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EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA:
THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF THE SENIOR EXECUTIVE

A research report submitted by

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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

Wits Business School

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DECLARATION

I, Elizabeth Warren, declare that this research is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in practical fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in Business and Executive Coaching at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Signed at…….on the……..

_____

Elizabeth Warren

ABSTRACT

Despite the substantial investment in leadership development made by corporates around the world, limited research has focussed on the lived experience of leadership development, with the research available typically focussed on specific leadership development interventions. In South Africa effective leadership development is particularly critical given both the emigration of experienced leaders in the past twenty years, and the need to have a diversity of leadership which is representative of the population as a whole.

The study explored executive development in South Africa through the lived experience of a sample of senior executives, all of whom had reached "C" suite positions in either a Group or business line capacity. The interview process was inductive in approach, so the narrative was not restricted by assumptions as to what development interventions would be described by the research participants. Eighteen senior executives were invited to participate in the research, and twelve were interviewed, at which point saturation was reached. Whilst no quota was established for racial diversity, the racial mix was representative of senior executives in South Africa corporates.

A significant theme in the research findings was the importance of childhood experiences in developing the drive, resilience and ambition that would enable the foundations to be built for adult leadership development. Another key theme was that formal leadership development should be supplemented by experiential learning if it is to have significant impact. Despite mixed feedback on formal leadership development programmes, international executive programmes were seen to provide the participants with the opportunity both to network with others and learn from reflection, developing their life purpose and philosophy.

The research participants found that coaching and mentoring were important in supporting the development of their leadership skills, as such interventions could focus on their specific development needs. The power of childhood influencers, workplace informal coaches and mentors and other influential counsellors also appears to have been significant. There was a view that successful leaders "breed" other successful leaders.

Another key theme was that of self-confidence leading to self-determination. The self-confidence of the research participants appears to have been balanced by humility and a

willingness to listen to and learn from others. All the executives had a strong sense of purpose, often developed initially in childhood, and strong values underpinned their leadership identity. The executives also stressed the importance of work-life balance in developing as effective leaders.

A crucial finding of this research was that leaders face unique challenges of diversity and empowerment in South Africa, but that transformational leaders with a South African identity and Anglo-US educational and work experience can be highly successful. The challenge of international leadership development and work experience was found to be particularly beneficial in developing leadership skills which were appropriate for the South African corporate culture.

The findings from this research therefore suggest that leadership development is a complex process based on some innate attributes, enhanced through critical childhood influences and trigger events, and developed to full potential through a combination of formal and informal leadership development interventions. Achieving full potential relies on readiness to learn and the opportunities to gain valuable experience, particularly in adversity. In the context of South Africa it appears that “western” leadership development experiences can be adapted by executives to enhance their effectiveness in a South African corporate culture.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research was to explore the experiences of senior executives participating in a variety of leadership development interventions. These interventions could be formal or informal, self-determined or selected by the employer, and may have happened at any stage in their life.

1.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The research investigated the perceptions of leadership development interventions by senior executives, who are individuals in key positions in an organisation, either at C-suite level in an organisation, or in a major business unit. For this research, leadership development is defined as "every form of growth or stage of development in the life-cycle that promotes, encourages and assists the expansion of knowledge and expertise required to optimise one's leadership potential and performance" (Brungardt and Crawford, 1996, p.83).

Given the critical role that the executives in the study will play in the future success of their organisations (Burke & Steensma, 1998; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002), the selection of efficacious development interventions should have a positive impact on these organisations.

The research was based in South Africa, a country which has seen a twenty year challenge to meet its national requirement of suitably qualified and ethnically proportional executives for elevation to key executive roles (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003). African, Indian and Coloured ("AIC") candidates, in particular, are underrepresented in C-suite positions, relative to the economically active population, and "South African organisations are confronted with the difficult but vital task to implement a transformation process in a rather brief period of time" (Burke and Steensma, 1998, p.86). It will therefore be important to ensure that AIC high potential executive candidates receive development which will position a critical proportion of them to reach and operate successfully in C-suite positions and, in so doing, to improve the ethnic diversity at that level.

South Africa also has a particular need to develop a collective mind set of cultural awareness and inclusivity across its entire leadership and governance structures. This was a key consideration in the study as the "key challenge facing South Africa as a whole, and carried down to the organisational level, is to attain a cultural synergy that will accommodate the various cultures and traditions" (Luthans et al., 2004, p.521).

This research was based on the premise of the importance of selecting appropriate development interventions to meet the specific needs not only of a particular individual or a particular organisation, but of the individual in the context of the leadership and change requirements of the organisation (Bolton & Gold, 1994). Effective leadership is a critical competitive advantage for organisations, with complex, global organisations even more reliant on leadership than traditional organisations, because of complex matrix structures, distance and cultural differences (Friedman, 2000).

The determination of development needs for individual senior executives will depend both on their personal development needs and the development needs of the organisation. Leader development considers the development needs of the individual, and leadership development the broader development and change requirements of the whole organisation. Both are required for a systemic attempt to improve leadership effectiveness in an organisation (Dalakoura, 2010). Leader and leadership development for senior executives of the level included in this study may include a range of interventions, including leadership development training programmes; executive coaching; mentoring; peer coaching; action learning; stretch assignments and 360 degree feedback (McCauley and Moxley, 1998). Indeed as suggested by Orvis and Ratwani (2010), engagement in a variety of development interventions is critical for developing the adaptability required of today's leaders. Yet research on the effectiveness of leadership development is limited, which is likely to mean that few organisation are aware of the efficacy of particular interventions (Collins, 2001).

The conceptual framework for this research had as variables the possible formal and informal development interventions; self-perceptions of development needs amongst the senior executives; and the perceived success or shortcomings of the interventions. This framework was structured within the complexity of the lived experience of the

senior executive, and the research was also informed by the inter-dependencies and significant events of that lived experience.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.3.1 Main Question

How do senior executives perceive the efficacy of the various leadership development interventions which they have experienced?

1.3.2 Sub Question

i) How do senior executives define their development needs prior to key development interventions?

ii) How do senior executives describe the efficacy of the various development interventions that they have experienced?

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study fills a gap in research as it investigates, in the context of post-Apartheid South Africa, the perceptions of senior executives in three key areas: their development needs; their development outcomes; and particular interventions, whether formal or informal. As Collins (2001) noted, leadership development research, as opposed to research on leadership, is very limited. She analysed 54 studies on leadership development research from 1984-2000, and her conclusion was that more research is needed to fully understand leadership development.

There is some research which looks in an integrated manner at leadership development, but it has typically had a different purpose. In the case of Groves (2007, p.239), the purpose was to "present a best practices model for optimal development of the leadership pipeline", but the focus was on the effective integration of leadership development and succession planning, rather than the selection of efficacious intervention types. Much existing research focuses on the efficacy of specific leadership development interventions, or on specific development needs such as creativity or authenticity (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). In so doing, this research focuses on types of leadership or leadership competencies, rather than on holistic leadership development. This is despite the acknowledgement of the

power of a variety of development experiences in providing efficacious development of leaders (Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004).

As noted above, this study is also focused on South African senior executives. The post-Apartheid years have brought particular challenges for leaders who had operated in a protected and local organisational structure, and have now been exposed to global competition and more complex organisational structures (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003). The shift from a largely white leadership culture to an emerging culture with strong African "ubuntu" cultural underpinning, adds to the challenges of effective leadership and leadership development in South Africa today (Luthans, Van Wyk, & Walumbwa, 2004).

This study should provide guidance to Executive Committees and Boards who have responsibility for ensuring strong succession planning. Executives should find the conclusions provide guidance in their own development planning. Finally, the findings should be critical for leadership development and talent management professionals who have responsibility for establishing leadership development strategies and advising on specific development interventions.

1.5 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study focused on the perceptions of senior executives who have experienced leadership development. Other parties, including managers, coaches and work colleagues, will also have a perception of the efficacy of the leadership development interventions. However, the focus of the study was on a wide range of formal and informal interventions or triggers (D. V. Day, 2001; Groves, 2007). Given that many of these interventions are only known to the recipient of the intervention, the research excluded input from third parties.

The study investigated senior executives who have reached C-suite level at either Group or business unit level and as a result can be deemed to be successful leaders. Given their seniority, they were likely to have the level of self-awareness and reflection required to provide valid assessments of the efficacy of particular development interventions. The study interviewed the executives at one point in time,

but asked them to reflect on their original development needs and subsequent development interventions and outcomes.

Given the huge change in leadership requirements in large private sector organisations post-Apartheid (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003), the interviewees were restricted to senior executives in large private sector companies. Within that sector, executives could work for any industry segment as it was assumed that the research results will not vary significantly between market sectors. Given the title of the study, the executives all worked in South Africa, and, for ease of access, were all based in Gauteng.

1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Term		Definition of Term
Action Learning	:	Typically formal approaches built around groups of work colleagues, with the aim of learning by delivering work related initiatives (Conger and Toegel, 2002)
Efficacy	:	The extent to which an intervention produces the intended result
Executive Coaching	:	A short to medium term relationship between an executive and a coach with the purpose of improving an executive's work effectiveness (Feldman & Lankau, 2005)
Leader Development	:	Focuses on the individual leader and increasing his or her capacity to lead through the acquisition of skills, self-awareness and motivation to lead (Riggio, 2008)

Leadership development	:	The process of developing the collective leadership capacity of the organisation (Riggio, 2008)
Mentoring	:	A personal development relationship, typically between two work colleagues, where the mentor has particular knowledge or experience which may enable him or her to provide insights and support to the mentee in their development process (Dziczkowski, 2013)
Multi-Rater or 360 degree Feedback	:	Typically includes self-rating by the individual and feedback from subordinates, peers and the individual's superior. Formal feedback will be co-ordinated by the superior (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998)
Peer Coaching	:	A voluntary and mutually beneficial relationship between two work colleagues of similar experience who provide support to each other in incorporating newly acquired knowledge into their work practice (Waddell & Dunn, 2004)

1.7 ASSUMPTIONS

It was assumed that the senior executives interviewed had the self-awareness required to define accurately their development needs and the efficacy of particular interventions. Given their seniority, I believe that was a reasonable assumption. However, a lack of understanding of their "current self" before the interventions/s and their "ideal self", and the extent to which they have reached their "ideal self", and how that change has occurred, could have jeopardised the validity of the research findings.

I have assumed that those interviewed will have experienced more than one development intervention, and that their leader or leadership development will typically include both change which is the result of formal interventions, and change which is the result of experience and/or triggers. It was also assumed that there will be little variance in results between market sectors and that the lack of targeting of specific market sectors will not impact the validity of the results.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This section contains a literature review on topics of relevance to the research area. This includes exploration of the range of leadership theories, as leadership development needs assume specific leadership models (Avolio et al 2009). The literature review will consider leader and leadership development as two separate but complementary concepts, and definitions of leader and leadership development needs. Different leader and leadership development interventions, both formal and informal, will then be reviewed. There will also be consideration of any specific environmental issues which may apply to leader and leadership development in South Africa. The section will conclude with an overview of the key findings from the literature review.

2.2 DEFINITION OF TOPIC

My research explores executive development through the lived experience of the senior executive. The central focus of the literature review will therefore be various leader and leadership development interventions, both formal and informal. I will introduce the review with an analysis of leadership theories and the particular skills and attributes which are required for specific leader and leadership constructs. I will also review the extent to which South African based senior executives are subject to unique environmental factors in the challenges they face as leaders or in their development as leaders. As the subjects of this research are senior executives, typically working in private sector organisations based in South Africa, the literature review will focus on articles which have as their subject matter research in private sector organisations.

Leadership development is a complex topic. Riggio (2008), points out that many researchers argue that the field is so complex that there is in fact no theory of leadership development on which experts are agreed. However, he suggests that, in the absence of an agreed theory, general models of training can be used to create a framework for leadership development. Brungardt and Crawford (1996) define leadership development as “every form of growth or stage of development in the life cycle that promotes, encourages and assists the expansion of knowledge and expertise

required to optimize one's leadership potential and performance" (Brungardt and Crawford, 1996, p.83).

Leadership development is also complicated by the reality that, whilst leaders and potential leaders have their own very specific development needs, leadership development is no longer focused exclusively on the individual but increasingly on the transformation of the organisation (Conger and Benjamin, 1999). The literature review will therefore seek to identify the key findings of research in this complex field in order to inform the research analysis. Whilst the research was focused on perceptions of individual senior executives they are, however, operating within an organisation which will have development requirements for their leaders which are not specific to an individual.

2.3 LEADERSHIP THEORIES AND ATTRIBUTES

In this section I will review several widely acknowledged leadership theories, with the aim of identifying the types of leadership skills and attributes which are required if individuals are to be effective as leaders within one or more of these leadership constructs. I make the assumption that leadership development needs are some or all of the skills and attributes described by the relevant leadership theorists.

In considering leadership theory it has to be contextualised by defining leadership as a concept. Winston & Patterson conclude that "leadership is about two things- process and behaviours" (Winston & Patterson, 2006, p.6). They also argue that a leader is an individual or individuals who hire, equip, develop and influence one or more followers, and focus the followers on the organisation's goals so that the follower willingly expends energy to support the achievement of those goals. The leader accomplishes this by building credibility and trust with the followers that shapes their attitudes and behaviours (Winston & Patterson, 2006). A leader also has to present their organisation to outside audiences in such a way that the audiences understand the organisation's purpose and goals, and can see the purpose and goals in the behaviour of the leader (Winston & Patterson, 2006). Leadership is no longer viewed as an individual characteristic but, given the criticality of followership to the concept of leadership, is seen as shared, relational and a complex social dynamic (Avolio, 2007).

Other definitions of leaders include one which sees the primary functions of leaders as influence and persuasion (Portugal & Yukl, 1994). Some researchers see leaders as action oriented, whilst strategic planning is seen as a key skill by others (Staub, 1996). Effective use of communications skills is also key (Kotter, 1990). Another definition is that business CEOs need to move from managers to leaders where they gain trust, exercise justice and are sufficiently confident to be humble (Bower, 1997). Other broadly described attributes include the ability to manage change (E. Murphy, 1996), challenge the status quo (Caroselli, 2000), call forth authentic action (Moxley, 2000), and the need for perception and insight into the realities of the world (Schein, 1992). Intuition is also seen as a critical skill learned through experience (Janesick, 2001). Active listening in leaders has been shown to result in increased performance by followers (Rutter, 2003). Finally having, emphasizing and enforcing strong ethics is seen as an important leadership attribute (Stettner, 2000).

The attributes of leaders noted above appear in one or more of the leadership theories portrayed in current academic research including servant leadership, transformational leadership and authentic leadership theories. Detailed below is an outline of these theories with a focus on the skills and attributes which these theories require of leaders, as it is those skills and attributes which will determine the leadership development needs which are at the heart of my research.

Winston & Patterson base their definition of leadership on the theory of servant leadership, where leaders have the "qualities of humility; concern for others; controlled discipline; seeking what is good and right for the organization; showing mercy; focussing on the purpose of the organization and on the wellbeing of the followers and creating peace in the organization" (p.9). Spears & Lawrence (2004) list ten characteristics of servant leadership: listening; empathy; healing; awareness; persuasion; conceptualisation; foresight; stewardship; commitment and building community. Thus the theory of servant leadership includes within it many of the characteristics of leaders noted above.

The concept of strategic leadership has become a critical focus of much current leadership theory (Nkomo & Kriek, 2011). In the complex, global and highly competitive wold in which companies now operate, strategic leadership is seen as of

paramount importance. Research suggests that strategic leadership has greatest impact when the organisation is required to go through a process of change (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). As a result, change management capabilities are seen as a key element of effective strategic leadership. Strategic leadership theory emphasises the style and skills that executives require to determine an effective strategic direction for their companies (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001).

A literature review of papers on authentic leadership reveals that there is no single agreed definition of authentic leadership. In one widely cited article there is the suggestion that authentic leaders possess self-knowledge and have clarity about, and act on, the basis of their values and convictions (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). According to other researchers an authentic leader "owns" their personal experiences and through a process of reflection has created original values and convictions (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Authentic leaders are also seen to have high levels of integrity and are highly transparent (W. L. Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005). Authentic leadership theory does not focus on leadership style or behaviours but rather on leadership qualities (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Shamir & Eilam (2005), define authentic leaders on the basis of their self-concepts and the relationship between their self-concepts and their actions. They see the role of the leader as a central component of their self-concept; their goals are self-concordant and are their authentic choices, and their behaviour is consistent with their self-concept. Perhaps most fundamentally in authentic leadership theory, the role and the self are relatively undifferentiated (W. L. Gardner & Avolio, 1998).

Authentic leadership as a construct was developed in response to the big corporate scandals which were deemed to be the result of a decrease in ethical leadership (Avolio, Luthans et al 2004). There was a belief that there is a business need for leaders who will conduct business in an ethical, socially responsible manner (Cooper, Scandura, & Schriesheim, 2005), and key attributes of authentic leaders are seen to be purpose, values, heart, relationships and self-discipline (George, 2003). An authentic leader must achieve authenticity through self-awareness, self-acceptance and authentic actions and relationships (W. L. Gardner et al., 2005).

Key proponents of authentic leadership as a construct propose that the developmental process for authentic leadership starts with how the individual interprets their life experiences and trigger events, which create further self-development (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). For authentic leaders, role models who have high levels of integrity, trustworthiness and transparency are also likely to have been influential in their development (W. L. Gardner et al., 2005).

Finally, transformational leadership is also a widely studied leadership theory. In considering the attributes of transformational leaders, they are seen to display more citizenship behaviours such as altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy and civic virtue, and share these behaviours with their followers. Transformational leaders are proactive and raise follower awareness for collective rather than self-interest, and help followers achieve challenging goals. The attributes of transformational leaders include charisma and focussing on higher order ideals; charismatic actions centred on values, beliefs and a sense of mission; inspirational motivation; intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003). Transformational or charismatic leadership theories are terms used alternately. Transformational or charismatic leadership requires individuals to inspire those around them to pursue the greater vision (Bass, 1996).

There are many other new leadership perspectives, most of which have no theoretical basis, but what they tend to have in common is that leadership effectiveness depends less on individual action and more on teamwork and shared accountability (Klenke, 2007).

