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An exploration of the leadership journeys of black women executives- Implications for coaching

Gaahele Diseko

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 in Business and Executive Coaching

Johannesburg, 2017

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored the leadership journeys of black women executives (BWEs), to understand those elements they perceived to enable and those they perceived to inhibit their career progression, as well as to establish implications for coaching.

Eighteen participants were interviewed. The sample included BWEs who had been coached, those who had not, human resources managers, and line managers to create some triangulation. The BWEs were all in the top two organisational levels, as defined by the Employment Equity Act. A semi-structured interview guide was utilised for the BWEs and another for HR and line managers. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and uploaded into ATLAS.ti analysis software. Coding was conducted inductively to identify themes that emerged.

The study highlighted the importance of ensuring that all parties to the coaching intervention are fully briefed, aligned, and coaching-ready before implementation. If readiness is not ensured, the process can be negatively affected.

A key finding was that a minimum of a bachelor's degree, but preferably a postgraduate degree, enabled the career progression of BWEs. Once in the workplace BWEs need to continue with self-development.

Elements that were found to enable career progression for BWEs were hard work, networking, self-development, and access to mentors. Resilience was found to be important in managing the challenges the BWEs' experience in the workplace.

Elements that inhibit BWEs' career progression were found to be lack of implementation of employment equity (EE) or transformation in the workplace. It was also found that BWEs operate in challenging work environments where

they experience marginalisation, stereotyping, and racism. Work-life integration is an issue as they are the homemakers.

Another key finding was that coaching could contribute to BWEs' career progression. It is important that all parties in the process are coaching-ready. It was also found that coaching heightened resilience for BWEs.

Coaching was shown to be utilised for leadership development, including improving communication skills. Line managers were unsure of the objectives for which their BWE charges were being coached. This highlighted the importance of aligning all parties and ensuring coaching readiness before coaching implementation. This point is also important because to be successful, coaching needs the support of organisational leadership. It was encouraging to realise that the line managers viewed coaching as confidential between coach and coachee; however, they appeared to have had no input into development needs identification. This could point to a missed opportunity to align coaching with business needs.

The intrapersonal skills of self-confidence and self-awareness were shown to have been developed through coaching. These skills are vital to effective leadership.

The BWEs' experiences of coaching were found to be challenging, and uncomfortable, and BWEs found that the coach did not understand or trivialised the coachee's issues. Coaching conversations are meant to be challenging, however too much challenge can derail the process. BWEs experienced coaching as uncomfortable because the conversation delved directly into deep personal issues without preparing the coachee or building rapport and a trusting relationship. Two BWEs felt that their coaches had trivialised or misunderstood their issues.

The finding that line managers were unaware of the development needs being addressed in their BWEs' coaching, the BWEs' experiences of discomfort in the coaching process, and coachees feeling that the coach had trivialised the coachee's issues, highlights the important matter of coaching readiness.

Coaching readiness is important to the success of any coaching engagement. Without participants being fully ready for coaching, the process might be compromised.

Coaching was found to be an appropriate tool for leadership development and improving the career progression prospects of BWEs. It was also found that it is important to ensure that every party to the coaching is coaching ready.

DECLARATION

I, Gaahele Salome Sylvia Diseko, 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.

……..

Gaahele Salome Sylvia Diseko

Signed at ……

On the ……. day of ……..…… 2017.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to the memory of my brother, Nat Diseko, and that of my dear parents Amos Mooketsi and Rebecca Khetse Diseko. They taught me the value of education and of family.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

B-BBEE	Broad-based black economic empowerment
BWE	Black women executive
BWEC	Black woman executive, coached
BWEN	Black woman executive, not coached
CEE	Commission for Employment Equity
EAP	Economically active population
EEA	Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998
EQ	Emotional intelligence
HDI	Historically disadvantaged individual
HRM	Human resource manager
LM	Line manager
VUCA	Volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous

CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore the leadership journeys of black women executives (BWEs) in South African corporations, with the view to understanding implications for how executive coaching might facilitate their career progression.

This qualitative study investigates those elements BWEs perceive to be positive contributors to their career progression and those they perceive to be inhibitors. It further explores how BWEs, who have undergone coaching, perceive coaching to have contributed to their leadership growth and development, thereby facilitating their career progression. The perceptions of stakeholders such as line managers (LMs) and human resources (HR) executives were also explored.

This chapter provides an overview of the background and orientation of the study, a statement of the research problem, research aim, and research objectives. These are followed by discussions on the research approach and methodology as well as the significance of the study to various stakeholders. Finally, a definition of key terms used in the research is included, followed by a discussion of the research assumptions and a summary of the chapter.

1.2 Background and orientation of the study

1.2.1 Historical context

The colonial and apartheid history of South Africa has left a legacy of poor skills and education among the black majority in the country, previously excluded from opportunities for learning and subjected to other social injustices which disadvantaged them in the workplace, by being systematically omitted from participation in the economy other than in menial occupations (Matandela,

2008; Myres, 2013). A new democratic government was voted into office in 1994. It enacted various pieces of legislation to redress injustices of the past in order to improve black people's access to economic opportunities. One of these was the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (EEA) (Booysen, 2007; Horwitz & Jain, 2011; Matandela, 2008, RSA, 1998).

The objectives of the EEA are to eliminate unfair discrimination in the workplace, and to promote affirmative action in favour of historically disadvantaged individuals (HDIs). The EEA enabled the establishment of a Commission for Employment Equity (CEE), which is the statutory advisory body to the Minister of Labour on EE matters. It monitors and reports annually on progress regarding EE compliance (RSA, 1998).

1.2.2 Workforce composition

The EEA identifies the two highest organisational management levels as top and senior management (RSA, 1998). Statistics indicate that while white people comprise 10.8 percent of the economically active population (EAP) in South Africa, they occupy 62 percent of top management positions and 57 percent of senior management positions (CEE, 2014). These statistics demonstrate that this demographic group is disproportionately represented at the highest organisational leadership levels. Affirmative action is intended to improve the workplace representation of designated groups, which refers to black people, white women and people with disabilities. Table 1 shows the profile of EAP distribution by population and gender (CEE, 2014).

Table 1: Profile of national EAP[a]

Race	Male	Female	Total
African	40.3%	34.9%	75.2%
Coloured	5.6%	5.0%	10.6%
Indian	1.9%	1.2%	3.1%
White	6.2%	4.6%	10.8%
Total	54.0%	46.0%	100%

All percentages are rounded off to one decimal point

(CEE, 2014, p. 13)

The numbers in Table 2 indicate that total women representation is only 20 percent of top management and 30 percent of senior managers, against their EAP representation of 46 percent. Further, African women are only 6.3 percent of top management and 8 percent of senior management, while they make up 34 percent of the EAP. These statistics again demonstrate disproportionate representation of women in general and African women in particular.

Women are an underutilised resource in so far as companies harnessing their contribution to leadership in organisations. This could be attributed to women's poor representation at the top of the business structure (Doh, 2003; Mathur-Helm, 2005). Strategies can be developed to identify enablers and inhibitors that have an impact on the career progression of women executives. It is proposed that coaching can be an enabler. Ragins, Townsend, and Mattis (1998), state that in a study conducted among Fortune 1 000 chief executive officers (CEOs) and their most successful women executives, it was found that the CEOs and the women executives perceived barriers to women's career progression differently. The CEOs attributed the paucity of women at the top to a lack of experience and to women's own shortcomings such as a lack of ambition. The women on the other hand attributed it to organisational structural issues and gender bias. This difference in views means that the issues may not be addressed appropriately and the gender gap might continue to exist (Ragins et al., 1998). The proposed research could assist business leaders to understand better how to deal effectively with removing barriers and enhancing

potential enablers that impact on women's career progression, especially in South Africa. While women are generally underrepresented in the workplace, black women are even more so, hence this research's focus (CEE, 2014). Additionally, women themselves may better understand the issues and focus their self-development appropriately.

Table 2 indicates private sector workforce representation by occupational level, race, and gender (CEE, 2014). Top and senior management are the two highest levels of management in organisations as defined by the EEA. Gender refers to males or females, meaning men and women respectively. Race or racial groups include African, coloured, Indian and white people. In this study, the term black refers to people of African descent. BWEs refer to women of African descent, at the top two levels of organisational leadership. The study focuses on BWEs, as this is the economically active group most affected by the lack of advancement into higher echelons of management (CEE, 2014). The study aims to contribute empirical evidence regarding perceived enablers and inhibitors of career progression for BWEs and how coaching is perceived to potentially enhance their career progression prospects.

Table 2: Private sector workforce representation

Occupational Level	Male AM – African Male CM – Coloured Male IM – Indian Male WM – White Male				Female AF – African Female CF – Coloured Female IF – Indian Female WF – White Female				Foreign Nationals FM – Foreign Male FF –Foreign Female		Total
	AM	CM	IM	WM	AF	CF	IF	WF	FM	FF	
Top management numbers and percentages	3 048	790	1 460	11 811	1 416	356	419	2 338	816	117	22 571
	13.5%	3.5%	6.5%	52.3%	6.3%	1.6%	1.9%	10.4%	3.6%	0.5%	100%
Senior management numbers and percentages	12 701	3786	5793	34 888	6 791	2 098	2 692	13 253	2036	489	84 527
	15.0%	4.5%	6.9%	41.3%	8.0%	2.5%	3.2%	15.7%	2.4%	0.6%	100%

CEE (2014, p. 85)

1.3 Problem statement

Research indicates that black women comprise 34 percent of the EAP in South Africa, yet in the workplace, they occupy only 6.3 percent of top management and eight percent of senior management (CEE, 2014). This discrepancy exists despite legislation and companies' efforts to meet EE targets aimed at workforce representation reflective of EAP demographics (Matandela, 2008; Myres, 2013). Coaching is accepted as a tool to support leadership development (Doh, 2003; Reid, 2012). There is a gap in understanding how coaching can potentially contribute to developing black women's leadership effectiveness so that they are better positioned to progress up the corporate leadership ladder.

1.4 Research aim

The research aim is to explore the lived experiences of BWEs, with a view to understanding what elements they perceive to enable or inhibit their career progression, and to explore how coaching can potentially contribute to strengthening the perceived enablers and addressing the inhibitors.

1.5 Research objectives

Four research objectives were identified to support the research aim.

(1) To explore the career journeys of BWEs to understand their lived experiences.
(2) To explore what BWEs perceive to be elements that have enabled their success in attaining higher organisational leadership roles.
(3) To explore what BWEs perceive to be elements that have inhibited their success in attaining higher organisational leadership roles.
(4) To explore how coaching may contribute to supporting the development of BWEs, such that they can achieve improved career progression prospects.

1.6 Research approach and methodology

In line with the research aim of exploring the lived experiences of BWEs, this study utilised a qualitative research approach. Fourteen BWEs and four stakeholders were interviewed. These were two HR and two line managers in the companies where eleven of the BWEs were employed. The line managers had direct line responsibility for some of the coached BWEs. HR managers managed the coaching programmes. All the participants occupied positions at the levels that the EEA, as amended, refers to as top and senior managers. Some of the BWEs had undergone coaching and others had not. This combination of interview participants allowed for the perceptions of coached participants to be collected as well as providing an opportunity for triangulation through interviewing non-coached BWEs and stakeholders, who were HR and line executives. The participants were sourced from companies based in South Africa and have their headquarters in the Gauteng province of the country.

Data were collected using semi-structured interview guides for the BWEs and the stakeholders respectively. However, a pilot interview was conducted with a non-coached black woman executive prior to the full data collection process. Each interview was tape recorded for accuracy and transcribed verbatim. To ensure confidentiality of the participants, pseudonyms were used in the report instead of the participants' real names. The qualitative study adopted a constructivist, interpretivist paradigm as the study aimed to understand the black executives' perceptions of their leadership journeys.

Narrative research design was adopted, and thematic analysis was utilised to analyse the data. Inductive coding was employed and many codes were derived as each successive interview transcript was coded. The codes were reviewed and a refinement process followed. The codes were then grouped into categories to reduce the data to themes upon which the main findings were based.

1.7 Significance of the study

There is a knowledge gap in how coaching can contribute to BWEs' development to enable better prospects for their career progression. South African companies are challenged with the need to improve their EE statistics and meet their targets (Myres, 2013). Knowing what impacts career progression, BWEs may better focus executive development programmes of companies, resulting in better outcomes and lower costs. In an environment where there is a war for talent, BWEs are important for the competitiveness of the business as well as its sustainability because better representation assists the business' legislative compliance and competitiveness (Mathur-Helm, 2005; Grant Thornton, 2014).

The findings might be significant for CEOs in their quest for talent to achieve transformation targets as well as having a talent pipeline for their organisations. HR practitioners might be better able to focus development efforts for improved success rates and returns, while BWEs may also realise value in knowing where to focus and in being afforded coaching opportunities.

1.8 Clarification of key concepts

1.8.1 Black people

In the study black people referred only to those of African origin. It excluded coloured and Indian people.

1.8.2 Career progression

Career progression refers to the upward growth of an individual into more senior organisational leadership positions. Each successive upward placement or position occupied is associated with more responsibility, influence, and rewards.

1.8.3 EAP

The EAP comprises people aged 15 to 64 years, who either are employed or are employment seekers (RSA, 1998). This measure is used to benchmark demographic representation in employment of the different racial groups, genders, and people with disabilities.

1.8.4 EEA, as amended

This refers to Act 55 of 1998, the South African legislation governing EE. It outlaws unfair discrimination in the workplace and seeks to foster an equitable, fair workplace as well as facilitate the implementation of affirmative action to align workplace demographics to those of the South African population (RSA, 1998).

1.8.5 Executives

Executives are organisational leaders at the levels defined in the EEA as top and senior management. In the study, the term BWEs were black women employed as executives in private companies in South Africa.

Top managers are defined as those managers who control the functional integration of the business and set the overall strategy of the business, having a long-term future-based focus in their responsibilities. They have responsibility for signing off policy and strategy (RSA, 1998).

Senior managers are defined as management roles that have responsibility for operationalising the company strategy and making inputs into the strategy. They have knowledge of the entire business unit or organisation (RSA, 1998).

1.9 Research assumptions

Experience as a top manager in corporate South Africa allowed the researcher to make five assumptions in anticipation of the study outcomes: The first assumption was that BWEs would perceive themselves to have experienced

prejudice or unfair discrimination in the workplace. This was based on the premise that research in South African organisations has shown that BWEs perceive such unfair discrimination (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010). The same was found for women managers (Mupambirei, 2013).

Second, it was assumed that BWEs would have family responsibilities, which could be perceived to present a challenge in the executives' pursuit of career advancement. The premise for this assumption is that traditionally family responsibilities such as child rearing and home management fall on the shoulders of the mother or wife. Research has shown that women have multiple roles, including family responsibility and organisational leadership roles, which is perceived to be a challenge in their career progression (Kiaye & Singh, 2013).

Third, the assumption was made that BWEs would perceive themselves to be fortunate to have risen to the senior levels to which they have risen. This is premised on the knowledge that women tend to underplay their capabilities (O'Neil, Hopkins, & Bilimoria, 2015).

The fourth assumption was that a postgraduate level of education would be perceived to be an enabler of good career progression prospects. The premise for this assumption is that the days of managers being appointed based on experience only are past. It is important for managers to have at least a graduate qualification in order for them to be able to deal with the complexity of managing in the knowledge age.

The fifth assumption was that coaching could potentially have a positive role to play in improving the career progression prospects of black executives; premised on the general recognition of coaching as a valuable tool for leadership development (Kahn, 2011).

1.10 Report outline

The research report is divided into six chapters, each focusing on a different aspect of the study.

Chapter 1 places the study in context and orientates the reader to the study. It provides the problem statement, research aim, objectives, and approach. These are followed by a discussion of the significance of the study and the definition of terms used.

Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature informing the study.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology followed in the study. It outlines the research approach, research design, and a discussion of the population, sample, and sampling method. This chapter includes the data collection instrument and procedure, the data analysis method, followed by discussions of the delimitations of the study, considerations to ensure trustworthiness, and finally ethical issues.

Chapter 4 details the main findings of the study following the field research, in response to each research question.

Chapter 5 entails a discussion of the main research findings, comparing them to what is already known about the topic, found in the literature review, and highlights some potential new knowledge.

Chapter 6 concludes the data analysis discussion and contains implications of the findings for different stakeholders. It includes recommendations for future research and an overall conclusion to the study.

1.11 Conclusion

Chapter 1 highlighted the purpose of the research, which was to explore the career journeys of BWEs to establish enablers and inhibitors affecting BWEs' career progression. The research focus was motivated by under-representation of black women at the executive level of private sector companies in South Africa. The background to the research showed how the historical challenges of systematically excluding black people from educational and other socio-economic opportunities, impacted on the competiveness and legislative compliance of South African private enterprises. It was hoped that identifying

enablers and inhibitors of BWEs' career progression would assist the focus of people development efforts of companies, and yield better results at lower costs. It was proposed that coaching could enable improved career progression for BWEs. The research targeted BWEs at the levels of top and senior management, as defined in the EEA. The research included BWEs employed in companies headquartered in the Gauteng province of the RSA.

Chapter 2 contains a literature review that informs the research process.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In line with the main research aim, this chapter provides a review of the literature on the status of BWE representation in corporate South Africa, including perceived enablers and inhibitors that may influence the career progression of these executives. The historical background to the problem of poor representation of African women in the workplace is explored, including interventions by the current South African government to redress past imbalances by levelling the playing field. Following the historical background discussion is an examination of the drivers of transformation of the workplace in South Africa. The utilisation of coaching to respond to leadership development needs is explored, with a view to finding linkages to how coaching can be used to address the research question.

2.2 Workplace transformation

This section contextualises the status of workplace transformation, the history, and drivers of transformation in South African workplaces.

2.2.1 Historical issues

The apartheid legacy of South Africa is well documented (Booysen, 2007; Horwitz & Jain, 2011; Matandela, 2008; Motileng, 2006; Nkomo & Kriek, 2011). It entailed systematic exclusion and disadvantage of black people in the country (Mathur-Helm, 2005). The resultant poor education, poverty, and lack of role models for black employees meant that they were disadvantaged in the employment stakes (Burger & Jafta, 2010). The EEA (RSA, 1998) was enacted to deal with inequality in the workplace. The broad-based black economic empowerment (B-BBEE) policy and scorecard are measures designed by the South African government to try to level the economic opportunities playing field among the country's various racial groups. One of the elements of the B-BBEE

scorecard is EE (Nyazema, 2013). Mpho Nkeli, acting Chairperson of the CEE characterised EE as the worst performing leg of the B-BBEE scorecard (CEE, 2014).The EEA has recently been amended more stringently in response to poor compliance by corporates (CEE, 2014).

2.2.2 Current reality in workforce representation or transformation

Despite the afore-mentioned legislation being in its seventeenth year, little progress has been recorded in the progression of black women into the upper occupational levels (CEE, 2014). Women are underrepresented in relation to their numbers in the EAP. Male representation remains higher than female representation. Poor education is one of the shortcomings of black managers (Booysen, 2007; Matandela, 2008; Motileng, 2006).

2.3 Drivers of change in workplace demographics

The following section covers the drivers of change or transformation in the workplace, which include globalisation and increased competition, the war for talent in the face of a global skills shortage, and legislative compliance in the South African context.

2.3.1 Impact of globalisation

With democracy came increased competition and opportunity as multinational companies established themselves in the country and South African companies were able to operate internationally. The country had previously been a closed economy and suddenly South African companies were facing new market entrants.

2.3.2 War for talent

To be competitive South African companies need to utilise all their available talent, including women; “any economy using half its human resources is bound to fall behind” (Grant Thornton, 2014, p. 8). However, this is a challenge, given

the historical context of poor levels of education for the majority of the black population (Matandela, 2008; Motileng, 2006).

Increased competition occasioned a war for talent, described as the acquisition, retention, and performance of employees. The war for talent in South Africa is a result of increased competition, especially from global players (Mohlala, Goldman, & Goosen, 2012). In a study of IT skills in a South African bank, it was found that global demand for IT skills was driving the war for talent (Mohlala et al., 2012).

2.3.3 Legislative compliance

The EEA was enacted to redress historical discrimination in the workplace (RSA, 1998; Horwitz & Jain, 2011). It states its intent to promote the equitable representation of suitably qualified designated groups at all levels of the company, and provides for preferential treatment or fair discrimination (affirmative action) as well as the setting of numerical goals or targets. The EEA prohibits unfair discrimination in the workplace (Horwitz & Jain, 2011; Lee, 2012), and provides a legislative framework for affirmative action in hiring, training and promotion. It requires designated employers to assess the workplace to identify areas of unfair discrimination, develop a plan to address those areas or practices; to set targets to increase the number of designated group members who benefit from promotions, training and development, and new hiring in recruitment; and to articulate steps to achieve the company's set equity targets. Designated employers are defined as employers with fifty or more employees or a turnover that is above specified thresholds (RSA, 1998).

Employers are required to submit annual progress reports to the department of labour, disaggregated by race, gender, and disability (Lee, 2012). The CEE was created by the EEA to monitor progress on EE compliance and to advise the minister of labour on matters pertaining to EE. The CEE publishes annual reports reflecting progress (RSA, 1998).

The EEA states that among suitably qualified candidates, employers must give preference to candidates from designated groups. Designated groups are defined as black people, women, and people with disabilities (RSA, 1998).

The EEA is part of a broader package of legislation and measures aimed at addressing and prohibiting past unfair discrimination. Horwitz and Jain (2011), indicate that companies that are not B-BBEE compliant might not be able to tender for business with government departments or they may fail in their bids for government business, rendering them potentially less competitive than are their peers. A high B-BBEE score indicates that a company is empowered, meaning it has progressed in its endeavours to be demographically inclusive and representative (Booysen, 2007).

2.4 Potential enablers of BWEs' career progression

Enablers discussed below commence with home or family circumstances, followed by CEOs' understanding of women's experiences in corporations, consistently exceeding performance expectations, education, and managerial style with which men are comfortable. A discussion follows on BWEs who have an influential mentor, have access to networks, support, and redefine the relationship between work and family.

2.4.1 Home or family circumstances

One outcome of the exclusionary policies of the previous South African government was poor access to education for black people generally. In a study to understand how a group of poor black youths managed to succeed academically, strong family support was identified as a contributor. Family support helped them to cope with difficulty and to persevere and succeed academically (Dass-Brailsford, 2005). Poor students struggled to find money to enrol and continue at tertiary institutions. Some skipped a year or two or settled for shorter courses to enable them to find employment quicker in order to contribute to the family coffers. Murray-Harvey and Slee (2007), assert that poverty is positively correlated with poorer academic performance, and poverty

and homelessness are challenges that still exist in South Africa. Parents influence the career choices of youth directly or indirectly by paying for their studies, caring for, and emotionally supporting them. Indirect support is premised on Bandura's social learning theory, which states that behaviour is learnt through observation and modelling of others, such as parents and family. They are role models for behaviours that students emulate. Students who receive strong emotional support tend to persevere and succeed, while the opposite held true for those without family support (Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Mhlongo & O'Neill, 2013). This ability to succeed, despite adversity, demonstrates resilience. Resilience is a belief system that guides individuals to cope with challenges from their environments or the ability to remain competent despite difficult circumstances. Resilient people have "social competence, problem solving skills, a sense of purpose and an orientation to the future" (Maluccio, 2002, p. 11).

2.4.2 CEOs' understanding of BWEs' experiences

CEOs should clearly understand the subtle and overt barriers experienced by women in their organisations. This is important because CEOs can then devise and apply the right solutions for change to occur in organisations (Ragins et al., 1998).

2.4.3 Consistently exceed performance expectations

Women have consistently to exceed expected standards of performance. While all executives are expected to perform to high standards, women need to counter the effects of negative stereotypes that exist in male dominated corporate environments by working doubly hard to prove themselves worthy of their positions (Broughton & Miller, 2009; Cheung & Halpern, 2010; Ragins et al., 1998). Women are held to higher performance standards than men. Such excellence requires stamina and sheer hard work (Ragins et al., 1998). Examples were given of women executives rising at dawn to read board papers or other documents before the family awoke, as well as late night business calls

in order to achieve exceptional results (Cheung & Halpern, 2010). To keep up with these activities necessitates hard work (Mainiero, 1994).

2.4.4 Education

Role congruity theory of prejudice states that men are perceived to better fit the requirements of leadership roles because they are seen as being agentic, which means they are assertive and competitive in their leadership styles. Women's leadership styles are perceived as communal, collaborative and nurturing, which is perceived as not fitting for leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Education is a critical enabler, with qualifications seen as an objective measure of merit, and is likely to boost credibility. Higher qualifications may offset lesser business skills and experience, helping women attain director roles (Broughton & Miller, 2009). Qualifications serve women more than they do men, who in any event find it easier to enter leadership roles because of role congruity (April, Dreyer, & Blass, 2007). Historically, qualifications have been the preserve of the privileged few; that is now changing (Mathur-Helm, 2006). It has been claimed that women lack the necessary level of education to make it into leadership positions (Davidson & Burke, 2011; Kiaye & Singh, 2013). Research has found that women appreciate more and more the value of education in breaking through the glass ceiling (Mathur-Helm, 2006).

