objective view like a coach or like a mentor or someone in your organisation who is on your level or above your level who can help or evaluate or give input, then it becomes quite difficult." I-005
3. "Input from people: you are not as a closed book as you think you are; people can give you great insight into how they perceive you..." I-003
4. "Then I ranked the getting input from the group and the peer feedback. Just going through every single one in my group and every single one was such a powerful woman and the interaction..." I-006
5. ".. the feedback for me is just like a mirror, that is what I like about it; it mirrors you..." I-004
6. "... but the feedback from the peers was 'no, we got the point and you know, the gestures didn't feel like too much..." I-004
7. "I don't get really feedback from my boss, almost never. So it was useful to see scores and also the comments..." I-005
8. "<It's the> first time I had a 360 done, so the results were very interesting to me." I-005
9. "It is things you can take home, because you really see yourself and how you interact...it is evidence on your strengths. So it is there on paper, or video and so

there is no doubt, and as I say, there are concrete things that you can do." I-005
10. "...I walk into that office and it reminds me of my attitude, my demeanour, my body language..." I-001
11. "... observing how you interact and conduct yourself in a meeting." I-001
12. "Yes, the video, basically the way I deal with meetings, interaction with my colleagues and peers…" I-001
13. " ……or noticing how I use my hands when I speak and things like that." I-004
14. "I don't know, it is hard to say. I think it just really makes me more aware when I am sitting in a meeting or part of a committee, how I am projecting myself, you know the body language, use of voice – I think that is the biggest impact. It is always at the back of my mind, how I am leading." I-005
15. "Peer feedback is very relevant because you don't actually realise. People along the pathway can make or break your career and I have learned that...and reputation is ultimately what carries weight within the marketplace. And if you are not sensitised to that, and finding out where you stand, it can actually be very damaging to your career. So it is to be aware of your peers, what they feel, what they think and how you respond to them. That to me is key." I-001
16. "And then also people aren't always honest face to face, so some of the honesty points were something I could reflect on and use in development objectives to get through that as well as what my new vision and mission would be. So that was very valuable to me." I-001
17. "Input: So there are certain things you didn't even believe or consider and somebody saw it, and sometimes it is like a deep-seated thing that you don't really want to entertain and somebody just brings it forward and suddenly you have to

acknowledge it...” I-003
18. “So <I learnt that> my role in the group was I was seen as a spiritually grounded person and that is the role I played.” I-003
19. “... and then they also give you insights into yourself which you don’t normally see, which is actually quite nice, you don’t get that very often, to be able to pick up on things that you know about yourself but that you have forgotten, or weren’t paying attention to. So it was actually quite interesting to see how accurate the insights were, or how they read you.” I-005
20. “... to see yourself and then have the group give input. That was very good.” I-005
“I think it <two of the sessions> showed my style of leadership which is not very ‘out there’ or loud or domineering; it is more of a ‘let’s hear what the group says’, participation...” I-005
21. “...<the 360 degree> just affirmed how I deal with people; that you always let them know you see the good in them and then say ‘perhaps think of doing things differently’ …. So it is challenging but also enlightening in the fact that it is always in the back of my mind now.” I-001
22. “Yes. You actually listen to what they say, how are you behaving, what are your listening skills, are you listening to them. It is key, what people think is important.” I-001

e. ***Group coaching impact - providing for sharing and support (through safety, validation and similarity)***

All six of the respondents in this study contributed frequent and rich commentary relating to a safe environment for sharing and support. Safety in this theme was described as empathising with others through non-judgement and validation. This safety allowed for sharing and support (both giving and receiving). In addition, the similarity of individuals also positioned them uniquely to give support and advice on common issues. See Figure 11 below for a model depicting these relationships (with the number of interviewees who contributed commentary in brackets).

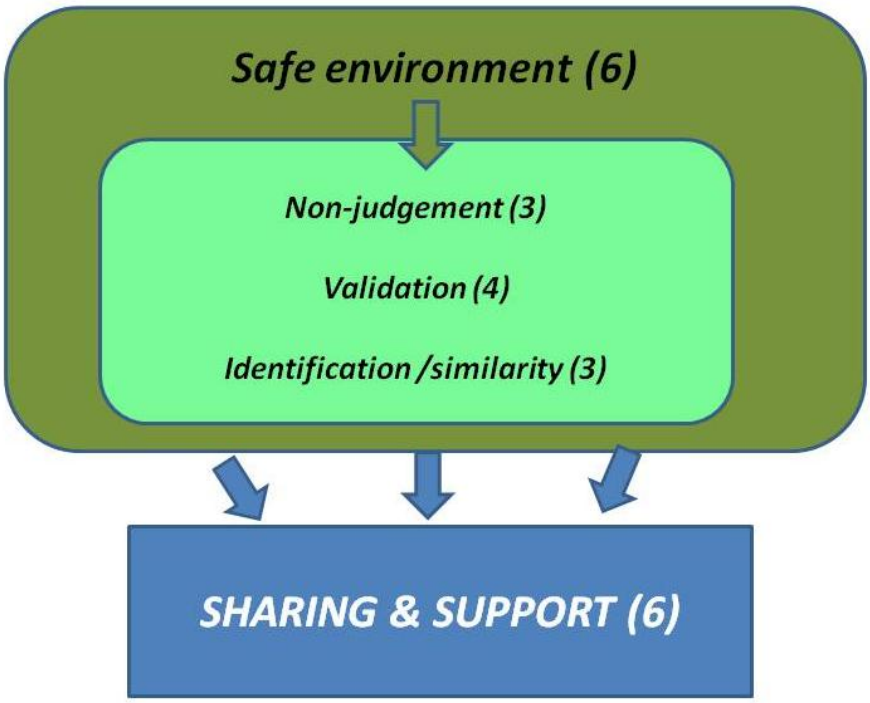

Figure 11: Graphical representation of the contributing elements of the theme on a safe environment for sharing and support

Towards the end of the data analysis process, the current theme existed as three differentiated themes: safety (including non-judgement); validation and support. Further intensive analysis on the conceptual relationships between the constructs, as well as the links between these contributions and the literature, highlighted a dominant theme underlying all three: sharing and support. The analytical and

conceptual decisions made by the researcher are discussed in further detail in the discussion section of this study.

Table 12 summarises the typical responses of the interviewees that related to how group coaching provided a safe space through non-judgement, validation and identification (or similarity) to allow for sharing and support. Commentary on safety describes a safe 'outlet', 'environment', 'space', 'place' or 'room' (between comments one and thirteen in table 12 below). A core aspect to this safety was non-judgement and not having to fear other "agendas", "wrong impressions", "being 'hurt", or "judged" and a space that was confidential and people were receptive without judgement or agenda. Commentary around non-judgement was most apparent in comments five to eleven in Table 12 below (with light shading). Another core aspect referring to safety was validation by being affirmed and valued. Comments on affirmation ('acknowledgment', 'assurance', 'encouragement'), confidence ('self-esteem', 'reclaimed confidence', 'self-confidence') and being valued are displayed in comments eighteen to twenty-four in table 12 below (with dark shading).

Comments on similarities and commonalities between participants included descriptions like "same fears and dreams", "same personality types", "same challenges", and being able to 'relate', 'identify' and 'not be alone' through these similarities. These descriptions are given in comments twenty-six to thirty-three in Table 12 below (light orange shading). Finally, the concept underlying the entire theme was of being allowed to give and receive sharing and support (through this safe environment). Commentary on sharing and support is distributed through–out the extracts in Table 12 below and appear in association with all sub-themes of safety (non-judgement, validation and identification).

Table 12: Responses related to group coaching impact in connection to 'having a safe space through non-judgement, validation and similarity for sharing and support'

1. "I think just having the freedom to express yourself in a safe environment..." I-005
2. "And so the biggest value that I got out of those group sessions honestly was the

sharing...” I-006
3. “...because it was more intimate than a classroom, which is good – you feel like you are in a safe space...” I-004
4. “As I said I don’t think I am given the support here <he organisation> and it is also not the type of environment where you can share. So it was good to allow my leadership skills to come out.” I-005
5. “So I could just be me, without having to think what impact my words could have... people are receptive; they are not taking it personally, or coming with an agenda.” I-005
6. “I think that for me it <coaching sessions> probably is important for this course because it is a safe place to come. You know at work you are always hesitant to share with your colleagues because you never know when you are going to be stabbed in the back. So it is a good support factor in that regard. I think women need that sometimes, it is a safe place to go.” I-001
7. “... was such a deep sharing… where nobody was afraid to say anything, ... And that allowed for the sharing of the collective experience and knowledge.” I-006
8. “... and I never judged other people based on what they told us about themselves. .... And no answer was stupid.” I-002
9. “I have never been in a coaching situation before so to have someone who is non-judgemental but probing you.” I-005
10. “... not having to watch what you say because it could come back to hurt you or you don’t want to give people the wrong impression.” I-005
11. “I think they <group peers> were very supportive, they listen without judging.” I-

001
12. “...whatever we talked about was going to be in that room and I really appreciated that.” I-002
13. “...but time, as we took off the façade and got through to the real person, you realised that was a safe space to be yourself and allow other women to share their insights and wisdoms into your issues.” I-003
14. “...I am like very colourful and I drive sideways and I don’t drive straight. So somewhere within the group, being allowed to do that ... just allowing my personality to be.” I-004
15. “...because I don’t feel that I get a lot of support at work, in my work environment, so I needed to get that support somewhere else.” I-005
16. “So the one thing that became clear for me during the programme is the need for support... I think the recognition that there are going to be lots of times when you need external support and the courage to call on that.” I-006
17. “So when you are in an environment where you can, you let these things come out and you find you were actually spot on. It proved to me that I actually do have insight, something valuable to add...” I-005
18. “So to me the 360 was enlightening because I actually realised how many people value what I do and my worth and my value and also how inspirational I am.” I-001
19. “So I had lost my confidence and the course has allowed me to claim my confidence back, and also to realise my value some more.” I-002

20. “So it is that affirmation I would say, from the peer feedback.” I-004
21. “Yes and also just acknowledgements you know? …., and not realise how much acknowledgement you actually require as a human being and who you are. “...results in your self-esteem being lifted and your self-confidence.” I-001
22. “It gave me the ….‘confidence’ is the wrong word but it confirmed what I was doing was right...” I-006
23. “...and she kept on assuring me that ‘you are actually on the right track and don’t undermine yourself.” I-002
24. “But feeling like your opinion is valued and how the group dynamic worked it was not just on some level the team encourages you to talk and even if you are taking time to get to your point they will be patient with you and that feeling of ‘I am valued’….” I-004
25. “So ja, peer networking has really helped me because I always have somebody I can share with, and the challenges I face, I am able to call and say ‘hey, I need your advice.” I-002
26. “...you realise that they are just people with the same fears and dreams and insecurities ... it just makes it feel more human. And I learnt that in the space of the group culture.” I-004
27. “I just think it was because we were in a way quite similar. I think some of the way we act, our personality types were very similar so when the others gave their stories most of them could really identify and I think it was because we were similar.” I-005
28. “Yes. There were things you could always relate to – maybe not directly but

similar situations.... I think we were a group of very similar type of people, so what applied to one would apply to most of us. So it wasn't only learning from the individual coaching but from the group coaching as well." I-005
29. ".. realised we are all female and are faced with challenges that are almost the same because we have kids and all these other things, and this has helped me because now when I am faced with something I am able to just BBM somebody and say 'how are you doing? This is my challenge." I-002
30. "And the commonalities between the various members of the group and me – different industries, different ages, different races – but actually we have so many things in common... But you realise the commonalities in personality – and as women." I-004
31. "But you see someone's fears come out from them and you are like 'oh, but I do the same thing!" I-004
32. "Because I used to do this job and I used to believe I was the only one out there who was really thrown in the deep end, and after meeting other people I realised we all face the same challenges." I-002
33. "...there are other women out there who you think are confident and are successful, but they are also having their self-doubts. So you are not alone in it really." I-005

f. ***Group coaching impact - supported staying on track to a direction/ goals/ game plan***

Table 13 summarises the typical responses of the interviewees that related to how group coaching supported setting a direction or game-plan (comments 1 and 2) and staying on track to that direction through 'objectives', 'checking and balancing' or

evaluating against these objectives to ensure continuous improvement (comments 3 to 6).