In conclusion, there are a significant number of leadership theories current in the literature, and leadership development needs and attributes which are based on the various theories. There are many overlaps between these theories, with servant leaders having many of the same attributes as authentic leaders (George, 2003), and there is also an argument that authentic leaders may or may not be transformational leaders (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). However, there is also an acknowledgement that the two constructs are similar (May, Chan, Hodges, & Avolio, 2003). Indeed there is also an argument that authentic leadership is a “root construct” on which other positive

approaches to leadership such as transformational and servant can be built (Avolio & Gardner, 2005) Given these overlaps I have chosen in my research analysis to consider the skills and attributes required of positive and successful leaders, rather than attempting to differentiate leaders according to a specific leadership theory. In so doing I have identified skills and attributes which have been included in all or most of the current widely researched leadership theories.

My position on the research analysis has been further influenced as it is difficult to find evidence based leadership development to determine whether leaders or leadership can be developed using one or more specific theories of leadership (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009). In considering whether or not authentic leaders are born or can be developed, one paper suggests that development is possible but may need to be a longer term commitment that involves training, one on one coaching and trigger events. They further suggest that key trigger events that stimulate personal growth and development could be important components of authentic leadership development (Cooper et al., 2005). May et al. (2003) believe that most people have the ability to become authentic leaders but Cooper et al. (2005) disagree, suggesting that authentic behaviours are value based, and are shaped by culture or experiences. One study of twins showed that approximately 30% of the variation in leadership style was inherited and the remainder could be attributed to environmental factors such as different role models or early development opportunities. The context one grows up in and later works in is therefore more critical that heritability (Arvey, Zhang, Avolio, & Krueger, 2007). However, relatively little work has been done to substantiate whether leadership can actually be developed (Avolio et al., 2009).

2.4 LEADER AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

My research explores senior executives' experience of leader and leadership development, both formal and informal. This section of the literature review will consider leadership development theory and research on the processes required to develop effective leaders and create leadership capacity in organisations. Over the past 10-15 years there has been an active field of theory building and research in leadership development (D. V. Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, & McKee, 2014), and I will seek to provide an overview of this research. In my research analysis I will then consider the extent to which my findings support or further expand the current theory.

In section 2.3 I concluded by suggesting that it is not possible to simply select a leadership theory and then to determine development based on that theory. This conclusion is supported by researchers who argue that one cannot base development on a particular leadership theory because development involves a complex set of processes that need to be understood (D. V. Day et al., 2014). As individual leader development happens in the context of adult development (D. V. Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2009), it is important to focus on development as much as leadership to understand the process of leadership development.

In reviewing the recent research on leadership development, a number of factors are all deemed to be central to the notion of developing the expert leader. One group of researchers found that skills, experience, learning and personality are all central (Lord & Hall, 2005). Challenging in part these assumptions, another highly cited article argues that there is little empirical evidence to suggest that experience plays an important role in developing effective leadership (D. V. Day, 2010). More specifically it is argued that leaders "learn from challenging work, from solving complex problems, and from leading a team" (Hirst, Mann, Bain, Pirola-Merlo, & Richver, 2004) (p.321).

In the past 15 years leadership scholars have also begun focusing attention on the particular leadership skills that can be developed as a result of development processes. In a US military study the researchers considered problem solving skills, creative thinking skills, social judgement skills, solution construction skills and leader expertise (Mumford, Marks, Connelly, Zaccaro, & Reiter-Palmon, 2000). They found that these skills were enhanced by development, with technical training being more important at lower ranks, and that advanced professional training was positively correlated with problem solving skills in more senior officers. This study also suggested that skills development depends on learning as people interact with their environment, can occur over a long period of time, and is progressive. Certain types of experience may support skills development at one career stage and others might be more beneficial at another stage.

Lord & Hall (2005) also proposed that leadership development is predicated on progressive skills development, and that learning at the early stage of leadership

development is different to that of experienced leaders. They base their analysis on a theory of learning and expertise, which suggests that changes in information processing and underlying knowledge structures occur as skills are gradually refined. They also note that self-motivation and "readiness" are also critical in the development of leadership skills. Through the course of development, identity progresses from the individual level to the relational level and ultimately to the collective level (Lord & Hall, 2005). Mumford, Zaccaro et al. (2000) also suggested that patterns of personality can have an impact on leader skill development.

A specific area of leadership development is that of self-development, which has been found to be "a cost effective way for organizations to develop leaders" (Reichard & Johnson, 2011) (p.33). It requires individuals to take on the primary responsibility for planning, carrying out and evaluating their own learning experiences (Ellinger, 2004). Researchers have found that self-development was more likely dependent on the strength of a leader's mastery (conscientiousness, openness and intellectual maturity) and work orientations (organisational commitment). Shamir & Eilam (2005) also proposed that leaders' self-stories contribute to their ongoing development. They suggest that by constructing, developing and revising their life-stories, leaders gain self-knowledge, self-concept clarity and person-role-merger. This research would suggest that self-reflection and self-awareness are key to development, and that outstanding leaders rely on past experience to assist their sense making efforts.

Self-development is also seen to be an effective response to the sweeping organisational changes of the 21st Century, which has required flexible leadership development strategies (Ellinger, 2004). Self-development can incorporate not only learning activities focused on skills acquisition, but also activities directed towards expanding one's conceptual frame of meaning. The result of such self-development may not be narrow skills acquisition, but a self-awareness of leadership (Lord & Hall, 2005).

Self-development may include not only self-directed learning but also taking advantage of organisation sponsored activities. One of the advantages of self-development is that the leader can select activities which address their own unique development needs (Orvis & Ratwani, 2010). It is argued that engagement in a

collection of self-development activities reflecting experiential variety should increase the individual's leadership capabilities through the development of new, more complex perspectives. In research by Orvis and Ratwani (2010) it was found that self-development is a valuable supplement to formal leadership development programmes. They propose that organisations should actively help leaders to make good self-development choices to optimise the value of interventions. Organisations that provide support for self-development may actually increase employees' motivation and skills to engage in self-development (Boyce, Zaccaro, & Wisecarver, 2010). Boyce et al. (2010) found, however, that individuals with a high propensity for self-development actually expended less effort when organisational support was provided. One explanation for this negative result may be that the support provided made the time they expended on development more efficient.

Re-inforcing the concept of leadership self-development, other researchers have argued that the development of leadership skills may require pro-active steps by the potential leader (Chan & Drasgow, 2001). What has also been found is that to sustain interest in development it is likely that the leadership role needs to become part of one's self identity. Lord & Hall (2005) posit that leadership skills develop, with micro level skills first learned, which are then organised into increasingly higher level systems that guide behaviour and knowledge. Over time leadership skills and knowledge become integrated with the individual's self-concept as a leader. Leaders' identities also move from individual to collective orientations as their expertise develops. As leadership identities develop it is likely that individuals will become motivated to attempt new leadership activities, creating the potential for learning new leadership skills and further identity development. The integration of leadership skills with identity can result in an expert style of leading (Lord & Hall, 2005).

Researchers have also addressed the role of process in leader and leadership development. Process factors determine the rate or pattern of development over time. The variability is in large part due to organisational practices such as mentoring and coaching, 360 degree feedback, leadership training, job assignments and action learning (D. V. Day et al., 2014).

In conclusion, the literature review in this section would suggest that successful leaders require development to be specific to their stage of development. It also suggests that interventions such as self-development are critical, and that personality is a factor which correlates with effective leadership. These interventions, and other factors determining leader and leadership development, can include experience, skills, personality, self-development, multi-source feedback and self-narratives. Leader and leadership development involves the development and application of a variety of skills and is shaped by both personality and relationships. Although much research on leadership development has taken place in the 21st Century, there still appear to be many unanswered questions on the process of development. It is the purpose of this research to support a better understanding of the process by which successful leaders are developed.

2.5 IDENTIFYING LEADER AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

My research focused on the lived experience of senior executives of leadership development, but in doing so it was critical to understand the development needs of those individuals. It is also relevant to understand how potential leaders are identified for development.

Many organisations today have extensive talent management and succession planning processes. It is through these processes, direct performance management by line management, and an understanding of broader organisational leadership requirements, that leadership development needs are determined. Conger and Fulmer (2003) argue that highly successful companies integrate leadership development and succession planning processes to enable optimal identification and development of future leaders. Some organisations, on the other hand, see succession planning in the narrow context of replacement planning (Kesler, 2002). Charan (2001), however, argues that successful companies create assessment and development practices that support the entire talent process. In learning-led organisations, leadership evaluation begins in the early years of employment, with development needs regularly reviewed in Talent Committees (Charan, 2005).

Another recent development in successful organisations has been the concept of self-development, where individuals are given the primary responsibility for determining

their own development needs and interventions, and in evaluating their own development needs (Ellinger, 2004). It can be argued that such a process will naturally focus on leader rather than leadership development, whereas the organisation will be most interested in leadership development. However, Orvis and Ratwani (2010) respond to this argument by proposing that leaders be provided with a decision tool to aid their development choices, and in this way the needs of the organisation can also be met.

Leonard (2003) also makes the point that leaders and leadership frameworks operate within the context of an organisation, and that development needs must meet not only the needs of the individual, but also the needs of the organisation. There is a need to understand the future strategy of the business, the challenges that are likely to lie ahead, and the culture that will support future organisational success. There appears to be a general acceptance that for leadership development to optimise impact it is important that interventions focus on both levels of learning (leader and leadership) simultaneously (Jay Alden Conger & Benjamin, 1999). Avolio and Hannah (2008) argue that development professionals should first focus on assessing the development needs of individual leaders and then on the development readiness of the organisation. Yet as Collins (2001) points out, outcomes of leadership development are determined by organisational performance and not simply individual leader performance, and therefore development needs must focus on those where improvement will have a measurable impact on the organisation. Hernez-Broome and Hughes (2004) also contend that identifying development needs is a far more complex process than in the past, as developmental needs will have to be defined as both those of the individual and of the organisation's systems and culture. In the research analysis it will be important to understand the extent to which company sponsored development interventions consider one or both levels of learning.

The determination of development needs is often supported by a multi-source review process which provides leaders with feedback from multiple sources on their strengths and developmental issues (Hazucha, Hezlett, & Schneider, 1993). Alimo-Metcalfe (1998) points out that multi-source review processes can be distorted by high self-ratings which will not provide accurate information to determine development needs. However, she argues that self-awareness is the key to the successful use of multi-

source review processes, as self-aware individuals will not only provide accurate information, but will also be able to modify their behaviour as a result of feedback alone.

Research has also shown that leadership development needs may vary according to specific categories of leaders. For example, women have been found variously to have a more participative style, but to being less assertive than men (Hopkins, O'Neil, Passarelli, & Bilimoria, 2008). Vinnicombe and Singh (2008) found that women have different value orientations to men; and yet another study demonstrates higher levels of empathy amongst women, whereas men demonstrate greater self-confidence and a greater likelihood of effectively managing stress (Goleman, 1998).

Leadership development needs will also vary by situation (Jay A Conger, 2004). The situation may be particular market realities; the need of the organisation to expand into new geographies; a takeover or merger of companies; the need for innovative thinking; or simply the function or level of the individual in the organisation.

In conclusion, there is a considerable amount of research which has focused on how leadership development needs are determined, whether through formal processes or through self-identification of development needs. However, there appears to be a gap in research focused on understanding the perceptions of senior executives of their development needs, and the process by which those perceptions then lead to particular development interventions. Development needs and required outcomes must be seen in the context of both a complex framework of leadership theories, and of the organisation in which the leader operates. This study relied on the lived experience of the senior executive, which provided rich data which should help us to better understand the causal link between interventions and outcomes within the context of the complex framework of leadership theories and organisational constructs.

2.6 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS

This study investigates the lived experience of leadership development interventions by senior executives. The literature review will therefore consider the types of leadership development interventions, both formal and informal, and the findings of researchers on the impact of different interventions.

2.6.1 **Executive Coaching**

Executive coaching is a short-term, interactive process between coach and coachee to improve leadership effectiveness through enhanced self-awareness and the practice of new behaviours (Kombarakaran, Yang, Baker, & Fernandes, 2008). Executive coaching supports the modification of behaviour without damaging self-esteem (Feldman & Lankau, 2005). The coaching environment offers the coachee the chance to reflect and consider opportunities for performance improvement (D. T. Hall, Otazo, & Hollenbeck, 2000).

Lewis Stern (2004), sees executive coaching as an experiential, individualised leadership development process that supports an executive in achieving short and long term organisational goals. It is conducted one-on-one, using multiple data sources and relies on mutual trust and respect. It is a partnership not only of the coach and coachee, but also the employer of the coachee (Ennis, Goodman, & Stern, 2003).

Certain researchers suggest that the promise of executive coaching is not so much to offer readymade solutions but to encourage learning and change (de Haan, Culpin, & Curd, 2011). Other researchers see coaching as a practical and goal focussed form of personal one-on-one learning, which may be used to improve behaviours or performance, develop careers and work through organisational issues (Briscoe, Hall, & Mayrhofer, 2011). They see good coaching as results oriented, and argue that it is highly rated by participants as a very satisfactory process for self-development.

A further academic identified that coaching typically involves not only one-to one coaching but some form of feedback mechanism such as multi-source feedback (Feldman, 2001). In another study it was determined that less than 10% of organisations measure the impact of coaching (Bolch, 2001). This study also noted that another area where there has been little research is the additive benefits of coaching with other development activities such as executive training.

Executive coaching has become a critical element of leadership development in the past decades (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001) and has increased dramatically both as an alternative to and support for executive training. As coaching rose to prominence in the latter 20th Century, it was seen as a means of correcting

weaknesses, but more recently it has been used to facilitate learning and achieve "peak performance" (Ellinger & Bostrom, 1999).

There is much debate in the literature on the efficacy of executive coaching given the lack of standards for executive coaches, or agreed models of coaching. Enhancing this debate is the limited academic research. However, it has been suggested that the studies which have taken place have established the potential positive benefits of executive coaching but not why it works, when it will be most efficacious, or in which situations it will achieve organisational effectiveness (Feldman & Lankau, 2005).

Conway (2002) found that coaching did not improve clients' self-perceptions of their leadership skills. Challenging Conway, (Kampa & White, 2002) found that executive coaching enhanced leadership styles. Orenstein (2006) suggests that executive coaching is effective if there is a mutuality of the relationship between the client and the consultant, as well as the psychological acceptance of change by all relevant individuals and groups in the system. She also suggests that the process requires four distinct phases to be effective: "entry, data collection and diagnosis, implementation and evaluation" (Orenstein, 2006, p.108). These phases appear to be a fairly standard model for effective executive coaching, but the methods used by coaches to support change in their clients do vary widely depending on their own background and intellectual framework (Feldman & Lankau, 2005).

Outcomes of an empirical study on executive coaching indicate that executive coaching is an effective method of leadership development. The study found that executive change occurred in people management; relationships with superiors; goal setting and prioritisation; engagement and communication. Key success factors were coach selection, executive commitment to the process and environmental support (Kombarakaran et al., 2008). Lewis Stern (2004) also argues that executive coaching can be an effective method to develop high potential leaders, get key players who have derailed back on track and support the learning of leaders who are assigned to critical roles. He also suggests that executive coaching is effective in enhancing individual skills and practices of senior executives. He concludes that one-on-one coaching shows good results which may not be achieved by less intensive methods of development.

In a large scale research into the effectiveness of executive coaching, it was found that those coached were significantly more likely than others to set goals; seek feedback from superiors; and achieve higher ratings in multi-source feedback (Smither, London, Flautt, Vargas, & Kucine, 2003). In another study listening and encouragement from the coach were deemed most helpful, followed by knowledge, empathy, authenticity and involvement. Overall their results showed that the quality of the relationship is key to outcomes (de Haan et al., 2011). In support of these results, another researcher suggested that if an executive is to be helped by coaching, they need a coach who can provide live feedback, serve as a role model and provide guidance (Stern, 2004). However, another study argued that different types of coaching require different types of coaches. Skills coaching should be done by manager-coaches, performance coaching by internal coaches and development coaching, which requires a higher mastery, should be done by external executive coaches (Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006).

In conclusion, despite limited research, the general consensus of academics appears to be that executive coaching can play a critical and unique role in leadership development. Key to success is the relationship between coach and coachee, and engagement not only at the individual level but also at the organisational level.

2.6.2 **Mentoring and Peer Coaching**

Mentoring has become an important element in many leadership development processes (Dziczkowski, 2013). Mentors are typically in-company managers who act as coaches, supporters and sponsors of high potential employees. Mentoring has been defined as “a relationship where an experienced colleague engages in the professional development of a less experienced colleague” (Dziczkowski, 2013, p.355). Mentoring is characterised by careers advice, social support and role modelling, and tends to occur at an early career stage. In one study two primary functions were identified for mentors: career and psychosocial functions (Kram, 1983). The career function supports the career advancement of the mentee through sponsorship, exposure, coaching and assignments. The psychosocial functions enhance the mentees sense of competence and work effectiveness. Another study found that role modelling is a third function of mentoring (Scandura & Ragins, 1993). It has been found that mentoring develops teamwork, motivation and skills levels when incorporated in

leadership development programmes (Solansky, 2010). The advantage of mentoring is that the mentor works in the same organisation as the mentee and can therefore provide advice on the organisational dynamics of the company.

It has, however, been found that the effectiveness of mentoring depends on the strength of the relationship, and the quality of the mentoring programme (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). Informal mentoring is often found to be more effective than a formal mentoring programme as informal mentoring allows freedom to select the mentor and the mentor is often more committed (Groves, 2007).

However, while traditional mentoring continues to be a valued part of leadership development (Mavrinac, 2005), resource constraints have meant that there are typically insufficient mentors to meet the needs of all mentees (Eby, 1997). Yet there is a significant need for emotional and informational support as individuals develop leadership capabilities (Parker, Hall, & Kram, 2008). As a result peer coaching has become more popular, with the potential to promote collaboration and professionalism amongst work colleagues (Wong & Nicotera, 2003). Indeed it has been argued that peer coaching has an advantage over mentoring, in that mentoring can create a power imbalance, which does not create the trust and security required to transfer learning (Eisen, 2001). Peer coaching can be consultative or challenging (Veenman, Denessen, Gerrits, & Kenter, 2001). In both situations there is a mutual partnership where the end goal is performance improvement for both partners (Waddell & Dunn, 2004). In addition to peer coaching, some organisations are now establishing peer coaching groups, and initial research has shown that the learning was so significant that the participants continued to meet after the formal group meetings had ended (Parker et al., 2008).