2.4.5 Managerial style with which men are comfortable

Another identified enabler is developing a managerial style with which men are comfortable. A phenomenon known as the male managerial model requires women to behave in ways that are consistent with what is deemed appropriate behaviour for successful managers. However, models for successful managerial behaviour are based on masculine styles (Broughton & Miller, 2009; Cheung & Halpern, 2010; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Ragins et al., 1998). The challenge for women in this regard is that they have to walk a fine line between being seen as too masculine or too feminine. They may be criticised for not being feminine if they adopt an overtly masculine style, while on the other hand they might be taken less seriously than their male counterparts might, if they demonstrate an

overtly feminine style. Women have to balance these styles, in order for their male counterparts to be comfortable with women in leadership positions (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

2.4.6 Influential mentor

It is important to have an influential mentor (Cheung & Halpern, 2010; Ragins et al., 1998). A mentor provides guidance through the organisational political landscape, giving the protégé insider knowledge of the subtle workings of the organisation; for instance, information from the old boys' networks (Vinnicombe, 2011). Male and female mentors have different strengths, with female mentors being seen as better at identifying and addressing self-esteem issues than their male counterparts (Ragins et al., 1998). A mentor can provide a buffer against negative forces in the organisation and be their protégé's sponsor into senior management circles. Mentors also contribute to maintaining the self-esteem and confidence of their protégés by assisting them to manage and survive the exclusionary practices in corporations (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005).

2.4.7 Access to networks

Two types of networks exist, career enhancing and relational. Career enhancing networks are those that are clearly aimed at enhancing careers, while relational ones are mainly for friendships (Clarke, 2011). Networking results in high visibility, and highly visible people are seen as promotable (Mainiero, 1994; Maxwell, Ogden, & McTavish, 2007). Those with good networks may get a head start in being appointed to high visibility projects before information about such projects becomes general knowledge in the company (Maxwell et al., 2007). Clarke (2011) advocates that companies should have development programmes exclusively for women, which should help women to access networks. On the other hand, Bierema (2005) asserts that networks solely for women do not work. One of the findings of a study conducted among women leaders was that in-house networks served to reinforce patriarchy in organisations, disadvantaging women (Bierema, 2005). Forret and Dougherty (2004), similarly assert that networks seem to benefit men more than women.

They posit that women may be less confident about directly requesting career assistance, in other words using networking in career enhancing ways. Alternatively, the issue may lie with the nature of their networks. Women find networking environments uncomfortable as they are geared to male activities such as sports clubs or golf events (Mathur-Helm, 2006).

2.4.8 Support

Because of the nurturing role that society ascribes to women, namely that of home maker, women need support if they are to aspire to leadership roles in organisations. Support helps in coping with managing the pressure of the dual role of homemaker and corporate leader. Holding down an executive role means long hours, business travel, and on call time especially with modern technology. These demands link to the view of the ideal worker, who will work long hours to show commitment, which is based on dated male perspectives (April et al., 2007; Broughton & Miller, 2009). The dual role women play can cause stress and burnout (Mupambirei, 2013). A double bind for women is that even if a company provides family-friendly facilities and policies such as day care and flexi time, there is a stigma attached to those who utilise these family-friendly policies and facilities. Women therefore have to rely on alternative support such as that of full-time help at home, au pairs etc. For African women, extended family members may provide support by looking after children and helping around the home (Kargwell, 2008; Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). Women have to choose to make these sacrifices if they aspire to a leadership position (April et al., 2007; Mathur-Helm, 2006). A study by Naidoo and Jano (2002) suggests that dual career women managers in South Africa experience the duality of home and work careers as complimentary, not conflictual. They do not have to choose one or the other; the two roles can co-exist. Women in Sudan were found to prioritise family over the work role if they did not get help from the extended family (Kargwell, 2008). While extended family and culture can be helpful in supporting women, they can also present a challenge. In some African cultures, women have to observe long periods of mourning, during which they are confined to the home (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). Support can also be emotional. In a study by Mupambirei (2013), women reported that returning

home from a stressful day at work, and having a husband to talk to who is supportive and encouraging is helpful.

2.4.9 Redefined relationship between work and family

In a study of successful women in China, it was found that a strategy they used was to redefine work and family as complementary, not conflictual, thereby redefining for themselves the norms for being a good leader. This assists by freeing them from guilt feelings about spending much time at work or leaving work to attend to family matters, such as a child's school play. They no longer attempt to be 'superwoman', doing it all by themselves. They enlist the help of family in managing the home. In this regard, women in more communal societies, such as China, rely on extended family, while western women employ help in the home (Cheung & Halpern, 2010). This is similar to findings by Naidoo and Jano (2002), who found that women adjusted the balance between the two roles, to make them complimentary, thereby reducing conflict between the roles.

2.5 Potential inhibitors of BWEs' career progression

Inhibitors include challenging work environments, work-life integration, and life and career stages.

2.5.1 Challenging work environments

Societal views of gender roles need to be considered as they affect how women's roles in leadership are viewed. Role congruity theory holds that it is incongruous for women to hold leadership roles, since they are seen as communal, while men are agentic in behaviour. Agency and communality refer to masculine versus feminine views of leadership. Males, being agentic, are seen as competitive, assertive, and directive in their leadership styles. These traits match traits deemed desirable for strong leadership. Men are therefore seen as fitting leadership roles. These stereotypes affect women's leadership opportunities (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). This

phenomenon has also been referred to as the ‘manager-as-male’ stereotype (Heilman, 2001).

Littrell and Nkomo (2005), assert that gender differences are aggravated by race. Black women are doubly disadvantaged in the South African context, in that they are seen as not suitable for leadership roles from a gender and a racial stereotype perspective.

However, a study conducted by Booysen and Nkomo (2010) found that black women in South Africa do perceive women’s attributes as fitting leadership roles. This is different from research generally, which finds perceptions that women’s attributes do not match the characteristics required for leadership. In the study by Booysen and Nkomo (2010), it is surmised that the lack of a the manager-as male stereotype among black South African women might be due to the strong agentic roles that women played in the liberation struggle in the country, or to EE law and the statutory focus on women empowerment. It may also be due to the availability of role models. An example is the deputy president of the country at the time of the study being a woman. She may have been a powerful role model, leading the women to perceive themselves as fit to lead. Parliament at the time had a strong representation of black women (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010). The only other study with similar results was conducted by Orser (1994, cited in Booysen & Nkomo, 2010) in Canada, which found that women perceived themselves as fitting into leadership roles. In other words, the manager-as-male stereotype was found to be absent among these women.

The gendered nature of the workplace is acknowledged as a barrier to women’s development and career progression (Booysen, 2007; Hopkins, O'Neil, Passarelli, & Bilimoria, 2008; Horwitz & Jain, 2011; Mathur-Helm, 2006; O'Neil et al., 2015). Gender bias, although subtle, exists in organisations (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011; Ibarra, Carter, & Silva, 2010). In a study involving 360-degree competency assessments, men and women were found to be similarly competent. However, the men received higher ratings, suggesting gender bias (Hopkins et al., 2008). Gender bias negatively affects employment decisions such as attraction, recruitment, and selection; promotion and learning;

and development of women (Hoyt & Blascovich, 2007). Women are held to higher standards of performance and generally more scrutiny than are men. They have fewer opportunities for development and face more challenges to their leadership authority (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ragins et al., 1998).

Women might also internalise these stereotypes and harbour self-limiting beliefs, which lead to self-limiting behaviours. They might perceive a lack of congruence between their attributes and styles, and those required for senior jobs. Based on this perception they may desist from applying for or aspiring to positions for which they may be well suited (Broughton & Miller, 2009; Skinner, 2012).

2.5.2 Work-life integration

Women face the societal expectation of being the homemaker, responsible for child rearing, family management, and running the home. As long as this is the case, women will be disadvantaged (Al-Ahmadi, 2011; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; Mupambirei, 2013). In South Africa, women might not accept promotion because the requirements of the positions do not fit in with the women's family responsibilities (Mupambirei, 2013). Even where generous maternity and sabbatical leave as well as child friendly policies and services were provided, women still found the culture of working long hours challenging. Women who utilised the generous maternity leave, sabbatical leave, and child friendly policies and services, were labelled as lacking commitment to the job (April et al., 2007; Mathur-Helm, 2006). There is a perception that women with children are less committed to their jobs. In some cultures, there is a stigma associated with an early return to work after maternity leave (Broughton & Miller, 2009; Mathur-Helm, 2006).

Upon return to work after maternity leave, women find that their male peers' careers have moved on and they have to catch up, which may feel as though they work harder than their male counterparts work (Broughton & Miller, 2009; Mainiero, 1994). Liff and Ward (2001) assert that women find problematic the behaviours and requirements for active parenting, versus those for senior

executive jobs where long hours were seen to reflect commitment; therefore, might decline promotions because they need to choose between a career or a family and quality of life. Mainiero and Sullivan (2005), supported by April et al. (2007) assert that some women opt out of the corporate workplace to pursue different, independent careers because of, for instance, raising children, coping with ailing parents, and sometimes ailing spouses. Such independent careers afford the women flexibility and an opportunity to practice their authentic leadership styles. Other reasons why women leave corporations include lack of career advancement in their current company, job dissatisfaction, as well as outright discrimination in the workplace (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005).

2.5.3 Life and career stages

Women face varied challenges depending on their life and career stage. The theory, postulated by Super (1957) and refined by Levinson (1986), holds that there are three stages in the life of an individual (Levinson, 1986). These stages affect women's career choices and progression in leadership (O'Neil, Hopkins, & Bilimoria, 2015). The life stages are idealistic achievement, where younger women want it all; that is a successful career as well as family life. At this stage, identity and self-development are important. The next stage is pragmatic endurance, where they realise that the dream of having it all is not easy as they juggle career and 'life'. Self-esteem and a search for meaning are important at this stage. Re-inventive contribution follows, at which stage women seek to contribute to the business and society as well as seek respect, integration, and authenticity. Kerka (1998) and Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) assert that authenticity, balance, and challenge are key elements that alternate in importance depending on career life stage and context. At each career life stage, all three considerations are present; however, some take a back seat, and others come to the fore depending on the life stage. It is worth noting that these concerns are independent of whether a woman has a family or not, since if single and at midlife/career, for instance, she would be concerned about care issues for elderly parents, nieces and nephews, or simply looking for a partner (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; O'Neil et al., 2015). Life stage issues stay with women throughout their working and private lives (O'Neil et al., 2015).

2.6 Coaching and BWEs' career progression

Following is a discussion on how coaching can potentially assist the career progression of BWEs.

2.6.1 Coaching defined

While there are various views among practitioners and academics regarding the nature of coaching, there is consensus that it works (Passmore & Gibbes, 2007). Presently, agreement on the exact definition of coaching does not exist. Individual coaching has been variously defined as:

- "A Socratic based dialogue between a facilitator (coach) and a participant (client) where the majority of interventions by the facilitator are questions which are aimed at stimulating the self-awareness and personal responsibility of participants" (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011, p. 6); and
- "A relationship formed between a client who has manager authority and responsibility in an organisation and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioural techniques and methods to help the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction and, consequently to improve the effectiveness of the client's organisation within a formally defined coaching agreement" (Kilburg, 1996, p. 142).

The definition by Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) is preferred in this research, motivated by its focus on stimulating self-awareness and personal responsibility. The discussion that follows clarifies how self-awareness and personal responsibility are important to effective leadership.

In the current volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) global conditions, leadership has become topical because it is recognised as important to organisational success. The focus on leadership has raised questions about what constitutes a good leader (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

Research has shown that successful leaders have emotional intelligence, which is "the ability to manage ourselves and our relationships effectively" (Goleman,

2000, p. 80). Emotional intelligence (EQ) is made up of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill (Boyatzis & Boyatzis, 2008; Goleman, 2000). The need to acquire new competencies to function in the VUCA world places a higher premium on leadership EQ (Kets de Vries, 2005). Self-awareness is the ability to understand one's own moods, emotions, and drives as well as their effects on others. Self-regulation is the ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and mood as well as the propensity to suspend judgement, to think before acting. Motivation is a passion to work for reasons beyond money or status and the propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence. Empathy is the ability to understand the emotional make up of others and having skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions, or being sensitive to the emotional make-up of others. Social skill is proficiency in managing relationships and building networks and the ability to find common ground and build rapport (Goleman, 2004).

Personal responsibility has been characterised as

> a moral position or obligation with respect to oneself and others. In this sense, the values related to personal responsibility are effort and autonomy. The values related to social responsibility are respect for the feelings and rights of others, empathy, and social sensibility. Social responsibility is conceived more than altruism, as an identification of oneself with others, an attitude that results in behavior that favors the common good (Sherrod, 2006, cited in Escarti, Gutiérrez, Pascual, & Llopis, 2010, p. 388).

Self-awareness and personal responsibility seem to fit the qualities of a good leader, possessing emotional intelligence. It is for this reason that the Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) definition of coaching is preferred.

O'Neil et al. (2015) have developed a framework of women's leadership development, integrating key factors influencing women's leadership development, which outlines strategies for coaching women leaders.

2.6.2 A framework for women's leadership development

O'Neil et al. (2015), posit that women's leadership development programmes need to focus on developing women's leadership presence, which is necessary for effective leadership. Leadership presence includes self-confidence, self-efficacy, influence, and authenticity. In addition, the unique challenges that women face in society and the workplace must be taken into account. The challenges are challenging work environments, work-life integration, and career life-stage issues, discussed in 2.5 as inhibitors affecting women's career progression.

Self-confidence is acting in a self-assured way (O'Neil et al., 2015). Self-confidence and leadership self-efficacy are necessary for women to advance in leadership roles. The more experienced and successful an individual is, the more his/her self-confidence grows.

Self-efficacy is an individual's self-belief in his/her ability to achieve certain actions required in pursuit of desired results (Bandura, 2001). Such beliefs influence how people think about themselves and whether they hold self-limiting beliefs or not. Based on perceptions of self-efficacy, people choose what goals to pursue and what challenges to confront (Bandura, 1982; Hoyt & Blascovich, 2007). The length of time spent in pursuit of the goal is partly determined by the individual level or strength of self-efficacy (Skinner, 2012).

Leaders with strong self-efficacy have been shown to be effective. In a study of men and women, it was found that women reported lower levels of leadership self-efficacy than did men, despite having similar work experience and educational levels (Hackett & Betz, 1981). Low levels of leadership self-efficacy may inhibit career success for women (Santovec, 2010). Women with high self-efficacy reported more positively about their leadership abilities than those who had low self-efficacy (Hoyt & Blascovich, 2007). Coaching has been shown to improve self-efficacy (Baron & Morin, 2010; Grant, Curtayne, & Burton, 2009; O'Neil et al., 2015).

Perceptions of influence are strongly affected by gender and gender role expectation. Women, perceived as communal, have to utilise indirect methods of persuasion, whereas men are allowed to be more direct and assertive (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Authenticity refers to the sense that one's actions are consistently aligned to one's values and beliefs (O'Neil et al., 2015; Skinner, 2014). It is more difficult for women to be accepted as leaders, since they are in the minority and therefore outsiders in organisations. Leadership development programmes need to make women and other outsiders in organisations aware of the relational aspects of authenticity and how they may influence women's careers (Eagly, 2005).

While coaching is generally gender neutral, the unique challenges that women face necessitate a customised approach to coaching (O'Neil et al., 2015).

2.6.3 Coaching origins and principles

The person-centred humanistic coaching approach has its roots in the psychology of Carl Rogers (Brock, 2008; Denis, 2008).

The core tenets of this approach are that the person is whole, and is able to make his/her own choices. This approach holds that the person (coachee) has a tendency towards self-improvement, espoused in the self-actualisation theory (Rogers, 2012). The assumption is that the coachee is able to reach their potential (Greenberg & Rice, 1997).

2.6.4 Success factors in coaching implementation

Coachees must be ready for coaching otherwise the effort is wasted. They must desire to be coached, be open to feedback, and believe that they can succeed. They must be willing to put in the necessary effort and time into the coaching (Davis & Barnett, 2009). If coachees are not ready, their readiness might need to be addressed at the initial coaching task (McKenna & Davis, 2009). Coutu

and Kauffman (2009) concur that readiness of the coachee is key to successful coaching.

A good quality relationship between coach and coachee is essential for a successful outcome and for change to occur. The relationship needs to be one of mutual trust and respect. The coaching space needs to be a safe, confidential space whose only reason for existence is to assist the coachee to achieve their goals. If the coachee does not feel safe in the space they may not be accessible and when necessary vulnerable, causing coaching to derail (Brock, 2008; Rogers, 2012).

The coach needs to have empathy and unconditional positive regard for the coachee. The result is that the coachee feels valued and a positive view of self is cultivated (Schunk, 1996). Such empathy must be communicated to the coachee (Brockbank, 2008). Unless the coachee feels safe, success cannot be achieved (Brock, 2008; Grant et al., 2009). Bordin (1979) asserts that it is imperative that the coach focuses on what matters to the coachee.

It is important for the coach to understand the coachee's environment, and to consider it when engaging with the coachee. Nuances in the environment can signal important messages about the coachee to the coach. Part of understanding the environment is creating alignment between the coaching effort and business requirements, while focusing on the coachee's agenda. It is also important that the coaching be supported by organisational leadership (Kahn, 2011).

2.6.5 Applications of coaching

Coaching might be used for performance improvement and leadership development (Doh, 2003; Rosha, 2014). Reid (2012) found group coaching to be effective in improving leadership development in women. Coaching is effective for improving "people management, relationship with managers, goal setting and prioritization, engagement and productivity, and dialogue and communication" (Kombarakaran, Yang, Baker, & Fernandes, 2008, p. 89). In one study, Grant et al. (2009) found that coaching had a positive impact on goal

attainment, resilience, and reduced work related stress. The opportunity to set and work towards goals that are congruent with one's values can heighten well-being and self-efficacy. Finally, the combination of a supportive coach and systematically working through such goals can boost self-regulation and build resilience (Grant et al., 2009).

2.6.6 Summary

Literature has revealed the paucity of BWEs at executive levels in corporate South Africa, as well as the historical roots thereof, despite nearly twenty years of the enactment of the EEA and a raft of legislation and legal regulations. Black people in general and black women in particular need to be better represented in workplace leadership positions.

Potential enablers of BWE career progression have been identified as home or family circumstances, CEOs understanding women's experiences in corporations, consistently exceeding performance expectations, education, managerial style with which men are comfortable, influential mentors, access to networks, support, and redefined relationship between work and family.

Inhibitors include challenging work environments, work-life integration, and life and career stage issues.

The potential contribution of coaching includes the definitions of coaching, its origins and principles, a framework for women's leadership development and coaching applications.

2.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, chapter two contained a literature review covering the poor representation of BWEs in private sector companies in South Africa including the historical roots thereof. Elements that enable and possibly inhibit from the career progression of BWEs were discussed including how executive coaching could potentially enhance career progression for BWEs.

The research questions (RQ) that were formulated for this study are stated in sections 2.7.1 to 2.7.4.

2.7.1 Research question 1

RQ1: What leadership journeys have BWEs undertaken to progress to their current positions?

2.7.2 Research question 2

RQ2: What enablers contributed to improved career progression for BWEs?

2.7.3 Research question 3

RQ3: What inhibitors detracted from improved career progression for BWEs?

2.7.4 Research question 4

RQ4: How can coaching assist with accelerating development for BWEs to achieve improved career progression?

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology that was followed to conduct the research. It outlines the research approach, research design, sampling, data collection and analysis, limitations of the study, validity and reliability, as well as ethical considerations.

3.2 Research approach

The research approach adopted for the study was qualitative. The qualitative paradigm does not seek to uncover causes and effects, rather to understand the subjective reality of participants. It adopts a constructivist view of reality. Quantitative research on the other hand is concerned with numbers, or quantification, causes and effects. Mathematical formulations are used to quantify and summarise results, which are generalised to the population and other situations (Golafshani, 2003). The positivist paradigm underpins quantitative research. It views reality as factual and observable.

A constructivist, interpretivist paradigm was adopted because the study sought to gain in-depth understanding of the participants' perspectives and to find common threads from their reported lived experiences in a manner that brings to life their experiences, bringing out their voices to add richness to the study (Allan, 1998; Morrow, 2007; Ponterotto & Grieger, 2007). It is also relevant because the study sought to understand rather than explain phenomena (Mack, 2010). This approach is often utilised in social sciences as it can extract practical meaning out of the work (Harding, 2009).

3.3 Research design

Narrative research design was adopted for the study since it is rooted in social research practice (Creswell, Hanson, Plano, & Morales, 2007). With the aid of

semi-structured interview guides, participants related stories of how they had experienced their journeys to executive positions. Bleakley (2005) characterises narrative inquiry as qualitative research, based on stories as the data or the research output. Stories constitute the data to be collected and analysed (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2013; Clandinin, 2006; Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007). This method was suitable for the study because the study sought to understand the phenomenon of participants' lived experiences of their career journeys through stories told by the participants (Andrews et al., 2013). It also needed to establish what implications existed for coaching through the participants' stories of these journeys (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The stories were situated in both the workplace and private lives of participants. Clandinin (2006) and Savin-Baden and Niekerk (2007) delineate between narrative analysis and analysis of narrative, where the former involves analysing data and forming narratives or stories from them by arranging along a time-line; the latter involves stories or narratives that are analysed to distil commonalities. The latter approach was utilised in this study. Interviews were semi-structured and questions were open-ended, allowing the participant freedom to tell their story (Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007). Narrative inquiry is reflexive, and interpretivist, which is appropriate in researching lived experiences, since the narrative is told through the participant's own lens (Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007). In narrating their experiences, participants told their stories in their own words, bringing to the fore their unique voices. There are various advantages and disadvantages to this design.

3.3.1 Advantages

Stories are easy to relate and people enjoy telling their stories, so gathering data in this manner is easy.

Telling a story is less demanding linguistically than other methods of data collection such as those using academic language. Narrative in research creates an opportunity for marginalised groups to contribute to academic research (Duff & Bell, 2002).

Storytelling increases the chances of the researcher learning from the participants. By delving below the apparent story to the underlying assumptions and insights that the stories provide, the experiences of the participants and how they have shaped the views of the participants are learned (Duff & Bell, 2002; Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007).

Narrative enquiry allows for thick description from data that delves deeply into the phenomenon under study, which was the objective of this study (Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007). The design lends itself to unearthing meaning because it is interpretive, and does not only focus on what is being said, but also the meanings assigned to the discourse. Participants' stories are underpinned by their own perspectives of the world. Their storytelling therefore is underpinned by the underlying assumptions they hold, which are at the centre of the participant's meaning making or perspective of their lived experience (Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007).

3.3.2 Disadvantages

The question of whose story it is arises as the researcher retells it in the analysis. Interpretation can confuse the researcher's voice and that of the participant. The reconstructed narrative says as much about the researcher as it does about the participant in relation to how the researcher treats the data; choosing certain items over others, for instance (Duff & Bell, 2002; Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007).

It can be time consuming, which precludes the use of large groups or numbers of participants (Duff & Bell, 2002).

The question of what criteria to use to evaluate narrative research is still under discussion. The subjective nature of narrative inquiry makes it important to articulate clearly the criteria governing the research, otherwise evaluators may utilise criteria differently (Duff & Bell, 2002).

Conservative stakeholders may not heed insights drawn from narrative inquiry because of its interpretative nature (Duff & Bell, 2002).

3.3.3 Rationale for selection

The qualitative approach was preferred because the study sought to understand the perspectives of the participants and not to explain any phenomenon. Data collection in narrative research is easier than for other methods because participants enjoy telling their stories in their own words, without the demands of academic language. This allows for more participants in research than would have been the case using challenging academic language. Meaning is interpreted, rather than taken at face value, based on the comments of participants. On the other hand misinterpretation may occur. The lines blur on ownership of the story between researcher and participant. Conservative stakeholders such as funders of research might not heed the research insights because of it being interpretive. This was not a concern, as the study is not donor funded. The positives of this approach outweighed the negatives.

3.4 Population and sample

3.4.1 Population

The population consisted of BWEs at the levels of senior manager and top manager, as defined in the EEA (RSA, 1998), who were employed in large corporations whose headquarters were in the Gauteng province of South Africa. There was no restriction in terms of industry, all private sector industries were included.

The focus of this research was on the private sector because this sector struggles to meet its equity targets (CEE, 2014). BWEs were the focus because they were underrepresented in the private sector (Horwitz & Jain, 2011; Mupambirei, 2013).