Table 13: Responses related to group coaching impact in connection to keeping on track to a direction/ goals/ game-plan

1. “It <vision coaching session> did, because like I said you need to have a direction and know where you are going to go.” I-002
2. “And then just to define it, refine it and forever work on it and even when encountering challenges somehow in your mind you have a framework, an understanding that this is game plan so to speak that I am working..... So on a day to day basis I always reflect on that statement and what it is that I am doing every day towards its obtainment.” I-003
3. “The impact of that <vision coaching session> is to recap on the way I do things….check and balance – okay I am on to it, no I am not, this is unnecessary – it should be a re-evaluation of those.” I-001
4. “Personal development objectives, self-introspection, things that needed changing, things that needed improvement. I believe life and everything you do is about continuous improvement...” I-001
5. “Yes, and bring it out in my own life and find that actually was it all around you say you are dedicated to excellence, does this fit in with the excellence mindset?” I-004
6. “<referring to the second 360 degree process> To see if you actually made a difference and in which areas, and new things that come up... I think it gives you encouragement, to see that you have improved.” I-005

g. ***Discourse around women.***

All six of the respondents in this study contributed comments relating to a discourse about what it meant to be women and women leaders in their current contexts. In this theme, commentary on what it meant to be women referred to “before anything else, I am a woman”, “trying to be everything”, and “being a mother”, while being a women leader included having “different leadership styles and skills”, having “relationship, communication and social skills”, as well as being “insecure” and “self-absorbed” (comments one to ten, with no shading, in Table 14 below).

Finally current work contexts were referred to as being “male dominated”, “not supportive”, as “not allowed to be emotional” and “not letting personal life affect things” (comments eleven to sixteen, with light shading, in table 15 below). The relationship between sub-themes in this theme are displayed in the model in Figure 12 below (with the number of interviewees who contributed commentary in brackets).

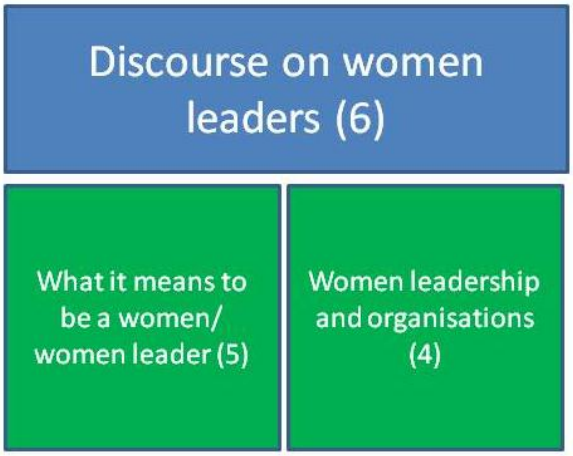

Figure 12: Graphical representation of the contributing elements to the discourse around women and women leaders

Table 14 summarises the typical responses of the interviewees that related to a discourse around women.

Table 14: Responses related commentary about women

1. "... it gave me the recognition that irrespective of who we were and what each of our contexts was, at the end of the day most of us were mothers, almost all of us were mothers actually." I-006
2. "... before I am anything else, I am a woman; before I am black/ white, old/ young, rich/ poor, one thing that defines who I am is that I am a woman...one of my core descriptors in a space that was just women. It was just awesome." I-004
3. "...and given that we were all trying to find that balance between being director at a corporate or owner of a business, mother, wife, sister, you know that sort of thing." I-006
4. "... And just general communication I think as women, I don't know to say whether we are quite good at that, but we are aware of it, communication as a means of making relationships flow much easier. So we can use that to our advantage." I-003
5. "...and they <men> don't even have … what is the word…'social'… .< intelligence>" I-002
6. "What I liked about the programme is that it firstly emphasised that our time as women has come and we bring a different set of skills to the workplace and that the time where maybe women were forced to be like men, that is done, it is no more applicable in the time and era we live in, especially with the world changes. So the world is looking for a different type of leadership and we as women need to step up to the plate." I-003
7. ".. and I have found that certainly with my engagement with a lot of the women on the group was almost like that sense of insecurity about being there, therefore

kind of needing to prove why you are there." I-006
8. "I think it has made me much more aware of my power. I think women don't always have that strong belief in oneself; I think that is like a common problem that I have picked up – that confidence, are we good enough really – that self-confidence..." I-005
9. "…because I think that as leaders and especially as women, we feel that given that we are in these positions it is expected from us from everybody else outside of our immediate environment, to kind of be everything, know everything, do everything 100%. I think that is unnecessary pressure that we put on ourselves as women leaders." I-006
10. "I think women don't listen, we are self-absorbed, want to tell our own story, it's a defence mechanism." I-001
11. "... it is great that it <the leadership programme> is focused on women but I really feel everyone needs this and in particular because in most companies men are the ones that are in charge..." I-002
12. "I think through this programme, it has been more empowering because I don't feel that I get a lot of support at work, in my work environment, so I needed to get that support somewhere else." I-005
13. "... introspect you weren't allowed to be emotional, okay to be a female okay to be authentic... I'm a very passionate person and that evokes emotion obviously took a backseat." I-001
14. "... again this field that I am in, is male dominated, and most of the ladies that were there I know were male dominated ...and that is the only thing that makes me sad, because we can't afford to have the only woman and that is it." I-002

15. “But for me personally it is more about how you handle yourself in a group of men.” I-005
16. “...because we work in a male dominated environment we tend to think that we cannot personalise and you cannot let your personal life affect things.” I-001

4.5 Summary of findings

This chapter reported the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses conducted within the context of the research question. The results demonstrated both support for the existing literature around group coaching and leadership effectiveness, as well as additional insights into the specific benefits of group coaching for the leader and their relationships with others. It also indicated insights into the leadership development context for women managers. In chapter five, the results from the research process are discussed in more detail in direct connection to the existing literature and to the research questions.

5 CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses conducted in relation to the research question and the literature. The research questions were informed by the literature on leadership effectiveness, women leaders and group coaching. The data was gathered from a questionnaire pre-and-post process, as well as the interview process. The data analysis and coding allowed for aggregation and refinement of the data. This chapter now explores the relevance of the results and the literature in the context of this study.

First, changes in leadership effectiveness are discussed. These are described in relation to findings from the quantitative questionnaire analyses and the qualitative interview analysis about changes in leadership competencies and changes in perceived leadership effectiveness respectively. Secondly, the impact of group coaching on leadership effectiveness is discussed in connection to thematic clusters extracted from the interview data.

5.2 Discussion pertaining to research question one

The first research question in this study is: How does leadership effectiveness in South African women managers change pre and post a six month leadership programme?

The findings indicate that the six month leadership intervention did change leadership effectiveness as perceived by those responding on the participants' questionnaires, as well as reported by the participants in the interviews. Accuracy of self-perceived changes reported on the questionnaires as well as response rate by participants' managers was, however, was poor. These findings are explored further below.

5.2.1 *Poor accuracy on self-perceived changes*

There were no significant differences in leadership effectiveness identified by the participants for themselves between the pre and post questionnaire administrations, which contrasted with significant changes perceived by the participant's observers. In fact, in most cases, self-perception of post questionnaire competency was lower (although not significantly) than in the pre questionnaire. While the literature is clear that leadership development requires self-assessment and the development of self-insight (Eva, Cunnington, Reiter, Keane, & Norman, 2004), there are also numerous studies showing that the accuracy of self-assessment of behaviour and learning is relatively poor (both over and under estimated) and poorly correlated with other performance measures (Bell & Federman, 2010; Cook, et al., 2005; Eva, et al., 2004; Hooijberg & Choi, 2000; Kolb, 1995; Ward, Gruppen, & Regehr, 2002). One study found that high performers, specifically, underestimate their performance, while under-performers tend to overestimate theirs (Kruger & Dunning, 1999).

Self-concept seems resistant to change and self-assessments seem to reflect inner images (concepts of self) and internal affective factors like motivation and satisfaction, rather than outer observations or actual change, in contrast to observer's ratings (Cook, et al., 2005; Sitzmann, Ely, Brown, & Bauer, 2010). This has implications for leaders who want to develop themselves and function in increasingly responsible leadership domains. Assessing oneself is important for improving leadership effectiveness and the responsibility lies with the individual leader, making leadership primarily a self-developmental exercise (Parry, 1998). The difficulty of accurately measuring these changes in self suggests that feedback and input from others are likely to be critical aspects to leadership development.

5.2.2 *Poor responses by 'managers'*

It was interesting to note that the numbers of 'managers' who completed both questionnaire administrations for participants in this study were too low for the statistical results to be included in the t-test analysis. Possible explanations are that the participant's managers were not engaged enough in their learning and development, or that an unusual number of the participant's line managers changed over the six months. Another possibility is that organisations develop cultures over

time that is not encouraging of feedback. Some managers do not tolerate failure and respond negatively to requests for feedback, causing those individuals to stop asking for feedback or to avoid performance discussions (Fleet, Peterson, & Fleet, 2005; Moss & Sanchez, 2004; Porr & Fields, 2006). Some employees avoid feedback because of the potential risk of being seen as incompetent. Employee and manager behaviours can mutually reinforce each another, ultimately creating an entrenched culture of feedback avoidance (Moss & Sanchez, 2004). A qualitative theme extracted in this study and also discussed later certainly indicates that the women participants felt that their organisations and managers did not provide much feedback.