2.6.3 **Multi-Source Feedback**

One of the key areas of growth in support of leadership development has been the use of multi-source feedback (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998). As a stand-alone tool it can be used as a developmental intervention, or be linked to other interventions such as training programmes and executive coaching. Multi-source feedback processes that are linked to training programmes have been found to facilitate skills acquisition, goal setting and behaviour change (Bailey & Austin, 2006). However, in a research study

the improvement noted was only on the dimensions that the recipients had chosen to work on (Bass, 1996).

At the core of multi-source feedback is the process of self-reflection. Given that accurate self-perception is critical for effective leadership (J. Conger & Toegel, 2002), and self-ratings suffer from unreliability (Yammarino & Atwater, 1997), leadership development is contingent on discovering the discrepancies among self and other ratings.

One of the key advantages of multi-source feedback over supervisory reviews is that subordinates are well positioned to evaluate leadership behaviours (London & Beatty, 1993). Given the importance to the organisation of effective leadership development, multi-source feedback can be a particularly useful organisational tool. In particular, it can call attention to important developmental needs previously neglected by an organisation (London & Beatty, 1993).

Another interesting advantage of using a multi-source feedback tool has been the impact on the assessment, and by implication, the development of women. Traditionally, women's bosses, typically male, have assessed women on the qualities they see in men, but multi-source feedback tools have allowed a more balanced feedback. It has been found that women are significantly more likely to be seen by their subordinates, rather than their bosses, as adopting an effective model of leadership (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998).

Multi-source feedback can be used solely for development purposes or combined with appraisal processes. However, research suggests that it is most effective when those rated own the information gathered for developmental purposes and when they have discretion over how they share the data (Toegel & Conger, 2003). Therefore multi-source feedback which is for developmental purposes only is likely to be more effective in leadership development.

In conclusion, whilst many researchers have found multi-source feedback to be effective for leadership development, it is critical that there is follow through on the development. Ongoing coaching and feedback, together with self-directed

development based on self-awareness, is key if multi-source feedback is to be truly effective in leadership development (Hazucha et al., 1993).

2.6.4 **Leadership Development Training**

Leadership development training has a long tradition, and organisations spend large amounts of money on both prestigious open programmes and in house customised training (Avolio & Hannah, 2008). Open leadership programmes, the most rated of which are often delivered by top business schools, tend to focus on generic leadership skills. The best customised leadership development programmes typically base their outcomes on the assessed needs of the leaders and the organisations they lead, and take into account factors such as participant motivation, readiness and their existing and needed skills (Riggio, 2008). Boyatzis (2008) suggests that general leadership programmes can develop broad leadership skills and another group of researchers argue that reasoning and decision making may be developed through these programmes (Thompson, Grahek, Phillips, & Fay, 2008). In another research project it was suggested that "strategically relevant, powerful and well timed programmes…can be enormously valuable" (McCall, 2004, p.10).

However, significant qualitative research has found that formal education and training had little impact on developing leadership skills. Part of the explanation for this is that they focus on a "training event" which may not be relevant to the individual's daily leadership demands. This is especially true when they attend public programmes apart from their colleagues and then receive little encouragement or feedback on their return to the workplace (Jay A Conger, 2004). The impact of leadership development training has also been shown to be short-lived (R. E. Boyatzis, 2008). The challenges facing modern leaders tend to be too complex and rapidly changing to be addressed successfully by a short-term training event (D. V. Day et al., 2014). Research on graduates from standard MBAs have also found limited gains in emotional intelligence, although it has also been found that changes in behaviour and thinking may not emerge until a year or more after the leadership development intervention (R. E. Boyatzis, 2008).

The success of leadership development programmes has been found to be dependent on certain critical factors. One is the readiness to learn of the participants (Riggio,

2008). Another is that the individual should have a clear ideal self-image against which development can occur (R. Boyatzis, Boyatzis, & Akrivou, 2006). Although many leadership development programmes focus on specific "universal" leadership skills, it is true that the best leadership development programmes assess the needs of the leaders and the teams and organisations in which they lead, set specific and measurable training goals, take into account factors such as participants' motivation, readiness and their existing and needed competencies (Riggio, 2008). These findings were supported in a meta-analysis of leadership development programmes, where it was found that programmes can produce significant results, especially if the programmes are customised and appropriately targeted. However, when needs analyses are not done, leadership development programmes may not be appropriate for the organisation (Collins & Holton, 2004).

In conclusion, it would appear that leadership development training can be effective, but in practice much leadership training has little impact. This may be because the training has not been made relevant to the needs of the individual or organisation, the individual is not receptive to the training, or there is no follow through and the activity becomes merely a "training event". In my research analysis I sought to understand the experience of the senior executives of both open and customised programmes and their views of the efficacy of such interventions.

2.6.5 Alternative Leadership Development Interventions

In Sections 2.6.1-2.6.4 I have reviewed the literature which covers traditional types of leadership development. In addition there are a number of other factors which may influence leadership development. Several researchers suggest that much leadership development takes place through allowing high potential employees to take risks, be given challenging assignments and learn through experience (Avolio & Hannah, 2008; R. E. Boyatzis, 2008). Another researcher argues that effective leadership development requires challenges, set-backs and failures, adversity or significant personal events to provide effective leadership development (McCall, 2004). A further team of researchers suggests that a full range of leadership development experiences includes not only mentoring, coaching, feedback systems and formal training but also job assignments, on-the job experiences, developmental relationships, exposure to senior executives and leader-follower relationships

(McCauley & Moxley). It is also argued that many other factors are involved in leadership development including family environment, school experiences, challenges, work experience and bosses (Jay A Conger, 2004).

Researchers also argue that it is the variety of leadership interventions which determines their efficacy (Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004). Avolio & Hannah (2008, p.331) suggest five constructs which will determine the efficacy of specific development interventions: "learning goal orientation; developmental efficacy; self-concept clarity; self-complexity; and meta-cognitive ability". They also suggest that leaders with higher levels of developmental readiness will be able to reflect on and make meaning out of experiences, which in turn will enhance their development.

Other researchers argue that "trigger" events in their life create heightened self-awareness for leaders that leads to significant leadership development, although this development will be dependent on the individual's developmental readiness (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). In their later work they also argue that leader development experiences lead to heightened self-awareness which can further facilitate development (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2006). Other researchers found that "trigger" events can occur during normal leadership experiences or can be created through formal training or coaching and self-reflection (Roberts et al 2005).

Social learning theory suggests that the efficacy of particular leadership development interventions will, in part at least, be determined by the opportunity they give to the participants to model and mimic best behaviours which they observe from the interventions (Black & Earnest, 2009). Researchers also examined the role of learning in the development of leadership behaviours. They found that leaders "learn from challenging work, from solving complex problems and from leading a team" (Hirst et al., 2004) (p.321).

Most of the interventions I have detailed in Section 2.6 are focused on adult development, yet the leadership development process tends to start at a young age, and is partly influenced by parental modelling (D. V. Day et al., 2014). In a study of West Point cadets it was found that those who had more leadership experience at school had higher initial leadership performance at West Point (R. Hall, Lord, Ritter,

Swee, & Dubois, 2004). Researchers contend that early leadership experiences create the foundation for future leadership development to build on. This is because there is a greater ability to develop at a young age, and the self-reinforcing nature of leader development. As one gains greater leadership efficacy and confidence the individual is more likely to engage in leadership experiences which will in turn increase their leadership capabilities (S. E. Murphy & Johnson, 2011). These researchers propose a model of leadership development which takes a longitudinal perspective, and takes into account early influences such as parenting style, sports and school leadership experiences.

Parents have a strong early influence on children's leadership potential through role modelling leadership, and through the leader behaviours and experiences they encourage in their children. Authoritative parents produce teenagers most likely to become effective leaders. They encourage independence with limits, and are supportive of their children's growth and increasing confidence (Ensher & Murphy, 2011).

Sport can also teach effective leadership. Initiative is a key skill developed in organised youth sport and is considered a key trait for leaders. School also provides a multitude of opportunities to practice leadership. In addition to taking on leadership roles and practicing the skills of leadership, mentoring relationships with teachers can enhance leadership development (Ensher & Murphy, 2011).

In another study it was also reported that strong and constructive leaders had experienced events that had established positive beliefs and values in early life (Ligon, Hunter, & Mumford, 2008). However, whilst childhood experiences may create a positive baseline for leadership development, much leadership development is the result of experiences in adult life, often during times of great challenge (Jay A Conger, 2004).

Teachers can support the development of leadership in young people, and managers acting as educators can also add unique value to building the organisational leadership pipeline. This is personified by General Electric, where line executives are largely responsible for facilitating the leadership development programmes and delivering a

range of other developmental activities. In particular this includes workshops on strategic challenges and action learning projects (Groves, 2007). In addition to the role of line executives, it has been found that organisational level constructs such as human resources practices, and resources linked with factors such as supervisor style and social networks can promote leaders' motivation to develop their leadership skills and to engage in continuous self-development.

In the meta-analysis by Collins and Holton (2004), best practice leadership development methods include multi-source feedback, coaching, mentoring and also networking, job assignments and action learning. Visibility to the company's most senior leaders is also seen to be key to leadership development (Groves, 2007). This can occur through structured action learning projects, where participants may be involved in a project of strategic relevance to the organisation, which is then presented to senior executives. Action learning for leaders reflects an understanding of the nature of adult learning (J. Conger & Toegel, 2002). Action learning presents learners with complex situations that are similar to events that they will encounter in their work. It requires the participants "to develop a set of concepts and principles that permit creative connections to be drawn between events" (J. Conger & Toegel, 2002, p.335).

Whilst these programmes can be very powerful they often fail to deliver the potential development of participants. One of the key reasons appears to be that they are delivered as a single event, when multiple exposures are required to develop a valid conceptual understanding. What is also required are subsequent job assignments which will re-inforce the learning process. Action learning projects also tend to imply leadership challenges, but are not explicit about the leadership development within the project (Jay Alden Conger & Benjamin, 1999). The critical advantage of good action learning projects is their opportunity to provide time for reflective learning which is rare when the experiences are in normal work time. This critical reflection is key to optimising learning and can be re-inforced by peer coaching and feedback on the project (Dotlich & Noel, 1998). It has also been found that learning on action learning projects is re-inforced by the implementation of the project outcomes as significant learning can occur in this phase of the project (J. Conger & Toegel, 2002).

Executive taught workshops also provide exposure for potential leaders and build their leadership networks (Groves, 2007). Indeed it has been found that leaders themselves can create strong learning conditions for potential leaders by supporting leader led workshops, review processes, quality circles and other forms of interaction (Yukl, 2008). These practices also provide the advantage of enabling "imitation", a concept developed by Bandura, where individuals model behaviours by observing and then imitating.

Experience of leadership is itself considered one of the most important factors in leadership development. If there is truth in this argument, it is important for those responsible for leadership development to understand which type of experiences are most developmental. The vast majority of experiences which are seen to be developmental involve struggle and adversity, including difficult assignments or exposure to excellent or terrible bosses, failing at an activity or a significant personal event (McCall, 2004). The apparent power of good experiences in leadership development places a focus on the need for effective talent management, and ensuring that high potential leaders are given developmental job assignments (McCall, 2004). Learning through experience also takes time, and it is therefore important that potential leaders are identified early in their careers and receive progressive development from that point (McCall, 2004).

Luthans & Avolio (2006) argue that high impact leader development experiences lead to increased self-awareness that can result in development. Experimentation and practice are also important in leadership development, especially when the individual has the flexibility to experiment, possible fail and then succeed with the new behaviour (Kolb & Boyatzis, 1970). However ready an individual is to enhance their leadership capabilities they do need others to support and guide them through the process. Such relationships provide a sense of identity (R. Boyatzis & Boyatzis, 2006).

It is clear that leadership development is a complex phenomenon. It can start in early childhood and be progressive throughout life. Many experiences and interventions can enable leadership development, and development is reliant on individual readiness to develop. Development interventions are a combination of self-development and

organisational sponsored development. In my research analysis I sought to identify the most efficacious experiences and interventions which are described by the research participants.

2.7 SOUTH AFRICAN SPECIFIC ISSUES WHICH IMPACT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

My research involves the lived experience of leadership development of South African senior executives. The research is therefore contextualised by the dramatic socio-political and economic events which South Africa has experienced in the past twenty plus years. The literature review has attempted to find literature which can provide insight into the implications of these environmental factors on leadership and leadership development. Whilst the literature is limited, there has been some interesting research which has informed my research analysis.

The impact on South African leaders since the end of apartheid has to be understood in the context of the apartheid era. In that period large corporations were created by the government, supported by subsidies and finance. As a result their organisations were highly bureaucratic, with decision making control exclusively at the top of the organisation (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003). These organisations were protected by tariffs and the trade sanctions of many other countries, and it was possible to succeed with relatively poor productivity and weak strategic management. The post-apartheid period has forced South African corporations to develop a very different approach to management. International competition has forced local companies to become more competitive. New labour legislation has changed the face of employee relations. Trade Union strength has grown and collective bargaining has become the norm. Creating a diverse and inclusive workforce is also a challenge, with the fears of affirmative action amongst the white population, the ongoing wealth gap and problems of poor education amongst the black population (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003).

In response to these pressures, organisational structures in South Africa have been changing from the traditional and bureaucratic to more flexible structures that have decentralised operations in line with international trends. Downsizing and

restructuring to improve productivity have become skills required of South African executives. In a much more employee centric environment, people centric leadership skills have also become critical. What is clear is that leaders in the new South Africa need to both manage change and engage a diverse workforce. It can be argued that they need to be transformational leaders, operating as change agents; prudent and courageous risk takers; with high integrity and empowering others; values driven; life-long learners; having the ability to deal with complexity and ambiguity; and visionaries. They also need to position their organisations for the future, mobilise their workforce and build organisational capability (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003).

Corporate leaders in South Africa also have to lead in a turbulent and rapidly changing economy and society, and some researchers believe that the key attribute of successful leaders in such an environment is flexible thinking, so that they can guide their organisations through such turbulence. To be successful, it is argued, means seeing obstacles as opportunities, to enable them to have the courage to push forward (Luthans et al., 2004). Self-efficacy and confidence about his or her ability to achieve a specific task is also seen as a key attribute of South African leaders, and has been found to be positively correlated to work-based outcomes (Luthans et al., 2004).

Strategic leadership is also critical in the new South Africa given that one of the key responsibilities of strategic leaders is leading change (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001). “An organisation’s ability to change requires cognitive and behavioural flexibility amongst leaders as well as an openness to, and acceptance of change” (Nkomo & Kriek, 2011) (p.3). The literature on leading change refers to discontinuous and radical change, triggered by disruptive events (Flamholtz & Randle, 2008), and this is exactly what happened in South Africa in 1994. They found that the key to organisational success was the ability of leaders to be flexible and manage change dynamically. There is little research on leading change in South Africa, other than research by Nkomo and Kriek (2011) who studied a number of senior executives in South Africa and their approach to change. What they found to be consistent was that the leaders gave direction, engendered trust and gave hope, underpinned by a clear set of values. One of their case studies was a black CEO who developed an “ubuntu” organisational model, stressing collectivism and teamwork. He had a compassionate and engaged style of leadership with strong values which resulted in his company growing to

create a footprint in thirty one countries in Africa. Generally, the study participants embraced change, explored new opportunities and took their corporate social responsibilities seriously. What they all appeared to do was provide their employees with a vision of hope. They also connected with and leveraged African values in the change process. All the leaders initiated diversity training interventions and employment equity initiatives (Nkomo & Kriek, 2011).

In the study by Nkomo and Kriek (2011) it appears that successful leaders, whether white or black, were sensitive to the cultural diversity of their workforce. A challenge for leadership in South Africa is how to balance the traditional white Eurocentric management culture and the emerging black Afrocentric culture. The Afrocentric "ubuntu" cultural value of communalism supports extensive social community networks characterised by cooperation and solidarity. This is in contrast to the more Eurocentric values prevalent in South African organisations. Ubuntu is a valuing of others and a continuous exploration of reconciliation and appreciation of the views of others. Ubuntu appears to reflect many of the tenets of "inclusiveness" now being promoted in "western" organisations and can be a real strength for an engaged and empowered organisation, but how can a largely white senior executive cadre integrate these values into their own leadership style? (Luthans et al., 2004). It can also be argued that whilst "ubuntu" may encourage compassion and connectedness, it may also promote nepotism and patronage, qualities which are not those of effective leaders. What is certainly clear is that leadership literature has not been informed to any significant degree by research on leadership in an African context (Walumbwa, Avolio, & Aryee, 2011). In my research I sought to analyse the extent to which a majority white research sample have experienced the development of a more Afrocentric leadership style.

Ultimately the economic performance of South Africa will depend on the effectiveness of its corporate leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2011). Productivity levels remain low when compared with the leading developed economies, and improvements are dependent on strong and culturally specific leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2011). This research project will explore the leadership development experiences and perceived needs of a sample of senior corporate executives in South Africa. From this research we should better understand how to provide the leadership development

which will enable South African corporate leaders to build a sustainable economic platform.

2.8 CONCLUSION TO THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review has explored research into various approaches to leadership development. To contextualise leadership development, the literature review has also outlined recent research on theories of leadership. Given that there are many 'good' leadership skills which are common to all the key current leadership theories, my research analysis does not seek to position leadership development within any specific theory of leadership.

This literature review has found that despite significant progress in leadership development research over the past decades, there still appears to be no generally accepted theory of leadership development (Riggio, 2008). The review has found that best practice leadership development methods include multi-source feedback, mentoring, executive coaching, peer coaching, networking, job assignments and action learning (Collins & Holton, 2004; D. V. Day, 2001). In addition self-development is becoming an important element of leadership development, and there is an acknowledgement that experience of leadership is itself a critical development tool. There is general agreement on the need for a supportive organisational culture to enable optimal leadership development. There is also a body of research which has considered the readiness of the individual for development and concluded that readiness is key to ensuring that leadership development interventions are efficacious. Collins (2001) pointed out that there is significant research on the concept of leadership, but there is little literature on the impact of leadership development. It is hoped that this research will enable a valuable insight into the experience of leadership development by a number of successful senior executives and, in so doing, identify those interventions which have created the greatest impact on their development. Given the unique environment of South Africa in the post-apartheid era, it is hoped that the research will be of particular value in identifying the most efficacious forms of leadership development which will enable the promotion of a leadership cadre who can opeate successfully in the complex and turbulent economy and society that is South Africa today.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology and analytical process used in this study were based on qualitative inquiry, structured in the constructivist-interpretivist tradition which emphasises the "lived experience" of the research participants (Schwandt, 1999). There was an acceptance in the study that there could be multiple perspectives in the minds of the research participants, and there was no attempt to determine a single "truth" from the experiences of the participants. This approach is fundamental to the constructivist-interpretivist tradition (Ponterotto, 2005). Through questioning, the researcher is able to gain an in depth understanding of the experience, which cannot be gathered using quantitative methods (Morrow, 2007). The research questions in this study are prefixed with "how" and such research questions are best answered with qualitative research (Creswell, 1998).