3.4.2 Sample and sampling method

Purposive sampling was adopted for the study in order to target information rich subjects best suited to provide insight into the research question (Coyne, 1997;

Devers & Frankel, 2000; Sandelowski, 2000). Participants were sourced mainly from two private companies in the Gauteng province of South Africa, through the companies' HR functions. The sample consisted of eight BWEs who had been coached (BWEC), and six BWEs who had not been coached (BWEN), as well as two HR managers (HRM) and two line managers (LM). The LMs each had line authority for BWECs and BWENs. Both HRMs were heads of HR for their companies and were responsible for the coaching programmes. All participants were employed in the private sector and were executives at the senior and top management level, as defined in the EEA (RSA, 1998). Table 3 sets out the respondents' profile.

Table 3: Profile of respondents

Respondent type	Number interviewed
BWEs who have been coached (BWEC)	8
BWEs who have not been coached (BWEN)	6
HR executives or managers (HRM)	2
Line managers of black female executive participants (LM)	2

The companies authorised that their BWECs, BWENs, HRMs, and LMs be contacted to participate in the study, which would be entirely at their discretion. The authorisation letters from Company 1 and Company 2 appear in Appendices A and B. The companies provided lists of BWEs who had been coached and those who had not been coached. Twenty participants were contacted by phone and email, of which two failed to respond to initial emails and were not pursued further. Two BWEs were from outside of the Gauteng province, but were interviewed at their company's head office in Gauteng. These two companies yielded 15 of the 18 participants (83 percent), with the remainder (17 percent) being sourced from different large corporations based in Gauteng through direct approaches.

The HRMs and LMs were sourced from company's 1 and 2. The companies from which the sample was drawn were in the manufacturing, hospitality and

entertainment, financial, construction, and chemicals industries. Table 4 provides a breakdown of respondents' profiles.

Table 4: Demographics of respondents

Respondent's Pseudonym	Department and company	Industry	BWEC/ BWEN/ HR/LM	Highest qualification
Mbali	Operations in company 1	Hospitality and entertainment	BWEC	B Com – incomplete
Vuyiswa	Finance in company 1	Hospitality and entertainment	BWEC	Chartered Accountant-SA (CA. SA)
Brenda	HR in company 2	Manufacturing	BWEC	B Hons
Nozibele	HR in company 2	Manufacturing	BWEC	BA Hons
Mohau	HR in company 2	Manufacturing	BWEC	M Sc
Mosidi	Research and development in company 2	Manufacturing	BWEC	B Hons
Nkosazana	HR in company 2	Manufacturing	BWEC	M Sc
Bakang	Marketing and Communications independent	Financial	BWEC	MBA
Tshego	Property development in company 1	Hospitality and entertainment	BWEN	Post-grad in property development
Modiehi	Marketing in company 1	Hospitality and entertainment	BWEN	BA Hons
Thakane	Legal in company 1	Hospitality and entertainment	BWEN	B Juris
Margaret	Operations in company 1	Hospitality and entertainment	BWEN	PhD
Nkuli	HR in company 2	Chemicals	BWEN	M Sc
Mandy	Corporate Affairs in company 2	Construction	BWEN	MBA
Dennis	HR in company 1	Hospitality and entertainment	HRM	MBA
Bertus	Finance in company 1	Hospitality and entertainment	LM	CA SA

Respondent's Pseudonym	Department and company	Industry	BWEC/ BWEN/ HR/LM	Highest qualification
Xhanti	HR in company 2	Manufacturing	HRM	Post-grad HR
Johan	Operations in company 2	Manufacturing	LM	CA SA

3.5 The research instrument

A semi-structured interview guide (Appendix C) was utilised to collect the data from BWEs, and another (Appendix D) to collect data from LMs and HRMs. The semi-structured interview guide was the appropriate data collection tool in this study because the questions were open-ended, allowing the respondents space to articulate their views without being led (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Interview questions were developed to elicit responses to the research questions.

Prior to going into the field, a pilot interview was conducted, using the semi-structured interview guide (Appendix C), to ensure that the questions were clear and understandable, and to raise any other issues such as potentially inappropriate questions. The pilot interview was also used to establish the timeframe required for each interview. The responses from this pilot interview were excluded from the research report.

3.6 Procedure for data collection

Interviews were arranged telephonically with the respondents and undertaken face-to-face with each one of the 18 participants. Interview times ranged from 30 minutes to an hour and a half, using the semi-structured interview guides as appropriate. Each interview was digitally recorded and the service of a professional transcriber was engaged to produce verbatim transcriptions of the recordings, thus ensuring accurate capture of the interview. Transcriptions were checked against the digital recordings to ensure accuracy. As part of a member checking process to ensure trustworthiness in the data treatment, individual transcriptions were sent to the study participants to establish whether the transcripts accurately captured what they had said in the interviews.

3.7 Data analysis

Table 5 shows linkages between the research questions and interview questions as per the interview guide for BWEs.

Table 5: Research and interview questions for BWEs

Establish what enables and what inhibits career progression for BWEs and how coaching can contribute to such improvement	
Research questions	**Interview questions for BWEs (Appendix C)**
RQ1: What leadership journeys have BWEs undertaken to progress to their current positions?	1. Tell me about your career and how it developed into your current position?
RQ2: What are the enablers that contribute to improved career progression for BWEs?	2. What do you believe are the elements that made it possible for you to be successful?
RQ3: What are the inhibitors that contribute to improved career progression for BWEs?	3. Tell me about some of the challenges you encountered on your journey
RQ4: How can coaching assist with accelerating development for BWEs to achieve improved career progression?	4. What were the factors you required coaching on? 5. How well did the coaching address these factors? 6. Please describe your experience with the executive coaching you underwent (only asked of coached BWEs) 7. What specifically stood out for you?

Table 6 shows linkages between the research questions and interview questions as per the interview guide for HRM and LM

Table 6: Research and interview questions for HRMs and LMs

Establish what enables and what inhibits career progression for BWEs and how coaching can contribute to such improvement	
Research questions	**Interview questions for HRM and LMs (Appendix D)**
RQ1: What leadership journeys have BWEs undertaken to progress to their current positions?	1. Share your sense of the career journeys of your BWEs and how they developed to their current positions?
RQ2: What are the enablers that contribute to improved career progression for BWEs?	2. What do you believe are the elements that made it possible for them to be successful?
RQ3: : What are the inhibitors that contribute to improved career progression for BWEs?	3. Tell me about some of the challenges you believe they encountered on their journeys?
RQ4: How can coaching assist with accelerating development for BWEs to achieve improved career progression?	4: What were factors that you required coaching on? 5. In your opinion, how well did the coaching address these factors?

Thematic analysis, a form of qualitative analysis, was utilised in the study. Buetow (2010) asserts that thematic analysis is often used in qualitative research. Thematic analysis is described as a method that is used to identify, analyse and report patterns (themes) in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013) The process begins with the identification of patterns of meaning as well as interesting aspects in the data, relating to the research question. Pattern recognition might begin in the data collection stage. These patterns constitute themes that emerge from the data. Themes are identified through “careful reading and rereading of the data” (Rice and Ezzy, 1999, cited in Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 84).

Thematic analysis was appropriate for the study because it is a method suitable for studying experiences of participants and goes beyond just the observable data, and that which is explicitly stated, enabling implicit and tacit themes to be identified in the data (Harper & Thompson, 2011). It is suitable for analysing narrative material from life stories that have been reduced to smaller units of text (Sparkes, 2005).

Consistent with the method posited by Braun and Clarke (2006), analysis was conducted in six phases as follows: familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and finally producing the report.

The transcripts of the interviews were entered into ATLAS.ti, an electronic data management programme, followed by a thorough coding process. Coding was conducted inductively, allowing the identification of units of meaning within the data, rather than having a prior list of codes as is the case in deductive coding. After coding, the results were checked for consistency to ensure reliability. At this stage, the codes were sorted into themes by clustering together matching codes. Themes were named or defined, and relevant patterns that emerged reported on. The phases are set out in sections 3.7.1 to 3.7.6.

3.7.1 Phase 1: Familiarisation with the data

This phase was the beginning of the analysis process. Accuracy was important so the transcriptions were read against the backdrop of the digitally recorded interviews to ensure accuracy and that they were true to their original nature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each transcript was read in its entirety before being coded, allowing full familiarisation with the content before attempting to code. The transcripts were read and reread actively, looking for patterns in the data, which became apparent with further reading. Notes were written in the margins of transcripts, and the words used were close, if not identical, to what the participants had said. With some ideas for coding starting to form, the process was now ready to proceed to phase 2.

3.7.2 Phase 2: Generating initial codes

While rereading data in phase 2, initial codes were gleaned: many codes were generated as each transcript was coded. The process was followed systematically for the whole data set, identifying interesting items in the data set, potentially constituting the basis of themes. Extracts of data were coded inclusive ensuring that the context was retained.

Some individual data extracts fitted into more than one code, in which case they were coded into two or more codes. All extracts were kept in their original context, and none were smoothed out to fit the codes. At this point, the process was ready to move into phase 3.

3.7.3 Phase 3: Searching for themes

Phase 2 generated a long list of initial codes, which required sorting into themes. Each code had a brief description to ensure that there was clarity about what it meant. The different individual codes were slotted under higher-level themes as appropriate. Some codes logically belonged under a particular theme, and subsets of themes emerged as themes were grouped together according to their relationship to one another. Those codes that did not have a logical place under a specific theme were temporarily accommodated in a miscellaneous theme until a fitting home was found. The research moved on to phase 4.

3.7.4 Phase 4: Reviewing themes

The process of refining ensures that data within each theme belongs together logically or coherently. Two levels of reviewing and refining themes followed:

All collated data extracts for each theme were read to ensure that there were coherent patterns among them under each theme. Some of the collated data extracts were not a good fit under some themes, so were further clarified and sorted together coherently. Some small items of data that were missed initially, were coded into the appropriate themes.

The whole data set was reread to see whether the themes were still relevant and worked for the full data set. Clear identifiable distinctions between themes are vital. Some initial themes were collapsed into others and yet others discarded as it became apparent that they did not have crispness of definition to stand alone as themes. The research advanced to phase 5, which included defining and naming the themes.

3.7.5 Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

This phase resulted in developing firm themes that were clear, and no longer tentative. To define the themes, understanding and identifying the essence of each theme and determining the aspect of data each theme captured was necessary. At this point, the interesting aspects of the data were identified. The story that the data were telling was becoming discernible and some writing began. Each theme and subtheme was analysed and a detailed analysis written for the said theme. The narrative identified the interesting aspects of the data and began to explain why they were interesting and how they were possibly answering the research question. It was important for each theme to fit properly the story it was telling. Meaningful names for each theme were sought and a full code list is included as Appendix F.

3.7.6 Phase 6: Producing the research report

The final analysis and writing up of the research report was undertaken in phase six. The objective was to tell the full story of the data in a convincing way that illustrated the merit and trustworthiness of the analysis. Presenting the findings, based on the themes, was supported by sufficient data extracts to capture the essence of each finding in relation to the research questions.

3.8 Considerations to ensure trustworthiness of findings

Trustworthiness answers the question posited by Lincoln and Guba (1985) when they ask “how can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?” (p. 290). The essence of this question refers to how it is ensured that the research findings can be trusted. Trustworthiness is at the heart of issues usually discussed as validity and reliability in quantitative research, and is important in judging or testing the quality of qualitative research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Golafshani, 2003). The criteria for trustworthiness in qualitative research are transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the data analysis and reporting process. The criteria are discussed in sections 3.8.1 to 3.8.4.

These criteria match the quantitative constructs of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity respectively (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The conventional terms of validity and reliability are deemed inappropriate for use in qualitative research since different paradigms make different knowledge claims and criteria for what constitutes significant knowledge is also different (Golafshani, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.8.1 Transferability

Transferability can be likened to external validity. It is about relationships between phenomena in different contexts (Morrow, 2005). To enable someone wanting to decide whether transfer of research findings is possible, thick description is necessary (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). In this regard, purposive sampling was helpful in that it targets information rich participants. The participants presented their views and experiences from a subjective perspective, being the originators of the information. The meaning making is their own. This is in the nature of qualitative research (Sandelowski, 1993). The raw database of this study is provided to enable transferability decisions to be made. The raw data consists of original transcripts of the digital recordings.

3.8.2 Credibility

Credibility is comparable to internal validity. Lincoln and Guba (1985), recommend building into the study, processes to enhance credibility. These include persistent observation, triangulation, and checks by study participants (member checks). Lincoln and Guba (1985), assert that member checks are the most crucial technique for establishing credibility in qualitative research. To this end, each study participant was given a copy of the verbatim transcription of their interview to verify as a true reflection of what they said and meant to say in the interview. The researcher personally conducted all interviews, achieving a deep understanding of the lived experiences of participants. An inductive approach was used in identifying codes and categories, allowing the data to speak rather than imposing predetermined codes and categories on the data. Interviews were recorded, to ensure accuracy in transcriptions. The

transcriptions were checked against the audio recordings. Coding to extract themes was employed and saturation achieved. All possible explanations for data in the study were pursued before any conclusions were drawn, to ensure that the data are true to the conclusions reached about them (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Morrow, 2005).

Triangulation is another way in which credibility can be achieved (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Different types of triangulation have been described, one of which is person triangulation. Person triangulation employs different people to provide diverse views about a topic (Kimchi, Polivka, & Stevenson, 1991; Mathison, 1988). Triangulation provides varying pieces of evidence, not necessarily similar or convergent, allowing the researcher to develop good explanations of the social phenomena being studied (Mathison, 1988; Patton, 1999). Data supplied by the eight BWECs was compared and contrasted against those supplied by the six BWENs who had not been coached, two LMs and two HRMs in the sample to identify differences and similarities.

3.8.3 Dependability

Dependability can be likened to reliability in quantitative research. Reliability is defined as the extent to which results are consistent over time, given the same circumstances (Joppe, 2000, cited in Golafshani, 2003). The constructivist nature of qualitative research means that it is revisionist, therefore rendering the strong possibility that the same phenomena might be interpreted or reported differently by different subjects or even the same subject at different times (Sandelowski, 1993; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). To ensure dependability, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend a process they term an inquiry or research audit. This accounting metaphor refers to verification of the steps in the research process by providing and examining items such as the raw data, data reduction methods, and process notes.

3.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to whether study results are a true reflection of the subjective views of study participants, not merely the researcher's own biases and disconnected interpretations of the data. Confirmability can be likened to objectivity in quantitative research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.9 Delimitations of the study

The study focused on BWEs at senior and top management levels as shown in Table 4; all other women were excluded. The research pertained to the private sector, as it is in this sector that companies are struggling to meet EE targets. The sample was restricted to BWEs who were employed in companies head quartered in Gauteng, who could be interviewed in Gauteng even though they may not have been physically based there.

3.10 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are important in research because research is intrusive by nature and might bring harm to subjects if not conducted ethically (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Ethical considerations include ensuring that participation in the research is voluntary and no participants are coerced into participating; that confidentiality and anonymity of each participant is maintained at all times, and that the research has integrity both in the analysis and reporting thereof.

In recognition of the preceding conditions, interviews were conducted only after participants provided formal, written, informed consent (Appendix E). The participants were informed of the voluntary nature of their participation, and that they had the right to withdraw at any given time without negative consequence to themselves.

The interview process and the data management procedure was shared with participants, including the fact that data would be reported in aggregated form, and that no individual participant would be identifiable, thus maintaining

confidentiality. Names of participants were not used in the research, and a pseudonym was allocated to each participant for the reporting process. This ensured anonymity in the research report.

Anonymity was limited in that the interviews were face-to-face, so the identity and input of the participants were known; however, the information was not publicly available and stored safely.

To guard against plagiarism, all sources of information cited in the report were acknowledged. Plagiarism is a serious offence, which can result in severe sanction, including disqualification of the work.

Finally, the ethics committee of the University of the Witwatersrand monitored and approved the research. The university has a Code of Ethics for Research on Human Subjects, to which the researcher adhered.

3.11 Summary

Chapter 3 set out the research methodology, including the research paradigm, constructivism. The research design, which was a narrative design; the sample and purposive sampling method; the data collection instrument, which is a semi-structured interview guide are discussed, followed by the data collection procedure through face-to-face interviews. Data analysis, trustworthiness considerations, and interpretation discussions were followed by delimitations of the study and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 sets out the research findings from the respondents' interviews and their transcripts.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the findings of the study are presented. The aim of the study was to explore the lived experiences of BWEs with a view to understanding what elements they perceived to either enable or inhibit their career progression and to explore how coaching could potentially contribute to strengthening the perceived enablers and addressing the inhibitors

Qualitative data collection methods were used to collect the data required to address the research questions. Eighteen respondents, sourced from the private sector, were interviewed, eight of whom were BWECs and six who were BWENs. In addition, two HRMs and two LMs were interviewed. The HRMs, LMs, and BWENs were included for triangulation.

4.2 Presentation of main research findings

The findings are presented according to the research questions (RQ), below.

- *RQ1*: What leadership journeys have BWEs undertaken to progress to their current positions?
- *RQ2*: What enablers contributed to improved career progression for BWEs?
- *RQ3*: What inhibitors detracted from improved career progression for BWEs?
- *RQ4*: How can coaching assist with accelerating development for BWEs to achieve improved career progression?

The findings are presented and supported by respondents' responses contained in the interviews and captured in the interview transcripts. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of participants and their employers.

Table 7 is a summary of the themes that emerged from the research, linked to the research questions. For the first three research questions, the top five themes are presented, while three main findings are presented for the fourth research question relating to coaching. These three findings will be further broken down in the presentation itself.

Table 7: Summary of research interview themes

Research questions	Interview themes in rank order
1. What leadership journeys have BWEs undertaken to progress to their current positions?	Family background Tertiary education Career entry Career progression Career choice motivation
2. What enablers contributed to improved career progression for BWEs?	Hard work Networking Access to mentors Self-development Resilience
3. What inhibitors detracted from improved career progression for BWEs?	Poor EE implementation Work-life integration Marginalisation Stereotyping Racism
4. How can coaching assist to accelerate development for BWEs in order to achieve improved career progression?	Coaching objectives Coaching outcomes Coaching experiences

4.2.1 RQ1: What leadership journeys have BWEs undertaken to progress to their current positions?

The themes that emerged relating to the leadership journeys of the BWEs were identified. Arranged chronologically, the themes were: family background, tertiary education, career entry, career progression, career choice motivation, career highlights, context, high school education, and personality traits, as depicted in Figure 1.

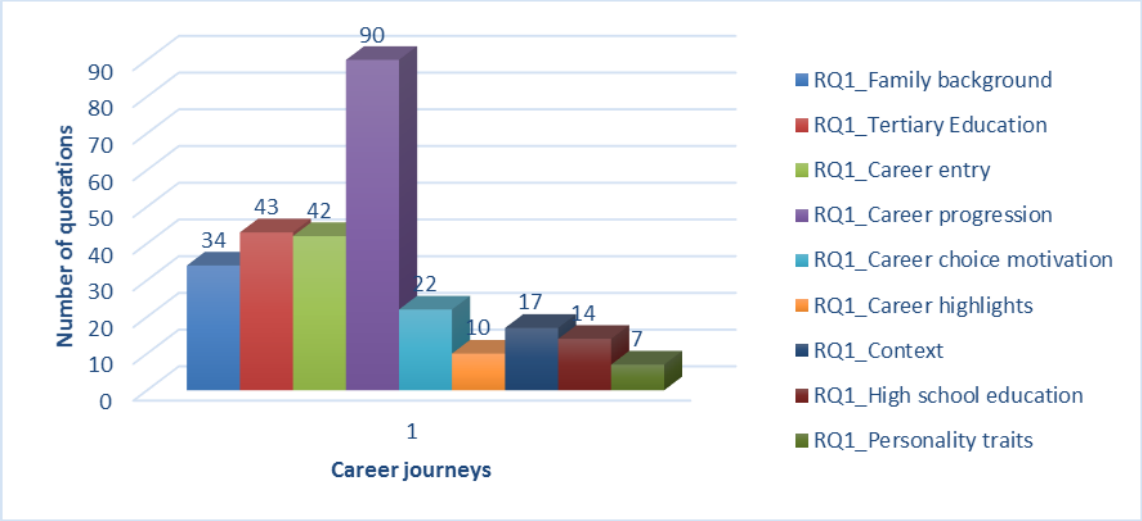


Figure 1: BWEs' career journeys

The top five themes emerging from the leadership journeys of BWEs are presented in the following section. These were: family background, tertiary education, career entry, career progression, and career choice motivation. For each theme quotations are presented in the following order: quotations from BWECs, followed by BWENs, HRMs and finally LMs.

Theme 1: Family background:

The majority (86 percent) of BWEs reported being from professional households. Three BWEC (14 percent) reported being from struggling backgrounds. One of the three reported that life was a struggle because her father was exiled and died when she was young. This is despite both parents being professional people. One LM reported that his BWEC came from a relatively comfortable background.

One BWEC reported that she was raised by a single mother.

> *Nozibele: I was raised by a single mother and after I finished my matric, I think there was a lot of excitement and then there was sadness immediately because now the reality was okay now what is she gonna do? First of all there no money for her to study. You know I wanted to do medicine… when we got the results, I had not*

applied anywhere because my mother was not very keen on paying those application fees.

Another BWEC reported growing up in exile. Although her parents were professionals, exile was a struggle. Her father died when she was little.

Mosidi: My father was a teacher, journalist, writer and then he went into exile…I grew up in Swaziland then. I only did Sub "A" here. Then from Sub "B" I was in Swaziland up to matric. My dad died. In fact I joined my mom after he died. He died in 1967, and I went there. I must have been eight.

Mosidi: We struggled in Swaziland actually. She was a single parent. We were always living in people's back yards, and but she was always focussed on our education. She said to us: "I don't have riches to bequeath. I bequeath you education. You better take it and stack it between your ears and no-one knows you have it, will get hold of it. Put it between your ears."

A BWEC reported having professional parents.

Bakang: Oh where I'm from? So I'm the first daughter of three. I'm the parent of three girls. Alright, my parents are in Soweto. My mom is social worker by profession and she's got a private practice. My dad's the Judge in the Transvaal High Court.

A BWEN also reported having professional parents.

Mandy: They worked for missionary church schools. So yes. So they would be transferred from one place to another school.

An interesting comment from a BWEN about not being disadvantaged; she also indicated that her father was determined they were all going to receive a good education.

> *Nkuli: So I haven't come from disadvantage you know. I don't. And my parents were very committed to education. My father was determined that we were all going to get a good education and I had a supportive family.*

One LM correctly understood his BWE to be from a relatively comfortable background.

> *Bertus: Look in this environment as I said earlier the information that I've got from, what I'm looking at is she comes from a relatively easy background.*

Theme 2: Tertiary education:

The overwhelming majority of BWECs and BWENs interviewed had a tertiary education qualification, while many held postgraduate qualifications, including one with a PhD. One LM noted that his BWEC had good qualifications.

A BWEC reported having an honours degree.

> *Mosidi: I did my Honours and microbiology at Wits, and then I worked some more and then I decided to go overseas to study ... I spent a year overseas doing food technology, which I didn't finish. I finished the course but I didn't do the exams. So it was just a bungle up that.*

A BWEN reported having an MBA.

> *Mandy: I have a marketing communication background and HR background. I have also done you know business qualifications. I have an MBA. It was here, about 12 you know short programs in-between…I've done also an international executive program at University of Pennsylvania in the US and doing jobs short programs throughout my career.*

One LM spoke about his BWEC's qualifications confidently.

> *Bertus: Professional household. Very bright, good qualifications, massive ability. Development in the last 24 months massive, positive.*

Theme 3: Career entry:

Sixty percent of all BWEs were recruited directly from university into graduate development programmes. Six of the eight BWECs and two of the six BWENs entered their careers though this route. No HRM or LM commented on this element of career journeys of BWEs.

> *Nozibele: So I think my professor recommended me. So you know, because I exited university with an Honours Degree, and Honours exams were written in January and as I finished my exam in January I walked into a job in February.*

One BWEC struggled to obtain employment, eventually settling for call centre work.

> *Nkosazana: I finished my degree and then I went into a different industry, I first started working in a call centre, which is not what I wanted.*

A BWEN struggled to enter the job market when she returned from studying abroad. She settled for a job at a lower level than ideal.

> *Mohau: We were all excited thinking wow. We going back home, and I got home and I stayed for a good few months before I managed to get a job. When I did finally get one, it was not at the level where I would have liked to start, but it was an occupational Health and Safety with a company called First Employer.*

The remainder entered the workplace without struggle but not through graduate programmes or internships such as the BWENs below.

> *Modiehi: My career was not planned, and where I am was not part of what I studied for at university. I was a publisher for African languages, I worked for publishers.*

> *Mandy: I started my career as a junior consultant soon after graduating. I was doing you know, consulting work and I then went into government and I studied HR as part of my career development.*

Theme 4: Career progression:

All BWECs and BWENs spoke about their individual career progression. One HRM and two LMs also commented on the journeys of their BWECs and BWENs. Career progression for the BWEs has been relatively easy for some and not so easy for others, with one BWE being overlooked a few times.