While it is uncertain what the specific reasons were behind the low response rate of the participants' managers in this study, it is claimed that when done correctly, feedback can be one of the most impactful development experiences for executives (Goldsmith & Underhill, 2001; Seifert, McDinald, & Yukl, 2003). It is likely to be especially important for senior women leaders to receive relevant feedback, as women are under-represented at senior levels globally (Hayward, 2005; Karelaia & Guillén, 2011; Stout-Rostron, 2012) and generally have fewer relevant role models, and therefore tend to take proffered feedback more to heart (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; Zenger & Folkman, 2012).

5.2.3 *Leadership effectiveness changes*

It was noteworthy that according to the participants' subjective interviews, there were indications of self-perceived changes in leadership effectiveness over the six month programme. This was despite the lack of significant quantitative change in the 'self' category on the leadership effectiveness questionnaire and this tension in results is an interesting one. It is possible that self-concept in general is resistant to change as indicated by the literature (Cook, et al., 2005; Sitzmann, et al., 2010), but that given the time and the opportunity to focus on personal experiences as the participants did in their interviews, deeper changes that were experienced could be surfaced and articulated. This is one of the advantages widely associated with qualitative techniques such as interviews; they allow for greater understanding of a concept with an emphasis on words, descriptions and interpretations to allow an exploration of

qualities associated with a situation (Blumberg, et al., 2005; Johnson & Harris, 2003; White, 2002). The finding that high performers can underestimate their performance (Kruger & Dunning, 1999), combined with the possibility of lower confidence in women relative to men (Ibarra, et al., 2010; Ely, Ibarra, & Kilm, 2011; Kolb, 1995), may point to a possible explanation of the discrepancy in the findings above - high-performing women (as were selected for the programme used in this study) may under-rate changes in their effectiveness initially, but when probed about their detailed experiences they have an opportunity to surface thoughts and feelings associated with events and are able to identify and reflect more deeply held (more unconscious) experiences.

The respondents of the participants in the 'other' category (subordinates, colleagues and peers) on the quantitative pre-and-post leadership effectiveness questionnaires reported significant positive changes in all leadership competencies for the participants over the six month programme. The most significant changes were for the 'heart' competency areas of 'enable self', 'enable others' and 'enable group and organisation'. These categories included items on self-awareness, openness to feedback, personal energy, self-control, confidence and authenticity (for 'enabling self'); listening, respecting, celebrating, supporting, actively building and coaching (for 'enabling others') and finally acting and thinking in terms of the team with respect to conflict, debate, power dynamics, networking, being influential and earning loyalty (for 'enabling groups and the organisation').

The qualitative themes extracted from the interview data tended to refer to three perceived changes in leadership: 'understanding authentic self',' 'understanding and impacting others' and 'confidence and certainty'. The first two themes, particularly, are consistent with, and add to, the quantitative differences in leadership effectiveness in the questionnaire analyses: enabling self, others and the group/ organisation. All three qualitative themes are discussed in further detail below.

5.2.4 *Leadership effectiveness changes: understanding self, enabling self and authentic self*

Five of the six respondents in this study contributed to a differentiated theme around changes in leadership relating to 'knowing authentic self'. The theme cohered around

participant responses to learning about themselves, this knowledge being an internal quality and about their authentic, genuine, true selves. These were three sub themes relating to this theme which are worth describing, but they were not felt to be differentiated enough to exist as three separate themes. The first of the sub-themes is related to knowing self and own values and leadership being ‘an inside thing’. Commentary from the participants referred to learning and understanding themselves, getting to know themselves better, learning about their values, learning from their own experiences and using what they already had inside themselves in order to lead. It was captured well by one participant who stated it is “a state of mind”.

The literature supports the notion that learning, as in a leadership development programme, is inherently self-oriented. As one author describes it, the leader needs to demonstrate an ability to transform from within themselves (Parry, 1998). This also needs to be supported through appropriate leadership interventions that enable self in addition to the harder leadership skills (Mirvis, 2008), which was well represented as commentary in this study. The ‘self-knowledge’ which participants referred to was also contrasted with leadership as not being about a “model”, as something that can’t be taught, not a skill that is just learnt and practised and that a leader does not just have all the answers, numbers or results.

This sub-theme was mentioned by half of the participants but was an important element in contrasting what the participants were saying about leadership as being about ‘internal self-knowledge’, and therefore served to highlight that they felt it was not simply a matter of taught skills. In essence, it was felt to be referring to the same concept of leadership (as an internal state of mind and form of self-knowledge, instead of a ‘hard’ skill). The development of leaders therefore needs to focus on the leader’s identity as a core part of the person’s self-concept, enhance self-knowledge (including clarity about values and purpose) and support the development of goals and behaviours that are concordant with this self-concept (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Supportive factors are encouraging awareness and expression of personal context through narrative, values, purpose and actions to empower others (George, et al., 2011). The literature on authentic leadership in particular supports the notion that leadership development is essentially about self-enabling and not necessarily only

about the ‘harder’ or taught skills of leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner, et al., 2011). This is consistent with the last sub-theme referred to in this study, which was about being authentic, genuine, true and honest. This again, was a slightly different component of the theme, emphasising a consistency to a true, genuine self or honesty about that self. Again, half the participants mentioned this sub-theme but it provided a valuable perspective to the theme on ‘self’ in connecting the concept of ‘self’ to a ‘real’ or ‘genuine’ self. It also seems that some knowledge of the perceived true self may be logically necessary to enable an honest adherence to that ‘genuine self’ which was felt to link the two sub-themes.

Authenticity, which originates in Greek philosophy, and captured in the aphorism: ‘know thyself’ (Gardner, et al., 2011), is described as owning one’s personal experiences (being self-aware), then acting in accordance with one’s core self and discovering and constructing this core sense of self (Gardner, et al., 2011). Authenticity is linked to characteristics such as awareness of one’s fundamental values, context, knowledge, strength and purpose, positive self-regulation, positive self-development, confidence, hopefulness, optimism, resilience and high moral character (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004; Dolny, 2009; Gardner, et al., 2011; Sparrowe, 2005; Toor & Ofari, 2008).

Several participants in this study mentioned learning about their values as a particularly important part of their self-knowledge. The assumption of authentic leadership theory is that people must lead effectively by using their values, beliefs, strengths and weaknesses in a way that expresses their unique identity (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio, et al., 2004; Gardner, et al., 2011).

The underlying thematic essence of all three sub-themes was therefore felt to be about knowledge of self (in some cases the ‘genuine’ self) as critical to leadership instead of just the ‘skills’ or ‘models’. The literature on leadership, especially that on transformational, authentic and identity-based leadership, therefore has relevance to this study’s findings. The participants appear to be reflecting the well-known aphorisms ‘know thyself’ mentioned above, as well as ‘be true to thyself’ in their comments, and also reflect a need for self-development in addition to the harder leadership skills, which is similarly claimed by some authors as essential for truly effective leadership development (Mirvis, 2008).

5.2.5 *Leadership effectiveness changes: understanding and enabling others*

Leadership is almost always a relationship between leader and followers and is, therefore, social and relational at its core (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008; Shamir & Eilam, 2005). In fact, modern neurobiology and neuroscience findings indicate that the brain is designed to enable social participation (Rock & Page, 2009), so it is unsurprising that modern leadership theory is also focussing on relational processes. Several authors therefore argue that development of social capital and relationships should be emphasised in leadership development (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008; Shamir & Eilam, 2005). This is consistent with the significant changes found in this study in 'enabling others' and 'enabling groups and the organisation' in the quantitative analysis, as well as the second qualitative theme extracted - 'understanding, engaging and influencing others positively'.

All six of the interviewees contributed to a core theme around understanding and engaging with others, as well as actively influencing them. This theme was also composed of three sub-themes, which overlap conceptually with each other, namely, understanding others, engaging with others and influencing others. The sub-theme on understanding others included comments on listening to, being sensitive to, learning about and valuing others. The comments also referred to how subordinates' personalities and styles can be different to the leader's own, and understanding others is about "not boxing people" and about being inclusive and learning from 'opposites'. Authors in the authentic leadership literature argue that the emphasis on authenticity as being true to 'thine own self' should also be complemented with having regard for and being true to others (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Sparrowe, 2005, p.420). It is similarly claimed by another author that executive development programmes need to create experiences that raise both self-awareness and understanding of others (Mirvis, 2008).

Engaging others was a second sub-theme extracted in this study that also involved an element of understanding and valuing others, but was more about the dynamic of engaging others specifically, through "relating to", "linking to", supporting and involving them to participate, giving input and collaborating. The literature refers extensively to relational and social leadership qualities, especially in more recent

studies and texts such as authentic leadership theory, engaging leadership theory, SIMOL and leadership theories on emotional intelligence. Authentic leadership refers to the involvement of others not only in affirming authenticity and ideas on self for the leader, but also in the follower's reality being key to the leadership process. The literature describes how authentic leadership is not just 'expressing one's true self', it is by embodying that 'true self' through self-exposure, relating and making good leadership choices that leaders are perceived by others as authentic or not (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010).

As social creatures, we assign meaning to the self that is partly affected by the opinions of others (Sparrowe, 2005) and the self-influences, and is influenced by social exchanges with others (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). In addition, the relational aspect of leadership plays out in the experience of leadership on the part of followers. It is therefore important to examine the congruence between leaders and followers, rather than the personality of either party alone (Zhang, Wang, & Shi, 2012).

The theoretical concept of authentic leadership is therefore multi-dimensional and includes traits, states, behaviours and contexts, as well as leader-follower dynamics and social relationships (Alban-Metcalfe & Alimo-Metcalfe, 2009a; Amagoh, 2009; Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio, et al., 2004; Dalakoura, 2009; George, et al., 2011; Ibarra, et al., 2010; Kemp, 2009a; Mumford, 2011). The second sub-theme in this study contains commentary that refers to these relationships and dynamics of exchange between leaders and followers, using descriptions such as; "it's not only getting support but giving support", "to empower other people and improve your own skills", "I immediately link up with them and it's spun off (even more) collaboration between myself and different groups (than) I would have thought of before", "they might have a different way of seeing things so it's important to involve them", and "if you have people who are happy and can relate to you as a whole human being".

These social exchanges and dynamics are also elegantly articulated in the African philosophy known as 'seriti' (Sotho) or 'isithunzi (Nguni), which describe that the self must be regarded in relation to all other life (the self exists only in interaction with the community) and these interdependent interactions reflect one's moral weight or influence (Boon, 2008). It is noteworthy, given the population group of this study, that

leadership skills that at times have been traditionally regarded as feminine (such as communication, team and relationship building, intuitive decision-making, multi-tasking and sensitivity to diverse needs) are especially consistent with the social, relational leadership skills discussed above (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Hayward, 2005).

The last sub-theme in this study referred to influencing others. This cluster of comments also included an element of engaging others, but was an extended concept to one of actively influencing others to set goals, contribute and be responsible for their actions, as well as growing, mentoring and empowering them (specific mentions were to influence others to set goals and take responsibility, to change people's lives, and "if they are not growing then I have failed as a leader").