It has been suggested that when undertaking qualitative research it is critical to have a guiding paradigm and personal orientation (Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999). In this section I will therefore provide context for the research methodology by describing the research structure and my personal orientation, and will then consider the research paradigm; research design; population and sample; research instrument; procedure for data collection; data analysis and interpretation; limitations of the study; issues of validity and reliability and the ethics which underpinned the research study.

3.1 STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY AND PERSONAL ORIENTATION

The research study is based on an inductive approach, where data has been collected through narrative interviews. The interviews followed a structure which provided data to answer the research questions but used open questions. Accepting the inductive nature of the study, there was no hypothesis but rather a tentative theory to enable a structuring of questions in the interviews. This was that perceived development needs, linked to development interventions, within the broader lived experience of the senior executive, will result in perceived outcomes.

The literature review was structured to provide an overview of leadership and leadership development theories, which would provide context for the descriptions of their development needs by the senior executives who were interviewed. The literature review also explored academic research into the various leadership development interventions, both formal and informal, which the senior executives had experienced.

Data from the interviews was coded using Atlas.ti qualitative software. The codes were aggregated into code groups and those groups into themes. The research findings were structured by themes which were then analysed to create a theory as to how senior executives experience the various development interventions in which they have participated. From this theory recommendations were made as to which development interventions are most efficacious for leaders at different stages in their career and for different development needs.

My personal orientation relates to my career as an HR professional, some of which was spent in specialist learning and leadership development roles. In that capacity I was engaged in developing and validating competency models of leadership, designing leadership development interventions and in assessing individual competency to be promoted into senior leadership roles. I therefore have views on both what makes a good leader and how to develop such leaders. I have also worked in senior executive positions and can therefore relate to the demands and challenges of such roles. It is acknowledged that building rapport is essential to sustain an effective research interview (Suzuki, Ahluwalia, Arora, & Mattis, 2007). Having been in senior executive positions I was able to establish credibility and rapport with the research participants which enabled open and frank dialogue.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A paradigm encompasses a set of beliefs that guides action (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The research paradigm in this study was the need to understand the "lived experience" of leader and leadership development by the senior executive. There was an appreciation of the fact that the research participants may not be aware of the meaning of their development interventions, and therefore the interview process needed to enable the meaning to be brought to consciousness. As the researcher, I had to co-

create these findings with the participants, through interactive dialogue. As noted above, the study is based on the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm, which emphasises the need to understand the lived experience of the research participant (Ponterotto, 2005). In this paradigm, researcher values and bias are assumed to exist. It also assumes that multiple and equally valid realities may exist, as it is the participants' realities which are being studied, and each participant will construct their own reality (Schwandt, 1999). The constructivist-interpretivist paradigm involves a hermeneutical approach, as meaning may be hidden and brought to the surface through reflection (Schwandt, 1999). This surfacing of meaning required the co-construction of the findings through the interview dialogue (Schwandt, 1999).

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The conceptual framework for the research study was that successful senior executives require leadership skills. Whilst some of these may be innate, others are developed through life. There was a belief that an understanding of leadership development needs and how these needs are met through various development interventions would enable a more effective approach to the selection of development interventions. However, given the inductive approach there were no hypotheses on what the outcomes might be.

The conceptual framework was based on my experience of leaders and leader and leadership development. From my experience, organisations often perform sub-optimally because of lack of leadership skills in their key executives. It is often the executives who have the best understanding of their leadership development needs but they are often not involved in selecting many of their development interventions. The research design was therefore to enable senior executives to both define their development needs and describe the different development interventions they experienced and their perceptions of the efficacy of those interventions. The framework also considered prior theories of leadership and leadership development, which were explored in the literature review, and research on the efficacy of particular leadership development interventions, also explored in the literature review. However, I also acknowledged that existing literature and theory could create a bias in my data collection and analysis by preventing me from seeing a new way of framing the phenomenon and I have used reflection in an attempt to prevent such bias.

Having determined the research paradigm, the conceptual framework and research questions, the design required the research participants to describe their lived experience of the phenomenon. I considered two qualitative design methodologies, narrative research and phenomenology. Narrative research gathers data " through collecting their stories, reporting individual experiences and chronologically ordering the meaning of those experiences" (Creswell, Hanson, Plano, & Morales, 2007) (p.240). In narrative research the interviews are relatively unstructured and the interview narrative is then "restoried" to create descriptions of themes (Polkinghorne 1995). However, narrative research typically requires only one or two research participants and I considered that a larger sample would be required to provide themes from which theories might be developed.

In phenomenology the views of a number of participants are collected (Creswell et al., 2007). Phenomenology is based on the lived world and requires the phenomenon to be described rather than explained. The researcher takes these descriptions and then reveals the essence of the phenomenon (Sadala & Adorno, 2002). Hermeneutic phenomenology is a research design which is oriented to lived experience and interprets the texts of life (Van Manen, 1990). In the case of this research a hermeneutic phenomenological approach would involve the phenomenon of leadership development. The research participants would describe their lived experience of the phenomenon and I, as the researcher, would then interpret the meaning of the lived experiences (Van Manen, 1990). In phenomenology it is more typical to have 5-25 research participants (Polkinghorne, 1989).

Hermeneutic phenomenology was therefore chosen as the research design, with 12 research participants. Semi-structured interviews were used to gain a rich description of the phenomenon. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed through open coding and identification of themes. From the themes I developed answers to the research questions from which recommendations were made as to how individual leaders and organisations could determine the most efficacious leadership development interventions.

3.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLE

It is important for a researcher to establish criteria for selecting research participants (Devers & Frankel, 1999). The research questions and the title of the research had already defined the population as senior executives in South Africa. Given the potential for differences in leadership requirements between the public and private sector I determined that the population would be restricted to senior executives working in the private sector.

It has been argued that a researcher must make the design more concrete through developing a sampling framework capable of answering the research questions. Purposive sampling is often used in qualitative research as such an approach is designed to enhance understanding of the participants' experiences through which theories and concepts may be developed (Devers & Frankel, 1999). Purposive sampling is the sampling method used in phenomenology as the participants have been selected because they have had experiences relating to the phenomenon being researched (Groenewald, 2004). This is accomplished by selected participants with "rich" experience. In purposive sampling these may be "normal", "extreme" or "negative" cases (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I decided that "normal" or "typical" cases would be most appropriate and therefore selected senior executives who had experienced a variety of leadership development, whether formal or informal.

Given the focus of the research on leadership interventions, I did not propose a quota of interviewees by race or gender. However, given the specific pressure in South Africa to have a diverse leadership cadre, I sought to have diversity in the sample. Of the twelve participants ultimately interviewed, 3 were Indian, 1 African and 1 Coloured. 3 were female.

Given the potential variety of interventions and experiences, it was important to have enough participants to enable saturation, but not so many that effective analysis becomes impossible. It has been suggested that it is sufficiency of data and not numbers which drives the sample size (Morrow, 2005). It has been argued that for complex, comparative research, no more than 12-15 participants are selected (Griffin & Ragin, 1994). I approached 18 senior executives, all based in Johannesburg or Pretoria. Of these 12 agreed to be interviewed. I was prepared to approach more

senior executives but found after initial coding that I had reached saturation. Of the 12, 10 were in publicly listed companies; 1 in a state owned company and one was currently a top executive in the Reserve Bank of South Africa. All had been or were in C-suite positions.

3.5 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The research instrument was unstructured interviews. The interview "is a place where knowledge is constructed from the direct interactions between the interviewer and the interviewee" (Suzuki et al., 2007) (p.308). Broad topics were outlined in the interview structure (Appendix B), and the interviewees were allowed to explore these topics in an open interviewing approach in order to gain the required "richness" of response. The researcher encouraged introspection at times to enable the interviewee to explore issues which they may not have consciously considered prior to the interview. The process was, however, inductive, as there was no preconception as to which interventions are likely to be most efficacious. Given that the research participants were senior executives, it was important for them to feel in control of the interview so that they could remain "the author of the description" (Polkinghorne, 2005) (p.143). This need supported the unstructured approach to the interview process.

The interviews were expected to be about 1.5-2 hours in length. Only one interview was planned, although Seidman (2012) argues that at least three interviews are required to obtain the necessary richness of data. It was considered that senior executives were unlikely to agree to such an onerous process and that their level of self-awareness was likely to provide rich data in one interview with follow up interviews as necessary. In the event the interviews were 1-2 hours in length and the congruence of the data was such that no follow up interviews were required. All interviews were face to face and audio taped for transcription.

3.6 PROCEDURE FOR DATA COLLECTION

Effective data collection is dependent on a number of factors including the relationship between the researcher and research participants; sampling criteria; the objectivity or subjectivity of the researcher; language and communication; culture shock; and ethical considerations (Suzuki et al., 2007). The first three factors have been considered in earlier parts of this section. The business language used in the

companies in which the participants worked was English and there was therefore no problem with communications. At the start of the interview I emphasised the confidential nature of the interview and provided a debriefing at the end of the interview. It was understood that it was critical to maintain the trust of the participants (Devers & Frankel, 1999), so the researcher approached the interview with the intention of building rapport and using empathy as appropriate. This enabled a high level of trust to be maintained throughout the interview dialogues. As the interviews were held in the offices of the participants they also felt comfortable in their own environment.

Given the unstructured interview approach there was a need to structure the data from the interview and disregard irrelevant data, and the researcher was aware of the risk of distortion in this process (McCurdy, Spradley, & Shandy, 2004). Detailed inductive coding was used with the transcripts loaded onto Atlas.ti software. This process ensured that nothing of relevance was disregarded, with over 100 codes created. Only data which was clearly not related to the research questions was not coded. As already noted the interviews were recorded to ensure that all relevant data was transcribed accurately. The researcher also researched the employing companies of the interviewees, using publicly available online information. She did not research the leadership development undertaken by the organisation, or by specific individuals, as this may have biased her questioning. However, some participants provided data on their interventions or their views of leadership and this was used as a source of secondary data (Polkinghorne, 2005; Prior, 2004).

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The aim of the study was to understand the lived experience of the participants in relation to their perceptions of their leadership development needs and the perceived efficacy of particular interventions. Whilst the intention of the study was to look for relationships between particular interventions and developmental progress, there was no intention to have preconceptions about possible relationships. The research analysis therefore used a conventional approach. The advantage of the conventional approach was that there are no pre-conceived categories or theories imposed on the analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In selecting such an approach it is accepted that the likely result of the analysis is concept development rather than development of a

formal theory (Lindkvist, 1981). Using conventional content analysis, the researcher will describe how the findings of the research contribute to knowledge in the area of leadership development efficacy (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Coding the data is critical in the process of analysis and, as noted above the approach used was inductive coding which required no preconceptions as to the code categories (Dey, 2003). However, to enable a richness of data to inform the analysis, the interview structure did include a provisional list of leadership development needs and interventions but these did not drive the coding structure which had many codes which would not have been predicted if a deductive approach had been used (Saldana, 2009).

As a result of the inductive approach to coding, codes were assigned as the initial interview transcripts were reviewed on Atlas.ti software. Descriptive codes were used to enable grouping of the breadth of opinions stated by the participants. It was then possible to see patterns forming from which categories could then be created. As suggested by Saldana (2009), the codes continued to be created until saturation was reached. During this process the researcher wrote analytic memos and started to determine noticeable patterns and themes. In developing the coding it was important to be aware of the effects of tacit theory as this will create bias in the coding of data. Equally it was important to use the analytic memos to support the development of formative concepts which will guide the data collection and initial analysis (LeCompte, 2000).

3.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In considering the possible limitations of this study, the African proverb used in the title of a much cited qualitative data collection article appears to be an appropriate starting point. “The pond you fish in determines the fish you can catch”. The proverb was used by Suzuki et al. (2007) to remind readers that it is the research methodology and the quality of data collection and analysis which will determine the quality of the outcomes. As the research methodology is based on phenomenology the main potential limitation was that the data collection relies wholly on the views and experiences of the research participants. These views were based on a recollection of

past experiences, many of which were in childhood, and could therefore be subject to a number of biases.

Given the complexity of the topic and the relatively unstructured nature of the interviews, the data collection could have been complicated by large amounts of data, much of it not directly relevant to the analysis. This could have caused confusion and coding and impacted the quality of the coding. In understanding this potential limitation, whilst allowing a free flow in the discussion, the researcher prevented the participant from straying too far from the topic. In coding the data the researcher also coded all data which was not obviously irrelevant as it was not always possible to determine relevance until the coding was completed.

Given the potential complexity of the data it was also possible that saturation would not be reached within the intended sample size, which could have resulted in the need to extend the sampling group with all the implications for time over-run, increasing data collection demands and challenges of data analysis.

Given the relatively small sample size and the large number of possible leadership development needs and interventions, it was also possible that no concept or theoretical proposition could be determined.

3.9 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

"Without rigor, research is worthless" (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2008) (p.14). It was therefore paramount that the study included a planned approach to ensuring the validity and reliability of the findings. In addition it was important to ensure the "trustworthiness" of the findings which entails determining credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability with the findings (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

Given that this study is within the constructivist-interpretive paradigm, validation processes needed to reflect this thinking. Criteria for validation included trustworthiness, which was defined by Guba and Lincoln (2005), and also authenticity which is defined as establishing fairness, enlarging personal constructs, improved understanding of the constructs of others and then action (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Validity and reliability in this study was also ensured by using triangulation in the sources of information from the interviews and any supporting online documentation, which formed categories in the data collection. This was valid as the phenomenological methodology will rely on multiple evidence from the interviewees (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

The data analysis also searched for disconfirming or negative evidence (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This provided further support for the credibility of the findings, because reality, according to constructivists, is multiple and complex (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Self-disclosure of beliefs and biases was also important, and this was done using interpretive commentary throughout the discussion of the findings (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher was also careful to ensure that the nature of open ended questions in the interviews did not allow for her beliefs and biases to colour the answers of the participants.

The research also included de-briefing at the end of each interview to test the understanding of the researcher and confirm the validity of the data collected through the interview discussion. The researcher also kept analytic memos and the data coding process was automated. This audit trail can be reviewed by both the research supervisor and assessors. Articles on research validity also propose peer debriefing (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). In addition to the process of validation with the Research Supervisor, the researcher also tested the analysis and findings on key members of the MMBEC class who can provide challenge and perspective on the findings.

In conclusion, the structure of the research incorporated a range of processes to ensure the validity, reliability and credibility of both the process of data collection and analysis, and the findings derived from that process.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research ethics were an important consideration in this study. Ethics governs the norms of conduct and acceptable behaviour in the process of research (Babbie, 1989). Babbie (1989) set out guiding principles to govern ethics in research. These include the need for each interviewee's participation to be voluntary, and for them to know that non-participation will have no adverse consequences for them. Interviewees also need to know that they can stop participation at any point. The decision as to whether or not to participate must be based on a full appreciation of the purpose and nature of the study, and the purpose and nature of their participation. The guiding principles also include confidentiality and anonymity, which are critical considerations in the reporting. The third guiding principle is that the analysis of the data is objective and has integrity. Whilst the researcher sought to have a level of objectivity through the open ended questions, she also had an acceptance of a level of subjectivity which, despite these guiding principles, appears to be acceptable in the constructivist-interpretivist tradition.

In addition to the ethical considerations outlined, the research proposal was approved by the Wits Business School Ethics Committee and the researcher followed the Code of Ethics of the University of the Witwatersrand.

3.11 CONCLUSIONS

This section has set out the research methodology, detailing the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm, the phenomenological foundation of the research design, and the sampling, data collection and analytical processes which were aligned with the paradigm and research design. The section has also considered the limitations of the study, the reliability and validity of the research and the ethical considerations which underpinned the research approach. Section 4 will set out the research findings which have been developed as a result of this approach.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research sought to answer the main research question which was: How do senior executives experience the various development interventions in which they have participated? The findings and discussion seek to answer this main question. In Section 5, Conclusion and recommendations for future research, I will consider how the findings answer both the main question and sub-questions.

This section considers the findings from the interviews with the Senior Executives, together with a review of relevant literature, to provide a framework for the findings. Given the inductive nature of the data analysis, the structure of the findings is based around the key topics which emerged from the interviews. Several topics focus on the critical nature of childhood experiences in developing both leadership attributes and a sense of purpose which would drive their leadership ambitions. These include the impact of parental influence; family circumstances, and early leadership opportunities. Other key topics include the importance of family, at all ages, in enabling successful leadership through creating work-life balance and security; the power of influential others, including followers, in developing the senior executives; the role of feedback with self-aware and self-efficacious leaders; the value of learning from challenges and failures; the role of coaching in developing leadership competencies; the significance of development programmes and executive education in their development; the skills and attributes required for effective leadership; the influence of leadership books in the ongoing development of the senior executives; and finally the unique issues pertinent to developing as a corporate leader in South Africa.

In analysing these topics, the themes which have emerged are the importance of early development, linked to personal drive and ambition; the need for a framework of formal leadership development interventions supplemented by development opportunities to enable learnt behaviours to be developed through challenge and failure; the importance of self- efficacy in leadership development and the influence of innate attributes in ensuring efficacious leadership development.