One BWEC was appointed to a store manager position after completing a graduate development programme.

> *Mbali: So in jeans and takkies the whole day, running a retail store as a 22 year old, that's when I finished everything and I was appointed as a store manager.*

This BWEC took whatever opportunity was offered, thereby gaining more experience. She did not necessarily plan her career at this point.

> *Bakang: I kind of used that period in my life I think which was a bit all over the place actually and that's why I said my career kind of began to happen to me at the time because it was really taking whatever opportunity presented itself. Not necessarily because you were seeking it passionately that this is what I want to do. It was like okay. I'm here. I'm going to make the most of being here, whatever comes up.*

A BWEN struggled to get placement after her secretarial learnership because the white managers would not have a black secretary.

> *Nkuli: Mine was not a linear journey. It zigzagged quite a bit. When the university got shut down, one of the many, many times that it got shut down, I actually applied for what we would call today a learnership… So at the end of the course, which took about 18 months, First Employer didn't have anywhere to place us because the managers who were white refused to have African secretaries.*

A BWEN was headhunted a few times.

> *Modiehi: So during my three-month stint at the agency, Company 1 came back and said 'listen, we know you said no in December. We've been struggling to fill this position, would you still be interested?' So I think my angels were with me. But three months later when they came back, … I was like yay, actually I am now ready for it.*

An HRM described how one BWEC was overlooked for promotions.

> *Xhanti: And when she got promoted to the position just before she became divisional HR director, she was passed over twice for the HR director position. Because every time "she was not quite there"*

This LM had a clear understanding of his BWEC's career progression.

> *Bertus: Very senior position at thirty, compared to a lot of other people, she's done exceptionally well, she's coped exceptionally well with a lot things. A lot of other people at thirty has also done very well. So you need, if you ahead of the game stay ahead of the game.*

Theme 5: Career choice motivation:

Four BWECs identified challenge or stimulation as motivation for them staying in a role.

> *Mosidi: So it could be 15 years at Sixth Employer but I've done so many different things. I joined Sixth Employer to go to the research and development centre, which is a technical centre that services Sixth Employer, worldwide,…I think it was good for the South Africa psyche to have the developed first world look down south for answers. That always felt good.*

Two BWECs mentioned job security as motivation for continuing in a role or organisation. This element was only identified by BWECs.

> *Nkosazana: Unfortunately, the business was not doing well later on. We had management buyout, we had new investors, there was challenges, until I started getting worried about, job security. And then I put my CV out …but I really wanted a stable and secure company to go to.*

One BWEC identified family considerations for her career decisions.

> *Nozibele: Yes, and a lot of my friends came to Joburg. Joburg has got a lot of opportunities you know. It's more senior. I could probably be a lot more senior than I am here if I relocated, but we decided we want to build our home in Durban. It works for us.*

Making a meaningful contribution was identified by another BWEC as motivation for continuing in a role.

> *Brenda: The contribution I was making, I felt I was making within the division space and then contributing to the bigger space of Company 2, but not necessarily being part of some of the strategic debates at group level of Company 2.*

Summary:

This section presented study findings for RQ1.

The leadership journeys seem to be similar in that the majority are from relatively affluent families. Only three BWECs reported being from struggling families, of which two were raised by a single mother. The rest had parents who were professionals, although that did not stop one family from struggling. HRMs did not comment on this element. One LM was aware of the general family circumstances of his BWEC.

Most reported that their parents valued education and were determined to ensure that they received a good education. The overwhelming majority of BWEs have a tertiary education and the majority hold postgraduate qualifications. One LM noted that his BWEC had good qualifications [she is a CA SA].

Career entry of 60 percent of the BWEs was through internships/learnerships or graduate development programmes. No LM or HRM offered a view in this regard. Career progression among the BWEs is similar, with two BWECs and one BWEN reporting that they had had a less than easy progression. One BWEC was overlooked a few times for promotion, as confirmed by an HRM, while one BWEC struggled to obtain employment that matched her qualifications. A BWEN struggled to be placed after a learnership because the white managers would not accept a black secretary. To place this in context it was in the days before democracy in South Africa. One LM was aware of his BWEC's career progression. Career choice motivation included stimulation/challenge for four BWECs, contribution for one BWEC, job security

for two BWECs, and family considerations for one BWEC. There was no mention of this theme by BWENs, HRMs, and LMs.

4.2.2 RQ2: What enablers contributed to improved career progression for BWEs?.

The top ten themes perceived to be enablers contributing to improved career progression for BWEs were identified. The themes were hard work, networking, access to mentors, self-development, resilience, support, communication, drive, self-knowledge, and purpose. These were ranked according to the number of quotations relating to each element, and are shown in rank order in Figure 2.

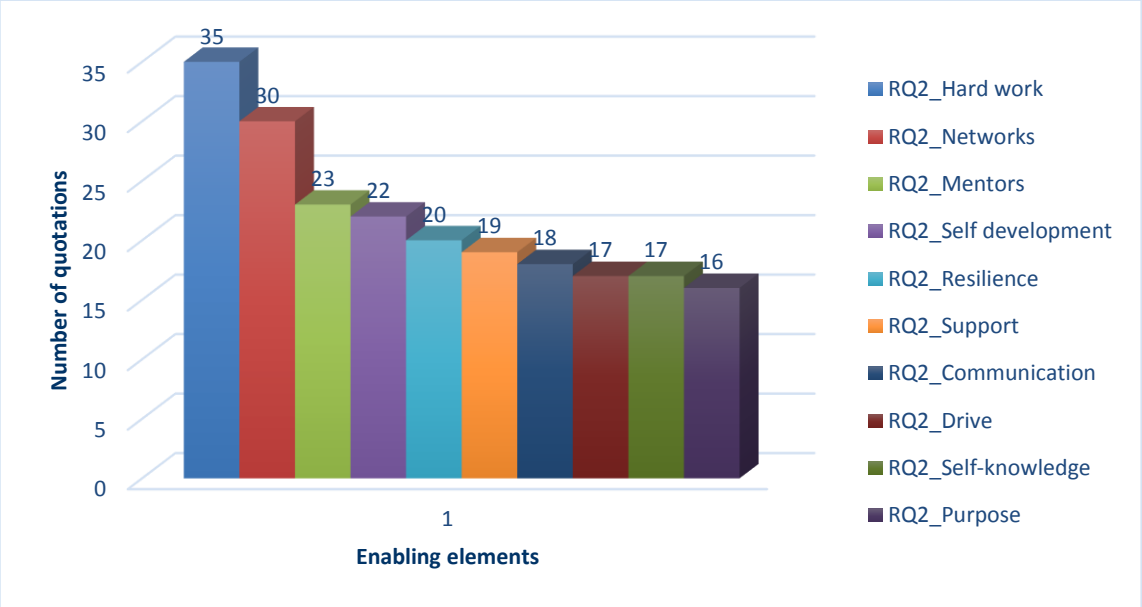


Figure 2: Elements contributing to BWEs' career progression

The top five elements perceived to contribute to the career progression of BWEs are presented in the following section, highlighting the perceptions of research participants regarding these elements. The top five themes are hard work, networking, access to mentors, self-development, and resilience.

Theme 1: Hard work:

Three BWEC's, three BWEN's, one HRM, and an LM mentioned that delivery on the job through hard work was an enabler of career progression.

A BWEC identified hard work as an enabler, asserting that delivery at all costs is needed.

> *Vuyiswa: The things to succeed are to work hard. Don't ever talk about 'but it's five o'clock I need to go.' [laughs] You must do what needs to be done to get the job done. Whatever time, almost 24-7 if I can put it like that.*

A BWEN reported that she built a reputation for hard work and reliability.

> *Tshego: So I cultivated a culture where people knew I was hard working. I could be relied upon and if I had made a commitment to deliver on something I would make sure I deliver. Didn't matter what it took.*

An HRM confirmed hard work as an enabler adding that it dispels stereotypes.

> *Dennis: I would say actually hard work. The ability to dispel the stereotype that a woman cannot do a job of that nature.*

One LM was emphatic that it is important to work hard.

> *Bertus: And do your work. Be prepared to work. Work hard.*

Theme 2: Networking:

Four BWECs, three BWENs (50 percent of BWEs) and a LM mentioned how networking can add value to the career progression of BWEs. No HRMs mentioned this element.

This BWEC reported that networking helped her to get different exposure, in addition to the academic work.

> *Mbali: I was also part of Forum 1, I was a treasurer with Forum1 at university, and I enjoyed that very much. Because it helps one to just to network and to also to get a different exposure as opposed to just an academic one, you know.*

One BWEN identified networking as knowing and being known by influential people and using that as her unique differentiator. She used these contacts or as she says she "played on it".

> *Margaret: What do I bring to the table that what is my unique selling point hey ... I actually realised I'm the only one who's very connected with the politicians in this country and not connected is not right word but I always say to my son it's about I know so-and-so but does so-and-so know me, but with this scenario I actually do have his phone number and I do have his wife's phone number and I do have you know. So I think, and sometimes I played on it deliberately [laughter], because that is the strength that I have.*

Networking is also seen as a door opener, as described in the following BWEN quote.

> *Tshego: So that networking goes a long way because it doesn't matter whether I'm dealing with the city, whether I'm dealing with some government department. If I don't know the people directly I'll know the sister, a brother or some relative you know.*

A LM reported that interacting with other people can result in the cross pollination of ideas and broaden the views of BWEs.

> *Bertus: And almost cross-pollinate to get a broader view, of realising that 50 percent is actually only 50 percent and it's not 100 percent. And speaking to other individuals that's also 30 or maybe*

that 40 you realise that's what they doing and I'm currently doing this and I'm in the same position.

Theme 3: Access to mentors:

All four categories of participants identified access to mentors as enabling BWE career progression; four BWECs, three BWENs, one HRM, and one LM identified this element.

A BWEC described access to mentors as the biggest enabler for herself and reported how she identified formal or informal mentors for herself.

Brenda: Look, I mean I must be honest with you, the biggest enablers, and I learned this very early when I came in, was quickly being able to identify people within the organisation that can mentor you, either formally or informally.

A BWEN reported having had global mentors.

Nkuli: I got mentored by people who had worked all over the world and my true true growth happened at Eighth Employer.

This HRM identified mentors as navigating the corporate environment for new employees; what he called 'seeing around the corners'.

Xhanti: So that's where I saw most of the value, in them mentoring other young females to see around the corners, that's the phrase we like using. Because that stuff you don't learn in university, it's not in a book.

He further reports that the mentors are role models for other women in the business.

Xhanti: So we selected, we would say in each of the graduate classes, if you've got 10 young women in that graduate classroom, I want all the ladies that are being coached to mentor at least two each, two each, two each. That way, you're building the capacity for the organisation to open up opportunities for females, which is key.

We need role models in the whole cycle … somebody they can look up to who is like them.

An LM saw mentoring in the context of technical skill building. He explained that both coaching and mentoring are needed for advancement and that the two are unlikely to reside in the same person.

Johan: Where there is perhaps a little bit of additional sort of.. So let's call it skills on more the professional level of your sort of space. Then I think an experienced mentor perhaps would be able to add nice value, but I would really think you probably need both [coaching and mentoring] hey, and whether they separate processes, you with difficulty going to find that within one individual I would imagine, to give you both those sort of, but I think that would be helpful.

Theme 4: Self-development:

Four BWECs, one BWEN and an LM identified self-development as an enabler. Surprisingly, none of the HRMs shared this view. Self-development can take the form of stretching oneself and embracing different learning environments, as reported by one BWEC.

Mbali: For me, I'm like a sponge. So I had like a notebook of everything, everywhere. And I tried also to stretch myself. I remember when I was at the 'five star' I asked if I could join them for their financial review with the hotel owner.

A BWEC advocates continued self-development as an investment in oneself.

Bakang: You know talk to people that are relevant in your industry or wherever that you want to go. Just invest in yourself because if people see also in the corporate environment that you investing in yourself …they also are inclined or more open to be investing in you because you investing in sharpening your sword you know.

A BWEN noted that she saw self-development as self-empowerment.

> *Modiehi: I've always believed in empowering myself. I've always believed that I don't know enough. I'm one person who always aspires to know more, learn more and do more things. Completed my diploma in one year. Very, very hard year.*

One LM mentioned that self-development need not be a training course.

> *Bertus: You don't need EDP. You can interact with like-minded individuals that's completely different, if that makes sense. That's coming from completely different environments …or in science.*

Theme 5: Resilience:

Half the BWECs and half the BWENs identified resilience as contributing to their career progression success, especially given the gendered nature of the workplace. No HRM identified this element. One LM did concur. They mentioned how challenges in organisations would always be present; that this was not unique to one organisation.

A BWEC spoke about how it was necessary not to internalise setbacks or challenges. She suggests that to succeed, women need to be strong since there would always be brash people in organisations.

> *Vuyiswa: But you need to man-up if I can put it like that. And what's the word I'm looking for? Not take things personally, so don't internalise the things. Because there are some brash people around and I don't think it's a company specific thing, I think if you go to any company there will always be those type of people.*

A BWEN commented on how she has had to be resilient in the face of challenges.

> *Mohau: So as much there are challenges I've had to learn to be resilient and also a bit selfish because when you are raising kids you want to stay in an organisation where they already know you*

until the time that you are ready to move and go and now work you know.

A BWEN characterised her resilience in the context of not accepting rejection, but rather persevere. There was always a possibility that next time she would win.

Modiehi: Even if I get a no today, I will try the next time. And maybe next time I do it differently I will get a yes. So I do persevere a lot.

A LM reported his preference for people who have had to deal with hardship over those that have it easy, because they are better able to handle pressure in the work place.

Bertus: And [if] I have to choose between the two of them, I'll probably choose the last person. Because I would expect that their life skills and the pressures and the different environment that they've had to deal with would enable them to deal with different pressures in that work environment better. Because they've seen more tough times, right?

Summary:

This section contains a presentation of the findings relating to RQ2. The top five findings by number of quotes are presented. The findings were hard work, networking, access to mentors, self-development, and resilience.

There seems to be agreement among the BWECs, BWENs, HRMs and LMs that hard work can enable career progression, with half the sample identifying it as such.

Networking appears to have a strong support base among the study participants, with half the BWECs, half the BWENs and one LM identifying it as an enabler.

Access to mentors was identified by four BWECs, three BWENs, one HRM, and one LM. This constitutes half of the total BWE sample and 50 percent each of HRMs and LMs.

Self-development is mentioned by three BWECs, one BWEN and an LM. It was surprising that the HRMs did not mention this element as people development is an HR competence.

Finally, resilience was identified by half the BWECs and half the BWENs and one LM. None of the HRMs mentioned resilience.

It would appear that the agreement on enabling elements is strongest among the BWEs, and strong between BWEs and LMs. HRMs' perceptions of enablers match only two of the five elements. The elements identified were consistent with the literature.

4.2.3 RQ3: What inhibitors detracted from improved career progression for BWEs?

The top ten themes perceived to be inhibitors from improved career progression for BWEs were identified. They were poor implementation of EE, work-life integration, marginalisation, stereotyping, racism, lack of support, undermining, bullying, gender disadvantage, and reputational damage. Themes were ranked according to the number of quotations relating to each element, and are presented in rank order, depicted in Figure 3.

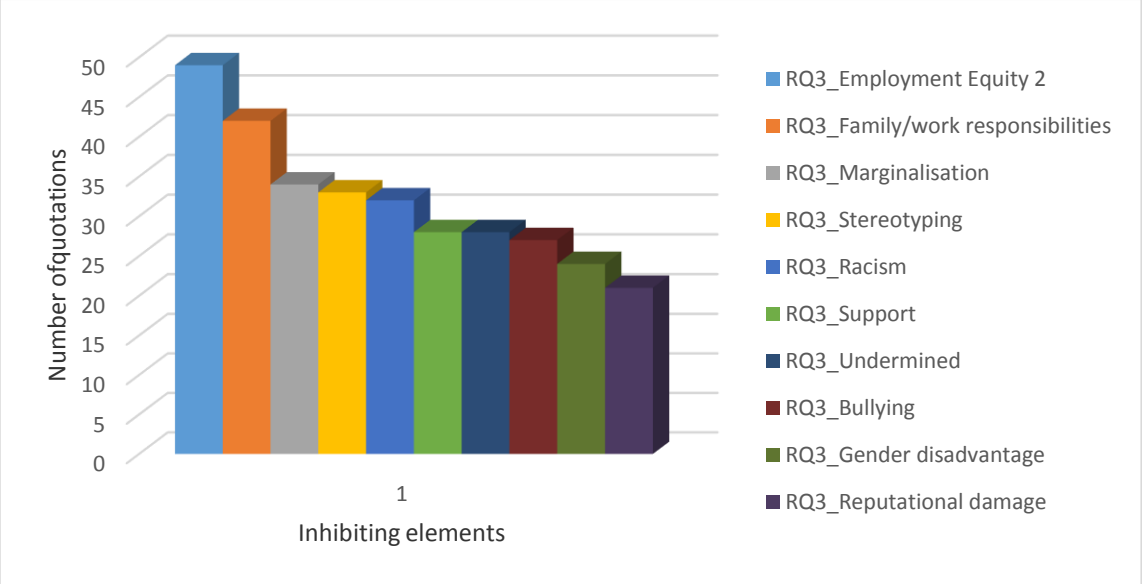


Figure 3: Elements inhibiting BWEs' career progression

Of the identified ten themes perceived to inhibit the career progression of BWEs, the top five themes presented are poor implementation of EE, work-life integration, marginalisation, stereotyping, and racism.

Theme 1: EE:

EE relates to legislative compliance and issues of changing the demographic representation in the workplace. The issue is poor or lack of implementation of EE, mentioned by five of the eight BWECs, four of the six BWENs, two HRMs and two LMs. One BWEC spoke about how the business had no succession planning.

> *Mbali: But ja, also [as] a black woman, where this company is going in terms of black leadership, I know the CEO said in this year's conference he wants to bring in a lot more black leaders,… I also start looking around and thinking, who are those candidates? Who are, I mean, where is the succession plan for all those people? And it's currently very thin, hey. It honestly is very thin.*

A BWEN noted how companies make excuses about inability to find black talent.

> *Modiehi: And it bothers me that in the South African environment, I do know that there are a lot of good black people out there. But when we do our recruitment there's always an excuse that we can't find them.*

Another BWEN noted how seriously the board takes the issue of EE.

> *Thakane: Even the Board itself, it's almost like it's not it's not, you have the BEE report tabled at the meeting. I sit on various Boards. They focus on financials, the Board. They focus on operations. Then they come to the HR report. But, you almost sort of browse through it. You know, and if a question is asked, it will always be like no, this person is 10 years to retirement or three or whatever. At the time that the person is due for retirement we will review the position. So, you still have that challenge.*

This HRM noted that even when they do find the talent, companies make excuses about the talent being too expensive and that this will cause pay scale problems.

> *Xhanti: Because she's qualified, she's got the experience, she's a star. But 'oh she's expensive that's my excuse.' My budget is 1 mil, she's on 1,2. I don't want her. She's gonna cause trouble. Yeah? Those are the subtle barriers. We have to look at those properly.*

This HRM admitted that there was insufficient representation of black women at the top of the organisation; an organisation that claims to lend itself to the employment of women.

> *Dennis: And if you look at board itself, there's only one woman, one black woman on the board, with the bulk again being male dominated. So whilst we can argue that the organisation itself, lends itself towards the advancement of women, the facts paint a*

different picture. And if you look at even the executives then of African descent, they're further down the food chain in the organisation, just even just women, in general.

The opportunity presented by the imminent retirement of white male executives does not appear to be underpinned by a coherent succession and EE strategy or plan.

Dennis: We have a long list of people who will be retiring in the next year, and by 2017 actually… And we've all said that the advantage of this list is that it is a list of mostly, in fact predominantly white males. Who have always been perceived to be in the old boys club, and this is an opportunity for the business to therefore bring on-board African females, black males, to begin to change the complexion of the business.

This LM indicated that poaching is an issue with black talent, and this is inconvenient.

Bertus: And then after a year, a bank or another company comes past, they write a cheque and the people leave. And that for me, although commercially, short-term is the right answer to let go, long-term it's just hard work.

The LM further explains that companies must be prepared to compete on salaries for equity candidates, within reason.

Bertus: Because …you've invested … you do it for the individuals, you do it for the BEE stats, for company's long-term commercial viability, all of that stuff. You have to get to a point where you're prepared to keep those people. Obviously within reason, because otherwise you're going to sit with two people next to each other, one black one white and [the] black person is gonna get paid 50 percent more. There's gotta be a balance but it's also supply and demand.

Another LM noted that token appointments are still an issue where EE is concerned.

> *Johan: Yes. I don't know how to sort of put it but I think the society and the South Africa business environment still struggle with things like a bit of tokenism and those sort of issues.*

Theme 2: Work-life integration:

Work-life integration relates to the balance that BWEs have to maintain in order to pursue careers. There is agreement across categories that this is a challenge, with three BWECs, three BWENs mentioning it as well as one HRM and both LMs.

One BWEC stated that company policies and procedures are less than optimal in addressing the challenges of balancing work and family responsibilities for women.

> *Mohau: That also contributes because they've got to try now and balance between the work demands, family demands and all that. So that's also a challenge, and it would be nice to have some flexibility when you are at that stage when you've got young kids as a mom. Now I'm not even talking black. It's just any female who's got young kids, you find that it would be easier if it can be flexible. Have flexibility at work, and unfortunately our company definitely doesn't.*

This BWEN was a single parent, with small children.

> *Mandy: I think more than a challenge and also another dynamic that I can even add is the fact that I lost my husband at an early age…So you find that it becomes extremely difficult to balance all those responsibilities. You've got to stay. You know you work a twelve-hour day and attend those meetings that are held at 7:00 in the evening while you have kids you know, and then you're not there to help them with homework and stuff like that.*

Another BWEN chose to work through maternity leave because she did not want to give the company reason to not employ women in senior positions.

> *Tshego: It's a continuous battle and of course in the process I've had three kids. So halfway through a project I'll be: I need to go on maternity leave, ohhhh and they're like: you see, that's why we don't employ women. Now you are leaving the project. So on each of my maternity leaves I have continued working. They had to bring stuff home. I'll be signing off invoices. So, but it was the only way to ensure that they do not use that excuse against women into the future.*

To meet the demands of a high-flying executive career calls for compromising family responsibility, because women do not want to be seen to require special attention, as this BWEN asserts.

> *Mandy: So for you it seems multiple responsibilities that we have as women especially you know in the younger days where you still have to grow and nurture a family, grow children and then you've got to aspire for this corporate ladder and make compromises sometimes, [chuckle] because you don't want to be seen wanting to be treated differently.*

An HRM noted that sometimes, even where the woman is married with children, the man is an absentee father and not supportive.

> *Dennis: And there's a statistic … to say the number of households that are brought up by women, single parenting households, it's unbelievable. So now, when you look at it, and concepts such as those, concepts of absent fathers or even if the father is present but he's abusive or he's just present by physically. But does not participate in any shape or form, in the nurturing and the bringing up of the children, you know.*

One LM touched on how travelling as a job requirement can be a challenge.

> *Johan: Well I know that she's a single parent… So I suppose that is a big challenge for her perhaps with the responsibility of a kid and then also really sort of sometimes travelling quite a bit. I think it's the nature of the job.*

Another LM shared his no-compromise stance on family responsibilities.

> *Bertus: If ... the job needs to be done to get the job done, and if you're a female and you have three kids I've no doubt that it's more difficult. But it doesn't mean that my expectation of the job gets reduced.*

Theme 3: Marginalisation:

Four BWECs, five BWENs and one HRM identified marginalisation as an inhibitor.

One BWEC mentioned decisions being taken outside formal structures, to her exclusion.

> *Bakang: By the time you get into a meeting, hau [exclamation] they've already talked about this. We met last week about it. Oh. So why am I here?. What do you want me to do in this meeting? What's the point?*

A BWEN likened it to being shut out of an exclusive boys' club, although one is supposed to be part of the team. It is so exclusionary that it feels as if members even have a language only they understand.

> *Thakane: Somehow …they speak the same language. They understand each other. You are speaking a different language, so it's almost like there is some sort of resistance to letting in, allowing new views and new opinions into the circle, into the boys club. So, it's a nucleus circle that you can never penetrate.*

One BWEN reported being made to feel like an outsider. Her not being South African born added to the marginalisation.

> *Margaret: I think they're almost making you feel like yes you not part of an insider. You're an outsider, and I think in my case sometimes as well I felt there almost a fall-back position was like well, also because you are not South African born.*

A BWEN reported that BWEs are only tolerated in the workplace, with even African males feeling they are the rightful people to be in positions of responsibility.

> *Nkuli: You have a situation where African males somehow feel that they are the rightful people to be in this office, and Indian people feel that they are superior. Not only are they superior, they are better workers, they are better this and better that and better that. So it's been tough yes. Immensely tough. Very difficult, and if one talks about being included I would say there is no inclusion here. No inclusion. Maybe people of colour are tolerated.*

This HRM stated that women are excluded from out-of-office activities, which it might be argued are team-building endeavours because they bring members together.