The literature on leadership promotes the idea that a leader's primary role is to value human talent and unlock potential (Gardner, et al., 2011) supporting the achievement of common organisational goals (Amagoh, 2009; Hernandez, et al., 2011; McCallum & O'Connell, 2008; Mumford, 2011). The behaviours of growing, fostering, mentoring, and empowering others are known to influence followers' work engagement, motivation, employee satisfaction, sharing of information, commitment and reduced intent to leave, which are linked to organisational performance (Atwater & Brett, 2006; Hernandez, et al., 2011; Sparrowe, 2005; Walumbwa, Christensen, & Hailey, 2011; Walumbwa, Wang, Wang, Schaubroeck, & Avolio, 2010). It is interesting that one study has found that being able to facilitate relationships and growth as described above is valued by subordinates, but not necessarily by managers themselves (Hooijberg & Choi, 2000).

The theme underlying all three sub-themes in this study was about the leader enabling/ influencing others, although this was through different processes such as understanding them, through relationship exchanges between leader and follower and lastly through more actively developing them. Inter-personal skills are mentioned in a range of leadership theories (such as engaging leadership, SIMOL and EQ leadership literature) as the behaviours that promote positive relationships, namely transparency, trust and confidence, listening, consideration, positive emotional contagion, social exchanges and enabling the growth of followers (Parry, 1998; Toor & Ofari, 2008; Walumbwa, et al., 2011). It appears that learning institutions should focus attention on processes that enable the authentic expression of social and

relational leadership, especially as this may be particularly pertinent in diverse and hyper-connected modern business realities.

5.2.6 *Leadership effectiveness changes: confidence*

The last theme that was extracted in the qualitative analysis about changes in leadership was in connection to increased confidence. Four of the respondents in this study contributed comments relating to this theme. Confidence was described in various ways including certainty, confirmation, courage and awareness of (one's own) power. In this theme, commentary also referred to a shift, which was described as moving from self-doubt, "fear of getting it wrong", low confidence and fear to increased confidence or reclaimed confidence. Several changed behaviours were described including having the courage to speak out, voicing opinions more, doing what they believe in, bringing strengths forward and concentrating on where their passion lies. The literature describes confidence in similar terms of tending to believe in the personal difference one can make, believing in one's own personal competence (Carless, Mann, & Wearing, 1996 in; Parry, 1998) and self-judgment that one believes they can do something (Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Hollenbeck & Hall, 2004).

It was felt that all the relevant comments in this study referred cohesively to the theme of 'confidence', although they were inclusive of comments on a shift over time, and on behaviours that resulted from this shift. One participant had a strong emphasis on the outcomes of increased confidence and contributed most of the commentary on 'know what I talk about', 'knowing I can lead', 'knowing my strengths and bringing them forward'. Although there was an implicit intensity about this particular participant's input, there were other contributions from at least two other participants for each subtheme of the theme, including the shifts on confidence over time and the resulting behaviour change from these shifts.

Self-confidence is linked to leadership performance in the literature, in that leaders who are confident welcome challenges and set difficult goals, take risks in working towards their objectives, may excel interpersonally and inspire followers to work toward the leader's objectives (Luthans, Luthans, Hodgetts, & Luthans, 2001; Luthans & Peterson, 2002; Shipman & Mumford, 2011). Confidence is also claimed

to be an important part of self-development (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Hannah, Avolio, Luthans, & Harms, 2008; Mahsud, Yukl, & Prussia, 2009; Mumford, 2011).

Certainly, the participants referred to behaviours that would support leadership, such as 'bringing their strengths forward, voicing opinions, being courageous' and "giving me confirmation ...in terms of empowering other people". Most of the commentary also expressed a self-development component which was discussed in detail in the previous section in relation to leadership effectiveness. Confidence is therefore related both to the theme of 'self-awareness' and the theme of 'empowering others', but is differentiated enough to consider it as conceptually separate.

It is worth noting that self-confidence in the workplace may be a dynamic of particular importance for women. According to some studies, women may be more modest, neutral and uncertain in an effort to avoid disapproval (Ibarra, et al., 2010; Ely, Ibarra, & Kilm, 2011; Kolb, 1995). This may also be exacerbated by cultures that are conflicted about their authority (Schein & Davidson, 1993; Sitzmann, et al., 2010) and in which they are subject to greater scrutiny because of the scarcity of women leaders at executive level (Ely, et al., 2011). The literature on leaders in general, however, especially in contemporary leadership theories such as transformational leadership, is rich with studies confirming that good leaders exhibit self-confidence and competence, have inner strength and an internal compass to support and guide them (Bass, 1985, 1990; Howell & Avolio, 1993; Ross & Offermann, 1997; Shamir & Eilam, 2005).

With the global economic crash and recent issues around ethical corporate governance, sustainable, courageous leadership is being increasingly sought (Kemp, 2009a) and this inner sense of strength is probably more important now than ever. In this sense, self-confidence and resilience may be more than a nice-to-have, but most likely is essential as an anchor in the modern leadership conditions of change and uncertainty.

5.2.7 *Leadership effectiveness: other changes*

It was notable that the competencies relating to enabling of self and people were perceived by others to change the most across the pre and post questionnaire

administration, compared to competencies relating to an ability to set direction and vision, the impact felt by others and ability to execute (although these also changed significantly). Certainly all measured leadership effectiveness behaviours did change. However, it is possible that setting and achieving 'direction/ vision' and 'execution' are both competencies that relate to a slightly longer-term application of behaviours to achieve observable results. The items in these sections of the questionnaire specifically referred to 'big picture', effective solutions for business problems', 'high standards of performance and delivery', setting up of systems and processes' and 'ensuring that staff receives training'. Perhaps these changes would be even more evident to others after the participants had more time to apply their learnt competencies in the varied contexts of their organisations and tangible results were more visible.

Similarly, 'leadership impact' items refer to the leaders behaviours as experienced by their followers. It is suggested that it might take longer for individuals to absorb the impact of a leader's behaviour on them than to observe a change in the leader's behaviour. This is consistent with the findings described earlier in this study, that inner images and experiences are more resistant to change than the observation of changes in others' behaviour (Cook, et al., 2005). All the 'impact' items in the questionnaire refer to the followers' feelings in response to the leader's behaviours. Perhaps followers would be more aware of changes in their 'felt' experiences after more time was available to adjust their perceptions, or if there was an opportunity to more deeply unpack their experiences in an interview. These are relative differences however, and the significant changes in all leadership behaviours on the questionnaire allowed for this research to confidently continue with exploring the impact of group coaching on leadership effectiveness changes.

5.3 Discussion pertaining to research question 2

This study's second research question is: How does a group coaching process impact on changes in leadership effectiveness in South African women managers?

In the six interviews conducted and subsequent thematic analysis, five core themes were extracted related to this question. These themes showed that in reference to changes in leadership effectiveness (as prompted by the interview questions), the main impacts of group coaching were an increased awareness of self (and what matters to self); learning through external input and feedback; sharing and support (through safety, empathy and identification); and a sense of direction or 'game-plan'. A sixth theme was extracted that referred to a core discourse on women and women leaders.

5.3.1 *Raised awareness of self and what matters to me*

The first differentiated theme extracted across the interview dataset about group coaching was in relation to increased awareness or learning about self and what matters to self. Four of the six respondents made references to issues that cohered around knowing, learning, delving into, "unlocking" and "opening their eyes to" themselves and what is valuable, meaningful or important to them.

These findings are consistent with the findings and literature discussed above about leadership being self-oriented and about authenticity and self-knowledge (Parry, 1998; Mirvis, 2008). However, they relate more specifically to how group coaching supports insights about the self. The literature indicates that group coaching is about individual learning and deepening insights (Thornton, 2010; Britton, 2010; Brown & Grant, 2010; Woodhead, 2011; Cook & Viedge, 2011; Vidmar, 2005). This learning is often about defining individuality, self-development and self-transformation, although often in relation to others (Thornton, 2010; Ward, 2008; Ibarra, et al., 2010).

Group coaching can provide a highly appropriate setting to experiment safely with multiple identities (Florent-Treacy, 2009), where interpersonal dynamics can played out and patterns of interaction can be explored (Kets-de-Vries, 2010). It therefore helps to capture a constancy and unity of self amidst dynamic and variable lived events (Sparrowe, 2005). This is often referred to as a re-finding, re-discovery, revisiting or a reinforcing of things one thought one was aware of in oneself, but actually wasn't (Griffiths & Campbell, 2009). The participants in this study provided commentary about both learning more about self ("learning more", "delving into self" or "learning about whole self")' as well as learning new or presumably previously

unknown aspects of self (“unlocking self”, “opening my eyes” and “…the characteristics I had that I never knew I had...”).

In addition, it appears that one of the most important components of knowing oneself is about what is deeply meaningful and valuable to self (what matters). Authentic leaders need to develop insight into their values and lead from this value system (Offermann, Hanges, & Day, 2001). These claims are consistent with a strong contributing sub-theme about self-knowledge in this study, referring to the participants’ experiences on “what is important to me” and learning about themselves “in a way that’s meaningful to me”. Group coaching therefore appears to not only support opportunities for insight about the self, but also about different personal meanings (Florent-Treacy, 2009).

5.3.2 *Learning through external input/ feedback*

The second differentiated theme on group coaching impact was related to learning about self from external input. All six respondents contributed to a theme that cohered around learning (and raised awareness) from input outside of self. This was a particularly strong theme, consisting of several (22) repeated comments across the participants, indicating that input and feedback may be a particularly noteworthy aspect of group coaching. These were also ranked number 1 and 2 as coaching sessions (in Table 5) and number 1, 2 and 3 (being video recorded, peer feedback and ‘getting input from the group respectively) as experiential processes (in Table 6). External input was defined in two core ways: receiving feedback from others and seeing oneself (it is assumed that these primarily related to feedback and to seeing oneself on video respectively). Receiving feedback included commentary about “collective knowledge”, “what peers think and feel, “honest face to face feedback”, “an objective view”, “great insight into how you’re perceived”, “learning about my role in the group”, “feedback as a mirror of self” and “hearing how you behave, listen etc.”.

The available literature describes the advantages of group coaching as the learning enhancement that occurs through factors such as input from role models and amplified learning due to reflection and feedback from multiple learning partners (Cook & Viedge, 2011; Thornton, 2010; Vidmar, 2005; Woodhead, 2011).

Participants learn through exchange, input and the collective wisdom of the group (Britton, 2010; Stelter, Nielsen, & Wikman, 2011; Thornton, 2010; Woodhead, 2011). A group can provide alternative solutions or strategies and individuals can challenge each other, making suggestions for improvement and change (Ward, 2008).