4.1 EARLY DEVELOPMENT LINKED TO PERSONAL DRIVE AND AMBITION

The first theme which emerged was the significance of childhood experiences in developing the drive, resilience and ambition that would enable the foundations to be built for adult leadership development. Parental and other influencers were important, and this was true for both parents who came from disadvantaged backgrounds and created role models for battling adversity, and parents who had succeeded in their own careers and could offer positive leadership role models to their children. This finding is significant as much research has suggested that children from higher income families are more likely that those from lower income families to have leadership ambitions (Ashby & Schoon, 2010; Schoon & Parsons, 2002). However, other research has illustrated that early incidents of trauma, such as the death of a parent or poverty, were prevalent in the early lives of great leaders (Simonton, 1994). Another researcher suggested that high parental aspirations for their children can go some way to balancing out the negative effect of a disadvantaged upbringing (De Civita, Pagani, Vitaro, & Tremblay, 2004). The findings from this current research reflect the barriers to socio-economic success placed on Black, Indian and Coloured families in the apartheid era in South Africa. This did not, however, mean that the families were not ambitious for their own children. Indeed the parents may have been role models of drive and ambition in other aspects of their lives, with the parents of three of the research participants being active in the anti-apartheid movement. This activism encouraged the children to have ambitions to play an important role in the post-apartheid South Africa.

4.1.1 The Importance of Childhood Drive and Ambition

One of the emerging themes from the interviews was the importance of childhood experiences in creating the necessary drive and ambition to become successful senior executives. Yet most studies on leadership development focus on development experiences that occur in adulthood (S. E. Murphy & Johnson, 2011). Ambition for leadership was clearly established at an early age with one of the interviewees, Simon, commenting "*I said to my mother that I will become a director of the biggest bank in South Africa*" (4:44). He had experienced the breakdown of his parent's marriage in his early adolescence and sought to emulate his father who was the Chairman of a financial services company.

Many of the interviewees came from relatively humble and disadvantaged backgrounds. However, a common theme was the importance to their future of taking advantage of education, with many of the participants noting that school developed key skills such as independence and resilience. In one study of childhood development in disadvantaged communities, it was found that more of the children's experiences were negative than positive (Usinger & Smith, 2010). This was to some extent true of the participants of this study, where several had fathers who either died or left home, leaving their mothers to support the family. However, in all these cases the mothers found work, and not only created role models for overcoming adversity but also provided more independence for their children and encouraged them to achieve in education. As Saras commented "*The one thing I've always believed is that education liberates you from poverty*" (12.59).

In research into the characteristics of leaders it has been found that a positive self-concept or belief in oneself is critical (Zaccaro, 2007). Self-confidence has also been identified as a requirement for successful leadership (Popper & Mayseless, 2007). Interestingly, several of the interviewees talked about the opportunities they had had as children to take risks and prove themselves, which then gave them the confidence to be successful in their adult life. Simon not only suggested that childhood had allowed him to build his self-confidence but that it had also given him a willingness to learn "*…childhood being allowed to express things differently, optimistic, hardworking, good sense of risk management…I did pretty courageous things…I'm prepared to be tested…willingness to learn*" (4:51). Ravi, who came from an impoverished family, nevertheless found that he could find the opportunities to develop and build confidence through extra-curricular activities at school as he was "*Selected by the principal to go on camps and things and I have been privileged to go on a lot of those things*" (6.41).

A significant proportion of the participants experienced boarding school, often because of parental necessity, and several had found the regime tough, but all had commented on their personal development as a result of the experience. In one study it was found that extraversion is the most important trait of leaders (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002). Other academics have found a link between sociability, socio-emotional competency and leadership (Bass, 2008). It would appear that in

addition to resilience, boarding school enabled the development of these inter-personal skills in the research participants.

Mary was sent to school when her father died and her mother had to find work as a forklift truck driver, working shifts to support her children "*So she worked shift work so my brothers and I went off to boarding school. We grew up in boarding school and I loved it. I think the good thing about boarding school was that, from a very young age, we had to be self-sufficient*" (10.4). She continued by commenting " *I think that life* [boarding school] *shaped me because I don't wait for anybody to solve anything and also, never think that something is somebody else's role* (10.6). Jack also found that boarding school was a key influence in his early development "…*my background was being in the hostel the whole time. You don't really live close to your family. You learn to stand on your own two feet at a very early age*" (9:18).

Stefan came from a very poor background, but one in which his parents encouraged him to see the importance of education. He took the initiative to apply for a sponsorship to a top US boarding school where Mark Zuckerberg was a student and commented "*I did very well and I got into Harvard and I spent four years at Harvard*" (2:3) and then added "*I think the kind of confidence that gave me probably became the bedrock of my career*" (2:4).

These schools provided encouragement for the participants to be ambitious and confident about their abilities, with Stefan commenting that "*At least once a week, our principal would say to us, you guys are the future leaders of America and at some point you'll be leading*" (2:14).

4.1.2 The Role of Sports and Extracurricular Activities

Many of the research participants commented on the importance of childhood sports and extracurricular activities in developing their leadership abilities. Previous research has also found that involvement in extracurricular activities such as sport has been found to predict future leader development (Bartone et al, 2007). One study found that engaging in leadership roles as an adolescent improved ones' chances of getting into college and had a positive impact on future earnings (Kuhn & Weinberger, 2005). Indeed researchers have argued that some skills may be more important to develop

early on (Avolio & Vogelgesang, 2011; H. Gardner & Laskin, 2011). Perhaps of significance for many of the participants in this research, leadership development has been found to be a self reinforcing process. As a person gains confidence in leadership they are more likely to engage in leadership experiences. Therefore small development experiences at an early age can have a profound impact on future development outcomes (Avolio & Hannah, 2008).

Simon suggested that being both intelligence and being good at sports were the foundations for his leadership development "*I was always seen as the cleverest kid in the class and I was lucky enough to be pretty good at cricket*" (4:13) He argued that being good at sport enabled adolescents to practice the skills of leadership, as the best sports players were given leadership roles irrespective of their leadership potential "*The default in the young sports field is normally to the more talented irrespective of their capabilities to lead people*" (4:14). As a school boarder he found that "*there were leadership positions associated with almost everything that I did*" (4:15). "*I was captain on the cricket side, vice-captain of the rugby team. I was the lead in the school play…I think that that just gave me an incredible amount of confidence that I can now reflect on*" (4:16).

Zweli made a similar comment: "*I was Captain of our team when I was twelve and the people in the team were fifteen. But it's only later on that you realize why, you know, that you've been really on this leadership journey*" (7:59).

Richard emphasised the value of learning to fail in sport when he said "*You've got to play sport when you're a kid. You've got to learn to lose. Not practice it. You don't practice losing, but you need to know what it's like not to win*" (3:7).

Simon also raised the need to learn how to fail at an early age "*I had to learn to fail as well, because if you don't get that experience earlier on in life, later on in life the stakes are much bigger and the pill you've got to swallow is too big*" (4:17).

Saras also saw that "*I had to make fundamental mistakes and learn not to do that*" (12.53) and this was reinforced by John who said " *making mistakes and how those are dealt with I think is critical"* (1:30)

In discussing the need to tackle team disharmony on the sports field Simon commented *"Later on in life if you don't know how to manage your ego and you can't take the odd punch or three, you have desperate, desperate problems because it can undo you forever"* (4:17).

Leadership roles as a child also appear to develop emotional intelligence which has been found to be critical for leadership development (Goleman, 1998). Sports and extracurricular school activities can, inparticular, develop social skills, and Saras reinforced the importance of these skills when she said that the skill which had been key to her leadership development was *"Without doubt…the ability to network and build partnerships"* (12.62).

A key finding of the research is therefore that leadership roles as a child create both the skills and confidence to take on leadership roles as an adult.

4.1.3 The Impact of Family Circumstances

Difficult family circumstances creating resilience and drive appears a common theme with a majority of the participants, with those coming from more affluent backgrounds often experiencing the loss of a parent through death or divorce. In the case of the interviewees who came from impoverished backgrounds, their childhood experiences were in the context of the end of apartheid and societal expectations of the next generation taking advantage of the political transformation.

Previous research has found that contextual factors do determine the extent to which early experiences impact the development of a leadership identity (S. E. Murphy & Johnson, 2011). Another study found that many successful British Chief Executives experienced the early loss of a parent or had been separated from their parents and, consequently, had to take responsibility for themselves at an early age (Cox & Cooper, 1989). Another study analysed the life histories of successful Chief Executives and identified several early factors associated with transformational leadership, including family circumstances that were difficult but not overwhelming. These circumstances had taught the children how to deal with disappointment and conflict effectively (Avolio & Gibbons, 1988).

Don saw his circumstances as enabling the development of leadership skills "*I came from a very humble background, and I think that holds in good stead*" (5:2).

Three participants had families who were active in the anti-apartheid struggle and again saw that exposure as encouraging action, determination and a commitment to supporting a "free" South Africa.

Ravi commented that "*I grew up in a family that was heavily involved in the anti-apartheid struggle in politics for several generations. When I was born my uncle was on Robin Island*" (6:2). "*So I grew up in a political family and became an activist in high school and my father had the view that I must do something in the sciences as at some point we would liberate South Africa and would need scientists*" (6:3).

Zweli was encouraged to achieve despite the troubles: "*My father didn't buy this idea of us being the lost generation, or marginalised youth…and through all the difficulties…I was able to matriculate and go on to university*" (7:2). Subsequently he had "*the good fortune of working in the first democratic Government and watched some of the key ministers and the President in action. And the things my father instilled in me, values of service, you know, humility, hard work, all those things, I could now bring them forward in a work context*" (7:3).

These findings suggest that difficult family circumstances do not necessarily have a detrimental impact on leadership development as they develop resilience and drive and teach the children to cope with disappointment and conflict.

4.1.4 **Parental Influence**

Parental and other family role models were common with all participants, whether they were role models seen in adversity or successful corporate leaders in their own right. Several studies have considered the role of parental influence in developing positive leadership behaviours and most have found fathers to be most influential (Sosik, 2006; Towler, 2005). One study of disadvantaged young people did find a correlation between maternal aspirations and academic success (De Civita et al., 2004). In my study mothers were found to be very influential. This could in part be explained by the comments that their mothers were nurturing, and thus gave them

security to build confidence and develop as leaders, rather than providing positive role models of leadership. Equally in this sample group there were several instances of mothers becoming the main breadwinner, and, although they were often not in leadership positions, the characteristics they modelled in supporting their families were in many cases those characteristics required of positive leaders.

Research has shown that parents who set high standards for achievement and who encouraged their children to be the best, support the development of transformational leaders (Avolio & Gibbons, 1988). Another model places the development of leadership in a social learning framework, emphasizing the role of parental modeling in the development of adolescents' leadership. This model suggests that leadership behaviours developed during adolescence are crucial to future leadership development, as behaviours learned during adolescence are relatively stable (Zacharatos, Barling, & Kelloway, 2000).

Zweli commented on the influence of his father: "*my dad would test me to the limit but there were also many times that he would pull me back*" (7:13). "*I learnt more from my dad, because he had laid the foundation so if you got back and you got 50%, he wasn't happy. He was interested in you, you know. And things about how to treat people and all of those things*" (7:45).

Zweli reflected the comments of several other participants, whose parents had encouraged them to set a higher purpose for life, rather than simply having career or personal goals. "*When you pass on, what would you have said you've done with your life? And I thought back to my father who had been such an influence to me all along, and I realised that what he had instilled in me, is what has helped me to be who I am and therefore my purpose in life is about developing young people and developing leaders and helping other leaders to succeed*" (7:24) Don made a similar comment "*that's what guides me in my life, and really to make a material difference in the lives of every single person I touch*" (5:33).

This transformational motivation was developed in childhood through parental influence. Studies have found that the early development of transformational

leadership attributes may have critical implications for later transformational leadership (Krosnick & Alwin, 1989).

Family disruptions were also seen as character forming. Jack commented that his parents divorced when he was four or five and "*I think I went to twelve different primary schools*" which taught him independence and resilience from an early age (9:8).

Mary said "*My mom was a huge and is a huge inspiration to me because we are of Portuguese descent, so when my dad passed away, she was really an immigrant in South Africa. She could hardly speak the language*" (10:23). *John, who came from an affluent background said of his father: "…my father was a successful businessman and so around the dinner table at home…you did talk business type of things or were exposed to his friends or whatever*" (1:6). Simon was driven to succeed by "*a highly competitive father*" (4:9) who was *" a leader from day dot, and I think that that initial influence certainly created a drive to succeed"* (4:10).

Simon commented on the nurturing of his mother which balanced the drive to emulate his father and said "*If they could read the great leaders in history, Genghis Khan, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar…they've got incredible relationships with their mothers*" (4:11). Zweli also commented on maternal influence when he said "*I've had very strong grandmothers. They were powerful*." (7:60).

Saras had found her mother to be a key role model and said "*my mom was one of the first black area managers of a retail store" (12:2) "My mom was an Indian woman, worked by day. She had to cook, she had to take care of us. So you know, you model behaviour, you see all of that"(12.55). "and I think the ambition, my mother, nothing was* impossible*. I think if she was just a stay at home mother maybe I wouldn't be as driven as I am"* (12:56).

Alex also commented that "*My mum worked from six to six in a clothing factory to put us through varsity*" (13:14) and this had created in him a determination to succeed to fulfil his mother's expectations.

These insights therefore suggest that parental influence is critical in developing leadership potential both through providing positive role models and encouraging high standards of achievement.

4.2 FORMAL AND INFORMAL DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS MUST BE SUPPLEMENTED WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP

One of the key themes which emerged from the interviews was that formal development on its own is inadequate, even if it is targeted. This is supported by research which suggests that individuals with leadership potential need to be systematically identified and developed as part of a strategic succession planning process in which selection, development, performance management and career management are aligned and reviewed and supported by top management (Fulmer, Stumpf, & Bleak, 2009). This research found that best practice firms focussed on highly customised leadership development programmes with an increasing use of action learning, mentoring and coaching (Fulmer et al., 2009). Other research supports this approach suggesting that more generic programmes run by international business schools are out of touch with the business world (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Ghoshal, 2005). Further research also suggests that business schools will be under increasing pressure from "corporate universities" (H. Thomas & Cornuel, 2007).

Contrary to this research my research participants gave very mixed feedback on "in company" programmes, but typically they appear to have been relatively un-customised, and not part of a broader development process as described by Fulmer et al. (2009). They were also very positive about their experiences of international business schools, although they saw the benefits as less about formal learning and more about the networking opportunities.

4.2.1 Leadership Programmes

In identifying impactful leadership development, I asked each of the interviewees to give feedback on their experience of formal leadership programmes. As noted above, a surprising number had attended international business schools, and the general consensus was that these schools provided great networking opportunities and

developed the individual through the networking provided, both with participants and key speakers.

John expressed the views of several of the participants when he said "*I went to Harvard on one of those executive programmes and it was fabulous. It was less what I actually learned formally in the classroom but it was just the fact that you were with different people from different countries, doing case studies, arguing, going drinking in the evenings*…" (1:22). Zweli also emphasised the importance of learning from and networking with others when he said "*What made Harvard different was that I was ready to learn more from* myself *by just learning from 150 different people and just building relationships with them*" (7:46). Ravi said of his executive education programme " *I really enjoyed it and still keep in contact with 20 of the 50 people on the course*" (6:32).

Stefan did admit to leadership skills development on his programme at Harvard, but still focused on the key benefit of networking "*What I got out of it is I think a network…I think it taught me some leadership skills…I'd say persuasion. I think network and persuasion is what it taught m*e" (2:30). This focus on the value of networking rather than the curriculum is concerning, and does support some of the research which has found that business schools have an increasing relevance gap (Starkey & Madan, 2001). However, as Simon suggested, part of the problem may be that attendance at executive programmes is seen more as a sabbatical than a learning experience. "*…getting sent to Harvard but never got fully utilised because it's treated more as a sabbatical than necessarily a leadership and learning platform. It is a loyalty reward. I loved it.*" (4:56).

As business school programmes are often attended when the individuals are already in senior management positions, the research participants did agree that they gave time away from the demands of work in which it was possible to reflect. Stefan admitted that the benefits of his business school programme were "…helping me with deep introspection to understand what I believed, and then learning to manage that…" Zweli also found the opportunity to reflect as important "*I think the time spent away at school…gave me so much time to reflect*" (7:22).

As noted above much of the research on business schools has questioned their relevance to leadership development. However, one academic suggested that business schools should engage with real management issues and challenges (H. Thomas & Cornuel, 2007). This might suggest the use of more case studies. Yet Don suggests that case studies is not where the value lies in top business schools. He believes the value is rather about reflection and developing a life purpose and philosophy, both of which are seen as critical attributes in current positive leadership theories. "*…a pivotal point in my career was my experience at Duke…it wasn't "death by case study". It was about listening, thinking about the world. It taught me a lot about having a life-philosophy as an executive and bringing that back to work every day in how you lead. That was by far one of the most profound interventions I've had in my career" (5:12). "What I loved about Duke, compared to Harvard, was Harvard "death by case study". Duke I only did three case studies and their thinking behind it was to say "the past is not necessarily the proxy of the future"* (5:27). But even there the network was seen as key with Don saying "*through those initiatives you create life-long fri*ends" (5:57).

Despite research which supports the development of "corporate universities" (Cornuel & Hawawini, 2005), participants gave very mixed feedback on other formal leadership programmes, with many seeing them as not relevant to their own development needs. Zweli commented "*So I fear that some of the interventions are not getting to the core of the problems that people face.*" (7:42). Don's experience of " in-house company programmes was that "*It was the old-style classroom form of download of factual data and so it helped for a period of time…but did it have significant impact? No, it didn't*" (5:55). And Nelis said "*I find a lot of it actually very academic to be honest" (8:34). "So mine has been hands on rather than classroom development"* (8:38) "*I am not a big fan of courses and degrees because it is very much reading a book on "how to" instead of…"* (8:13).

Zweli summed up the concerns of several participants that "in-company" programmes were too abstract and did not teach practical "how to" leadership skills, when he said "*I guess many were frustrating for me because they were abstract. I fully agreed with them but they were not helping people deal with what they have to deal with and that was frustrating for me*". (7:40) .

Saras wanted to develop her leadership skills, and found programmes that were relevant to her needs at the time. "*I just said I need to know…how to give feedback because it was done very ad hoc. So I went on a development programme, I think it was about a six month programme and it was incredible*" (12:29). She also wanted to ensure that she had leading edge knowledge as "*At the time digital marketing was starting to play and I did an international course in digital market because I knew that you have got to get the skill*" (12:33).

All the participants valued continuous learning, but Saras was the most determined to take advantage of formal learning "*…and I thought my God I don't have creativity. So let me tell you now and then I researched and there was this wonderful creativity course in Potchefstroom University*"(12:35).