> *Xhanti: Typically, the ladies don't get invited. Ja because, 'What do they know about rugby!?' And also the darkies also don't invite them when Chiefs and Pirates are playing. 'What do they know about soccer?!' So the ladies are excluded.*

Theme 4: Stereotyping:

Stereotypes are assumptions made about how a group of people is or ought to be. Stereotyping was mentioned by three BWECs, five BWENs, one HRM and one LM.

This BWEC was likened to her predecessor and expected to behave as a police officer.

> *Nkosazana: Because when I came in, there was a lot of comments, about you know, 'HR is not very helpful, HR thinks they just policemen here,' you know, and that's not what our role is.*

This BWEN stated that it was assumed that black women are incapable of succeeding in the corporate world. They have to first prove themselves.

> *Thakane: You come in like I said almost at a disadvantage. You don't move from a position of strength. You have to prove yourself, okay. You come in, it's almost like Gaahele is black and Gaahele is female, therefore Gaahele is not going to make it.*

Stereotyping is not only gender based, but also racial, as this BWEN noted.

> *Mandy: It becomes doubly difficult for a non-white female and because there are those racial undertones and dynamics that come from the past ... So you fight against those stereotypes not just because you a female but also because of your racial grouping, because there's a perception about a certain racial grouping.*

Role incongruity may result if women behave outside of their allocated stereotype of being soft and nurturing.

> *Xhanti: So we get ladies into our system and we socialise them into thinking that you know it's good to be aggro if you're a man. And it's okay to be soft if you're a woman. So we now play these roles… we don't change anything.*

The prevailing perception is that men lead and not women.

> *Bertus: Exactly. It's almost where I have again, this perception where the males have to lead, so the guys run the business environment, right?*

Theme 5: Racism:

Racism was mentioned as an inhibitor by nine BWEs (three BWECs and six BWENs) and an HRM.

This BWEC experienced racial and age discrimination.

> *Nkosazana: That's been the challenge. And I think the fact that as well you are younger than everyone else, and you black [laughs]. It also plays a role. You sit, at times you wonder, you know, if I was a Marielise I wonder you know if this would be happening? And but you snap out of those thoughts and you think 'you know what I'm here to do this job and this is what I'll do.*

A BWEN noted that not only do BWEs feel racial discrimination, they also feel gender discrimination.

> *Thakane: Where you have black and white females, so as a black female you find yourself discriminated upon on different levels… the levels that I've already mentioned that affect women in general. Then you come to the racial issue, which is still an issue in our country… we all know it and we all feel it. Corporate South Africa is still struggling to get there.*

Interestingly, this BWEN reported that despite perceiving racism in the company, she did not believe her work was judged with a racist lens.

> *Modiehi: As much as I feel I perceive racism, I don't feel that the work that I produce gets questioned because it's me and I never at any point, when it comes to work, a lot of the stuff is more interpersonal or things that are outside of work. So, if I submit a project I never at any point feel that it is rejected because I'm black.*

A BWEN placed the responsibility for tolerating racism in the organisation on everyone.

> *Margaret: With the Ops Director I think he belongs to a different era, [chuckle] but the worst thing is he's been allowed to get away with it and with him it was just roughness and rudeness to everybody, but I think when it comes to black people there's a racial element attached to it as well… you know for me it was not a surprise that he ended up leaving because of using the "K" word.*

An HRM reported how racism had become subtle, unlike previously where it was overt and therefore easier to deal with.

> *Xhanti: From where I sit, the barriers are getting more and more subtle. Okay. When we started out in HR as young people, it was very clear, it was black and white and never the twain are going to meet. And if you tried to bridge that gap you were an 'opstoker', a trouble maker, and all of this nonsense…and in a way that was easier to deal with. Because you could touch it, you know and you would force the issue. Now it's more subtle, because everybody pays lip service … the barriers are more subtle.*

Summary:

This section presented the findings relating to RQ3. The top five findings by number of quotes were presented, which were poor implementation of EE, work-life integration, marginalisation, stereotyping, and racism.

There seems to be agreement among the BWECs, BWENs, HRMs and LMs that poor implementation of EE is an inhibitor of the career progression of BWEs; 11 of the 18 study participants identified it as such. In addition, each category of participant (BWEC, BWEN, HRM, and LM) mentioned it.

Work-life integration was mentioned by 50 percent of the participants as an inhibitor. It was mentioned by three BWECs, three BWENs, one HRM, and both

LMs. This level of support was surprisingly low, as the literature had indicated stronger support for this element.

Stereotyping had support from 10 of the 18 in the sample, with a mention from all four of the participant categories; three BWECs, five BWENs, an HRM, and an LM identified it as an inhibitor.

Ten study participants identified marginalisation as an inhibitor; four BWECs, five BWENs and an HRM. However, it had no mention among the LMs. Racism was identified by three BWECs, all six BWENs and one HRM. LMs did not identify racism as an inhibitor.

BWECs, BWENs and HRMs agreed on the perceived inhibitors. Two elements were not mentioned by all four categories of participant; LMs did not mention marginalisation and racism.

4.2.4 RQ4: How can coaching assist with accelerating development for BWEs to achieve improved career progression?

The findings for RQ4 were derived from the BWECs, HRMs, and LMs. The main themes that emerged from the interview questions were coaching objectives, coaching outcomes, and coaching experiences. Each of these was divided further into subthemes, and are presented hereafter.

For each theme and subtheme quotations are presented in the following order: quotations from BWECs, HRMs, and finally LMs. BWENs were excluded as they did not receive coaching.

Theme 1: Coaching objectives:

The subthemes for coaching objectives were identified as development, communication, confidentiality, confidence, work-life integration or balance, focus, letting go, and providing a safe space. The subthemes are depicted in Figure 4.

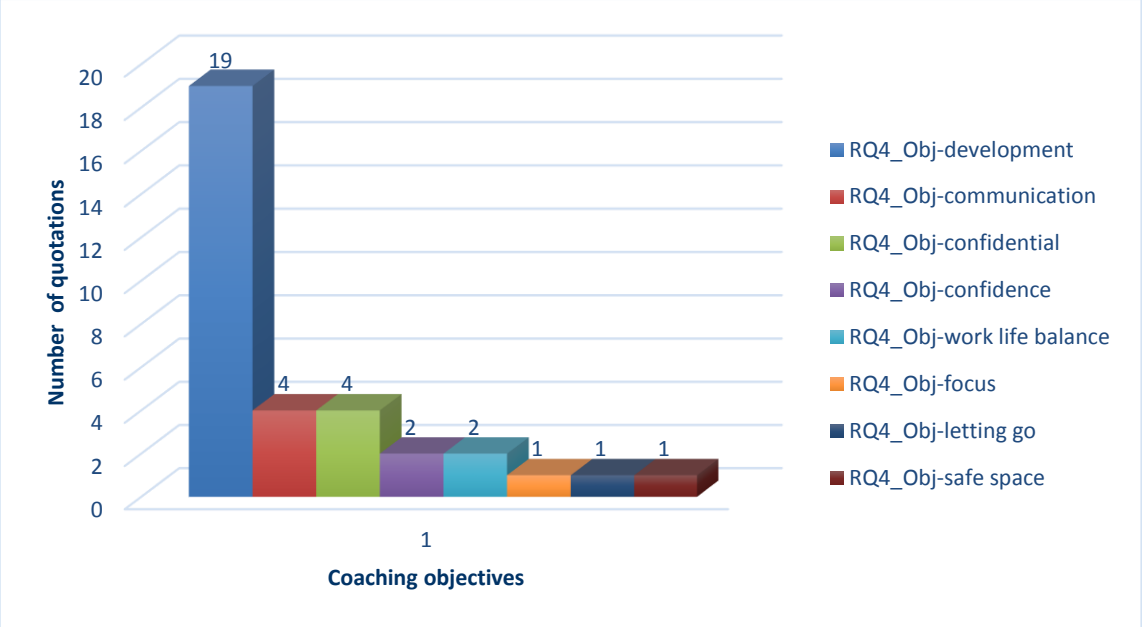


Figure 4: Coaching objectives

Subtheme 1.1: Development:

Development as a subtheme was mentioned by five BWECs, an HRM, and two LMs.

One BWEC positioned it in the context of development for succession.

> *Mosidi: It was just … I think it is part of a greater succession plan. Just to empower the next level of senior management and just to give the skills to be the best we can and you know lead Sixth Employer.*

An HRM characterised development as enabling access into core areas of the business so as not to be limited to staff positions. He referred to it as breaking the glass ceiling; referring to BWEs reaching the highest echelons of organisational leadership.

> *Xhanti: So the challenge there was to say how do you break this ceiling, firstly obviously you want to make the executives developed to the highest possible level, that's fine. But then how do we get the guys to get into the core of the business. The ladies?*

One LM was unsure of the coaching objective for his BWE but thought it would have been personal development.

> *Johan: Yes. I'm not too sure that that was what was actually handled in the coaching sort of process. It was a bit more personal development rather than a skills type of thing.*

Subtheme 1.2: Communication:

Three BWECs and an LM identified communication as a coaching objective.

This BWEC noted that coachees set their own objectives.

> *Mohau: Our own goals. So some of the things I had mentioned it was around communication, around being assertive and gosh I don't remember everything, but there were about four things that I was working on with my coach.*

One LM noted the objective for his BWEC's coaching was communication.

> *Bertus: I think one of the, the broader comments would be in terms of coaching, was to improve the communication and a level of assertiveness.*

Subtheme 1.3: Confidentiality:

Confidentiality in the coaching process was emphasised by LMs, including that the coaching agenda was set by the coachee. One LM indicated that he did not know the coaching objectives set because he did not get too involved with the process. None of the other participant categories mentioned this.

> *Johan: I didn't get too involved with the detail of the process. I would make some observations perhaps to the coach at the outset of the process, but I think it was a very confidential process. It was really not something that we got into too much detail of. The agenda was dictated by the coachee.*

Another LM reported that he did not want to probe, as it would compromise the confidentiality of the process. He noted that progress would manifest in work performance.

> *Bertus: There's no detailed feedback in terms of confidentiality or any of those areas, and I'm also very set on that I don't wanna probe because you also, once you probe … it carries the risk of compromising the relationship between the individual and the coach. If the coaching didn't go well I will see in any case in the results in the office. Coaching went well it will be in the results in terms of work performance.*

Theme 2: Coaching outcomes:

Subthemes for coaching outcomes were identified as good outcome, self-awareness, assertiveness, confidence, no direct correlation, and a sense of mission. They are depicted in Figure 5.

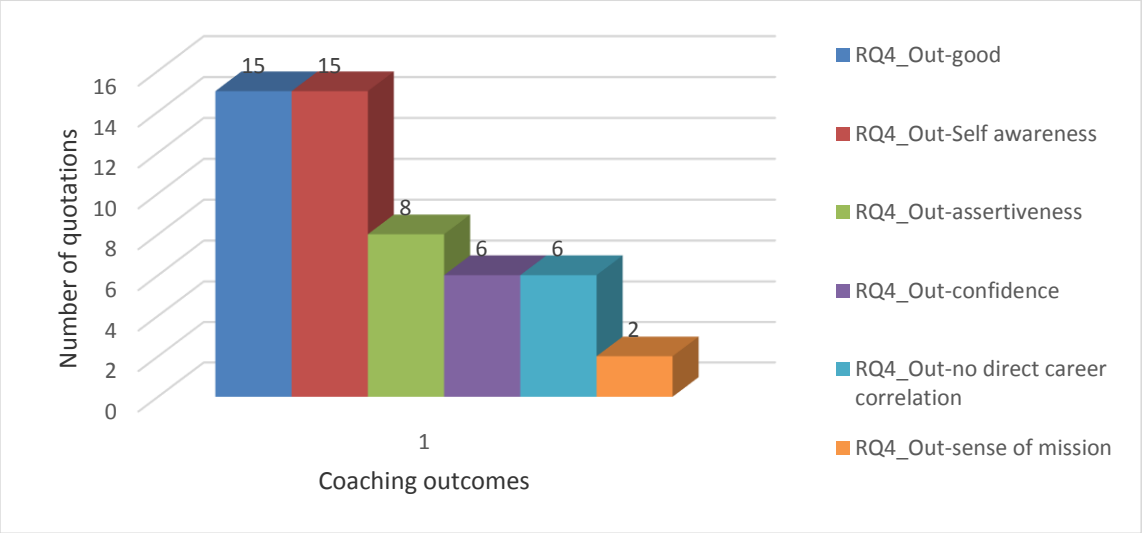


Figure 5: Coaching outcomes

The subthemes that are presented are good outcome, self-awareness, and assertiveness.

Subtheme 2.1: Good outcome:

Five BWECs and both HRMs were of the view that coaching outcomes were good. The term good means a successful process.

A BWEC achieved career progression after being coached.

> *Brenda: When you go through the coaching programme, it does sometimes help you to think differently about where you are, about your career in general. I felt that… it was time for me to move to bigger things. A much bigger role and when the opportunity came, I thought why not?*

Another BWEC felt coaching was a catalyst for her career being fast-tracked.

> *Mbali: I think coaching for me in my life has been more of a catalyst than anything, you know. I think I would have reached where I am right now without coaching, but it would have taken me longer.*

A BWEC found her leadership skills improved after being introduced to personality assessment in her coaching.

> *Nkosazana: I used to take my team which is the people that I had the biggest problem with and say ok if I analyse so and so, then I understand why they're like that … all of that helped!*

This BWEC found coaching helped her resilience in surviving sexual harassment at work that had left her feeling victimised. She reported reclaiming her power.

> *Mosidi: That has been my biggest wobbler … take the sexual harassment policy which I am an advocate of and I pronounce on, I educate people on, but the truth is they will close rank at senior levels. There's actually squat you can do. Coaching helped me.*

She elaborated.

> *Mosidi: I think what that coaching did, was actually make me step back and I think I was beginning to be the victim; to act and feel the victim … I was beginning to cede my power without realising it. The coaching helped me to step back and reclaim it and then my systems awoke.*

An HRM described how BWECs' career progression happened after coaching.

> *Dennis: I would say it has [been good] in the sense that you see some of them moving up, I mean taking up general management positions, being earmarked for bigger roles.*

Subtheme 2.2: Assertiveness:

Three BWECs and one HRM mentioned assertiveness as an outcome of the coaching programmes.

One BWEC reported that she became bolder in asserting her opinion.

> *Nozibele: Yes, and then she actually helped me overcome that you know in terms of how do you approach these difficult situations … So it helped me become more bold in terms of speaking my opinion and because she said: "Just try it. I know you've got a view. You've got a different view. They all men yes. They all white yes."*

This HRM reported that assertiveness improved for BWECs.

> *Xhanti: So, she started coming out and challenge certain behaviours, that were inappropriate and when you get the feedback from one of her MDs, they said "hey, she's coming out. We didn't know she's as strong as this. We didn't know that she can express an opinion so firmly".*

Subtheme 2.3: Self-awareness:

Self-awareness was mentioned by three BWECs and an HRM as an outcome of coaching.

> *Vuyiswa: So the self-awareness that came from those couple of sessions, I think I still have to this day ... even one of those it's called an Enneagram; that was like mind blowing for me. It like just pinpointed my exact personality and issues, completely. And to this day, I get a little affirmations from it. So that for me the coaching was more about understanding myself.*

An HRM concurred that self-awareness resulted from the coaching interventions.

> *Xhanti: I watched the process of these ladies being coached by, they were allocated various coaches, and when they came back in their feedback sessions they would actually go straight to the core of that and say 'I had this blind spot'.*

Theme 3: Coaching experience:

Subthemes for coaching experiences were identified as uncomfortable, challenging, coach misunderstood issues, good experience, safe space, and more personal. Subthemes for coaching experiences are depicted in Figure 6.

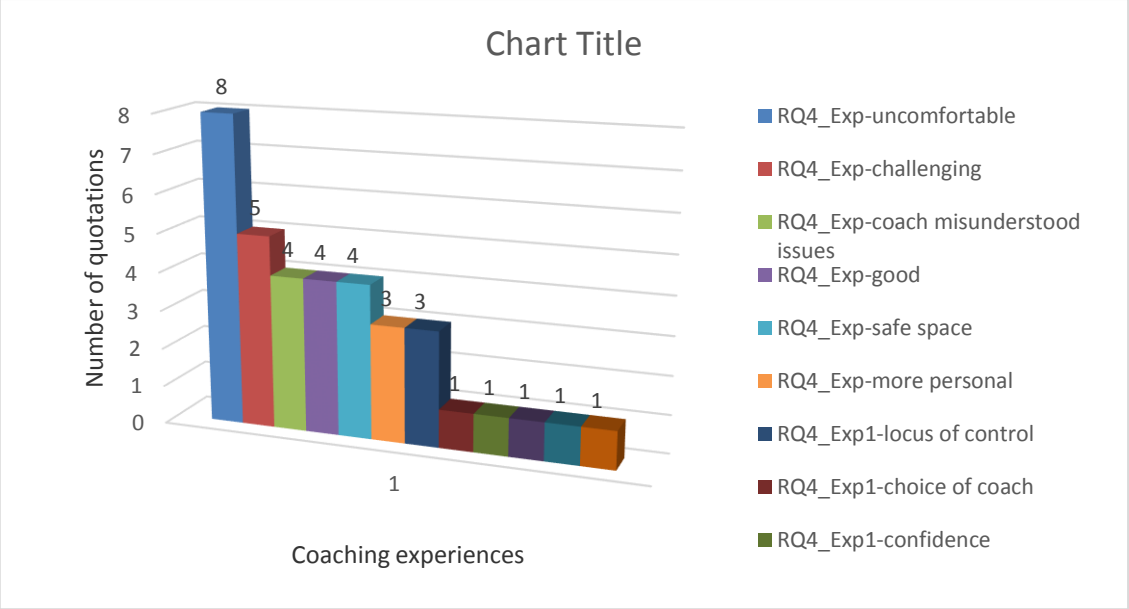


Figure 6: Coaching experiences

The subthemes that are reported are uncomfortable, challenging, and coach did not understand my issues. Only BWECs were asked about experiences.

Subtheme 3.1: Uncomfortable:

One BWEC reported being unsure why she was chosen, and was suspicious of the process.

> *Mosidi: As of the first workshop I went to was quite scary. The coaching was fairly new to Sixth Employer. So there's a lot of intrigue, suspicion, all of those things. Like why me? We all had why me.*

Another BWEC reported that the process was rushed. Deep issues were discussed without the requisite building of trust and setting the coachee at ease.

> *Vuyiswa: Like pit of your stomach, that type of feeling. And where it's coming from is just my personality. Like I said before, I try figure out the situation, person, before I open up. So in that situation, there's no time for all of that warming up and whatever. It's like 'ok! Let's go! Tell me all about you!' and it's not surface [issues]… So that's when I felt uncomfortable.*

Subtheme 3.2: Challenging:

Two BWECs found the experience challenging, in a good way. As one BWEC reported, she was being compelled to find the answers within herself.

> *Bakang: I found that really challenging at times. So that was also quite good. Because you really knew that the kind of coach was asking me really interesting questions and forcing me to get to the answer myself.*

Subtheme 3.3: Coach misunderstood my issues:

Two of the eight BWECs reported that their coaches did not understand their issues. One thought the coach trivialised her issues while another felt that the coach did not understand her issues the way she would have liked.

> *Mohau: Sometimes I felt my issues … maybe my coach didn't understand my issues. You know the way maybe I wanted her to understand them and see them.*

> *Bakang: After a while I just thought at some time she just didn't understand some of the things that I was going through and so I felt she was trivialising and simplifying things that I thought were bigger than they were, and maybe that was just me getting irritated and then maybe it was her getting focussed around the issues of me telling her.*

Summary:

This section comprises a presentation of the potential contribution of coaching to BWE career progression. Presentation was done under the themes derived from the interview guide: coaching objectives, coaching outcomes, and experiences the BWECs had of the coaching interventions.

Subthemes were identified for each theme. The top three subthemes for each theme were presented. The subthemes for coaching objectives were development, communication and confidentiality. For coaching outcomes the

subthemes are good outcomes, assertiveness and self-awareness. Coaching experiences subthemes were identified as uncomfortable, challenging and coach misunderstood my issues.

The BWECs mostly reported that the objective of the coaching was development; an HRM and two LMs concurred. One BWEC linked this development to succession planning and the HRM linked it to access to core business areas. There was less strong reporting on communication with three BWECs and an LM reporting it as an objective. Both LMs indicated that coaching was a confidential endeavour and they did not want to compromise its confidentiality by probing.

Four BWECs and an HRM agreed coaching outcomes were good. Outcomes included career progression for one BWEC, fast tracking of one BWEC's career, while another improved her leadership skills. A fourth BWEC reported that coaching had helped her deal with harassment. Three BWECs and one HRM agreed on the outcomes of assertiveness and self -awareness. One HRM, while not explicitly using the term successful, conveyed an enthusiasm for the process and its outcomes, which clearly communicated that he thought it had been successful.

Two BWECs reported that it was an uncomfortable experience. Five BWEs reported that coaching challenged them to find their own solutions. This was a positive view. One BWEC felt that the coach did not understand her issues, and one felt that the coach trivialised her issues.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter comprised a presentation of findings for a qualitative study into the role executive coaching can potentially play to enhance the career progression of BWEs. The findings derive from interviews conducted with BWECs, BWENs, HRMs and LMs. The latter three categories of participants were included for triangulation. Only BWECs were asked about their coaching experiences.

Chapter 5 is a discussion of the findings presented in this section.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises a discussion of the main findings of the study. The discussion considers the findings of the study from two perspectives, namely an organisational and a personal perspective. The reason for this approach is that research shows that organisational factors affect the career progression of women, because women's careers occur in the context of the organisation and its culture (Booysen, 2007; Kiaye & Singh, 2013; Liff & Ward, 2001; Littrell & Nkomo, 2005; Mathur-Helm, 2006; Vinnicombe, 2011). O'Neil et al. (2015), caution against trying to fix women, when their progression is constrained by structural organisational factors. In addition to organisational factors, personal attributes and behaviours are identified as necessary for women to progress in their careers (Mainiero, 1994; O'Neil et al., 2015).

5.2 Discussion of main findings

The following is a discussion of the main findings of the study, organised based on the research objectives, which were:

(1) To explore the career journeys of BWEs to understand their lived experiences.
(2) To explore what BWEs perceive to be elements that have enabled their success in attaining higher organisational leadership roles.
(3) To explore what BWEs perceive to be elements that have inhibited their success in attaining higher organisational leadership roles.
(4) To explore how coaching may contribute to supporting the development of BWEs, such that they can achieve improved career progression prospects.

The coaching contribution discussion was broken down into

(4a) Findings of how coaching has contributed to improving career prospects of BWE's.

(4b) A discussion on the implications of coaching against the backdrop of the overall findings for this study.

5.2.1 Career journeys of BWEs

This section discusses the top five findings of the career journeys of the BWEs, those being: family background, tertiary education, career entry, career progression, and career choice motivation.

Theme 1: Family background:

All the BWEs interviewed came from stable families and most were financially stable. Only two BWEs reported having struggled financially. That the majority of BWEs were from financially stable families would have enabled financial support from their families, consistent with research indicating that the socio-economic circumstances of a family have an impact on the growth and development of children. Lower socio-economic status could mean that children are financially unsupported and therefore are disadvantaged (Mhlongo & O'Neill, 2013).

All BWEs reported coming from families that were emotionally supportive. This finding is consistent with research that found that children who receive emotional support are more likely to persevere and succeed, than those who receive no support (Dass-Brailsford, 2005).

The parents of the majority of the BWEs were professionals, including judges, journalists, social workers, teachers, among others. This would possibly have influenced the BWEs to aspire to be professionals themselves. According to social learning theory, individuals learn from observing others, and emulating them. They cognitively process the information, projecting into the future the possible impact of learnt behaviours (Bandura & Walters, 1977). The findings of the study were consistent with the literature.

Theme 2: Tertiary education:

The vast majority are graduates with Bachelors' degrees and most hold post-graduate qualifications. Although they did not specifically ascribe their rise up the corporate ladder to their education, continuous self-development was mentioned as an enabler, indicating a valuing of knowledge and skill acquisition. Research shows that education is an enabler, more so for women than for men (April et al., 2007). Low levels of education were previously identified as an inhibitor of black people's progression to executive roles. However, this is no longer the case for black male managers, who are seen as over qualified or at least more qualified than their white colleagues (Myres, 2013). The findings of this study appear to confirm that for BWEs, low levels of education are no longer an issue.