Participants are also exposed to many different perspectives about their own behaviour which can help them to recognise where and how they can become more effective (Kets-de-Vries, 2010). This lends support for the commentary in this study about learning not only through collective knowledge and what peers think and feel, but also for the most frequent and repeated set of extracts which were about receiving feedback relating to how one is perceived and the impact of this on others. There was also commentary in this research on the effects of this input (what learning occurred), including 'causing one to reflect on', 'keep at the back of their mind', 'acknowledge' something and more actively, to "be challenged", "set objectives", and relating feedback to "where you stand in your career". The literature referred to above also supports the notion that feedback and exposure to perspectives results in reflection as well as being challenged to change (Cook & Viedge, 2011; Thornton, 2010; Vidmar, 2005; Woodhead, 2011; Ward, 2008; Kets-de-Vries, 2010) as this study's participants expressed.

While commentary in this study was not explicitly about differences in others, the literature does indicate that individuals can learn through the diversity of the group itself (strengths, learning types and personalities) and through social comparisons with these different perspectives (Britton, 2010; Stelter, et al., 2011; Thornton, 2010; Woodhead, 2011; Yalom, 1995). The participants did not unpack the reasons for feedback being different from what they may have originally thought, but one logical reason for this is simply the difference in people's opinions and perspectives that allow them to offer new and 'honest', 'objective' or 'challenging but enlightening' feedback. This can develop flexibility and resilience through exposure to alternative perspectives (Britton, 2010; Stelter, et al., 2011; Thornton, 2010; Woodhead, 2011; Yalom, 1995) and suggests an advantage in multiple sources of input and 'challenging feedback' rather than one (Kets-de-Vries, 2010; Steyn & Mynhardt).

The second sub-theme in external input referred to in this research was 'seeing oneself' and included commentary about 'seeing how you interact', 'seeing

demeanour, body language, gestures and use of voice', 'observing conduct' and 'showing leadership style'. Although only half of the participants explicitly distinguished 'seeing oneself' from 'getting input', it was felt to add an important context to this theme. In addition, several comments may have been referring to either visual or peer feedback or both, for example, "I learnt that my role in the group was I was seen as a spiritually grounded person".

Since the accuracy of self-assessment of behaviour is relatively poor and poorly correlated with performance measures (Bell & Federman, 2010; Cook, et al., 2005; Eva, et al., 2004; Hooijberg & Choi, 2000; Kolb, 1995; M. Ward, Gruppen, & Regehr, 2002), seeing oneself from outside of oneself (for example in video feedback form) could be a useful form of self-development feedback. If self-assessment tends to reflect inner concepts of self rather than outer observations or actual change (Cook, et al., 2005; Sitzmann, Ely, Brown, & Bauer, 2010), then providing another version of 'outer observation' such as through video may be an additional support in calibrating views of self. In the leadership programme in this study, peer feedback was encouraged while the video was being viewed and the additional versions of 'external input' may well have been cumulative.

Some environments may not always feel safe for individuals to receive feedback and to learn in. If organisations do not provide both challenge and support, a leader is unlikely to seek feedback and other forms of external input that help them learn. Safety and support is discussed in the next section.

5.3.3 *A safe environment for sharing and support amongst similar peers*

The third core theme extracted from the dataset is one containing commentary from all six respondents around a safe environment for sharing and support through non-judgement, validation and identification. This theme was a complex one that contained several sub-themes and frequent or intense commentary. The inter-relationship between sub-themes are depicted in Figure 10. Safety in this theme was described as non-judgement and validation and being able to identify with similar others. This safety enabled sharing and support. In addition, the similarity of individuals uniquely positioned them to give support and advice on common issues.

The meanings around ‘safety’ appeared to cohere around an outlet or safe environment that was confidential, intimate and supportive, and where people were receptive without judgement or agenda. This safe environment allowed participants to ‘show themselves’, have the “freedom to express”, share and just be themselves in terms of allowing their ‘self’, personality and leadership skills ‘out’. A core aspect to this safety was non-judgement and not having to fear other agendas, “wrong impressions”, “being ‘hurt”, or “judged”. Although only three participants explicitly mentioned ‘non-judgement’ in their commentary, there were also mixed comments that can be assumed to relate to a concept of non-judgement (e.g. “...space to be yourself...” and “...being allowed to do that...just allowing my personality to be”). Although these comments were not counted in this sub-theme, feeling that they could be themselves may well have been related to the participants feeling accepted (not judged), as well as being encouraged or validated for being themselves.

Another core aspect referring to the safety to share was affirmation and validation by being valued. Affirmation (acknowledgment, assurance, encouragement) and confidence (self-esteem, reclaimed confidence, self-confidence) were provided by an environment in the group coaching that valued both the participants themselves and their opinions, ‘actions (‘what they do’) and insights. Some of the subjective commentary also referred to a contrasting environment at work where “you know at work you are hesitant to share because you never know when you are going to be stabbed in the back”, “I don’t feel that I get a lot of support at work...” and ‘’it <referring to her organisation> is not the type of environment where you can share.”

If individuals feel anxious and are apprehensive of having their weaknesses exposed for judgement, it can make learning difficult (Kets-de-Vries, 2011; Thornton, 2010; G. Ward, 2008). Empathy increases participants’ willingness to talk openly, take risks and be vulnerable without fear of misunderstanding and judgement (Ibarra, et al., 2010). It is possible therefore that participants in learning groups can become emotional anchors for each other’s learning (Higgins & Kram, 2001; Kram & Cherniss, 2001), creating an empowering, safe atmosphere as well as acceptance and support to provide the motivation for learning and change (Griffiths & Campbell, 2009; Kets-de-Vries, 2011; Petriglieri, 2011; Ward, 2008).

The commentary extracted in this theme in the research was not specifically about learning. However, in the previous theme it was discussed in detail how participants learnt through feedback and input, therefore sharing and giving and receiving of input was the key vehicle for learning in this study. Safety is widely cited in the literature as a necessary learning condition because it is easier to learn when one feel essentially safe and valued (Thornton, 2010; Edmondson, 1999; Kets-de-Vries, 2011; Siegel, 1999; Yalom, 1995).

In order to learn, one needs to encounter something new (for example feedback or new information) and compare it for a fit or re-modelling of one's world to accommodate it (Argyris & Schon, 1978). Therefore learning happens through a balancing of security and risk and establishing a sense of safety and validation allows a person to take in and learn from new experiences, such as feedback (Stout-Rostron, 2012; Thornton, 2010). In this study, the safe and validating group coaching environment seemed to reduce uncomfortable affect associated with learning, and not only allowed participants to support each other, but also to share feedback with each other (Ward, 2008).

Support was also facilitated for the research participants by identifying with and learning from others specifically because they were similar. While only half of the participants provided explicit commentary about the sub-theme of similarity, all three provided detailed accounts and were intense (repetitive) about their commentary. Identification ("relating to", "feeling human about") and receiving support (e.g. "asking for advice") was made possible because the research participants felt they were similar or had similar personalities/ commonalities, dreams, fears, insecurities, challenges, situations and issues. The similarity of individuals allows for support and advice on common issues as a result of a sense of identification and belonging in a "sentient community" (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010, p.44). In fact, the particular advantages of group coaching include the possibility of identification with others (Thornton, 2010a; Woodhead, 2011). Participants provided examples of similar workplace issues, forming alliances and networks, providing solutions and coping strategies, and recognising their own unhelpful patterns and behaviours in the mirroring and similar stories of others (Kets-de-Vries, 2011; Stout-Rostron, 2012; Ward, 2008).

The literature on psychology and psychotherapy offers another source of support for this perspective on safety and learning in groups, as the coaching profession was built on foundations from psychology, amongst others (Rock & Page, 2009; Stout-Rostron, 2006). It is well known in psychology and psychotherapy practice that safety and being valued through inter-personal interaction are critical elements to the psychotherapeutic process (Ivey, Ivey, & Simek-Morgan, 1997; Yalom, 1995). Attunement and connection with each other's interpersonal experiences are important for developing resilience and emotional wellbeing (Siegel, 1999). This attunement occurs through contingent, collaborative communication through shared interactions that amplify positive feelings and create security (Siegel, 1999). Humans develop through and with relationships and group-systems like their communities. Groups therefore provide multiple opportunities for empathic interpersonal relationships, identification and belonging, and therefore sharing in a group as a social microcosm (Thornton, 2010; Yalom, 1995).

Women tend to have less access to sponsors and role models or mentors and also fewer advantages associated with network positions and relationships compared to men (Cormier, 2007; Ibarra, 1997; Ibarra, et al., 2010; Karelaia & Guillén, 2011; Stout-Rostron, 2012). It is perhaps even more important for women to experience a sense of belonging and identification in environments in which they can get feedback from similarly positioned women (Debebe, 2011; Higgins & Kram, 2001; Holmes, 2005; Kram & Cherniss, 2001). There was a comment by a participant in this study about not being able to learn from others who were more junior to her. This comment was not included in this theme as it related more to a concept of hierarchy or seniority and was not repeated by others, but it does offer some reflection on the current theme: perhaps if a participant herself is perceived as too 'different' for another participant to relate to, the exchange may not be viewed as valuable (is not identified with). If structured appropriately, however, these learning groups may provide a rare opportunity to spend time with women peers who are able to identify with each other and are therefore given the support and validation that is frequently needed (Debebe, 2011; Karelaia & Guillén, 2011). This was certainly expressed by the majority of the women in this study.

In the previous qualitative theme this study explored how learning occurs through new and different perspectives. The paradox in this current theme is that learning from difference (enabled by sharing) also requires some similarity to provide a sense of safety. Learning and change is most likely to happen through both safety and stretch and a combination of group challenge or pressure and group support.

It is worth noting that towards the end of the data analysis process, the current theme existed as three differentiated themes: safety (inclusive of non-judgement); validation; and support. Through an intensive process analysing the conceptual relationships between the constructs and the commonalities between interviewee contributions and the literature, it was decided that there was a dominant theme underlying all three: that of sharing and support. In addition, the researcher decided to focus on the 'outcome' inherent in the theme, which was more closely related to the research question of 'impact of group coaching'. In this sense, safety (through validation and non-judgement), identification and similarity are inter-related concepts that collectively allow for supporting each other and for the sharing that enables learning (as discussed in the previous theme). This was a theoretical and conceptual decision taken and it is acknowledged that safety, validation and support could be separate constructs if analysed against a different research question or conceptual orientation.

5.3.4 *Supporting a sense of direction or game-plan*

The last core theme identified in this study around the effects of group coaching referred to commentary on how group coaching supported a sense of direction (described also as a 'framework' or 'game-plan') which was used to re-evaluate, 'check and balance', and 'assess' in order to continuously improve and achieve objectives. Although there was not as much commentary in this theme as in others, five of the six participants referred to the theme in some way and the commentary was differentiated as a fairly cohesive 'group coaching effect' more than other interview content (other than that already discussed).

Coaching is known to focus on achieving goals (Rock & Page, 2009; Goldsmith, 2009; Linley, Woolston, & Biswas-Diener, 2009; Nelson & Hogan, 2009). Group coaching can, like individual coaching, be useful in creating a sense of a 'game plan'

or objective within which insights and positive learning and change occurs (Britton, 2010; Thornton, 2010).