A rather muted validation from Jack for leadership development programmes was that it reinforces what you already know "*Many of them find, because of the nature of business, a lot of the content to a large extent they already know. The fact that it is validated helps them*" (9:32).

Even those who supported formal leadership development programmes see the generic programmes as sub-optimal, with Mary commenting that "*I do believe that leadership development is crucial. I think that sometimes we are misguided in terms of what the right programme is again because we try to do a one size fits all approach*" (10:30).

As noted in the research above it is seen to be important to have an integrated approach to leadership development and Saras summed up what several of the participants noted when she said "*I would do a combination of internal courses and I would shadow…a type of coaching…it was incredible…it was the catalyst I think for my career"* (12:18).

These research findings support research which has argued that generic programmes do not provide the level of customisation required to meet the specific development needs of the participants. Enabling the flexibility to select a combination of programmes and types of leadership intervention will be more effective in meeting

individual needs. However, international business school programmes were valued because they gave the opportunity for networking and for reflection.

4.2.2 **Identification as "Top Talent"**

Several of the research participants commented on the importance of knowing that they were considered "top talent". This recognition is not only motivational but is seen as important in building self-efficacy. Being selected as one of the few to attend an international business school programme was therefore seen as highly motivational. However, research suggests that some executives worry that by giving high potentials special treatment they may be creating the perception of a "favoured class" at an organisation. 60% of the firms canvassed in one research study said that they avoid using the "high potential" label publicly. Yet their research showed that employees who are recognised as high potentials are more motivated and engaged (Martin & Schmidt, 2010).

It is therefore not surprising that high potential leaders value selective leadership development opportunities as much for the recognition as they do for any development opportunities. Mary confirmed the research when she said "*So what was most significant I think was just the message from FNB…It was a good thing for me that they identified me as somebody that they could develop*" (11:4).

Stefan suggested that the value of recognition applies to both "in-house" and business school programmes when he said "*I was selected to go on a management development programme…they created a sense of prestige around the development programmes" (2:13) "I did the AMP at Kellogg in Chicago. So that again is more about reward and recognition than actually about learning*" (2:18). Saras also commented on a highly selective application process for a development programme which made her determined to be selected: "*There was a performance hub, high potential individuals and they would put them through a three year process. The first year was centred around personal mastery and then again it was an application process and they would only identify twenty people again. And by the grace of God I was successful*" (12:42).

These findings suggest that selective leadership development interventions are not only valuable as learning opportunities but also provide recognition, which is key in building self confidence, motivation and engagement.

4.2.3 **Executive Coaching**

"Boss as coach" was clearly seen to be "first prize" in developmental coaching for the research participants, but there was considerable enthusiasm for external coaching. This is supported by recent research literature. In one longitudinal study of 87 executives coached, less than half were positive about coaching and only 29% expressed an enthusiastic anticipation of coaching. In general the respondents rated coaching effective in developing skills and improving performance in areas related to the coaching (Wasylyshyn, 2003). In a meta-analysis of the effectiveness of coaching (Theeboom, Beersma, & van Vianen, 2014) the findings indicated that coaching is an effective intervention. However, current research on coaching is inconclusive as to whether there is a positive return on investment given the high costs of dedicated coaching resources (Leonard-Cross, 2010).

Simon had a positive experience of executive coaching : "*It was brilliant. She brought a completely different perspective, brutal to be honest. It was a trusted and nurtured environment…not as beneficial as working for [my boss] but probably a good look in the mirror*" (4:53). His comments endorse research which suggests that the most consistently identified factor contributing to the success of a coaching engagement is the quality of the relationship between the coach and client (A. Day, De Haan, Blass, Sills, & Bertie, 2008; Passmore, 2008). His coaching experience was also developmental rather than remedial, and research has found that coaching is more successful when executives are not defensive and are willing to look inward for development and growth (Coutu & Kauffman, 2009). Simon refers to the opportunity to "look in the mirror" or reflect, and this suggests a positive motivation to explore and build self-awareness which has been found to be critical in a positive coaching relationship (Goldberg, 2005).

Stefan had been acknowledged as high potential, which again allowed him to be constructive and motivated in his coaching experience "*As much as I was a kind of rising star…I had certain personal deficiencies which were holding me back…she*

helped me get over those things" (2:21). " *I think the woman I had at SAB helped me to understand myself so that I could adjust*" (2:34). This positive experience appears to have been enabled by his own self-awareness and readiness for change which has also been identified as a major predictor of coaching effectiveness (Fillery-Travis & Cox, 2014).

A positive experience of coaching can be attributed to one highly impactful learning as Don found "*He gave me one piece of advice…your ability to ask a deeply refined question would make you even more impactful as an executive*" (5:13).

One of the key themes of the research findings has been that learning is not enough, but rather that the learning has to be applied effectively, and this requirement was highlighted by Saras' comment on coaching "*the ability of a coach to take out that learning and make you apply it was the most incredible thing*" (12:46).

A common theme amongst the research participants was that the coaches had to understand the business of the coachee if they were to be effective. In the case of one organisation the coaches were working with all the executive team, had had a full briefing on the business strategy, and also used multi source feedback to provide the coachee with practical insights. There was also a view that it was helpful for coaches to have shadowed the coachees to gain an understanding of their leadership style. John expressed these views when he said "*She came into the business and we talked about our strategy, what we are trying to do and …so there was real material for her to work with…to say to coachees this is what everyone around you is saying*" (1:32). "*A coach also has to see you in action…because if you have never seen that person conduct a meeting how can you coach them about…how they treat people*" (1:41). Stefan also supported this view by giving negative feedback on a coaching experience "*the other coach was trying to guide me with practical problems in an industry that he knew very little about*" (2:34).

There does appear to be some limited research which supports the comments made by these research participants. Research has found that if commonality is high, rapport and trust will develop quicker (Wycherley & Cox, 2008). Research has also found that the credibility of the coach is critical for positive client performance and

satisfaction ratings (Gregory, Levy, & Jeffers, 2008). Researchers have also identified business, management, leadership and political expertise as important credibility considerations in the establishment of effective relationships (Alvey & Barclay, 2007).

There appears to be little research on the need for coaches to understand the industry or to have shadowed the coachee. In South Africa coaching is a much more recent leadership development intervention than in countries that are typically the subject of coaching research, such as the USA. The comments by the research participants suggesting that it is important for the coach to understand the industry may therefore be the result of a lack of trust in coaching because of the infancy of the concept in South Africa. Research does support the need for effective coaching relationships (Baron & Morin, 2010), and it may well be that for some coachees the credibility of the coach in terms of knowledge of both their industry and leadership style is critical for the necessary relationship of trust and commitment.

The use of multi-source feedback as a coaching tool was also seen by the research participants as an important resource for leadership development. Studies have shown that individuals who received multi-source feedback had a higher rating when assessed again (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998). Another study also found that the combination of coaching and multi-source feedback was powerful for leadership development (Smither et al., 2003). A further study found that multi-source feedback used for developmental purposes offers individuals valuable feedback that facilitates skill acquisition, setting developmental goals and behaviour change (Bailey & Austin, 2006).

Simon found the use of a 360 tool with coaching very powerful "*I still reflect on the 360 and the diagnostics that we went through and her coaching as to where my behaviour was too sharp, elbowish and sometimes too dismissive…it had a big impact on behaviour*" (4:54). Yet even with this positive endorsement the final comment was "*how much [of my leadership development] am I attributing to formal coaching: could be as much as 10 percen*t" (4:59).

The ability to give constructive feedback based on multi-source feedback was reinforced by Richard "*Feedback from my coach. The arrogance and self-promotion; use of intimidation; need to value people's contribution. Leaders are generous not just about money-it's time…be a reasonable person with a big heart"* (3:1).

There was also a view that coaching was for times of transition or particular challenge, and when you did not necessarily have an internal coach. Nelis commented "*In that transition role it was difficult to cope with everything simultaneously so I had someone, I would call it more mentoring" (8:27). "I think what really helped is that she helped me to put everything into perspective so that you can see the bigger picture and take that few steps back and look. She also helped me to explain how people operate and why they do certain things*" (8:28). John also found the benefits of coaching to be situational "*I think it is dependent on where you are…either in a difficult job or a new job…and you have not got someone within the organisation to talk to*" (1:38). Stefan saw coaching as a tool to support career transitions "*It's more about professional career guidance in career transition…that's probably where I see value in coaching*" (2:37).

The research participants saw coaching as not only having a role in transition or in the case of a particularly challenging role, but also when an high potential individual has a major "de-railer". Simon described a colleague when he said "*He'd got to see a coach because of his interpersonal skills*" (4:61).

Whilst a number of the participants described their coaches as being beneficial because they provided a mentoring capability, others described coaching as important because it enabled reflection, self-awareness and growing self-efficacy. Nelis commented on the value of reflection when he said "*I am very supportive of coaching because it is a reflection process, it helps people to understand*" (8:49). Saras summed up the value of coaching for her by saying"*I thought I'm going to go in there and they're gonna tell me how to do things and just be spoon-fed and I'd go out and apply. But the questioning technique meant that I have never felt so empowered in my life. And it was a great soundboard because that person would also give me feedback"* (12:47) Don also saw coaching as enabling self-belief "*All the coaching I*

did with her was giving me self-belief. To believe that you can achieve anything you want to achieve" (5:62

4.2.4 **Influential Others**

Although several of the participants had found value in executive coaching, the boss, as coach or mentor, was seen to be the "first prize". None of the participants had had formal mentoring relationships, but the power of childhood influencers, workplace informal coaches and mentors and other influential counsellors appears to have been significant. What is also perhaps significant is that the participants actively sought out such support, which could be explained by their natural desire to learn and improve, which are attributes of transformational leaders (Popper & Mayseless, 2003). Research has shown that formal mentoring can enhance the development of mentees. However, coaching as a component of mentoring can be particularly powerful as it encourages communication and information sharing (Tracey & Nicholl, 2007). What appears to have been critical for the participants was that their mentors were individuals who not only gave advice but challenged and inspired them.

As we have already noted, John had valued an external coach but for him "boss as coach" was more valuable "*I think that is prize one actually, if you have a boss who can coach you, that is better than having an external coach probably because you are all on the same team and trying to achieve the same thing. I also think it is useful to have somebody external…*" (1:39) "*I have been so lucky; all my life I had good bosses. I had bosses who were keen for me to succeed"* (1:27).

Mary also had a boss who both provided guidance and opportunity "*She was a fantastic mentor because she was older and she took me under her wing and she gave me a lot of opportunity which was fantastic"* (10:13) As Mary became a leader her new boss was also someone who has encouraged communication and debate and listened to her views, which not only motivated her but provided coaching and learning "*I've worked with Nelis now for most of those years and the ability to debate and being heard has for me been crucial*" (9:28). Zweli also commented on a boss who took a considered risk on him "*He really gave me the space to be myself and he took the biggest bat in the bank on me, and I think he understood more than most who I really am*" (7:14).

Stefan believes that what he is today had a lot to do with an inspirational early boss "*I found that a lot of my development and my inspiration around what I do today came from discussions with [my boss], and he formed my world view, both at a personal level and a professional level*" (2:6). Don had also found bosses who provided opportunities and from whom he could learn "*I was again blessed with great opportunities and great leaders that I've worked for…learning different things from each one*" (5:5). "*I'll go in and take the best of what I think a leader stands for and I will tailor to what I think is right*" (5:6) "*When I look at leaders like Mfundo, he commands power, but he says very little to command power and he taught me a lot about that*" (5:34).

Simon had a boss who ensured that he was both supported and challenged "*He was both boss and mentor…and he took unbelievably good care of me*" (4:32).

Saras also had the insight to tailor what she saw and learnt from her bosses "*I would observe good managers and I would see what they did, you know, and take the good*" (12:54).

Ravi described a particular transformational leader who had been his inspiration "*I probably learnt more about managing people from Lesetsa that anyone else…he is able to bring the best out of people. He is one of those managers that people in his team would be prepared to walk through fire for him*" (6:27).

Saras on the other hand found a mentor who could provide a model of successful leadership which could both inspire and teach her "I also had a mentor. I wanted to know what success looked like because I couldn't tell" (12:34).

Female bosses were mentioned positively by male research participants, just as they had mentioned the influence of their mothers. This may in part reflect the findings of one meta-analysis which showed that female managers are somewhat more transformational than male managers, and are more effective at providing support and mentoring in the workplace (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & Van Engen, 2003).

Stefan found that his female boss taught him more feminine aspects of leadership "*I had the most amazing boss. She brought some of the diversity that women bring, less ego, less testosterone… and she taught me some skills which I probably don't use enough, on how to get things done without needing to win every argument*" (2:12).

Don also focused on what he saw as a particular strength of a female boss when he said "*Ingrid taught me a lot around human psychology and how you deal with people*" (5:35). Ravi reflected that a great female boss for him had been both challenging and supportive "*Maria was a very tough task master and so she would phone me at four in the morning and say "what rubbish is this?"'* (6:19). He also said "*Maria was a very good manager because you never felt undermined*" (6:22), which reflects the research which saw female bosses as more supportive (Eagly et al., 2003).

There was certainly a view that successful leaders "breed" other successful leaders. Simon said "*Every single person that I've worked for has been unbelievably successful. So I slotted myself into a mode where the person that I worked for always succeeded and I got sucked along*" (4:26) "*So he was both boss and mentor and the biggest rising star in the Standard Bank Group and he took unbelievably good care of me*" (4:32)

Whilst boss as coach was seen as highly influential, many of the participants had a broader circle of mentors, many of whom they still rely on even though they are now senior executives. This appeared to support a level of humility in the research participants, who believed that they still had much to learn and did not always get things right. Zweli summed up the continued need for mentoring when he said "*If you don't have a circle of advisers who give you unsolicited advice at all times, you can get yourself in trouble"* (7:55).

For CEO's the mentors also include the board of directors. John had relied on board members for guidance "*There are people [the Board] guiding you as opposed to just you on your own trying to go down the road*" (1:29). Stefan also said "*I'm starting to look for a bit of guidance, so I'm speaking to some board members and one of the guys who runs one of the consultancies that advise us*" (2:36).

International opportunities also created the chance to find powerful mentors. Ravi was sent on secondment to the UK Treasury and worked with one of their top economists who provided him with the insight he needed to develop in his own career "*I worked with Nick in the UK and he was a wonderful mentor, absolutely lovely man, amazing wisdom and I really valued that*" (6:16). Back in South Africa he also found another mentor who inspired him to peak performance "*Momo was sort of an uncle that you would be embarrassed if you did something wrong…he would offer the comments, you messed up here, or made a mistake here*" (6:26).

The concept of transformational leaders seeking counsel from others to support their own development was noted earlier in this sub-section. Transformational leadership theory also places great importance on developmental processes such as empowering followers to reach self-actualisation. In considering the participants' comments about their experiences of "boss as coach" the effective bosses appear to have the attributes of transformational leaders.

Given the importance the research participants placed on parental influence in their development as leaders, it is perhaps not surprising that they also place importance on these leader relationships, as research has shown that leaders with whom followers form emotional relationships function in many respects like parents (Popper & Mayseless, 2003). This similarity between authoritative parents and transformational leaders is apparent in a number of areas, including both being sensitive and responsive; providing opportunities; and positive role models. This similarity also appears to include the ability to allow the child or follower to learn from their mistakes and develop self-confidence and self-awareness as a result of the process. The research participants certainly saw the benefit of a leader as coach in both their own experiences of being coached and now as senior executives in coaching others. Nelis suggested that "*Sometimes I let them mess it up a bit first before I come and help"* (8:39).

Challenge from an inspirational boss was seen to be important, with Mary commenting on her boss that "*He knows how to stretch you and he's clever and witty because he will say something that he knows will really upset you, but he knows that's what is going to drive you to do whatever it is*" (10:38). Zweli also suggested that the

boss he identified as having been an inspirational coach developed him through stretching him further than others "*He was always harder on me than anybody else, expected more from me than anybody else*" (7:12). Alex also referred to his "boss as coach" as challenging him to go the "extra mile" "*He said to us you've always got to be ahead of the curve in whatever you do*" (13:1).

Zweli described his boss as a transformational leader when he said "*The empowerment, the trust, the challenge, the testing, I know at times made me a better person*" (7:15). "*He would challenge my own fears. He would say "I'm going to say some harsh things to you, but you have to listen to them because you have to hear them"* (7:16). *"His own example of life taught me a lot about self-awareness and introspection and self-criticism*" (7:20).

Coaching and mentoring were seen to be particularly important to support transformation in South Africa. John argued that "*It is often young black people and they …have not got someone at home. So they are looking for that sounding board*" (1:42).

Researchers have considered mentoring through a social exchange perspective where an individual develops, maintains and exits relationships based on their perceived costs and benefits. In mentoring relationships the benefits exchanged fit into the social exchange resource categories of emotional support, information, services and status However, mentoring can actually be detrimental to the mentor, mentee or both if there is incompatible pairing (Baranik, Roling, & Eby, 2010). Given the value found by the research participants, who typically sought out their mentors, one finding could well be that creating a coaching and mentoring culture, and then allowing relationships to form spontaneously, may be more successful than formal mentoring programmes where there is a significant risk of poor pairing.

Effective mentoring at an early career stage has left many of the participants with abiding beliefs around the principles of leadership. Stefan said of his mentor "*I'd have a coffee with him once every two months…and he always drilled into me…that the only thing that matters are your people. So get the best people. Get rid of the bad ones. Hold onto the good ones and develop them"* (2:17). Mary also described a

mentor in similar terms "*Somebody that is fair, is realistic, but also stretches the people because otherwise where does everybody go if they are not being stretched*" (10:39).

Having seen the value of coaching and mentoring, all the participants spoke of their own role now as coach or mentor. They had a very unselfish view of trying to help others make it faster and better than they did, which again reflects the behaviour of a transformational leader. Don said "*I love giving that advice to folks and set them up for success, because my view is that if they can do it quicker than I did, then that's something that's a great gift*" (5:64). Zweli was also keen to give something back when he said "*I said I'd like to formally spend more time with young leaders in the bank*" (7:31). Alex said "*I have mentored directly six people*" (13:52).