Theme 3: Career entry:

Having entered the workplace through internships implies a certain level of ease of entry because they were recruited from university. Only two reported having struggled to enter a career. Van der Berg and Van Broekhuizen (2012) assert that based on the popular press, South Africa has high levels of graduate unemployment. However, these claims are based on people with post-high school certificates, not graduates from institutions of higher learning (Van der Berg & Van Broekhuizen, 2012). In a study covering the years 1995 to 2011, it was found that the unemployment rate among graduates (defined as those holding bachelor's degrees), is low in an international context. While there are unemployed graduates, the problem does not appear to be as dire as it is made out to be (Kingdon & Knight, 2007; Van der Berg & Van Broekhuizen, 2012). This coupled with their qualifications, goes some way to explain the relatively smooth career entries of the BWEs in the study.

Theme 4: Career progression:

The BWEs' progression was similar; once they entered the workplace, they progressed to leadership roles. Career progression was not reported to have been too difficult for most of the BWEs. However, one HRM reported that one of

his BWECs had been overlooked a few times for promotion; and one BWEN reported that her career had zigzagged, in her words. She started in an internship in a large corporation during the apartheid years. Upon completing the internship as a secretary, she struggled to be appointed because none of the white managers would have a black secretary. This is consistent with research that unfair discrimination was practiced in apartheid South Africa (Horwitz & Jain, 2011; Matandela, 2008). She was placed in a clerical role but eventually left the company. Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) identify reasons for women leaving corporations as, among others, lack of career progression and outright discrimination. Buttner and Moore (1997) concurred that women resign from organisations because of discrimination; they asserted that women preferred jobs that had growth opportunities and challenge.

One LM commented on the career journey of his BWEC. He did not know what barriers the BWEC had encountered in the organisation. He reported that he would be disappointed if he learnt that she had experienced barriers but had not spoken about them. This is consistent with the research findings of Cheung and Halpern (2010), supported by Ragins et al. (1998), all of whom assert that CEOs need to know the challenges of their women executives. Without this knowledge, CEOs are unable to assist in improving the circumstances that create the challenges. The LM may be correct in expecting the BWEC to share her frustrations and experiences of organisational barriers; however such openness requires trust in the relationship, which may be absent.

Theme 5: Career choice motivation:

With four BWECs identifying stimulation or challenge for their career choices, and one identifying contribution, it can be inferred that these are ambitious women. This is consistent with Buttner and Moore (1997) who assert that women want meaningful work. Job security was identified by two BWECs, with one reporting having stayed in a job for family considerations. She commented that she would have held a higher position had she relocated. This is consistent with April et al. (2007), who assert that women might stay in mid-level positions that allow for flexibility regarding family responsibilities.

Summary:

The career journeys of BWEs were similar in that they were all from supportive families that valued education. The vast majority had bachelor's degrees and most have postgraduate qualifications. They entered their careers through internships or graduate development programmes and proceeded up the career progression ladder. Two BWECs and one BWEN struggled to progress at one stage. The career choice motivation of the BWECs and BWENs include making meaningful contributions to the business and seeking challenge in roles they occupy. A BWEC mentioned family considerations in taking roles that became available. Another identified job security as her career choice motivation. The interesting element here is that they all came from middle class families and had high educational qualifications, given the general poverty of black people in South Africa and that literature identifies a lack of education as a career barrier for black people in general in South Africa. Beyond this anomaly, the findings are consistent with research.

5.2.2 Elements that enable BWEs' career progression

This section discusses the top five enabling elements of BWE career progression, those being: hard work, networking, access to mentors, self-development, and resilience.

These elements are discussed at an organisational and individual level as appropriate. The elements of hard work, resilience, and self-development are clearly elements that the individual has control over. The remaining elements, access to mentors and networking, straddle the organisational and personal areas, in that organisations may create women's networking forums and mentorship programmes as part of their leadership development programmes; individuals may also seek these opportunities on their own.

Theme 1: Hard work:

Three BWECs, three BWENs, one HRM, and an LM mentioned that delivery on the job through hard work was an enabler of career progression. There seems to be agreement among all the participant categories that hard work enables career progression. This finding is consistent with Davidson and Burke (2011), and O'Neil, Hopkins, and Sullivan (2011), who assert that to advance in their careers, women had to work hard. They have to deliver high performance consistently, which requires hard work (Mainiero, 1994). One BWEC and a BWEN emphasised delivery at all costs, whatever it took to do so, including working around the clock if necessary. Clock watching was frowned upon. This point is consistent with research that asserts that to be successful in their careers women need to work hard and long hours. The culture of long hours is accepted as the norm in organisations (Cheung & Halpern, 2010; O'Neil et al., 2011; Whitehead & Kotze, 2003). An HRM reflected that women needed to work hard in order to dispel stereotypes, which assume that they were incapable of performing certain types of work. This observation is consistent with research, which found that women needed to work doubly hard to counter the effects of negative stereotypes and to prove themselves in gendered organisations (Cheung & Halpern, 2010; Ragins et al., 1998). In a study of 21 members (not executive leaders) of an internal women's network, and six executive leaders in the same organisation, only the women's network members noted that hard work and long hours were necessary for career success of women. Of the six executive leaders, only one was a woman. She was the only one of the executives who identified hard work as necessary for career success for women (O'Neil et al., 2011). The findings of this study do not support this difference in perception of hard work among BWECs, BWENs, HRMs or LMs.

Theme 2: Networking:

Both BWECs and BWENs appeared to concur that networking enables career progression for BWEs. Half of them identified this as an enabling element, with a LM concurring. By contrast, HRMs did not mention networking. BWEs reported that they had built networks in and out of the company, with one

BWEN noting that because of her extensive networks she would always know someone who could help in whatever situation she found herself. Another BWEN noted that her strength was that she had strong networks among the country's political elite. This is consistent with Clarke (2011), and Higgins and Kram (2001) who assert that having good networks can improve women's career advancement prospects. Networks may be inside or outside the company (Bierema, 2005; Maxwell et al., 2007). Networking boosts career progression by making an individual visible within the organisation. Visible individuals are seen as effective, which improves career advancement prospects (Mainiero, 1994).

Theme 3: Access to mentors:

All four categories of participants (BWECs, BWENs, HRMs and LMs) identified access to mentors as enabling BWEs' career progression. One BWEC characterised having mentors as the biggest enabler for her career success, stating that in every job she undertook, she immediately identified mentors for herself, while another indicated that she had had international mentors at one employer. She characterised this as a period of true growth for herself. This finding is consistent with the assertions of a number of researchers, that having good networks enables career progression (Cheung & Halpern, 2010; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; Morrison & von Glinow, 1990; Ragins et al., 1998). An HRM noted that for him the value of mentors was the help they provided young, new employees to navigate the corporate environment and become successful. The HRM reported that this resource is particularly helpful in remote areas of the business where there may not be many resources. This is consistent with Vinnicombe (2011), supported by Clarke (2011), who assert that mentors can help new employees with navigating the new environment. The HRM saw value in mentors building up the confidence of new employees, which is consistent with Mainiero and Sullivan (2005). This HRM positioned mentoring as an enabler of the company's strategy of changing organisational culture to embrace diversity, consistent with De Vries, Webb, and Eveline (2006). An LM mentioned that a mentor might advise on technical matters; however, no BWECs, BWENs or HRMs mentioned this. This study therefore did not find that

mentors might advise on technical skills, which is consistent with Swap, Leonard, and Mimi Shields (2001) who report that, in their study of mentoring literature, they found little evidence of skills transfer through mentoring. They infer that mentors assist mentees by giving them thorough feedback.

Theme 4: Resilience:

There is apparent agreement among BWECs, BWENs and LMs that resilience is an enabler of career success for BWEs. Half the BWEC and BWEN sample and an LM mentioned how it was necessary to be resilient because there would always be challenges in organisations. This finding is consistent with research that identified resilience as an enabler of career success for women executives (April et al., 2007; Clarke, 2011; Davidson & Burke, 2011). Myres (2013) asserts that black South Africans generally have experienced high levels of trauma. For them to succeed in business careers despite this, requires high levels of resilience. This would apply to the BWEs in the study, as black South Africans in leadership.

Theme 5: Self-development:

Four BWECs, one BWEN and an LM identified self-development as a potential enabler of career progression for BWEs. One BWEC reported being like a sponge and always having her notebook at the ready to capture new learning. She spoke about how she asked for a stretch project and, to her surprise, was granted it. This is consistent with Alfred (2001), supported by Ragins et al. (1998) who assert that stretch assignments are not only good for learning, they afford assignees visibility in the organisation as well as access to key decision-makers. They provide professional growth by grooming individuals who undertake stretch projects for higher office.

Another BWEC spoke about self-development as an investment in oneself, noting that this signalled to leadership that the BWEC doing so is serious about their growth and development. A BWEN saw self-development as self-empowerment. She reported having studied a diploma course while working, and characterised that year as a ‘hard, hard year’. Consistent with this finding is

the assertion that self-development through training and development was the most frequently used method of gaining leadership skills (Hopkins et al., 2008).

Self-development did not necessarily have to be a formal course such as an executive development programme, as one LM indicated. This is consistent with Hopkins et al. (2008) who propose seven categories of formal and informal development including assessments, training and development, coaches (coaching), mentors, networking, on-job experiential learning, and career planning. Further, Kram and Isabella (1985) posit that peer relationships can enhance and support individual development at different career stages. They identified different types of peers, namely information peer, collegial peer, and special peer. Peer relationships are similar to mentoring relationships but differ in that they are more a two-way exchange than are mentoring relationships, which are one-way with a more experienced senior person dispensing wisdom. Peer relationships are more accessible than mentoring relationships. A mentoring relationship is with an older, more senior individual, while a peer relationship may be between people of the same age and or who are hierarchically similar. Finally, mentoring relationships are more useful at early stages in a career, peer relationships can last the lifetime of a career (Kram & Isabella, 1985). It is clear that self-development is valued by BWECs, BWENs and LMs as a career enabler.

Study participants appear to focus on self-development as an individual endeavour in that they do not mention that the organisation must provide opportunities for development, yet people development is an organisational as well as individual responsibility. It builds human capital for organisations and can be transformational. For individuals, it increases competence and improves job performance (Hopkins et al., 2008). Decision-makers seek competence in leaders at lower levels. Higher up the career ladder, competence becomes a hygiene factor and other factors are of more consequence. These factors include displaying entrepreneurial initiative, innovation, problem solving, and a mixture of experiences, in line management and staff roles (Mainiero, 1994).

Summary:

This section discussed the findings for enabling elements for career progression of BWEs, being: hard work, networking, access to mentors, resilience, and self-development. There appears to be general agreement among the BWEs and LMs about enablers of BWE career progression. HRMs agree to a lesser extent, having mentioned only two out of the five elements, being hard work and mentoring. The identified elements were consistent with literature; no new items emerged.

5.2.3 Elements that inhibit BWEs career progression

In this section, the top five inhibitors of BWEs career progression are discussed. The study found the following top five inhibitors: poor implementation of EE, work-life integration, stereotyping, marginalisation, and racism

The elements are all organisational issues, except work-life integration being one that falls into the organisational and personal domain. These issues are discussed from the organisational and personal perspectives as appropriate.

Theme 1: Lack of implementation of EE:

There seems to be strong agreement that poor EE implementation is an issue in BWE career progression. Six BWECs, four BWENs, one HRM, and two LMs identified lack of transformation as an issue.

One BWEC reported that black leadership was very thin in the company. She spoke about how the CEO had expressed the intention to increase black representation in the organisation. She questioned where the talent was going to come from given that succession planning was lacking. An HRM in the same company conceded that there is a gap in representation of not only black women but women in general. Ironically, he characterised the organisation as lending itself to women's advancement. Research has confirmed that EE implementation in South African organisations is poor (Mathur-Helm, 2005).

Another BWEN reported that EE reports were glossed over in board meetings. This pointed to a lack of commitment to EE implementation, consistent with research, which found that low leadership commitment was a major barrier to successful EE implementation (Booysen, 2007; Mupambirei, 2013).

In this study, an HRM identified a gap in gender representation at board level. He further reported that several retirements of long serving white men are due in the current year (2017). Given that there was no apparent succession planning, this appears to be lip service. Poor succession planning has been identified as a barrier to successful EE implementation in Booysen (2007).

One HRM and one LM mentioned high salary levels demanded by BWEs as an issue in organisations. The HRM reported that when suitable, well-qualified candidates were recruited, the excuse LMs made was that the asking salary rates were too high; that this would create a problem of salary inequity in a department. In contrast, the LM stated that the company had to be prepared to pay higher wages to BWEs. He attributes it to supply and demand, but tempers his comment with a note that this must be within reason. While these two managers direct their observations at recruitment issues, Booysen (2007) concurs that black talent demands high pay because of market forces. However, research ascribes this issue to retention failure in organisations (Booysen, 2007). Motileng (2006) supports poaching of black talent and persuading these people with money, it asserts that companies entice black candidates with inflated pay because they want to fulfil their EE targets and comply with legislation.

Theme 2: Stereotyping:

Stereotyping was mentioned by all categories of participants as an inhibitor of progression for BWEs. One BWEC reported being likened to her predecessor and being labelled unhelpful to the business, only playing the role of police officer. A BWEN reported that failure to perform in the job, as a black woman, is assumed. BWEs have to prove themselves and disprove this stereotype.

Another BWEN concurred, attributing the stereotype to racial bias. An HRM reported that organisations expected different behaviours between women and men. Men are allowed to be aggressive while women are expected to be soft and well mannered. An LM stated that the view in organisations was still that men were leaders in the business environment. These findings are consistent with research that identifies bias as a challenge women experience in the workplace (Heilman, 2001). Further, management is deemed to be a male domain because leadership traits match what society perceives as masculine traits, with women deemed to not fit the role (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011; Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). Such stereotypes can impact on how BWEs' performance is evaluated or indeed how organisational processes such as recruitment and selection are implemented. This is aggravated by the fact that there are no objective performance measures at the top of organisations (Broughton & Miller, 2009; Eagly & Karau, 2002).

In South Africa, racial stereotypes exacerbate discrimination against black women. Succinctly put, "Gender differences are exacerbated by race. Black and coloured women face stereotypes rooted in their historical employment as maids in the homes of white employers" (Littrell & Nkomo, 2005, p. 565).

Consistent with the findings of this study, gender stereotyping is a barrier to BWEs' career progression. Gender stereotyping is acknowledged as a barrier to women's career growth in the workplace. The barrier is subtle but certainly exists (Hopkins et al., 2008; Horwitz & Jain, 2011).

Theme 3: Work-life integration:

It would appear that BWECs, BWENs, HRMs and LMs agree on work-life integration being an inhibitor of career progression for BWEs. One BWEC expressed concern about company policies, which did not support women with child-rearing and childbearing responsibilities, noting that it would be helpful if flexible work arrangements could be availed. A BWEN reported being widowed at a young age, and struggling to balance work and family responsibilities. She

reported having to attend after hours meetings, and not being there for her children.

A BWEN said she was ambitious, wanting to climb the corporate ladder, and did not want to be seen to want preferential treatment even though work-life integration was a challenge for her. Another BWEN touched on how she continued to work even while on maternity leave. Her reason is that she did not want her taking maternity breaks to be used to exclude women from advancement in the future. A LM reported how one of his BWECs was a single parent and had the pressure of business travel. Another LM emphasised that work deliverables would not be compromised for the sake of accommodating a woman's family responsibilities.

These findings are consistent with research showing that traditionally women are expected to be the homemakers, and that they will be disadvantaged as long as this is the case (Al-Ahmadi, 2011; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; Mathur-Helm, 2006). Working long hours is seen as a sign of commitment to the organisation, thus disadvantaging women who have families to look after. Women might themselves decline advancement because they may not want to work these long hours without requisite compensation (Broughton & Miller, 2009). Company policies are mostly not pro-family and services such as childminding are not available in organisations (Mupambirei, 2013). However, even where pro-family policies exist and childminding facilities are provided, women who avail themselves of these services may be marginalised (Mathur-Helm, 2006).

Theme 4: Marginalisation:

There appears to be consensus among BWECs, BWENs, and HRMs that marginalisation is an issue in career advancement of BWEs. A BWEC reported having been left out of decisions made in informal structures. The decisions were presented in formal meetings as *fait accomplis*. A BWEN referred to an exclusive boys' club operating in the company, where the exclusion is so severe as to make the BWEN feel as though she did not belong. Even the language

used was as though they were speaking a language that she did not understand.

Another BWEN referred to feeling like an outsider, exacerbated by her being non-South African. A BWEN reported that there seems to be a hierarchy of belonging, where African males somehow felt that they are the rightful people to be in leadership, and Indian people felt that they are superior and are better workers. She noted that that is difficult to deal with and that she feels tolerated, rather than belonging.

One HRM noted that women were excluded from out-of-office activities that men are invited to. Findings here are consistent with research, which shows that there is gross marginalisation of black managers in the workplace. It operates in a way that excludes black managers socially. It creates self-doubt, thereby subtly supporting racial prejudice (Davidson & Burke, 2011; Matandela, 2008). Booysen (2007) asserts that the white male-dominated culture in organisations engenders a sense of marginalisation and alienation among black managers. She further asserts that these cultures push black people out of organisations. Women's family responsibilities may mean that they have less time for socialising or do not feel comfortable with the pub culture associated with such activities (Broughton & Miller, 2009; Mathur-Helm, 2006); however, this did not surface in the study.

Theme 5: Racism:

Nine BWEs and an HRM mentioned racism as an inhibitor to BWEs' career progression. There appears to be strong agreement among BWECs, BWENs and HRMs. No LMs mentioned racism as an inhibitor. The history of South Africa is one that was racist and exclusionary. This finding is therefore not surprising. It is also interesting that all those who mentioned this were black and that none of the white LMs did, implying a potential blindness to this challenge. One HRM reported that racism has become subtle, and the notion of a rainbow nation camouflages this serious issue. People pretend it does not exist. Racism is consistent with research that black managers experience racism in the

workplace (Booysen, 2007; Mabokela & Mawila, 2004; Matandela, 2008; Myres, 2013).

Summary:

This section contains a discussion of the inhibiting factors of BWE career progression. These include lack of implementation of EE, work-life integration, marginalisation, stereotyping, and racism. Most of these elements are organisational elements with the exception of work-life integration, which is both an organisational and individual issue.

Largely, the issues relate to the white male-dominated culture of organisations, compounded by racial biases left over from the apartheid era. The organisations require outsiders (BWEs) to assimilate and behave in a manner consistent with the culture. The culture of long hours in the office, coupled with family responsibilities women carry, and the operation of an old boys' club resulting in exclusion of BWEs, all conspire to inhibit BWE progression. These inhibitors are consistent with the literature.

5.2.4a How coaching contributed to enhancing BWEs' career progression

This section discusses the three themes identified for coaching as a potential enabler of career progression for BWEs. The three themes comprise coaching objectives, coaching outcomes, and coaching experiences. For each theme, three subthemes were identified and are discussed.

Theme 1: Coaching objectives:

Coaching objectives subthemes identified were development, communication, and confidentiality.

Subtheme 1.1: Development:

There appears to be strong agreement among the participants on development being a coaching objective for BWEs. It was identified as such by five BWECs, an HRM and two LMs. One BWEC positioned it as development for succession

while her HRM positioned development as a means to break the glass ceiling. The glass ceiling is a term that originated in the US to describe an invisible barrier for women getting to the very top of their organisations (April et al., 2007). Coaching as a development tool is consistent with literature. Development is one of the reasons for which coaching is utilised. Rosha (2014) found in a study that coaching was utilised for self-development, allowing the coachee to develop certain skills. After reviewing coaching literature, Joo (2005) found that coaching was among others often associated with development, behavioural change, and performance leadership. In their framework for women's leadership development O'Neil et al. (2015) describe how coaching can be utilised to develop the leadership presence of women. Further, they caution that in coaching women for development, coaches must be cognisant of the challenges women experience in organisations. These findings are also consistent with Fillery-Travis and Lane (2006), who assert that while organisations need certain capabilities, the individual must develop the skills to deliver on the organisational mandate.

Development has become more person-centred and coaching fills this space effectively. Kahn (2011) supports the developmental focus of coaching and asserts that coaching is used for developing leadership competencies. He posits that coaching is appropriate in the context of business, where complexity is a factor, asserting that training would be too generalised while consulting and psychotherapy would be inappropriate.

Subtheme 1.2: Communication:

Three BWECs and one LM identified communication as a coaching objective, while HRMs did not mention communication. It appears that there is better agreement among the BWECs and LMs than HRMs. Research shows that senior roles in organisations require proficiency in social skills such as building networks and building rapport with others as a key competence; it is more than technical skills. To be able to do this, effective communication is needed (Goleman, 2004).

Transformational leaders need to articulate a compelling vision and inspire followers to rally behind the vision (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Without effective communication skills it is difficult to achieve; therefore, developing communication skills is important.

One BWEC reported that she set her own coaching objectives. This is consistent with literature in that the coaching agenda is set by the coachee (Lennard, 2013; Stober, 2006). Person-centred coaching focuses on the coachee's agenda. The coach is only in the relationship as a facilitator. Agreed actions from the previous session are discussed, and new ones might be set or there might be a continuation of the previous ones, depending on progress (Rogers, 2012).

To be successfully implemented, coaching needs to have the support of organisational leaders and to be integrated into organisational structures and processes (Kombarakaran et al., 2008).

Subtheme 1.3: Confidentiality:

Confidentiality in the coaching process was emphasised by LMs, including that the coaching agenda was set by the coachee. One LM indicated that he did not know the coaching objectives set because he did not get too involved with the process; the other seemed unsure of the objectives set. Both cited confidentiality, reporting that they did not want to compromise the process by probing. It is apparent that they did not participate in objective setting or briefing the coach. If they did, there is no evidence that they gave it much thought. This was a surprising finding because for coaching to succeed and for the organisation to benefit from the investment, coaching must have the support of organisational leaders (Leonard-Cross, 2010).

The coaching space being a safe, confidential one is consistent with literature (Brock, 2008; Rogers, 2012). However, in coaching on the axis, Kahn (2011) advocates a systemic approach to executive coaching, that takes into account the complexity of the relationship between the coachee, coach, and organisation. Kahn (2011) posits that it is insufficient to focus purely on the

coachee's identified objectives. Ideally to be effective coaching must focus on the axis. The axis is used as a metaphor for the intersection of three dimensions in the system, the environment, the individual, and the coach. The LMs not knowing what objectives were set for their BWECs, it can be inferred that the axis was missed, and that the focus was purely on the individual. Organisational support is required for the success of coaching interventions, and they need to be integrated into organisational processes (Palmer & Whybrow, 2014).

Theme 2: Coaching outcomes:

The subthemes for coaching outcomes were identified as good outcomes, assertiveness, and self-awareness.

Subtheme 2.1: Good outcomes:

There was strong agreement among the BWECs, and HRMs, that the process was good (effective). Sixty percent of BWECs and one HRM were of the view that coaching outcomes were good. One BWEC realised after being coached that she had developed to a point where she was ready for career progression. When an opportunity arose, she took it. Another BWEC commented that coaching helped her reach her current leadership position quicker than she would have done, had she not been coached. An HRM commented that some BWEs had gone on to become General Managers after being coached. Leadership development appears to have been successful in this instance. Leadership skills were developed for another BWEC who, through her coaching engagement, learnt about different personality assessments. She had her team assessed, and found that the insights she gained through the assessments improved her leadership of the team, with which she had been struggling. Coaching is seen as an effective tool for successful leadership development (Kahn, 2011; O'Neil et al., 2015; Passmore, 2015). Hopkins et al. (2008) assert that coaching is useful for the development of women because it can be customised to address their unique development needs, which are connection, agency, authenticity, and self-clarity. These manifest throughout a woman's lifetime. A BWEC reported that she had begun to feel like a victim after experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace. She commented that

coaching helped her to be resilient and reclaim her power. In her words: “the coaching helped me to step back and reclaim it [power] and then my systems awoke”. Coaching has been shown to improve resilience as well as organisational well-being (Grant et al., 2009; Passmore, 2015). In this study, resilience was identified as an enabler of women’s career progression, necessary for coping with the challenging work environments in which women work.

Subtheme 2.2: Assertiveness:

Three BWECs and one HRM mentioned assertiveness as an outcome of the coaching programmes, indicating some agreement among BWECs and HRMs. LMs did not identify assertiveness as an outcome. A BWEC asserted that she became bolder as a result of coaching while an HRM noted that a BWEC started being seen as strong. This is consistent with research where coaching has been found to improve levels of assertiveness (Wales, 2002). Women are often seen as lacking assertiveness and needing to improve (Kiaye & Singh, 2013). Role congruity theory however, posits that women do not fit the agentic, assertive behaviours required for leadership (Littrell & Nkomo, 2005). A double bind ensues from this theory in that women who are assertive are seen as not fitting their feminine identity, and may be viewed negatively (Broughton & Miller, 2009; Eagly & Karau, 2002). A balance is necessary so that a leader is not seen as over- or under-assertive. Excessive assertiveness might render a leader socially ineffective and disliked. Under-assertive leaders are perceived as instrumentally ineffective, not meeting organisational objectives because they do not push enough (Ames & Flynn, 2007).