Where this can be enhanced in group settings is the use of multiple inputs contributing to a sense of vision. Group coaching is also known to provide members with opportunities to identify and set goals and the opportunities for being held accountable by multiple peers who all bear witness to these objectives or vision can be an advantage (Kets-de-Vries, 2010; Thornton, 2010; Woodhead, 2011). Group settings can also allow for the framing of a purpose larger than individual selves and for individuals to feel part of a larger endeavour (Kets-de-Vries, 2010; Thornton, 2010; Woodhead, 2011).

In the context of leadership specifically, connecting leaders to their purpose is seen as critical in supporting the development of a leadership role (George, 2007; George, George, & Sims, 2007). The participants in this study certainly commented on the need to have a direction and the need to constantly "re-evaluate it" for "continuous improvement" and to "check" that they were on track. One participant summed up the elements of this theme well when she said: "...in your mind you have a framework.....a game-plan, so to speak that I am working to, ...so on a day to day basis I reflect on that statement and what it is that I am doing every day towards it's obtainment."

A focus on leadership purpose can be particularly helpful to women who may be at risk of turning their attention comparatively inwards to deal with conflicting messages around leadership behaviour and stereotypically masculine leadership approaches (Ibarra, 2011). Anchoring on a larger leadership purpose can help women leaders in developing and enacting identities that advance their values and purposes (Ely, et al., 2011). In this way, a broader purpose, direction or 'game-plan' is closely related to learning about personal values (explored in the first qualitative theme) in that they may inform one's direction, purpose or 'game-plan'.

5.3.5 *Themes that were absent*

It was surprising that there was not a stronger theme on networking, given that the programme provided for this, and that women tend to have less access to sponsors

and relevant networks than men (Cormier, 2007; Ibarra, 1997; Ibarra, et al., 2010; Karelaia & Guillén, 2011; Stout-Rostron, 2012). The strong theme around the value of support from similar others indicates however that it is possible that the participants in this study found value in the process of the support and exchange element of networking without labelling it as 'networking'.

It was also surprising that there wasn't a stronger theme around action, performance, accountability and achievement of results in this study. Coaching is a powerful tool for both insight and action or improved performance (Thornton, 2010; Whitworth, et al., 1998). There were not many contributions from the interviewees on the application of performance resulting from the group coaching. Perhaps this is less surprising given the process also does not focus on one individual's context to the exclusion of others and may not explore personal application or follow through of performance to the degree that individual coaching may (Thornton, 2010).

In addition, team coaching and action learning set coaching lend themselves more easily to transferred, applied and measured results than learning–oriented group coaching does (Hawkins, 2011; Thornton, 2010). Coaching groups of relative strangers that come together for the purpose of learning can reference and align to application but may focus more on the learning and insight processes from dynamics and input present in the group (Thornton, 2010; Vidmar, 2005). This study did not measure follow-up application into work contexts which would be valuable research to undertake.

Lastly, the themes extracted from the interviewees' contributions probably reflect in part the design and conceptual orientation of the coaching process itself. This provides opportunity for reflection on what processes and techniques in group coaching could be used to support enhanced action and application in future programme design. In general, an important aspect of successful leadership development initiatives is how they encourage participants to think about what they've learnt and apply that learning to work contexts (Amagoh, 2009; Dalakoura, 2009). The researcher was particularly intrigued with the possibility of designing group coaching processes that not only provide for self-awareness, insight and feedback processes, but also accountability for action, measurable progress and support for transfer of learning into the workplace.

5.3.6 *Researcher's learnings*

The researcher learnt a great deal through the process of conducting this study. Most of this learning was emergent and evolved through the process of reading, conducting the research, and then continuously relating the findings to the literature in a way that evolved and built an understanding of the topics. One of the ways that learning is most apparent is when paradigms shift in relation to surprising findings. The absence of expected findings discussed above is one area that supported learning: the researcher was compelled to integrate and compare models of group and individual coaching in several instances to intellectually differentiate them in relation to the theory and the findings as they emerged. Group coaching assumes that some individual coaching mechanisms are present, but these findings highlight that there may be a trade-off in focus on individual dynamics for focus on group dynamics.

The researcher also found underlying trends in the historical and contemporary development of fields such as leadership, coaching, research and learning through reading. This could be captured very generally as a shift from mechanistic (cause and effect), simplistic, linear thinking (e.g. a focus on behavioural or cognitive elements of theories in isolation to others) to more systemic, complex and inclusive ways of thinking over time (Hernandez, et al., 2011; Remenyi, 2011; Rock & Page, 2009; Stout-Rostron, 2006). This allowed for recognition of some of the philosophical assumptions underpinning the theoretical orientations in leadership, coaching, gender research and learning (and a context of the time in which the theory was developed). Locating literature (and theories) as well as the current study in a theoretical and practical context lends awareness and relevance to the discussion.

Finally, the researcher focussed the study on women managers because they were a group that lent itself to observation. However, a powerful discourse around women and their leadership circumstances, development and intra-personal factors like confidence emerged, which changed one area of thematic focus in the study, as described further below.

5.4 Women leaders in organisations

The last theme is from contributions around a discourse on women. This theme is different from those discussed above in that it is not explicitly about leadership effectiveness or group coaching. However, although the question was never asked and 'women' or 'women in business' was not alluded to in the interview questions, a strong theme around what it means to be a women leader did emerge from the interview data. It was felt that while this theme does not refer to either of the research questions in this study, it does deepen understanding about women as leaders, which was the population group and therefore the context for this study.

All six of the interview participants contributed to the theme on women, which included comments on identification as women ('we are all mothers', 'before anything else, I am a woman') and the value of being able to share common issues as women. Leadership in women was also described in terms of having particular skills ('good communication as a means of making relationships flow' and 'social intelligence') and having a "different set of skills as leaders" to men. Finally, a discourse on current leadership contexts for women was described in terms of organisations being 'male-dominated'; 'not supportive' and of "emotionality" and "personalising things" not being allowed. One participant summed up her comments on women leaders and their environments, saying: "...we must step up".

Numerous studies support the finding that women occupy fewer senior management jobs than men (78% men at top management level in one study) (Zenger & Folkman, 2012) and therefore have to function in predominantly male organisational cultures with a relative scarcity of relevant role models (Cormier, 2007; Noe, 1988; Schein, 2001, 2007; Schein & Davidson, 1993; Stout-Rostron, 2012). As a result, women may feel a need to adopt masculine leadership styles and behaviours to be successful rather than developing their own authentic skills (Hayward, 2005; Stout-Rostron, 2009).

Paradoxically, some studies suggest that more 'feminine qualities' may be especially important in organisations today, for example women might be better than men at managing their own and other's emotions. (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Hayward, 2005). While there are studies that conclude that there are no differences between men and

women on those leadership dimensions (Eagly & Johnson, 1990), other researchers have found women to be more transformational than men (Carless, 1998). More research is needed to clarify this, but the implications are that if women are better at elements of emotional intelligence than men and if emotional intelligence is considered a critical transformational leadership ability in times of change, then women may have a uniquely valuable leadership quality. Certainly in this study, the participants felt that 'relationships', 'communication' and 'social intelligence' were particular skills that women had. This commentary was not prolific and the study did not focus on comparing skills in men and women. However it is interesting that the strongest themes that emerged in this research were on the emotional and social intelligence skills of enabling self and others (in both quantitative and qualitative sections). It would be interesting to repeat this study comparing the results of men and women leaders to see if the strength of the themes are the same for men.

Women leaders may also lack self-confidence relative to men (Ibarra, et al., 2010; Ely, et al., 2011; Kolb, 1995; Sitzmann, et al., 2010) and effective leadership is associated with self-confidence (Bass, 1985, 1990; Howell & Avolio, 1993; Luthans & Peterson, 2002; Ross & Offermann, 1997; Shamir & Eilam, 2005; Shipman & Mumford, 2011). There were comments in this research that were consistent with these studies, which described women leaders as being insecure, lacking in confidence and self-belief, and placing unnecessary pressure on themselves. There was also a theme in the qualitative analysis about self-confidence as a leadership development change (but this was not compared in this study to men).

Leadership development programmes could use leadership development and coaching interventions that cultivate collective self-esteem and address these components of a women's gender identity as well as enhancing functional leadership skills (Karelaia & Guillén, 2011).

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the study's findings in relation to the research question and in relation to the literature. The findings indicated that the six month leadership intervention did change leadership effectiveness as perceived by those responding

on the participants questionnaires, as well as reported by the participants in the interviews. Accuracy of self-perceived changes reported on the questionnaires was however, poor, as was the response rate by participant's managers, which suggests there is value in eliciting feedback from alternative learning partners. Specifically, understanding one's authentic self, understanding and enabling others and self-confidence, changed in the leaders. These are all important leadership skills that are well reviewed in the literature and some are highlighted by this study as particularly important for women managers in current leadership contexts.

The core impacts of group coaching were an increased awareness of self (and what matters to self); learning through external input and feedback; sharing and support through safety (non-judgement, validation and identification); and a sense of direction or 'game-plan'. These benefits are consistent with the discussions in the existing literature on group coaching. This study added additional insights also. It deepened the understanding of which group coaching factors are especially valuable and how these factors add value in a leadership context.

A discourse on women in leadership was explored in relation to participant's comments. This chapter also discussed themes that were absent from the findings. Group coaching seems to be appropriate for learning in a social context and for leadership in complex social business conditions.

The research objectives as defined in the research questions in chapter 2 have therefore been met and contribute to the existing body of knowledge, specifically on group coaching and in leadership development contexts for women managers.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes this study. It summarises the contributions of this research against the research questions and the literature and makes specific recommendations for groups of people within relevant areas of practice. It also makes suggestions for further research.

6.2 Conclusions of the study

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of group coaching on leadership effectiveness in South African women managers. It aimed to investigate changes in women's leadership effectiveness after attending a business school leadership development programme, which included a group coaching component. It subsequently aimed to explore what impact the group coaching process had on changes in the women's leadership effectiveness. The findings indicate that leadership effectiveness did change significantly over a six month leadership development programme, most notably in the areas of enabling self and others. Group coaching also specifically impacted leadership effectiveness. The described benefits of group coaching are particularly appropriate for modern social and relational leadership contexts and may be especially beneficial for women leaders.

Group coaching is in essence about the input and collective knowledge of several participants who help each other and collaborate in learning, in the presence of an experienced coach. It is about the dynamics in a group and about a matrix of social interactions. But it is also about coaching and highlights forward-movement, change and a focus on goals. The results of this study show that the effects of group coaching were an increased understanding of self and meaning, which group coaching can facilitate by enabling experimentation with multiple identities through multiple interactions. It also showed that group coaching allowed for input from the group's collective knowledge which can support new ideas, challenge existing ideas and allow for alternative perspectives. These forms of alternative and external inputs challenge existing mind-sets which results in learning. Learning is made possible and is easier when the learning space is safe, and participants reported that group coaching created safety and enabled sharing and support from multiple others as a result of non-judgemental, validating interactions. Lastly, group coaching allowed for the creation of game-plans and accountability for sticking to those game-plans.