Some participants identified key facilitators on leadership development programmes as having provided critical leadership lessons. So although they did not necessarily rate the overall curriculum they did focus on the key messages given by inspirational lecturers. John recalled an *"…amazing professor called John Kotter. One of the things he said was "do not assume that your leadership skills are transferable from where you are currently to some other industry*" (1:23). Don reflected that "*I met some wonderful folk. Professor Len Khona was an amazing influence*" (5:41). Ravi also recalled a lecturer who had been highly influential *"At Wits I met Roland Hunter who was a great influence" (6:6). "He got me interested in Economics…and we would have long discussions and from that point I developed a love for Economics"* (6:7).

In conclusion, influential bosses or mentors in the workplace or in adult education appear to have had a significant impact on the leadership development of the research participants. They have provided role models, found challenging opportunities, and given support and advice. In so doing they built the self-awareness and self-confidence of the research participants, and provided wise counsel to develop particular leadership skills.

4.3 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-EFFICACY

Given the relatively unstructured nature of the interviews, key themes surfaced which had not been anticipated. One key theme was that of self -confidence leading to self-determination, with most of the interviewees justifying their success as leaders by referring in various ways to their belief in their career being in their own hands. This self-determination appears to have enabled them to gain experiences which further developed their leadership skills and it therefore created a self-perpetuating development of leadership competence. Previous research has acknowledged these leadership attributes, arguing that effective leaders are highly committed, determined, resilient and goal focused (Kirkpatick & Locke, 1991). It has been suggested by other researchers that such attributes describe a person with high self-efficacy for the leadership role (McCormick, Tanguma, & López-Forment, 2002). However, previous research does not specifically appear to have identified this virtuous circle of leadership development.

Self-efficacy is a personal belief in one's capabilities and is a key causal factor in successful leadership (McCormick et al., 2002). Bandura was the academic who first described self-efficacy and he identified four major categories of experience that influence efficacy levels. The first is personal performance accomplishments. The second is exposure to models. The third positive feedback and encouragement, and the fourth one's physiological condition (Bandura, 1986). In the current research findings it is significant that the research participants comment on developing as effective leaders from childhood. The findings show that both parental influence and other influencers in adult life have been critical in their leadership development through both role modelling and providing support and encouragement. As notedin section 4.4.1, the need to have a healthy life with work-life balance and a stable family existence have also been critical. These factors support the four drivers of self-efficacy described by Bandura and suggest that self-efficacy has been a crucial factor in the leadership success of the research participants.

The self-efficacy of the research participants has been developed largely without formal leadership development interventions. It would be interesting in further

research to determine the extent to which self-efficacy can be developed through formal interventions. Bandura has suggested that the development of self-efficacy should be an objective for leadership programmes. He also suggested that creating leadership role opportunities and providing supportive coaching will lead to heightened leadership self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). However, more recent research has shown that we must understand that some facets of leadership self-efficacy are negatively correlated with leadership performance (Anderson, Krajewski, Goffin, & Jackson, 2008). Thus a leader who was very confident in their ability to act would be less effective in relational leadership (Anderson et al., 2008). Interestingly the research findings in the current study have found that a key attribute of the research participants has been self-confidence balanced by humility and a willingness to listen to others.

4.3.1 Self-Determination Driving Leadership Development

The research findings suggest that self-determination was a critical aspect of self-efficacy for the research participants. As Nelis suggested "*It is up to you to create your own sunshine and make your career work and I think people do not get that*." (8:47). "*Only one person is responsible for your career and that is yourself*" (8:48).

Saras was working as a secretary in a bank and was determined to be a banker, although her boss told her that it would be "*very, very difficult*" (12:10). She then saw an advertisement for management trainees: "*So I went to HR and they said to me sorry, its only open to branch staff*" (12:17). On persisting she was told that her manager could make a motivation to allow her to apply as an exception. That was the start of her career advancement.

"Creating your own sunshine" also involved many of the interviewees taking advantage of opportunities even if there were risks involved. Stefan said "*If you are a self-starter, often in chaos there are lots of development opportunities…here I was doing stuff I would never have been trusted to do anywhere else"* (2:8). Ravi also jumped at a high risk opportunity "*So he said why don't you just come work for us? You do all of our work anyway. And so I jumped at the opportunity and …started working at the Treasury*" (6:8).

Saras took the opportunity to become a branch manager at a time when she would then have to compete with three other experienced branch managers for the job "*So I was given that branch early May and in November they were gonna converge the four brands. So I had very limited time but I…had the branch and I just saw the opportunity*" (12:22). This approach clearly required a high level of self-efficacy supported by self-confidence and determination and the resilience to take risks and go into the unknown with limited support. Stefan accepted a role where "*I didn't have the competence to do it, I didn't have any of the training to do it, but I kind of learnt on the job*" (2:9). Ravi, just out of university, managed to persuade a senior colleague to let him help draft the National Development Plan. This meant working very long hours and reporting to Ministers and Commissioners, but he described it as "*a phenomenal experience*" (6:25). This level of determination and resilience was linked by several interviewees to their experience at boarding school. Jack said "*You don't really live close to your family. So you don't really come to your family for advice. You learn to stand on your own two feet at a very early age*" (9:18).

This sense of determination to succeed was voiced by many of the interviewees, who had often had to sacrifice to succeed as children, and continued to be prepared to do so as adults. Saras epitomised this sense of sheer determination when she said "*Cause I also believe God gave you hands at the end of these arms…so you've got to mobilise"* (12:66). Simon also expressed his approach to his career progression when he said "*I just never gave up*" (4:22). Zweli also responded to his father's high standards by saying "*But you always go that extra mile*" (7:62).

Earlier in this section it was mentioned that in the findings it appears that all the research participants had innate self-confidence, but they were also humble enough to do whatever it took to succeed. Mary found that "*If emptying a consultant's dustbin can make them more successful and productive, that what we'll do*" (10:17). Saras had seen her mother sacrifice to enable her children to get an education and she reflected the same sentiments in her career ambitions when she said *"I wanted more but I knew that I had to sacrifice*" (12:60). Jack learnt the hard way how to run a hotel *"I had to close the bar at twelve o'clock and then kick them out by two o'clock, go to sleep and wake up at six"*(9:7).

Many of the interviewees discussed attributes such as determination and resilience in the context of suggesting that such attributes are more important than formal leadership development. Simon actually suggested that leaders are born although they can be further developed to fulfilment. "*My thesis is that leaders are born and then they are nurtured to fulfilment" (4:1) "You can't take a non-leader and turn them into a leader*" (4:2) However, he did acknowledge that development was also important "*You are naturally born or gifted into a moment that you can allow to be developed*" (4:5).

Other related views included one from John who said that "*It is the X-factor. It is like in sports teams when the pressure is on, where some people can score goals and other people who cannot*" (1:9) "*It is the ability to get the important things done you know as opposed to talking about them, and some people just do not quite have it*" (1:20) .

Whilst a number of studies have shown that leadership development can be taught, a key study involving well known leadership development experts did propose that not every person can learn how to be an effective leader (Doh, 2003). In this study Jay Conger argued that only certain aspects of leadership can be taught. He saw that there were three dimensions of leadership: skills, perspectives and dispositions and that the third cannot be taught. As an example he suggested that you cannot teach a person to be ambitious or more open to risk taking and that these aspects of leadership are part of innate qualities (Doh, 2003). This argument supports the contentions of both Simon and John that you need certain innate qualities to have the potential to become a leader. These are what John described as "the X factor".

From both Simon and John's comments, and the life narrative of the research participants, it can certainly be argued that there were key innate attributes which were nurtured or enhanced through childhood experiences and then became critical in the development of their leadership capabilities. These key attributes such as determination and resilience appear to be sub-sets of self-efficacy. They also appear to be a virtuous circle, as results from empirical research indicate that a person with strong self-efficacy will also learn and transfer more in leadership development than a person with a weak self-efficacy (Baron & Morin, 2010). A finding of this research

study is therefore that self-efficacy is both critical in creating the potential to be a successful leader, and in enhancing learning in leadership development.

4.3.2 Leadership Development through Adversity and Failure

In discussing their development as leaders, all the current research participants referred to learning through challenges and adversity, and the importance of learning to lose from an early age. One researcher confirmed the views of the participants in the current research when he suggested that the primary source of learning is experience (McCall, 2004). He found that the majority of experiences reported as development involve adversity and struggling with the unfamiliar. The types of experience which have the greatest impact are challenging assignments, exposure to great or terrible superiors, hardships and significant personal experiences (McCall, 2004). Failure experiences are critical learning opportunities and have been found to be more powerful and longer lasting than lessons learned from successes (Ruvolo, Peterson, & LeBoeuf, 2004). Another academic pointed out that leadership is often a struggle. He argued that the best leaders accept themselves for who they are today whilst striving to be better tomorrow. Great leaders also use failure as a wake-up call. They learn from failure through turning to mentors or taking time to reflect. To be such a leader you need to have clarity of purpose and self-awarness to be aware of one's blind spots (Snyder, 2013).

Saras stressed the need to learn through making mistakes when she said "*I had to make fundamental mistakes and learn not to do that"* (12:53). Tellingly she also added "*I have been unsuccessful in one or two positions and I'd go back and ask why"* (12:67). McCall (2004) did point out that people don't learn automatically from experience and that what is actually learned from experience varies depending on what the individual brings to it which includes, as it did with Saras, a readiness to learn. John also emphasised this point when he said "*Making mistakes and how those are dealt with I think is critical"(1:30). "From mistakes comes experience you know and from experience can come wisdom, but not always. A lot of people have got a lot of experience and are none the wiser, but from mistakes…you can become wiser if you are an intuitive person who is sensitive and those people are then very valuable because having made a bad loan as a banker you hopefully will not make that same mistake again*"(1:31). Johns's comments appear to validate the view that leadership

development requires self-awareness, self-reflection and humility to enable you to learn from your experiences.

This message of learning from your mistakes was re-inforced by Alex who told the story of how he was leading a shift of miners, who as a bonus were due a pack of meat. On the day the meat was due he was short three packs due to an error he had made. This would have caused a riot. He managed to find the extra meat and it proved to be a significant learning experience for him "*It took a simple meat pack to get me slapped back into shape*" (13:11).

Several of the interviewees also benefitted from international opportunities in their early career and saw the challenge as critical in developing their leadership skills. Don said "*Working in these international environments…grooms you tremendously as an executive*" (5:44) Nelis also chose to go on an international assignment "*I purposely wanted to go to London on secondment. The purpose of London was also life experience and I think if I need to look back I think the life experience and the exposure is even more valuable than the technical expertise"*(8:9) Ravi also said "*I did a 2 year secondment with the UK Treasury and learnt a lot no doubt about it…I gained a lot of experience, friends and contacts*" (6:11). These references to contacts and networking were consistent themes throughout the interviews, and as previously noted, much of the value of public executive education programmes was attributed to the networking opportunities provided on the programmes.

There were also comments about the particular value of international assignments for South Africans who had been brought up in the restrictive shadow of the apartheid era. Nelis managed to find work abroad at a young age and commented "*So it is the mere fact that you have to make your way in a city where you do not have the fall back or safety nets of family and friends and stuff like that*" (8:10). He further argued that "*It is kind of the fittest survive, those who know how to do it they rise to the top*" (8:15). "*The world is so much bigger there than here, so it humbles you in a way because South Africans tend to be quite arrogant. I think also for me it is just the style of work there is very different…so it teaches patience, it teaches you to see the bigger picture, a broader perspective*"(8:11).

Other interviewees learnt from challenges in their South African roles. John was catapulted into a Group CEO role to lead the fight against a hostile bid and he said "*…going through the hostile takeover was kind of a transformative thing…so I suppose with all the mistakes we made and the problems we had back and forth I think that was a huge developmental thing*"(1:46). "*I think your leadership credibility or your leadership attributes are sort of finally formed in the heat of battle*"(1:43) Jack got the opportunity to run a hotel when still in his early twenties, and told how "*I went and borrowed a thousand rand…from the bank to help buy my share and I started the business"* (9:4). He had no prior experience of the hospitality business but was willing to take what was a significant risk.

Interviewees saw experiential learning as more profound for leadership development than formal learning. John added "*I mean I think you learn more, you definitely learn more in the real world if you are aware of it than you do in…a classroom situation*"(1:26). Nelis also confirmed this view when he said "*I think the experience based learning I have had is far more valuable*"(8:37). McCall (2004) also made the point that the development of leaders does not happen all at once and this was confirmed by Simon when he said "*Leaders have got this patchwork of experiences that can make them better and wiser*"(4:47).

John also illustrated two critical points made by researchers when he said "*I was running a bank at age thirty-five…they had no real right to give me that kind of job to do and it was just scary, because I understood a few aspects really well but then a whole bunch of other aspects I knew absolutely nothing about"*(1:44). Not only is it important to start challenging leadership development early as was the case with John, but those with the potential to be really successful leaders have the self-efficacy to be prepared to take on unknown challenges. Stefan also learnt through a transition process "*I moved to MNet…and I was leading the marketing function and probably the biggest learning there was bumping my head a lot"* (2:23). Alex also gained tough leadership exposure at a very early age "*At the age of twenty two I had four hundred men in my shift and when you go down, you have 400 lives you have got to take care of"(13:6) "emotionally speaking it means growing up early*"(13:7). Simon eloquently described one experience of failure as "*I didn't call it fast enough so I was the frog in*

boiling water" (4:46). However, he also reflected that he had the benefit of an inspirational boss who he could then turn to for guidance.

These findings on the importance of developing as a leader through experience are well documented in research. One academic noted that "learning to lead is a process of learning by doing" (Hill, 2007) (p.104). It cannot be taught in the classroom but is acquired through on-the –job experiences, especially adverse experiences. Hill (2007) found that new leaders were often reluctant to turn to their own bosses for advice, and that their bosses may not know when to provide support. What I have found in this research is that the participants not only had the emotional intelligence to learn from their mistakes, but also the confidence and humility to turn to others for support, with the benefit in most cases of having inspirational leaders to guide them.

4.3.3 Leadership Development through Reading about Inspirational Leaders

It has already been noted that this research has found that there was no perceived cultural conflict for African, Indian or Coloured corporate leaders as they progressed in their careers. This is despite the particular dynamic of transformation requirements in the workplace. Research has shown that western leadership theory has informed leadership development practices in the modern African organisation (Kuada, 2010; Mbigi, 2005). This view is supported by the reality of the leadership development of the research participants, with the most impactful experiences including international business schools and overseas work assignments. As a result much of their networking is global with an Anglo-US bias. Many academics have suggested that this "imperialist" approach to leadership development must change in Africa if we are to have effective African leadership. One scholar has gone so far as to denounce the relevance of western theories of leadership in the African context and has called for African education which inculcates African culture and values (Obiakor, 2004).

The findings of this research are that leadership is more complex in South Africa given the multi-cultural dynamics, and that transformational leaders with a South African national identity and Anglo-US educational experiences can be highly successful. This position is supported by another academic who has dismissed the idea of an "African culture" and suggest a hybrid option in which global leadership development interventions are aligned with the socio-cultural contexts of the

participants (Nkomo, 2011). It can be argued that the findings of the current research do reflect individuals who had developed a clear set of values and awareness of their cultural heritage before they experienced international development, and were thus able to merge the two in developing skills which were appropriate for their work context. It may also be the case that the particular racial mix of South Africa creates the need to have that blended approach, and that a more Afrocentric approach may be more successful in other African countries.

In the context of this acceptance of an Anglo-US perspective on leadership development, it was therefore interesting to find that this extended to their reading on leadership topics. The research interviews specifically asked participants to describe the leadership literature they read and all, to a greater or lesser extent, actively read such books, although none appeared to value what were viewed as "leadership self-help books". Their taste was for leadership biographies and other philosophical texts which enabled them to gain inspiration around situational leadership behaviours and to reflect on their life purpose and meaning.

John was perhaps the exception when he said "*I tend not to[read leadership books]…when I was younger I did…it is not because I do not think that they are any good but it is kind of where your priorities lie*" (1:49). What he did do, which seems to be typical of the participants, was to read biographies rather than "self-help" leadership books: "*In those early days I did read …biographies of successful people*" (1:50).

Stefan read widely but focused on the biographies of successful business leaders "*If you look at my bookshelf I've got hundreds and hundreds of biographies…business biographies*" (2:48). Mary saw reading leadership books as part of her continuous learning as a leader "*I'm always reading a leadership book because one should always be learning and whatever you read that night you will relate to something that happened that day*" (10:40).

Alex not only tended to read the biographies of successful western corporate leaders, but also reflected the motivation of many of the research participants when he expressed the view that he learnt about spirituality through the experience "*I enjoyed*

reading Steve Job's biography" (13:45). "One of the things I got out of that was the link between the spirit and this material world" (13:46). Richard went so far as to read the "Leadership Bible" in his search for an understanding of corporate leadership and spirituality "*It's hard going but it's interesting…it draws the parallels of leadership examples in the Bible and turns it into corporate comparisons*" (3:10). Simon also wanted to understand the character of successful leadership and "*I found reading more non-business leadership books is a much much better way to be able to see that leadership goes down to the core of character. So understanding how Genghis Khan managed to mobilise his army, what he did when things went wrong, how he disciplined people…*" (4:63).

All the participants had a strong understanding about the meaning of life for them, and as a result reading philosophy was important for many. Don said *"I've read Victor Frankl's "Man's Search For Meaning" and one learns a lot from these true life stories"*. Don also used such works in coaching junior leaders: *"I take them on my journey. They probably think I'm going to teach them about the job. Yet they know the job better than I do". I'm teaching them about a life philosophy that encompasses their family and their community, their friends and their work"* (5:61).

Saras said *"I must say that one of the most impactful books I have read is "The Alchemist" by Paolo Coelho"* (12:65). Ravi had found the opportunity to learn about leadership through the "Reading Space Dialogue", again with a focus on philosophy: "*You read everything from Mandela to Ghandi and Martin Luther King to Plato and Confucius literature on what it a good leader"* (6:34). Ravi, however, echoed the views of most of the participants in stating "*I don't read seven ways to fix yourself kind of books"* (6:36). Zweli was also searching for books to guide his life purpose and said "*The one was a book by Clay Christiansen "That's How You Measure Your Life". That for me was the biggest wake up call and it kind of set the direction and tone for what I wanted to do with my life"* (7:23).

Deep intellectual curiosity seems to be a common theme amongst the participants. Nelis commented that "*I have got an intellectual curiosity to understand how people think and how they work so I read up about it, about people behaviour and their*

unique systems" (8:32). Nelis had actually read books on numerology which he believed had helped him to understand people and their behaviour.