Subtheme 3: Self-awareness:

Self-awareness was mentioned by three BWEs and an HRM as an outcome of the coaching. Again, there was some agreement between BWECs and an HRM, with LMs not identifying this outcome. Joo (2005), supported by Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011), asserts that the objective of coaching is to improve self-awareness in order to improve performance.

Self-awareness is improved through feedback by a supportive coach, encouraging the coachee to examine their underlying behaviour and perception patterns. This insight improves self-awareness (Kombarakaran et al., 2008). Kolb (2014) developed the experiential learning circle. According to the model, learning happens in a circular manner, from concrete experience, onto reflection and observation, abstracting into general concepts, thereafter testing the concepts in new situations. The strength of this process is on focusing the coachee on the 'here and now' concrete experience to test ideas, using critical reflection to get feedback, and change the coachee's practices and theories (Smith, 2001).

The coaching space is a reflective space, and affords the coachee the opportunity to reflect, assisting the coachee to change or transform their assumptions, and create new ones. Mezirow (1990) is credited with developing transformational learning theory, which is harnessed in coaching (Lennard, 2013). One BWEC reported that the self-awareness that she developed from the coaching has stayed with her, and that she gets affirmations from it. Her HRM concurs that self-awareness resulted from the coaching.

Research indicates that the basis of effective leadership is emotional intelligence, which includes competencies of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill (Boyatzis & Boyatzis, 2008; Goleman, 2004). Improvement in self-awareness bodes well for the leadership development of the BWEs.

Theme 3: Coaching experiences:

Coaching experiences are discussed under the following subthemes: challenging, uncomfortable, and coach did not understand my issues. Only the eight BWECs were asked about how they had experienced the coaching.

Subtheme 3.1: Challenging:

The experience of coaching as challenging appears to be strong among those coached. Five of eight BWECs reported that the coaching was challenging, in a good way. One BWEC reported that it was good as it forced her to find the

answers for herself, which is what coaching is meant to do. Humanistic coaching posits that the coachee is capable of finding solutions, which are already within themselves. Through a Socratic questioning technique, the coach facilitates the coachee to surface those solutions. This result is consistent with the nature of coaching. The philosophical basis of coaching is that within themselves, coachees have the answers, and the coach's function is to facilitate surfacing these answers or solutions (Joseph & Bryant-Jefferies, 2008).

Subtheme 3.2: Uncomfortable:

Two BWECs reported that the experience had been uncomfortable. One described the experience as scary because she did not understand why she had been selected for coaching and was suspicious. Another reported that she was brought unprepared into the coaching conversation and expected to reveal deeply personal issues to a stranger. This is inconsistent with coaching principles. For coaching to be successful, certain steps need to be followed. Coaching readiness refers to a state where all parties in the coaching intervention understand what coaching is, why it is being undertaken, and how the process will unfold. Coaching readiness must be established before any coaching begins (McKenna & Davis, 2009). The coachee must want to be coached, and be prepared to exert effort and energy into the process. They must be motivated to change and be open to receiving feedback (Davis & Barnett, 2009). Coaching begins with the coach establishing rapport with the coachee and creating a warm relationship. Trust is a key factor in the coaching relationship. It needs to be built between coach and coachee before the coachee can be expected to disclose deeply personal information that makes the coachee feel vulnerable (Rogers, 2012; Stober, 2006). The organisation also needs to be ready because support and challenge from a leader create the impetus for a coachee to move forward in their coaching (Eggers & Clark, 2000). It is imperative that coaching is aligned to the needs of the business (Kahn, 2011).

Subtheme 3.3: Coach misunderstood my issues:

Two BWECs felt the coach had misunderstood and or trivialised their issues. This is inconsistent with research, which indicates that the coach has to allow the coachee to drive the coaching agenda. Issues of importance to the coachee must be addressed, not those which the coach deems important (Bordin, 1979; Denis, 2008; Rogers, 2012). Coaching principles include that the coaching relationship is one that is supportive and empathetic (Stober, 2006). This highlights the importance of matching in coaching engagements, and the compromise a poor match can pose. Selecting the right coach is important otherwise the process can derail (Kombarakaran et al., 2008).

Summary:

The discussion of the potential contribution of coaching to the career progression of BWEs included the coaching objectives, outcomes, and experiences that the BWECs had. There is agreement that outcomes were good. Specifically, good outcomes included a BWEC who progressed upwards and another who felt that coaching had fast-tracked her career. A third BWEC's leadership skills improved after being coached. For another BWEC, coaching built resilience and helped her cope with harassment at work. Furthermore, there was agreement that coaching contributed to improved assertiveness and self-awareness of BWECs. There was agreement that the coaching objectives were developmental, including improving communication skills.

However, some implementation issues were raised, around the coaching readiness of all parties to the coaching. LMs were unaware of the coaching objectives and believed that their involvement would compromise the process. The sentiment suggested that they value the process and do not want to compromise it. On the other hand, they missed an opportunity to support and challenge their BWECs. Getting the organisation ready and everybody aligned is important.

Coaching experiences were mixed, but an important highlight was the importance of coach/coachee matching. This finding is interesting and important

in that it highlights the importance of success factors in coaching implementation.

5.2.4b Implications for coaching

Having explored the leadership journeys of BWEs, this section focuses on the research aim, the implications for coaching. Discussions on elements that enable and inhibit BWEs' career progression are followed by coaching objectives, coaching outcomes, and coaching experiences**.**

Elements that enable BWEs' career progression:

Considering the enabling elements of hard work, networking, access to mentors, self-development, and resilience, there is an opportunity for coaching to contribute to the career development of BWEs by focusing on enhancing the strength of these elements for BWEs.

- *Hard work:* Coaching could contribute to assisting in managing the possible stress and burnout that might result from the hard work and work-life integration issues BWEs have to deal with. Coaching has been shown to assist in stress management because it provides a safe and confidential space to talk about difficult work or life challenges. The support that a coach offers is valuable in this regard (Thach & Heinselman, 1999; Jones, Rafferty, & Griffin, 2006). Grant et al. (2009) found that coaching reduced depression and stress. In coaching for stress management, coaches can assist BWEs to cope better with their busy lives. Coaching can also look at helping the BWEs to manage and prioritise, so that the hard work is not as stressful.
- *Access to mentors:* BWEs can be coached to seek mentors. Ragins et al. (1998) asserts that male and female mentors have differing strengths. Male mentors are more influential in organisations and can enable access to a powerful inner circle; female mentors are more empathetic and can support the self-esteem of a mentee or protégé. Coaching can assist BWEs to appreciate this difference and seek mentors of both

genders. This would potentially give them the benefit of the strengths of male and female mentors.

- *Networking:* Coaches could focus on assisting women in building the political skills needed in networking, which can be developed in a coaching intervention (Hopkins et al., 2008). Different networks serve different purposes, for instance, relational versus career enhancing networks (Clarke, 2011). Understanding the difference between the two might assist BWEs to seek the appropriate networks for their career progression. With skilful questioning, the BWE coachee can be brought to the realisation of the importance of networking, and to set specific actions around this objective.
- *Self-development:* This was identified as an enabler. Being a coachee affords BWEs the opportunity for self-development. Coaching is seen as an important development tool for executives (Jones et al., 2006). In the coaching engagement, coaches can help BWEs to identify competency gaps and take up appropriate learning and development programmes or activities. Coaching has been described as a reflective process, which enhances development or learning (Rogers, 2012). Hopkins et al. (2008) posit that coaches can advise organisations to support continuing education for women. This was applicable in the case of BWEs. The coach could utilise feedback tools to highlight specific behaviours that may not be career enhancing for a BWE. These could include 360 degree assessments, which if done well can highlight behaviour issues and link to organisational outcomes (Joo, 2005). Honesty and challenging feedback can contribute to the effectiveness of coaching. This is dependent on the coachee being receptive to feedback, and being willing to put effort into the development process (Hall, Otazo, & Hollenbeck, 2000). The BWE can be coached to actively seek feedback from her manager.
- *Resilience*: An important enabling element identified in the study, which can deal with the inhibitors of BWE career progression, such as work-life integration, which causes stress, and marginalisation, which can cause alienation and challenge an individual's self-concept. If resilience can be

heightened, it would stand BWEs in good stead. In a randomised study, Grant et al. (2009) found that coaching improved resilience and organisational well-being. Coaching can also assist BWEs to achieve more managerial flexibility. In a study to explore the influence of coaching on managerial flexibility, Bateman and Crant (1999) found that coaching could be positively associated with managerial flexibility development. Managerial flexibility includes proactive behaviour, adaptability, and resilience. Proactive behaviour entails scanning the environment to identify and anticipate problems. Adaptability is about adjusting to the demands of a particular environment; adjusting refers to adjusting behaviour. Resilience entails dealing with and recovering from adversity (Bateman & Crant, 1999).

Elements that inhibit BWEs' career progression:

These elements are identified as lack of EE implementation work-life integration, stereotyping, marginalisation, and racism. Coaching can contribute by enhancing the resilience and leadership presence of BWEs. By building strong coping skills through being coached, BWEs are better placed to reduce the effects of these challenges.

- *EE implementation:* The study identified lack of EE implementation. Noted in Chapter 2, the EEA directs employers to implement affirmative action steps. Affirmative action is about preferential treatment of designated people in attraction, recruitment, selection, promotion, and learning and development opportunities. BWEs are part of the intended beneficiaries of these measures. It also prohibits unfair discrimination, which includes harassment, among other actions (Horwitz & Jain, 2011). The study has found that BWEs have experienced sexual harassment and lack of protection from the organisation, even where there is a policy against such infringements. These policies are ineffectual because they are not internalised in organisations. Policies are developed for legislative compliance (Booysen, 2007). Esterhuizen and Martins (2008, cited in Mupambirei, 2013) assert that organisational leadership ought to focus not only on legislative compliance, but also on providing

employees with justice in the work environment. Poor implementation could imply that BWEs remain unprotected, as in the example given by one of the BWECs in the study. From a coaching perspective, it would be useful for BWEs to be coached for resilience in order for them to withstand the effects of a lack of effective EE implementation in organisations. Coaching in diversity has been found to enable organisational leaders to work more effectively with diversity (Motsoaledi & Cilliers, 2012).

- *Work-life integration:* Another finding of this study was that work-life integration was one of the career inhibitors BWEs face in workplaces. The framework for women's leadership development (O'Neil et al., 2015) identified work-life integration as one challenge that women face in the workplace. They recommend coaching to focus on the specific inhibitors by customising questions to help women deal with this challenge. Hopkins et al. (2008) assert that coaches need to focus holistically on women's development, using insights from career life stages to help women manage work-life integration issues. Further, coaches must advocate for organisations to use coaching on an on-going basis and help the organisation to develop a culture of leadership development. This entails a development focus, rather than a performance management focus (Hopkins et al., 2008).
- *Stereotyping:* The think-manager-think-male stereotype results in women being perceived as not matching the requirements of leadership positions. Women themselves may internalise this stereotype and limit their ambitions for leadership (Broughton & Miller, 2009). They have to work harder to prove their competence. Bias might affect employment decisions such as promotions, performance assessments, and access to learning and development opportunities (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Hoyt & Blascovich, 2007). Coaching women to request feedback more often and to seek high visibility assignments might improve their visibility and competencies (Hopkins et al., 2008). Coaching can help to focus women on balancing pressures of organisational environments, which do not value women's collaborative management styles. Depending on a

woman's development focus, coaching strategies can help them deal with hostile organisational cultures. If for instance she wants to develop her influencing skills the coach needs to focus on that (O'Neil et al., 2015). Coaching has been shown to improve resilience, which is relevant in this case (Grant et al., 2009).

- *Marginalisation:* Marginalisation is one of the challenges that need to be taken into account as women are developed for leadership positions. Through careful questioning, the coach can address the coachee's agenda. The focus could be developing the coachee's leadership presence and self-confidence so that they are sufficiently poised to address these issues in their organisations (O'Neil et al., 2015). Coaching can help to build the coachee's understanding of the political landscape in organisations, such as networking, and coach them to build relationships with individuals in the organisation or to join women's networks outside the organisation to foster a sense of belonging (Hopkins et al., 2008; McKenna & Davis, 2009).
- *Racism:* Coaching can assist BWEs to deal with racism by building on their resilience. Resilience is needed to deal with such trauma as black people in general have been subjected to previously (Myres, 2013). Racism is still prevalent in South African organisations (Matandela, 2008). Coaching for resilience would be useful in this instance. Grant et al. (2009) have demonstrated that coaching can improve resilience. Building leadership self-efficacy and authenticity, as proposed by O'Neil et al. (2015) could assist BWEs to deal with racism. They would have improved self-belief and would be able to stay true to themselves despite the challenge. Coaching might also add to feelings of wellbeing for those who experience racism (Greif, 2007). The coach can provide feedback to the organisation about the existence of this challenge and encourage the organisation to consider a wider leadership coaching intervention to include more executives. In coaching more executives for self-awareness and better understanding diversity, coaching can assist in mitigating the effects of racism on BWEs (Motsoaledi & Cilliers, 2012).

Coaching objectives:

Subthemes for coaching objectives are development, communication, and confidentiality.

- *Development:* Coaching is ideally positioned to deliver effective leadership development (Leonard-Cross, 2010). Development might focus on any leadership competency applicable to individual BWEs because coaching can be customised to the individual (Joo, 2005). In their framework for women's leadership development, O'Neil et al. (2015) assert that women's leadership presence needs to be developed. This is another area where coaching can be effective. Leadership presence improvements will assist with the self-efficacy, self-confidence, authenticity, and influence of the BWEs (O'Neil et al., 2015). Include a multi-rater feedback instrument to strengthen the impact of coaching; this has been shown to improve effectiveness by up to 60 percent (Thach, 2002).
- *Communication:* A key leadership competence; coaching might assist in improving communication skills of BWEs by building their self-confidence (O'Neil et al., 2015). This may enable BWEs to communicate effectively.
- *Confidentiality:* This is an important coaching principle (Stober, 2006). It is important that the LMs understand the need for confidentiality. However, they need to support the coaching exercise. They also need to ensure that the coaching intervention is aligned with organisational requirements (Kahn, 2011; McKenna & Davis, 2009). In the contracting phase, the coach needs to ensure that this is understood. The coach could encourage the coachee to give the LM feedback on the coaching, and seek feedback from the LM on how they are doing in the work space (Hopkins et al., 2008).

Coaching outcomes:

- *Good outcomes: These* included BWEs' careers being positively impacted by coaching. A BWEC was coached to be resilient and 'reclaim' her power after a sexual harassment incident. Continuing to focus on

leadership development in coaching can enhance the delivery of such good outcomes, as coaching has been shown to be effective in leadership development (Kilburg, 1996; Passmore, 2015; Rosha, 2014). Development could focus on improving the leadership self-efficacy of BWEs, to boost their self-belief and enable them to persevere in their leadership development activities (O'Neil et al., 2015). Coaching to develop resilience and well-being can assist the BWEs in managing challenges (Greif, 2007).

- *Assertiveness:* Coaching can assist BWEs to develop their self-confidence (O'Neil et al., 2015), which in turn can stimulate assertiveness (Wales, 2002). Inner attributes, such as self-confidence, have an impact on outer attributes, such as assertiveness (Joo, 2005; Wales, 2002).
- *Self-awareness:* Self-awareness has been characterised as the main objective of coaching (Joo, 2005; Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011). Coaches can assist the self-awareness improvement of BWEs by giving them reflective exercises and helping them to reflect during coaching engagements (Kaiser & Kaplan, 2006; Passmore, 2015). Another method can be for the coach to gather feedback on the coachee and when sharing feedback, the coach needs to relate it to the individual circumstances and context of the coachee (Hopkins et al., 2008).

Coaching experiences:

- *Challenging:* “The coach’s role is to develop the client’s resourcefulness through skilful questioning, challenge, and support” (Rogers, 2012, p. 8). By its very nature, coaching is a challenging endeavour. Coaches can assist coachees to feel less challenged by supporting them through the challenge (Bluckert, 2005). Self-efficacy has been shown to help individuals to be resilient in the face of challenge (Hackett & Betz, 1981). Coaching for self-efficacy could help coachees cope with the challenge. Too much challenge might derail a coaching relationship; therefore, coaches need to balance this element (Bluckert, 2005)
- *Uncomfortable:* This element raises coaching readiness in implementation. Before coaching takes place, there is a contracting

stage, at which transparency may help coachees to feel comfortable. Coachees need to understand why they are being coached; they need to be adequately prepared for the process with an explanation of what coaching is and how it works. The coachees should be involved in coach selection (Wycherley & Cox, 2008). It must be ensured that the coachees want to be coached and perhaps the coaching engagement should begin by getting the coachee coaching ready (McKenna & Davis, 2009). Trust is an important factor in a coaching relationship. If the coachee does not trust the coach, the coachee may not feel safe enough to open up to the coach. Trust extends to confidence in the coach's competence and may be broken if a coachee feels the coaching has entered a deep emotional level with a coach who is not able to hold and support the emotions (Bluckert, 2005).

- *Coach misunderstood my issues:* Many coaches struggle with achieving a non-judgemental stance (Bluckert, 2005). Coaching needs to focus on topics that matter to the coachee, or the agenda of the coachee (Bordin, 1979) and in so doing, adopting a non-judgemental stance towards the coachee, thus mitigating misunderstanding. The coach can also cultivate better listening skills and work on their presence so that they can be fully there for the coachee (Rogers, 2012).

Summary:

This section contains a discussion of implications for coaching in enhancing the career progression of BWEs. It was found that coaching can contribute positively to the career progression of BWES by strengthening the elements that enable BWE career progression. BWEs can be coached for resilience, wellbeing, and improving leadership presence in dealing with inhibitors. BWEs might be coached to request more feedback. Coaches can be advocates of organisation wide coaching engagements to improve diversity awareness and to create a culture of development.

The subthemes coaching objectives, coaching outcomes, and coaching experiences are included. Coaching objectives include development, communication, and confidentiality of coaching. Coaching outcomes included

subthemes good outcome, assertiveness, and self-awareness. Coaching experiences subthemes include challenging, uncomfortable, and coach did not understand my issues. Notwithstanding the discomfort and feeling that the coach had misunderstood their issues, participants overall agreed that coaching was successful. There is potential for coaching to assist in the development of BWE leadership skills, imparting coping skills to deal with environmental challenges thereby enhancing career progression, and strengthening the enabling elements for BWE career progression. Coaching readiness issues raised in this study contribute to strengthening coaching implementation, which can enhance BWE career progression.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter comprised a discussion of findings for this qualitative study into the role that executive coaching can play to enhance the career progression of BWEs. Only BWECs were asked about their coaching experiences. BWEs in the study are likely to have been influenced by their family circumstances, which for most were supportive emotionally and financially. This might have helped their self-efficacy and achievement focus, for them to have the academic qualifications they hold. Qualifications were helpful in career progression, and they are more useful for women than for men. They displayed resilience, considering that they are outsiders as far as organisational culture is concerned, and the hard work they have had to put in to prove themselves; all this while balancing work with family responsibilities. Organisational culture appears to be the most challenging inhibitor for BWEs in many respects. Even the poor implementation of EE might be attributed to the culture of exclusion, which wants to maintain the status quo. Coaching can certainly be a mediator and enabler of BWE career progression, with the proviso that it is integrated into organisational objectives, individual objectives, and is implemented appropriately, ensuring coaching readiness of all participants.

The next chapter concludes this research, and includes a summary of the findings and conclusions reached. Furthermore, it discusses limitations and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 introduction

The research topic of this qualitative research study was to explore how executive coaching could assist the improved career progression of BWEs in the South African corporate environment. This chapter contains a summary of the study's findings, a discussion of the limitations of the study, recommendations, and implications of the study for consideration by relevant stakeholders.

6.2 Summary of main findings

The research aim was to explore the lived experiences of BWEs, with a view to understanding what elements they perceive to enable or inhibit their career progression, and to explore how coaching might contribute towards strengthening the perceived enablers and addressing the inhibitors. The aim was supported by the following research objectives:

(1) To explore the career journeys of BWEs to understand their lived experiences.
(2) To explore what BWEs perceive to be elements that have enabled their success in attaining higher organisational leadership roles.
(3) To explore what BWEs perceive to be elements that have inhibited their success in attaining higher organisational leadership roles.
(4) To explore how coaching may contribute to supporting the development of BWEs, such that they can achieve improved career progression prospects.

6.2.1 Career journeys of BWEs

The majority of the women in the study sample came from functional, financially stable homes with parents in a profession. Even those who came from struggling families mentioned how their parents valued education, and strove to avail it to their children. They have good tertiary and post-graduate education. A conclusion that can be drawn from this finding is that education is an important enabler of career progression. It has to be at least at graduate and possibly post-graduate level.

A second conclusion that can be drawn is that a strong family background is important because financial and emotional support is enabled. Even those BWEs who came from struggling families spoke about how supportive their parents were and how they valued education.

The fact that they mostly had professional parents leads to the third conclusion, parents as successful professionals are good role models. It is likely that their upbringing played a part in developing their self-efficacy, which has been shown to be an important ingredient not only in leadership effectiveness, but also for success in other spheres of life. Women are usually seen as lacking self-efficacy. The conclusion that can be drawn is that the BWE participants' self-efficacy is likely to have been influenced by the presence of successful parents. These BWEs have demonstrated a presence of this trait in pursuing their studies to the level they have done, and in their career successes.

Career entries were relatively smooth, with most entering through internships or graduate development programmes. Once they had entered their careers, they progressed without too much hindrance, other than one participant who was overlooked for promotion a few times and another who was denied placement as a secretary after internship because white managers would not have a black secretary. The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that BWEs today still face inhibitors to their career progression.

The women's career motivations ranged from seeking stimulation and making a meaningful contribution, to family considerations and security of tenure. The

conclusion here is that women are motivated to make a difference in organisations.

6.2.2 Elements that enable BWEs' career progression

The enabling elements for BWE career progression were identified as hard work, networking, access to mentors, self-development, and resilience.

Hard work is required for success in the corporate world. A conclusion that can be drawn is that BWEs need to have a strong work ethic and consistently deliver good performance; which is not easy given the issues they have to deal with daily.

The second conclusion that can be drawn from this finding is that to succeed in corporate leadership BWEs need to continue honing their skills and knowledge throughout their careers, including their political and networking skills. Continued self-development is in any case a requirement in the fast-paced world of the 21st century.

The last conclusion in this section is that BWEs need to strengthen their coping skills or learn new ones. Building resilience and identifying support systems, such as mentors, to help manage the challenges are two coping mechanisms they can cultivate. While the individuals have a responsibility to empower themselves, the organisation has a role to play as well, in supporting the development of BWEs and removing barriers to their advancement

6.2.3 Elements that inhibit BWEs' career progression

The identified inhibiting elements are a lack of or poor implementation of EE, work-life integration, marginalisation, stereotyping, and racism. Lack of EE implementation is a recurring theme in research, despite researchers' recommendations that have been offered in pursuit of better implementation. A conclusion that can be drawn from this finding is that there are few if any affirmative action openings for BWEs in organisations. They are having to lift themselves and compete for progression.

From these findings, it is apparent that BWEs are confronted with hostile organisational cultures in which they have to operate. They face structural and subtle psychological inhibitors to their advancement. The conclusion that can be drawn from this finding is that organisational cultures and gendered contexts are a barrier to BWE career progression.

A third conclusion is that BWEs are still the main caregivers and homemakers and that work-life integration is a challenge for them.

6.2.4 Implications for coaching

The findings of this study are that coaching can enhance the career progression of BWEs. It also found that it is important to ensure that all parties to the coaching intervention are aligned and fully ready before coaching can begin. Further findings are as follows

Coaching objectives:

The objectives addressed by the coaching interventions were identified as development, communication, and confidentiality (LMs view coaching as a confidential intervention in which they should not interfere). The conclusion drawn from these findings is that coaching is utilised mainly for leadership development, which includes effective communication. Utilising executive coaching for development is appropriate for the career progression prospects of BWEs.

The second conclusion is that coaching interventions that are not positioned as part a holistic organisational people development strategy, can misalign the coaching process from organisational objectives. Coaching interventions need to be integrated into the development programmes of organisations and not be stand-alone interventions. Leadership needs to be engaged throughout the process and be seen to be supportive of it, including LMs being engaged in the process in order for them to be supportive of their charges' coaching journey.

The third conclusion that can be drawn is that LMs do not take an active interest in the coaching journeys of their charges, believing this to be interference and

potentially threatening confidentiality and therefore credibility and effectiveness of the process. While it is true that the coaching space is confidential, it is also true that the organisation is an important partner in the coaching relationship. In being disengaged from the coaching, coaching focuses entirely on the individual's agenda, which may not necessarily align with organisational objectives. The balance is a fine one, but leadership disengagement can potentially limit the success of coaching interventions.