Group coaching in this study was impactful in terms of factors inherent in its group nature: multiple interactions, multiple inputs and collective sharing and support. The implications are that group coaches may need a skillset that enables them to coach, yet also to manage group processes. There was less emphasis in this study on achieving personal goals, accountability and organisational outcomes as result of the

group coaching. It is possible that there is a trade-off in benefits offered by multiple interactions in group coaching for individually-focussed change which results from individual coaching. Designers of leadership development programmes should bear this in mind as they assess areas of focus and select coaches for their programmes. Further research should also directly compare the impact of individual and group coaching in similar conditions to clarify this potential trade-off.

Findings also indicated that leadership effectiveness changed significantly in all areas assessed in the questionnaire, especially in competencies related to self-development and empowerment of others. Group coaching sessions specifically affected leadership in the areas of raised levels of insight, understanding (of self and others) and increased confidence. Modern notions of leadership indicate that it is implicitly about the self and about enabling and unlocking the human potential of others in high performance contexts. Self-confidence and inner strength is also critical to leadership effectiveness and performance, especially in the turbulent financial and ethical circumstances of current business realities. Thus the findings provide insight into the study's research question on changes in leadership effectiveness, which is also consistent with the literature. Feedback was rated as important by the participants but the response rate of participant's managers was poor, suggesting that feedback from alternative groups as in group coaching may be important. Participant's self-assessments in this study were also not consistent with how others assessed them, which adds weight to the value of alternative and multiple viewpoints in developing one's leadership effectiveness.

The study indicates that women who work in gendered organisations may benefit particularly from alternative groups that provide safe feedback, supportive validation and a sense of identification with similarly positioned women. This study supports the literature that claims that self-confidence may be especially important to women who may deal with conflicting messages about stereotypical leadership approaches. It is also consistent with claims that women may benefit particularly from contexts that also support traditionally 'feminine' leadership skills.

In conclusion, this study's findings add to the body of knowledge on group coaching and leadership effectiveness in women managers. They are consistent with the espoused benefits of group coaching as being about multiple feedback and

exchange interactions. They indicate additionally that group coaching is a particularly beneficial approach to enhancing leadership capabilities in relational contexts and for women managers. It is especially effective at doing this by providing a safe and validating space to learn from multiple partners, gain support from similar others and anchor to a vision aligned to personal values.

6.3 Recommendations

This section recommends areas of focus for professionals in coaching and leadership programme design, as well as for organisations and women managers themselves. It also suggests areas for further research.

6.3.1 *Recommendations for leadership programme design, including group coaching*

The recommendations for leadership development programmes identified by the researcher from this study relates to four areas, namely: self-development of leaders, the necessity of feedback in development, the benefits of group coaching in leadership development and development of women leaders. These are discussed further below.

- The findings in this study indicate that leadership development is as much about the self (and self in relation to others) as it is about the 'harder skills' of leadership that can be taught in more traditional training programmes. The participants in this study felt that enabling self (insight, knowledge, meaning, confidence, direction) and others (understand, engage, influence, share, advise) were important to their leadership effectiveness. It was also the more indirective and 'process-oriented' aspects of the programme that are usually 'discovered' rather than taught (e.g. sharing, giving and receiving of input, context of safety, feedback and validation) that enabled this learning. It is recommended that leadership development programmes focus as much on these 'self-development' and 'process-oriented' skills in leadership development as they do on functional and directive (taught) skills.

- This study found that feedback is an important part of a leader's growth and development. Feedback from organisations and managers was scarce and yet

challenge, validation, social comparison and alternative perspectives were important in supporting learning. It is recommended that leadership development programmes provide supportive structures for feedback and also encourage feedback in organisations.

- This research found that group coaching can be an effective way of developing leadership competencies that require multiple interactions, multiple inputs and collective sharing and support. The particular competencies that group coaching facilitated were self-insight, enabling of others, feedback, sharing, continuous improvement and confidence. Multiple dynamics and interactions are implicit in complex relational and globally connected leadership conditions. It is therefore recommended that group coaching formats are considered for leadership development initiatives that aim to develop these competencies in these contexts.

This study's participants also indicated in their commentary that groups should be kept small (five or six individuals), the duration should be long enough to explore the aspects mentioned above, and that coaches are experienced and able to manage both coaching and group dynamics. It is recommended that adequate attention is paid to how group coaching processes are designed and how group coaches are trained, in creating impactful leadership development processes.

- Finally, findings emerged from this study about the context of women leaders. These indicated that organisational environments may not be supportive of women leaders, that women may lack reference groups or mentorship from which to learn and that women may have different leadership skills than men. It is recommended that attention is paid to the unique challenges and opportunities in developing leadership effectiveness in women leaders. Specifically, programmes should focus on developing leadership confidence, play to women's strengths in leadership skills, provide alternative reference groups for feedback and identification and provide challenges and solutions for managing organisation's gender biases.

6.3.2 *Recommendations for organisations and managers*

Many of the recommendations above also apply to organisations that design or play a role in designing their own leadership development programmes. There are some additional recommendations also:

- This study's findings indicated that while feedback is critical to leadership development, it may be scarce in organisations and from line managers. It is recommended that managers are encouraged to be more engaged in the leadership development of their direct reports. It is also recommended that organisations build feedback processes into their systems and cultures, in addition designing them for learning interventions.

- This study found that organisations are still felt to be male-dominated and have subtle cultural and organisational biases towards masculine approaches to leadership. The recommendations for organisations and managers are to pay attention to developing their women leaders as a business prerogative and to leverage the unique leadership competencies in women. It is recommended that the cultural and systemic constraints that limit the promotion and development of women in organisations be challenged.

6.3.3 *Recommendations for coaches*

This study indicated that there is a need for the kind of learning that occurs in group coaching contexts. The literature also indicates that group coaching is particularly appropriate for certain current leadership contexts and economic realities. It is apparent from the participant's commentary and from the literature that group coaches may need to complement their traditional coaching skills with skills and experience in group process, group dynamics and with group coaching tools. It is recommended that coaches who want to practice group coaching develop themselves in these ways and in so doing, also raise the practice standards and professionalism of group coaching.

6.3.4 *Recommendations for women managers*

Given that this study found evidence for the challenges experienced by women in organisations as well as specific development needs for women leaders, it is recommended that women take responsibility for developing themselves in relevant and appropriate ways. It is recommended that women leaders proactively seek out peers and environments that can provide alternative reference points for social comparison, emotional anchoring, validation and learning opportunities. It is also recommended that women seek out feedback both inside and outside of their organisations. Finally, it is recommended that women pay attention to some of the ways in which they may be limiting their own leadership development by, for example, displaying a lack of confidence in their own abilities.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

This study focussed on middle-to-senior managers attending a business school leadership programme for women in South Africa. The study also explored the subjective impact of a group coaching process for the women managers through interviews. It recommends that further research:

- Replicates this study in empirical settings, including quantitatively measurable effects of group coaching processes on leadership effectiveness, as well as the specific relationships between processes, techniques and coach qualities in group coaching and leadership effectiveness.

- Replicates this study, focussing on the qualitative aspects of the research with a larger number of interviews.

- Establishes the validity of these findings in other settings such as leadership at other levels of management, leadership effectiveness in men and the application of leadership skills outside of a business school context and in work environments.

- Compares the effects of group coaching impact between men and women leaders.

- Investigates the perceptions of people that leaders work with in addition to the perceptions of leaders themselves. Importantly, this should ensure substantial engagement and feedback from the leader's direct line managers.

- Investigates the impact of group coaching on leadership development in longer time frames and the impact of group coaching for specific organisational results.

- Explores the effects of other forms of group coaching, such as team coaching and action leaning sets, as well as comparing the effects of group coaching with other aspects of leadership development programmes (e.g. classroom teaching, workshops, debates and case studies) on leadership effectiveness.

- Explores the relationship between group coaching and leadership effectiveness in other organisational and social-cultural contexts outside of South Africa.

6.5 Conclusion

Effective leadership is critical for organisational performance and growth, especially in demanding modern business environments. Group coaching is more time and cost-effective than individual coaching, is scalable and sustainable, and is appropriate to complex relational and systemic leadership contexts. It does, however, need rigorous theoretical and practical development. This study aimed to investigate the impact on group coaching for leadership effectiveness and has added to the body of knowledge on leadership effectiveness, extending this to women managers in South Africa. It has also contributed to the academic dialogue on group coaching processes and its value for modern leadership development and modern leadership challenges.

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APPENDIX A – QUESTIONNAIRE

LEADING WOMEN 360° FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE © 1 April 2011

Dear (Participant's name),

As you know, you have been selected to participate in the Leading Women Programme at GIBS, 2011 and a research study for which you've given consent.

This email contains the instructions for how to access the questionnaire on-line. Please complete the questionnaire yourself and forward this email to those colleagues you would like to give you feedback. Select people whose views represent a range of experiences with you, and whose views you would value as you identify your strengths and development areas. You may select as many as you like, but select only those who know you well enough to provide informed feedback. We recommend that if possible you include your manager and at least four people who report to you, and at least four others who work with you at the same level. The report is able to distinguish between these groups of respondents provided there are at least three from each group.

The questionnaire should take about fifteen minutes to complete.

To complete the questionnaire now, click on:

https://www.thornhill.co.za (unique URL)

If it does not work as a click-through, please cut and paste it into the address line of your browser. At times connections do break up, so if you are not successful the first time, please try again a little later. If that does not work, please contact Thornhill Associates to check the connection. Note that this is a secure personalised address for feedback to you only and cannot be used to give feedback to any other participant. Your respondents will be asked to indicate their names (for record purposes only; their feedback to you will not be identified) and position relative to you. If your respondents have any questions about the programme, they are welcome to contact me using the details below.

If you have any technical questions you may consult Thornhill Associates' FAQs by clicking on http://www.thornhill.co.za/thornhill/faq.html or you can send Thornhill Associates a message by replying to this email.

Your respondents' kind contribution to the programme is greatly appreciated.

Kind regards,

Alison Reid

Tel: + 771 4219

Email: reida@gibs.co.za

The questionnaire was created by the Thornhill 360-degree feedback system www.thornhill.co.za, and this email was generated automatically from the server of Thornhill Associates. For technical information about the on-line administration of the questionnaire, please contact admin@thornhill.co.za.