Coaching outcomes:

The study found that the outcomes were good, in that BWEs' careers progressed, and resilience developed for one BWE. The competencies that were developed were assertiveness and self-awareness.

The conclusion that can be drawn is that coaching can enhance BWEs' career progression. A second conclusion is that leadership competencies are developed with coaching, in keeping with the objective of development as stated above, which bodes well for future coaching engagements of BWEs.

Failure to align correctly, coupled with leadership adopting a hands-off stance, might discredit the coaching process and waste the organisation's money. This finding strengthens the need for coaching to be part of a strategic development programme.

Coaching experiences

These were found to be challenging, uncomfortable, and that the coach did not understand the coachees' issues. A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that the coaching process was effective as positive outcomes were reported, this despite the fact that coaching is indeed a challenging process.

A second conclusion that can be drawn is that it is important to ensure coaching readiness and ease into the coaching relationship, and to build rapport and trust ensuring the coachee feels safe and comfortable in the relationship.

The last conclusion is that coaches need to be sensitive to the worldviews of the coachee, and in light of this, a coach/coachee match is important. It is also

important for organisations to engage coaches who are well qualified, who will manage the coaching relationship not only professionally but also ethically.

6.3 Limitations of the study

The limitations of this study are:

- Study findings cannot be extrapolated to all BWEs, for example to those in the public service, or to black women in middle management.
- Sample size is small and the study is confined to the Gauteng province of the RSA.
- Total objectivity is not possible as the nature of the study lends itself to potential bias, notwithstanding the measures taken to limit it.
- Qualitative studies cannot be fully generalised.

6.4 Recommendations and implications from the research

Recommendations and implications are discussed in the next section, focused at the organisation, coaching, and the individual BWE.

6.4.1 Implications for the organisation

Organisational culture:

The study found that BWEs have to navigate hostile, male dominated corporate environments, exacerbated by racial undertones. This poses a challenge to the career progression of BWEs and unless it is acknowledged and addressed, it will not change. As the drivers of organisations, top leadership need to be made aware of these experiences and hear the feedback about how BWEs experience the organisation. Although the leaders in this study had some idea about BWE challenges in their organisations, the assertion that they will be disappointed if challenges existed and the BWEs had not raised them, is indicative of some blindness to the depth and nature of the issues.

The recommendation therefore, is that organisational culture be addressed as a priority. What is needed is an environment that values diversity. This undertaking needs to be approached with the requisite sensitivity, seriousness, and boldness on the part of organisational leaders. Preferably, an organisational development (OD) approach must be taken, engaging outside professional facilitation.

As part of the OD implementation, it is recommended that a leadership development programme be implemented. On-going development must be a key element of company culture. It is important that the programmes are integrated into the overall people strategy of the organisation. Programmes that are not aligned to organisational strategy, risk being discredited because they do not address the strategic future needs of the organisation, and may fail.

A drive by the top leadership to be visibly engaged with the programme is recommended. Just being supportive of the programme implies a certain detachment. They must own the programme even though it may be driven on a day-to-day basis by the learning and development or HR department. Such programmes must include men and women other than BWEs, so that they do not become relegated to being BWE ghettos. Bierema (2005) asserts that women only networking programmes only serve to entrench patriarchy: BWE only development programmes would do the same.

The leadership development programme needs to be multifaceted, focusing on individual managers as well as at group level. A coaching programme for the top leadership, both at individual and group coaching levels, would add value in that it would assist the BWEs in the team to table issues in a safe, supportive, and managed environment. Trust issues can be addressed as well as the fears and anxieties of non-BWE leaders. In preparation for coaching and engagement, it would be advisable to conduct 360 degree and other assessments such as personality assessments. Feedback is key in behavioural change and a coaching readiness assessment is also helpful in this case.

Apart from contributing to culture change, such an undertaking would put executives on a learning trajectory in other business areas. Continuing self-

renewal is important given the fast pace of the VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) world.

Organisations often contract with coaching companies to provide external coaching for executives. The criteria for these engagements need to be carefully chosen to reduce chances of a mismatch. In a study of black men by Myres (2013), some black managers suggested engaging experienced white male executives as coaches. They saw an opportunity for the coach to challenge the black coachees' perspectives. This could risk becoming an exercise in assimilation. It would be more fruitful for organisations to confront the issues of a white culture and expectation that black people must conform. There needs to be new, shared organisational values that acknowledge all stakeholders' needs, building on a culture that embraces diversity and allows all to experience authenticity in the workplace. This will not be easy, or happen overnight, but if the country is to succeed, everyone must have a stake and feel a sense of belonging.

Organisations should support women when re-entering the workplace post maternity absence with, for instance a focused coaching intervention.

EE:

EE implementation is a challenge, especially if top leadership and the board do not prioritise it. It is a challenge for policy makers because they cannot legislate in a way that may be seen as draconian. On the other hand, companies can simply factor possible fines for non-compliance into their costs of operating the business.

Guidelines for implementation have been suggested, with one of the more thorough guidelines coming from Booysen (2007). The issue is for organisations to heed the suggestions.

Implications for human capital management:

It is recommended that learning and development must offer black women, below the executive levels, opportunities to attain graduate degree

qualifications. The likelihood of entering executive level is improved by such qualifications. The level of middle managers and professionally qualified individuals is the feeder level for executives and black women need preparation for those roles.

Leadership development programmes for middle management, professionally qualified BWEs, and others must be designed and implemented. A strong individual and group coaching focus is needed to ensure that programmes offered are integrated, thus aligning effort and focus for the business.

Human capital processes such as succession planning and career pathing need to be in place and aligned with the strategic objective of creating a culture that values diversity and ensures sustainability by growing capability for the business.

The performance management philosophy must have a developmental focus. A process such as the Leadership Pipeline is ideal for this purpose (Charan, Drotter, & Noel, 2010).

HR needs to evaluate and redesign policies and procedures to address issues such as work-life integration. It is disturbing that women will work while on maternity leave for fear of spoiling chances for other women. An understanding of the needs of BWEs in this regard is vital. It cannot be assumed that the organisation knows what is needed. The new policies must support the new culture that is in process of unfolding. It is axiomatic that business needs must also be borne in mind as policies are redrafted.

Learning and development policies, such as paying for BWEs' membership of networks such as the Business Women's Association and professional networks like the South African Chefs' Association are recommended.

6.4.2 Implications for coaching

Coaching implementation is crucial to the success of coaching interventions. Coaches must take care to ensure readiness for both the organisation and coachees, otherwise the process must not be pursued.

Coaches must be able to appreciate the perspectives of the BWEs and not trivialise their issues. They must also understand the context in which the coachee operates. This raises the question of coach-coachee matching. Coaches must be authentic and sensitive to the environmental circumstances of their coachee as well as their life and career stages, so that issues relevant to these stages are addressed.

Coaching focused on developing self-efficacy and self-confidence is important as women are often seen as lacking in these traits. Although the study did not find such deficiency among the sample BWEs, it is wise to include them. These contribute to leadership presence, a key component of effective leadership.

Coach for re-entry into the workplace post maternity, to help BWEs catch up with peers who may have moved on.

Help BWEs to understand what the organisation values, so that they can focus on activities that make a difference to their careers.

Coachees need to be resilient to operate in the corporate environment. Coaching can help them develop coping skills, especially in navigating the environment while remaining authentic.

Focus the BWEs on seeking feedback and implementing actions to close identified gaps. This might include 360 degree and other feedback.

Coach the BWEs in networking skills, and appreciating the need to network for career advancement, not only friendships. Help coachees to find mentors, and appreciate the importance of a mentor in their career progression.

6.4.3 Implications for individual BWEs

The individual BWE needs to appreciate that their career progression is their responsibility too. To this end, they must take measures to enable it. Building on the perceived enablers of career progression is as important as removing inhibitors. BWEs need to improve their political skills such as networking and understanding how to network for effective career progression. They need to

identify mentors and or sponsors in the organisation to assist their progression. They need to use coaching to boost their coping skills in navigating the organisational environment.

On-going self-development is necessary. BWEs might be coached to appreciate that it does not entail academic courses necessarily. Women do not usually get as much feedback as men. BWEs need to be coached to ask for feedback and to design action plans for implementation.

6.5 Recommendations for further research

The study's objective was to explore the leadership journeys of BWEs to identify implications for coaching in enhancing career progression for BWEs. The sample was of necessity small and limited to Gauteng.

It might be useful to extend a similar study to black women in middle management. This is the feeder group into executive management. Understanding their career enablers and inhibitors could prove beneficial in increasing the numbers of BWEs in the future.

It might also be instructive to understand the enablers and inhibitors of BWEs in the public sector. This would provide a needed body of knowledge about BWEs' career progression needs.

The elements identified in the study may provide a useful springboard for a focused study that tests these elements.

6.6 Conclusion

The study showed coaching to be an enabler of career progression for BWEs. It highlighted coaching readiness as an important part of ensuring success for coaching interventions.

Coaching can assist BWEs to manage the challenges they encounter in the workplace, as well as augment the enablers of their career progression.

Leadership development programmes should include as many BWEs as possible, and women only development programmes are not recommended.

Coaching for leadership development that includes elements accepted as characteristic of good leadership such as emotional intelligence and leadership presence could assist in supporting organisational change efforts, while also benefitting individual BWEs. Organisations need to address the unique challenges BWEs encounter in the work place and empower them to raise their own contributions to their career progression. Coaching is a valuable tool in enhancing BWE career progression provided the organisation and BWE are coaching ready.

The study shows that BWEs might face challenges and inhibitors to their career progression in South African organisations. They have to manage the usual challenges that women face generally, primarily hostile organisational cultures and work-life integration challenges, occasioned by the multiple roles women play. In addition, they face racism, a relic of the pre-1994 era of the country.

Organisational culture is the one inhibitor that can become a significant enabler if addressed. As per the study assumptions, the study identified coaching as an enhancer of BWEs' career progression. Coaching readiness cannot be over-emphasised for successful coaching interventions.

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APPENDIX: A LETTER OF AUTHORISATION: COMPANY 1



Company 1

Johannesburg

2 St. David's Place, Parktown

P.O. Box 98, WITS, 2050

Johannesburg, 2193

www.wbs.ac.za

Attention: Training and Development Manager

MMBEC RESEARCH AUTHORISATION LETTER

An exploration of the leadership journey of black women executives - implications for coaching.

Who I am

I am Gaahele Diseko, a student at Wits Business School. I am conducting research for the purpose of completing my Master of Management in the field of Business and Executive Coaching (MMBEC) degree.

What I am doing

The research aim is to establish enablers or inhibitors of the career progression of black women executives, in order to establish how coaching can assist these executives to higher levels of management.

I am conducting a qualitative study with sixteen (16) participants to:

1. Identify enablers that contribute to career progression for black women executives
2. Identify what detracts from career progression for black women executives
3. Establish how coaching can support development for black women executives in order to achieve improved career progression

Participation of Company 1

I am asking for authorisation to contact Company 1 executives to interview on a one on one basis. If they agree, I will ask each executive to participate in one interview for approximately one hour. I will also ask them to give me permission to tape record the interview. I tape record interviews so that I can accurately record what is said.

Voluntary participation

Participation is voluntary and they are not in any way being forced to take part in this study. The choice of whether to participate or not, is theirs alone. If they choose not take part, they will not be affected in any way whatsoever. If they agree to participate, they may stop participating in the research at any time and tell me that they do not want to continue. If they do this there will also be no penalties incurred and they will NOT be prejudiced in ANY way.

Confidentiality

Any study records that identify any individual participant will be kept confidential to the extent possible by law. The records thereof may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including my academic supervisor/s. (All of these people are required to keep participants' identities confidential)

All study records will be destroyed after the completion and marking of my thesis. I will refer to specific individuals by a code number or pseudonym in the thesis and any further publication.

Risks/discomforts

At the present time, I do not foresee any risks in any participant's involvement in the study. The risks associated with participation in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life.

Benefits

There are no immediate benefits from participating in this study for Company 1 or the participants. However, this study will be extremely helpful to us in understanding enablers and inhibitors of the career progression of black women executives, in order to establish how coaching can assist these executives to higher levels of management.

If you would like to receive feedback on the study, I can send you the results of the study when it is completed sometime after December 2016.

Who to contact if you any concerns

This research has been approved by the Wits Business School. If you have any complaints about ethical aspects of the research or feel that you have been harmed in any way by participating in this study, please contact the Research Office Manager at the Wits Business School, Mmabatho Leeuw at: Mmabatho.leeuw@wits.ac.za.

If you have concerns or questions about the research you may call my academic research supervisor Dr Tineke Wulffers on: 083 676 6084 or tineke@moyatf.co.za.

AUTHORISATION

I hereby authorise Gaahele Diseko to contact Company 1 executives as prospective research participants in the research to establish enablers or inhibitors of the career progression of black women executives and how coaching can assist in their development. I understand that the executives will participate freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that they can stop participating at any point should they not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect them negatively.

I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit Company 1 in the immediate or short term.

I understand that participation will remain confidential.

I hereby confirm that I am duly authorised to sign this authorisation on behalf of Company 1 in my capacity as Training and Development Manager.

Name:

Title

…… ……

Signature Date

APPENDIX B: LETTER OF AUTHORISATION COMPANY 2



Company 2
Johannesburg

Wits Business School
2 St. David's Place, Parktown
Johannesburg, 2193
P.O. Box 98, WITS 2050
www.wbs.ac.za

Attention: Group Human Resources Director

MMBEC RESEARCH AUTHORISATION LETTER

An exploration of the leadership journey of black women executives - implications for coaching.

Who I am

I am Gaahele Diseko, a student at Wits Business School. I am conducting research for the purpose of completing my Master of Management in the field of Business and Executive Coaching (MMBEC) degree.

What I am doing

The research aim is to establish enablers or inhibitors of the career progression of black women executives, in order to establish how coaching can assist these executives to higher levels of management.

I am conducting a qualitative study with sixteen (16) participants to:

1. Identify enablers that contribute to career progression for black women executives
2. Identify what detracts from career progression for black executives
3. Establish how coaching can support development for black executives in order to achieve improved career progression

Participation of Company 2

I request authorisation to contact Company 2 executives to interview on a one on one basis. If they agree, I will ask each executive to participate in one interview for approximately one hour. I will also ask them to give me permission to tape record the interview. I tape record interviews so that I can accurately record what is said.

Voluntary participation

Participation is voluntary and they are not in any way being forced to take part in this study. The choice of whether to participate or not, is theirs alone. If they choose not take part, they will not be affected in any way whatsoever. If they agree to participate, they may stop participating in

the research at any time and tell me that they do not want to continue. If they do this there will also be no penalties incurred and they will NOT be prejudiced in ANY way.

Confidentiality

Any study records that identify any individual participant will be kept confidential to the extent possible by law. The records thereof may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including my academic supervisor/s. (All of these people are required to keep participants' identities confidential)

All study records will be destroyed after the completion and marking of my thesis. I will refer to specific individuals by a code number or pseudonym in the thesis and any further publication.

Risks/discomforts

At the present time, I do not foresee any risks in any participant's involvement in the study. The risks associated with participation in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life.

Benefits

There are no immediate benefits from participating in this study for Company 2 or the participants. However, this study will be extremely helpful to us in understanding enablers or inhibitors of the career progression of black women executives, in order to establish how coaching can assist these executives to higher levels of management.

If you would like to receive feedback on the study, I can send you the results of the study when it is completed sometime after December 2016.

Who to contact if you any concerns

This research has been approved by the Wits Business School. If you have any complaints about ethical aspects of the research or feel that you have been harmed in any way by participating in this study, please contact the Research Office Manager at the Wits Business School, Mmabatho Leeuw at: Mmabatho.leeuw@wits.ac.za.

If you have concerns or questions about the research you may call my academic research supervisor, Dr. Tineke Wulffers on: 083 676 6084 or tineke@moyatf.co.za.

AUTHORISATION

I hereby authorise Gaahele Diseko to contact Company 2 executives as prospective research participants in the research to establish enablers or inhibitors of the career progression of black women executives and how coaching can assist in their development. I understand that the executives will participate freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that they can stop participating at any point should they not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect them negatively.

I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit Company 2 in the immediate or short term.

I understand that participation will remain confidential.

I hereby confirm that I am duly authorised to sign this authorisation on behalf of Company 2 in my capacity as Group HR Director.

Name:

Group HR Director

…….. ……

Signature Date

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE – BWEs

Name and title of participant:	
Date:	
Location and time:	
Participant's job title or role (confirm in org chart or other):	
Level in management (senior or top management)	
Experience (how many years employed)	
Years in management (clarify experience at senior and top management)	
Qualifications	
Have you undergone executive coaching?	

Interview questions

Share with interviewee that interviewer is a retired Human Resources executive with over fifteen years' experience at senior management level and has an interest in women's issues. Also mention that audiotape will be used. Assure the participant that anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained.

Section 1 - Women and careers

Question 1: Tell me about your career and how it developed to your current position?

Question 2: What do you believe are the elements that made it possible for you to be successful?

Question 3: Tell me about some of the challenges you encountered in your journey.

Section 2 - Coaching

Question 4: (For those that were coached) What were the factors that you required coaching on?

Question 5: How well did the coaching address these factors?

Question 6: Please describe your experience with the executive coaching you underwent

Question 7: What specifically stood out for you?

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE – LMs AND HRMs

Name and title of participant:	
Date:	
Location and time:	
Participant's job title or role (confirm in org chart or other):	
Level in management (senior or top management)	
Experience (how many years employed)	
Years in management (clarify experience at senior and top management)	
Qualifications	

Interview questions

Share with interviewee that interviewer is a retired Human Resources executive with over fifteen years' experience at senior management level and has an interest in women's issues. Also mention that audiotape will be used. Assure the participant that anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained.

Section 1 - Women and careers

Question 1: Share your sense of the career journeys of your black women executives and how they developed to their current positions?

Question 2: What do you believe are the elements that made it possible for them to be successful?

Question 3: Tell me about some of the challenges you believe they encountered on their journeys.

Section 2 - Coaching

Question 4: What were factors that they required coaching on?

Question 5: In your opinion, how well did the coaching address these factors?

APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER



2 St. David's Place, Parktown,

Johannesburg, 2193,

South Africa

PO Box 98, WITS, 2050

Website: www.wbs.ac.za

MMBEC RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM

An exploration of the leadership journey of black women executives - implications for coaching

Hello, I am Gaahele Diseko. I am conducting research for the purpose of completing my Masters in Management and Business Executive Coaching at Wits Business School.

I am conducting research on the exploration of the leadership journey of black women executives and how coaching can assist that journey.

I am conducting a qualitative study with 16 participants to establish the experiences of black women executives.

I am asking you whether you will allow me to conduct one interview with you. If you agree, I will ask you to participate in one interview for approximately one hour. I am also asking you to give me permission to tape record the interview. I tape record interviews so that I can accurately record what is said.

Please understand that **your participation is voluntary** and you are not being forced to take part in this study. The choice of whether to participate or not, is yours alone. If you choose not take part, you will not be affected in any way whatsoever. If you agree to participate, you may stop participating in the research at any time and tell me that you don't want to go continue. If you do this there will be no penalties and you will NOT be prejudiced in ANY way.

Any study records that identify you will be kept confidential to the extent possible by law. The records from your participation may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including my academic supervisor/s.

All study records will be destroyed after the completion and marking of my thesis. I will refer to you by a code number or pseudonym (another name) in the thesis and any further publication.

At the present time, I do not see any risks in your participation. The risks associated with participation in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life.

There are no immediate benefits to you from participating in this study. However, this study will be extremely helpful to us in understanding the experiences of black women executives in South African corporations and how coaching can support their career progression.

If you would like to receive feedback on the study, I can send you the results of the study when it is completed sometime after March 2017

This research has been approved by the Wits Business School. If you have any complaints about ethical aspects of the research or feel that you have been harmed in any way by

participating in this study, please contact the Research Office Manager at the Wits Business School, Mmabatho Leeuw. Mmabatho.leeuw@wits.ac.za.

If you have concerns or questions about the research you may call my academic research supervisor, Dr Tineke Wulffers on: 083 676 6084 or tineke@moyatf.co.za.

CONSENT

I hereby agree to participate in research on the Exploration of the leadership journey of black women executives - implications for coaching

I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop participating at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively.

I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally in the immediate or short term. I understand that my participation will remain confidential.

Name:……

……..…… ……

Signature of participant: Date:

I hereby agree to the tape-recording of my participation in the study.

……..…… ……

Signature of participant: Date:

APPENDIX F: CODE LIST

Research Question	BWEC	BWEN	HRM	LM	TOTALS
RQ1_Career choice motivation	22	0	0	0	22
RQ1_Career entry	32	10	0	0	42
RQ1_Career highlights	7	3	0	0	10
RQ1_Career progression	47	37	2	4	90
RQ1_Context	1	1	15	0	17
RQ1_Family background	18	8	0	8	34
RQ1_High school education	5	7	0	2	14
RQ1_Personality traits	6	0	0	1	7
RQ1_Tertiary Education	28	11	0	4	43
RQ2_Assertiveness	4	2	1	1	8
RQ2_Attitude	5	5	0	3	13
RQ2_Career progression opportunities	1	1	0	9	11
RQ2_Communication	9	8	0	1	18
RQ2_Competence	5	3	0	4	12
RQ2_Drive	11	1	0	5	17
RQ2_Employment Equity 1	0	0	13	2	15
RQ2_Hard work	11	12	2	10	35
RQ2_Integrity	0	1	0	2	3
RQ2_Luck	4	6	0	1	11
RQ2_Mentors	9	2	8	4	23
RQ2_Networks	10	18	0	2	30
RQ2_Positive role models	1	4	1	1	7
RQ2_Purpose	11	4	0	1	16
RQ2_Resilience	10	8	0	2	20
RQ2_Self-differentiation	3	5	0	1	9
RQ2_Self-knowledge	7	9	0	1	17
RQ2_Self development	15	5	0	2	22
RQ2_Support	9	7	1	2	19
RQ2_Work experience	6	1	2	3	12
RQ3_Age	6	0	0	0	6
RQ3_Bullying	10	14	3	0	27
RQ3_Career progression opportunities	15	0	0	2	17
RQ3_Confidence	4	6	0	0	10
RQ3_Culture	2	0	0	5	7
RQ3_Employment Equity 2	17	17	3	12	49
RQ3_Gender	8	7	1	1	17
RQ3_Gender disadvantage	7	10	2	5	24
RQ3_Gender representation	4	5	1	1	11
RQ3_Leadership	16	0	0	0	16
RQ3_Macho behaviour	2	0	6	0	8

Research Question	BWEC	BWEN	HRM	LM	TOTALS
RQ3_Management practices	4	13	0	0	17
RQ3_Marginalisation	12	17	5	0	34
RQ3_No knowledge of challenges	0	0	0	7	7
RQ3_Not speaking up	1	0	0	4	5
RQ3_Racism	14	16	1	1	32
RQ3_Relationships	12	2	0	2	16
RQ3_Reputational damage	10	11	0	0	21
RQ3_Role model burden	3	7	0	0	10
RQ3_Sexual harassment	16	0	1	0	17
RQ3_Stereotyping	14	15	2	2	33
RQ3_Support	22	1	5	0	28
RQ3_Underestimate own influence	0	0	2	3	5
RQ3_Undermined	9	8	11	0	28
RQ3_Work-life integration	16	14	3	9	42
RQ4_Exp-challenging	5	0	0	0	5
RQ4_Exp-coach misunderstood issues	4	0	0	0	4
RQ4_Exp-good	4	0	0	0	4
RQ4_Exp-more personal	3	0	0	0	3
RQ4_Exp-safe space	4	0	0	0	4
RQ4_Exp-uncomfortable	8	0	0	0	8
RQ4_Exp1-choice of coach	1	0	0	0	1
RQ4_Exp1-confidence	1	0	0	0	1
RQ4_Exp1-discovery	1	0	0	0	1
RQ4_Exp1-enthusiasm returned	1	0	0	0	1
RQ4_Exp1-locus of control	3	0	0	0	3
RQ4_Exp1-personality test	1	0	0	0	1
RQ4_Obj-communication	3	0	0	1	4
RQ4_Obj-confidence	2	0	0	0	2
RQ4_Obj-confidential	0	0	0	4	4
RQ4_Obj-development	8	0	5	8	21
RQ4_Obj-focus	1	0	0	0	1
RQ4_Obj-letting go	1	0	0	0	1
RQ4_Obj-safe space	0	0	0	1	1
RQ4_Obj-work-life integration	2	0	0	0	2
RQ4_Out-assertiveness	5	0	2	1	8
RQ4_Out-confidence	2	0	3	1	6
RQ4_Out-good	18	0	4	4	26
RQ4_Out-no direct career correlation	6	0	0	0	6
RQ4_Out-Self awareness	13	0	2	0	15
RQ4_Out-sense of mission	0	0	2	0	2
TOTALS:	618	342	109	150	1219