Questionnaire Items

HEAD: CREATING DIRECTION

1. Identifies the "big picture" strategic context of problems and opportunities
2. Communicates a clear, compelling and attractive vision for the future of the organisation
3. Contributes a very thorough understanding of how business works
4. Demonstrates insight when faced with complexity
5. Comes up with effective solutions to business problems
6. Is open and receptive to the new ideas of others and different ways of doing things
7. Introduces her own creative and innovative thinking
8. Challenges existing ways of doing things
9. Takes tough decisions when necessary, even when they are unpopular
10. Encourages realism in decisions by finding and facing the truth, even when it is unpleasant

HEART 1: ENABLING OTHERS

11. Listens attentively and accurately
12. Treats all people with respect, regardless of race, gender, or other diversity
13. Actively builds on the benefits of diversity to draw the best out of all people
14. Coaches and develops staff
15. Contributes supportively and expertly to the success of peers and superiors
16. Demonstrates a set of values that subordinates respect and buy into
17. Supports others' decisions
18. Celebrates others' successes and achievements
19. Expresses confidence in the ability of others
20. Inspires support and enthusiasm in others for a shared vision and mission

HEART 2: ENABLING SELF

21. Recognises her own emotions and how they impact on others
22. Is aware of her strengths and weaknesses and is not afraid to disclose them
23. Obtains and attends to feedback from other people without defensiveness
24. Comes across as confidently optimistic, even when others are discouraged
25. Maintains a high level of personal energy and determination
26. Maintains composure and self-control under difficult circumstances
27. Steps forward to take the initiative unprompted
28. Her values, words and actions come across as consistent
29. Is dependable in all situations
30. Keeps going with resilience in the face of difficulties or opposition.
31. Comes across as leading naturally rather than acting a part
32. Clearly demonstrates what contribution she wants to make

HEART 3: ENABLING GROUPS AND THE ORGANISATION

33. Sums up and puts what the team is thinking into words or action steps
34. Spots potential conflict, brings disagreements into the open and deals with them promptly
35. Comes across as confident
36. Encourages constructive debate and open discussion
37. Is influential
38. Reads the organisation's power dynamics so well she can deal with politics effectively
39. Builds consensus and support for initiatives, especially among key decision makers
40. Forms strong networks with people across the organisation
41. Attracts and retains talented staff
42. Gains unusual loyalty from staff to the extent that they go the extra mile for her.

HANDS: EXECUTING

43. Insists on high standards of performance and service to clients/ customers/ colleagues
44. Can be counted on personally to deliver on time and up to standard

45. Clearly states what is required, from whom, by when, how and why
46. Meets with direct reports often to confirm direction and monitor progress
47. Gives accurate, insightful and fair feedback on performance
48. Has the courage to implement tough consequences for poor performance
49. Sets up and/ or improves systems, processes and structures to achieve optimal results
50. Takes active steps immediately to ensure the team obtains the resources needed to do the job
51. Ensures that staff receive training or coaching to equip them for specific requirements.
52. Empowers others to take initiative, make decisions and work effectively on their own.

LEADERSHIP IMPACT ITEMS

53. When I am with her I feel understood
54. When I am with her I feel respected
55. When I am with her I feel stretched to go beyond my comfort zone
56. When I am with her I feel that I want to do things right all the time
57. When I am with her I feel confident in my own abilities
58. When I am with her I feel appreciated and recognised
59. When I am with her I feel energised
60. When I am with her I feel the urgency of what we need to do
61. When I am with her I feel that work is fun
62. When I am with her I feel that we have a future in this organisation
63. When I am with her I feel motivated to give my very best all the time
64. When I am with her I feel proud to be part of a winning team
65. When I am with her I feel that I can trust her

Comments (these open questions will not be used in the research)

What strengths would you like her to use more?

What could she change to become even more effective?

Do you have any other messages for her?

APPENDIX B – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

'LEADING WOMEN' GROUP COACHING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

We are using the following definition to describe 'leadership effectiveness':

Leadership effectiveness: the success in influencing or encouraging other's participation in achieving set goals (Amagoh, 2009; McCallum & O'Connell, 2008).

1. How have you changed your thinking around what it means to be a leader/ leadership effectiveness?
2. How has the Leading Women programme impacted on your ability to influence others to a set goal?
3. What role has group coaching played in this process?
4. Which of the sessions had the greatest impact on your leadership effectiveness (ability to influence others to a set goal), e.g. strengths and weaknesses, life-stories, values, leadership impact, setting personal development objectives, your vision?
5. Can you describe in further detail (e.g. tell me a story about this impact)?
6. Please rank the coaching sessions in order of greatest to least impact on your leadership effectiveness:
    - Session one: Life story
    - Session two: Values
    - Session three 360 degree: strengths and development areas
    - Session four: Impact (video).
    - Session five: Personal Development objectives
    - Session six: Vision/ mission

7. Which group coaching tools had the greatest impact on your leadership effectiveness (ability to influence to a set goal), E.g. video-reflection, coaching, peer feedback, being held accountable for a goal, telling your story/ stories, getting input from the groups collective knowledge/ experience, learning from the group dynamic, learning from taking in a role in the group, peer networking, other?

8. Can you describe in further detail (e.g. tell me a story about this impact)?

9. Please rank the group coaching tools in order from most to least effective.

   Tool one: video-reflection

   Tool two: coaching

   Tool three: peer feedback

   Tool four: being held accountable for a goal

   Tool five: telling your story/ stories

   Tool six: getting input from the groups collective knowledge/ experience

   Tool seven: learning from the group dynamic

   Tool eight: learning from taking in a role in the group

   Tool nine: peer networking

   Tool ten: other (this was later adapted to ‘giving input as participants indicated that it was important).

APPENDIX C – PARTICIPANTS' INFORMATION LETTER

Research Participants' information document

	Issue	
1	Name of researcher Contact details Employers name	Alison Reid +27 72 992 9457 GIBS, 26 Melville Rd, Illovo
2	Title of research project	The impact of group coaching on leadership effectiveness for South African women managers
3	Purpose of study	The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of group coaching on leadership effectiveness in South African women managers. This research aims to investigate changes in women's leadership effectiveness after attending a business school leadership development programme, which includes a group coaching component. It subsequently aims to explore what impact the group coaching process had on changes in the women's leadership effectiveness.
4	Description of study	The research will take the form of a questionnaire and interviews
5	Duration of the research	10 months
6	What is involved and how long will it take?	**Questionnaire participants:** Contributors will be asked to complete a short questionnaire which will take approximately 15 minutes. Contributors are also asked to forward

		the questionnaire to at least three people who work for them. **Interview participants:** Contributors will be asked to take part in a one-to-one interview. You will asked if you are prepared to have this interview voice recorded, and you may decline if you so wish. The time required for the interview is approximately 60 minutes.
7	Why you have been asked to participate?	You have been asked to take part in this research due to your being a participant on the GIBS 'Leading Women' leadership programme, and therefore due to your experience as a manager in South Africa, your experience on this programme and experience with the group coaching process.
8	What will happen to the information which will be given for the study?	The information will be held securely and confidentially while the research is being collated. All notes will be kept under lock and key. Following the completion of the research all material collected will be shredded and destroyed.
9	What will be done with the results of the study?	The results of the questionnaire and interviews will be reported in the findings section of the research work. This will be done anonymously. The study will be published as a Masters dissertation at the Wits University.

10	What are the possible disadvantages?	There are no costs to you associated with this research. No negative consequences are expected to you as a result of taking part in this research.
11	In what way will the study be beneficial and to whom?	The results will add to the body of knowledge on group coaching and leadership effectiveness. It will help to inform the practice of effective leadership in organisations, especially for women managers; and to inform the practice of leadership development programmes in education service providers.
12	Who has reviewed this study to ensure that it complies with all the requirements and ethical standards of the university?	The Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC Non-Medical) at the University of Witwatersrand have approved this research proposal and granted permission for the research to commence.
13	Can permission be withdrawn having previously been granted?	Yes, all contributors shall retain the right to have their contributions withdrawn at any time prior to the submission of the document. In addition the contributor has the right to refuse to answer any question asked during the interview or ask to end the interview at any time.
14	Can you refuse to answer any question?	Yes. The contributor has the right to refuse to answer any question on either the questionnaire or any part of the interview.

APPENDIX D - LETTER OF CONSENT

I, person X, agree voluntarily to take part in the research project being conducted by Alison Reid as part of the requirements for her Master's Degree at the University of Witwatersrand. I have read the Research Participants Information Document and I understand the contents thereof. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that the information I will supply is confidential and that it will be anonymised and will only be used in the findings of the research.

I understand that I do not have to answer all the questions that have been put to me. The information that I will provide will be held securely until the research has been completed (published) after which it will be destroyed.

The information that I will provide will not be used for any other purpose. I understand that I am entitled to ask for a debriefing session or a copy of the research at the end of the project.

I have been informed that I may withdraw from this study at any time and that any information which I have supplied will not be used for this research and any records held relating to my contribution will be destroyed.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX E –CONSISTENCY MATRIX

Assess the impact of a group coaching process on leadership development in South African women leaders.					
Sub-problem	**Literature Review (primary resources)**	**Hypotheses or Propositions or Research questions**	**Source of data**	**Type of data**	**Analysis**
The first sub-problem is to evaluate how leadership effectiveness in South African women managers changes pre and post a six month leadership programme.	Amagoh, 2009 Kemp, 2009 Avolio & Gardner, 2005 Ibarra, Snook et al. 2010 Ibarra, 1997, 2004 Day, 2001 Mumford, 2011 Pearce, 2007 Gardner et al. 2011 Goleman, 2003, 2008 Ely et al. 2011 Stout-Rostron 2006, 2009, 2011 Nicholls, 1994 Cook, 2011 Hernandez et al. 2011 Hayward, 2005 Cormier, 2007 Hannum, 2010. Eagly and Carli, 2003	How does leadership effectiveness in South African women managers change pre and post a six month leadership programme?	An online questionnaire Likert-style questionnaire consisting of 62-behaviour items developed for this study to assess leadership effectiveness in women managers.	Ordinal, Scalar	Statistical comparison between pre and post summated scores on 'self' questionnaires. Statistical comparison between pre and post summated scores on 'respondents' questionnaires.

Assess the impact of a group coaching process on leadership development in South African women leaders.					
Sub-problem	**Literature Review (primary resources)**	**Hypotheses or Propositions or Research questions**	**Source of data**	**Type of data**	**Analysis**
The second sub-problem is to assess the impact of the group coaching component of the leadership programme, on leadership effectiveness in South African women managers.	Rock & Page, 2009 Chapman, 2010 Stout-Rostron, 2006, 2009, 2011 Britton, 2010 Kemp, 2009 Vries, 2010, 2011 Schein, 2001, 2007 Steltar, 2011 Yalom, 1995 Ward, 2008 Goldsmith, 2009 Linley et al. 2009 Hawkins, 2011 Cook & Viedge, 2011 Thornton, 2010 Ibarra, Snook et al. 2010 Florent-Treacy, 2009 Mthembu, 2007	How does a group coaching process impact on changes in leadership effectiveness in South African women managers?	A qualitative semi-structured interview, consisting of two open questions to assess perceived impact of a group coaching process on change in leadership effectiveness.	Descriptive	Simple interpretive thematic analysis