So successful senior leaders in this study do not appear to read formal leadership books. Reading philosophical texts seems to be linked to their need for purpose and meaning in life. Where they seek to learn about leadership they read the biographies of other successful leaders, many of whom are not African leaders. They appear to have the ability to take information and contextualise it for their own purposes. This would suggest that leadership development specialists should not seek to be too prescriptive in the cultural context of their interventions, but rather encourage a level of cultural sensitivity and awareness which will enable the development participants to adapt the knowledge and experiences to their own context.

4.4 THE X FACTOR IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

As already discussed, research participants appear to have had some innate leadership attributes which were developed through childhood experiences and that positioned them for leadership success early in their career. Another finding is that all the participants continued to see the need to learn and adapt throughout their career. These findings suggest that for optimal success an individual requires both certain innate attributes and opportunities for leadership development early in their life, followed by continuous learning throughout their career. These findings support neither mainstream views about leadership, with one school holding that leaders are born (Grint, 2000; Nietzsche, 1969), while the other suggests that humans need to work hard to develop as leaders (Henrikson, 2006).

4.4.1 Balance and Stability

One theme which emerged from the findings was that many of the research participants believed in the importance of balance and stability in their lives. This would appear contradictory to the perception of effective leaders as highly driven and work oriented. Leaders who fail to achieve balance have been found to suffer from burnout, poor health and damaged relationships (Muna & Mansour, 2009). There is little research on this issue, although it has been suggested that leaders often perceive that they have to commit to either their personal or professional lives but not both (McDermott, Kidney, & Flood, 2011). This trade-off also has implications for

developing and sustaining emotional resilience (Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004), a critical skill in leader development (Moxley & Pulley, 2004). Another study has shown that people who are not clear about their personal values are more likely to show a work-life imbalance. An emotionally imbalanced leader often loses the trust of those around them, as they are perceived as unpredictable (Cannon, 2011). It is therefore significant that the participants in this study typically referred both to the importance of values and the presence of work-life balance.

Nelis stressed the importance of having fun and finding happiness outside work when he said "*I did my articles in Pretoria…there was a decent balance between socialising and working hard so it was a lot of fun also, not just working*" (8:4). "*So for me to balance myself as an individual, to be happy and balanced as an individual I need to find life happiness in other aspects of my life*" (8:42) He also found that meditation and yoga were important for personal balance "*I do yoga once a week, and it hugely helped me to understand how you balance yourself, how you can be quite peaceful in the middle of a storm"* (8:45). Saras also stressed the need to have balance and to take advantage of the networking opportunities when she said "*I do a lot of social stuff*" (12:57). Simon also found it important to have a range of interests outside work "*I think leaders are interesting people, so I have got a huge array of interests*" (4:50).

The importance of family was acknowledged by Zweli "*It's important that I go and see the kids because I'm leaving the next day*" (7:64). Nelis found that it was important for his successs as a leader to have a good family life when he said "*It is very important because if I do not have a very healthy family environment, it is bound to spill over in my work-life and the other way round"* (8:24). Jack actually articulated a strong family focus when he said "*For me that's the measure of my success. Not at (X) it's my kids*" (9:37). Saras also focused on the importance of family providing support in your work endeavours when she said "*My husband was an amazing support during the exams*" (12:16).

At critical points in their careers several research participants deliberately put family before their leadership prospects, with one taking time out to nurse her husband who had a brain tumour, and another returning from an international assignment to nurse

his mother. This theme again supports a correlation between values/life purpose and work-life balance and leadership success.

Mary spoke of how her husband's illness made her prioritise family over career "*He unfortunately had a brain tumour…I was driving a lot of things in the business, but all of a sudden that wasn't my priority*" (10:22). Alex also spoke about a transformational boss who have encouraged him to take a sabbatical and look after his sick mother "*He put me on a plane back home and said…go be with your mum*" (13:30).

Don encapsulated the theme of a strong life purpose and values being linked to a whole life philosophy when he said "*I think you cannot differentiate your life philosophy versus your work philosophy. I think you have one philosophy and they are intertwined*" (5:1). This is echoed by research which showed that those who pursued more sustainable approaches to work had a sense of purpose that was grounded in something more enduring than just the achievement of career goals and personal interest, and it was this which made them "burnout proof" (Casserley & Megginson, 2008).

These findings therefore suggest that leadership development needs to encourage future leaders to find balance in their lives rather than believing that successful leaders need to focus only on their work and career. Balance enables the stability and purpose which is required for leaders to thrive and achieve work and career goals.

4.4.2 **The Skills of Positive Leaders**

In exploring the development needs of leaders, a number of interwoven themes developed which might best be described by the concept of authentic leadership. At the heart of these themes was a purpose which was more than self, a compassion for others and putting others before self. In section 4.1.4 we noted a key finding which was the focus by the participants on the need for a clear sense of purpose. Without such a sense of purpose it was considered difficult to develop as an effective leader. Previous researchers have supported this, arguing that few people in leadership positions are true leaders because leadership calls for total commitment to the perpetual process of purpose seeking (Lee-Davies, Kakabadse, & Kakabadse, 2007).

Authenticity itself was also a key theme for successful leadership. Saras said *"I don't want to be modelled on something I'm not, I have to be authentic"* (12:68). Zweli also espoused authenticity when he said "*Believe in myself and trust in my instincts, trust my gut about things and just be who I am"* (7:18). Don also saw authenticity at the heart of his leadership success when he commented that "*You have to be authentic…otherwise it's absolutely false and people see straight through you*" (5:39). Alex described authenticity as "*you have to be consistent*" (13:36).

The participants all described the importance for them as leaders in having strong values and, as noted in section 4.3.4, several of the participants spoke about having a strong sense of spirituality which underpinned their life purpose. These leadership attributes had typically been developed early in life and often as a result of parental or other influence. This finding is supported by other research in which leaders identified strong values as critical to their leadership development and emphasised that they were influenced by formative events or individuals (McDermott et al., 2011). Authentic leaders are also true to their core beliefs and values and lead by example, as they communicate through their words and deeds high moral standards and values (May et al., 2003).

Zweli emphasised the importance of a deeper purpose when he said "*Our joy will not be how exulted we may be, how elevated our positions are and how much wealth we can amass and how much power we can have. It must come from a deeper special place where I must benefit*" (7:53). Don also emphasised that "*First and foremost, I am deeply religious, and I am values-led and vision-led in what I do and how I do it. With everything that I do in my life*" (5:32) "*What guides me in my life…to make a material difference in the lives of every single person I touch*" (5:33).

The research participants also focused on the importance of teamwork and the role of a leader in empowering and engaging others, whether through understanding them or creating a vision for them. Research has shown that leaders can gain the respect of followers by demonstrating a compelling and achievable vision and a decisive pursuit of that vision (Tubbs & Schulz, 2006). John focused on this skill when he said "*You need to be able to paint the canvas or the dream…for your little team…that will create hope and inspiration for the people working for you*" (1:12). Stefan also

stressed the importance of vision in leading others when he said "*Manage by vision and outputs rather than by tasks"* (2:38).

Successful leaders have been shown to exhibit empathy of three distinct kinds: cognitive empathy; emotional empathy; and empathetic concern (Goleman, 2013). Ravi focused on the importance of understanding others and their points of view- cognitive empathy- when he said "*So I would not quite call it empathy… but walking in another man's moccasins is probably a better phrasing…It gives you a lens through which to understand people"* (6:43). Mary not only emphasised understanding others but also then showing that understanding in her communication "*What motivates them, what doesn't and then speak their language" (10:19). "One has to be an empathetic-type leader. So you can't make decisions from your point of view. You have to make decisions that affect people from their point of view"* (10:52). Don also stressed the importance of both cognitive and emotional empathy in a leader when he said "*I think it's always been so important as a leader in a business to deeply appreciate what your people go through"* (5:15). Nelis focused on cognitive empathy when he said *" To have an open mind to listen to them so you respect everyone's view"* (8:31). Mary emphasised empathetic leadership when she said "*Human and approachable and that nothing they can say shocks me"* (10:32). She also focused on cognitive empathy when she said what was important for her as an effective leader was "*Understanding people and very quickly sussing them out; being able to connect with them, establish a rapport pretty quickly*" (10:21).

Self-awareness is a critical pillar of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998), and it was therefore not suprising to find that a number of the research participants noted the importance of self-awareness in both leadership development and successful leadership. Zweli saw the need to develop more self-awareness when he was on an Executive Education Programme: "*I think it was about a lot of introspection. I did a lot of criticism of myself"* (7:27). Don also expressed similar views when he said " *The other thing that I learned so much from the AMP Program was the ability to stand back and say what could I have done differently today"* (5:58).

Don also saw self-awareness as critical when he said "*A very deep introspection in terms of one's own self-awareness, the way you impact on others, the way you're*

perceived…"(5:9). Jack saw the importance of self-awareness in adapting management styles as "*everybody needs a different method of management and because I'm flexible enough to be actually able to manage people differently*" (9:22).

Another key pillar of emotional intelligence is motivation (Goleman, 1998). Nelis emphasised that effective leadership is about "*how to empower people, how to inspire them, how to let them shine and not take the shine from them"* (8:21). *"Lead by actually empowering people and inspiring them and then you will have a community that works with you"* (8:22). He also referred to the X factor when he said *"Have that X-factor as far as energy and engagement is concerned"* (8:20). *"I believe things like flexibility, empowering people, making them feel they are in charge of their own destiny is going to be even more important going forward"* (8:40). Nelis was describing the transformational leader-follower relationship, which academics have viewed as one of mutual stimulation and which has three distinct characteristics of intellectual stimulation, individualised consideration and inpirational motivation (Barbuto, 2005). Don also focused on inspirational motivation when he said "*You light the flames in their hearts and not under their bums*" (5:19). Mary interpreted inspirational motivation as *"If you're feeling sad, they worry, so you've always got to bring this thing of it all can be done-that's got to be the message and everyday put on the lights in a way that it all can be done, no matter how bad you're feeling"* (10:47).

Another finding noted in Section 4.3 was that self-efficacy was critical to support the leadership development of the research participants, but that this attribute had to be balanced by a level of humility. The research participants all commented in one way or another about the importance of humility with Jack saying "*I do know that there are better people than myself, much better"* (9:20). Don also focused on the need to reveal your vulnerability when he said "*Showing your vulnerability is also critical*" (5:51). Richard encapsulated the view of humility when he said "*Not believing in your own nonsense*" (3:2). This sense of humility was also linked to the ability to listen to other people's ideas and not be limited by your own views and opinions. Mary described this when she said *"I can always be talked out of something if there's a good logic*" (10:50). Even on Executive Education Programmes there was a focus on humility when several of the research participants noted their willingness to learn from their peers. Zweli typified the group when he said "*I was ready to learn more*

from myself by just learning from one hundred and fifty different people and just building relationships with them" (7:46).

There has been limited research on the importance of humility in effective leadership development. One group of researchers considered humility as a key antecedent of three core socialised charismatic leadership behaviours (Nielsen, Marrone, & Slay, 2010). Other researchers suggest that humility is a willingness to see the self accurately, including strengths and limitations (Exline & Geyer, 2004). Humility enables people to consider themselves in relation to a greater whole (Nielsen et al., 2010) and this therefore suggests a correlation between the sense of greater purpose and humility found as key elements of leadership development in this research.

Nielsen et al. (2010) also found that humility prevents excessive self-focus and allows leaders to understand themselves and develop perspective in their relationships with followers. This perspective was also a focus of the current research participants' narratives, with Ravi commenting on the importance of knowing when to listen to followers and when to give directions, when he said "*You have to know when to listen and when to give direction"* (6:44). Don saw this perspective as "*Be firm and fair equally" (*5:17). Alex interpreted the perspective as being culturally sensitive "*Cultural awareness is probably a lot more critical than mental awareness*" (13:49). Stefan saw the focus as teamwork "*The new social contract is…how are we going to work together"* (2:31), and Richard saw the importance of respecting others "*Show people more respect; be a reasonable person with a big heart*" (3:1). Jack stressed the importance of building trust in the relationships with followers "*I think that trust has been the golden thread*" (9:38).

One characteristic normally associated with successful leaders is ambition. In the findings of this study the participants certainly had drive but they appeared to develop a deeper purpose than ambition at an early stage in their life. In one research study they found a positive relationship between parental socioeconomic status and ambition (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012). Given the unique situation in South Africa many of the research participants in this study came from socially disadvantaged families. Although the limitiations of this research mean that a correlation cannot be determined between family circumstances and a deeper purpose

in seeking leadership development and success, it could well be argued that parental influence on my research sample was such that drive and determination existed but for a deeper purpose than mere ambition. Indeed research has suggested that authentic leaders are motivated by goals that are concordant with their central values and beliefs and have a commitment to a self-concept. It is therefore interesting that, whilst the findings of this research show little reference to motivation as a key factor in leadership efficacy, there is significant reference to "purpose" and "values", both of which are critical to drive motivation.

So a key finding appears to be that this randomly selected group of senior executives all appear to exhibit some or all of the key characteristics of authentic leaders. Academics who developed the theory of authentic leadership view personal history and key trigger events to be antecedents for authentic leadership development. Personal history may include parental influence and role models, early life challenges and work experiences. Trigger events are changes in circumstances that facilitated growth and development (W. L. Gardner et al., 2005). In the research findings I have already determined that the research sample typically started their leadership development in their childhood as a result of key influencers and, in several cases, the key trigger events of either losing a parent, being part of the anti-apartheid movement or being sent away to school. This research therefore suggests that such early life events, and subsequent adult experiences may be key in developing attributes of authentic leadership in the research participants. This finding is supported by further research in which it is suggested that authentic leadership characteristics are developed by constructing and revising the individual's life story. This research further suggests that rather than focusing leadership development only on the development of skills and behaviours, it may be more important to place emphasis on leaders' self-development, especially the development of their self-concepts through the construction of life-stories (Shamir & Eilam, 2005).

4.5 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF SOUTH AFRICA

The interview questions were not directed in any way to discussing the uniqueness or otherwise of developing as a leader in South Africa. Many of the interviewees started their career in the apartheid era, and so it might have been anticipated that any specific issues relating to South Africa would have been focused on the restrictions,

particularly for AIC interviewees, of such an environment. However, this is the feedback from John: "*What really struck me when I went to Harvard was just how much wider, even in my early thirties, my knowledge base was compared to other people on the programme. Because they were all coming from more developed economies they were specialist and already I had a whole bunch of different things…*" (1:45).

This positive approach to the challenges of leading organisations in the post-apartheid era were echoed by all the research participants. This is an interesting research finding, as an academic paper by three renowned leadership researchers suggested that in South Africa it is particularly important for leaders to develop expectations of hope, given the need to meld together multiple cultures and to re-position organisations for global competition (Luthans et al., 2004).

There was also an acknowledgement that early promotions were easier in South Africa than in more developed economies, with Stefan saying "*So if you ask me…I would never if I was working in Europe or America been able to have the positions I've had at my age*" (2:45) South Africa was also acknowledged to have a more complex set of stakeholders for leaders to manage, which requires a high sense of emotional intelligence and social skills. Simon saw this added complexity when he said "*You're trying to balance all the stakeholders as opposed to how you necessarily would do it in America"* (4:49).

Several of the participants talked about both the challenge and the development offered by the huge cultural diversity of employees in the "new" South Africa. Simon confirmed that "*You don't succeed unless you can deal with this melting pot that we live in"* (4:65).

Being part of the freedom movement also helped to develop values and principles which would be important for some of the interviewees as they developed as leaders, with Zweli commenting that "*The principles and values as espoused in the liberation movement then resonated a lot with what I believed in*" (7:56). This link between leadership values and principles and the meaning the leader attaches to life experiences was also a finding in other research (Shamir & Eilam, 2005).

The post-apartheid environment also created great opportunities for young leaders. As Zweli said "*I had the good fortune of working in the first democratic government and watched some of the key Ministers and the President in action*" (7:5) However, there was an understanding that the opportunity for early progress as a result of black empowerment is not wholly positive, and that leadership development must take precedence over compliance. Several of the participants commented on the importance of sponsoring high potential young leaders and not over promoting and setting them up for failure.

Leadership development in South Africa has also been impacted, both positively and negatively, by the exodus of a number of corporate leaders. This has meant that the average age of leaders is young, and the opportunity for leadership positions is enhanced. However, the loss of mentors and corporate memory can negatively impact leadership development as Stefan suggested "*There seems to be a big exodus of senior people very early. So I think what you have is not enough corporate memory, entrenched experience, a sense of history and perspective"* (2:44).

African, Indian and Coloured research participants were themselves highly aware of the potential for, and risks of, positive discrimination with Zweli commenting "*You're obsessed about this issue of excellence and achievement but you worry a lot about whether you are moving up because you're black, or are you moving up because you are good and competent*" (7:17).

There was reference to both the benefits of "Ubuntu" culture in the "new South Africa" but also the downside of African culture for corporate leaders. Alex was concerned that Ubuntu does not always encourage appropriate corporate behaviour "*I go nuts because, you know, especially African culture is all about, you know, playing down" (13:48)."In South Africa you have always got to create the buy-in before you cover your risk, because the buy-in sort of covers that risk"* (13:37). However, other research participants did not focus on cultural challenges in the workplace.

Research findings on the impact of cultural differences on leadership development in South Africa are mixed. One research project found managerial differences between people of different cultural orientations (Booysen, 2001). However, another South

African study found no such cultural differences. It found that despite participants' identification with their ethnic group, there was a common national culture at the managerial level (A. Thomas & Bendixen, 2000). This view is supported by the current research findings, in which the participants, irrespective of race, have typically not expressed concern about cultural differences and have talked positively about bosses and other mentors who came from different cultural backgrounds. However, these findings were contradicted by another South African study which found that there were significant differences in leadership behaviour preferences between the responses of the various racial groups (Littrell & Nkomo, 2005). This could be explained by the fact that their study sample was MBA students, whereas the current study sample is made up of already successful leaders. If this difference in sample is significant it could suggest that for African, Indian and Coloured racial groups to be successful they need to have more eurocentric leadership behaviours. If this is the case it will be necessary to be more culturally inclusive if South Africa wishes to have full racial representation at the most senior levels of corporate South Africa.

4.6 CONCLUSION

The literature and findings from this research study suggest that leadership development is a complex process based on some innate attributes, developed through critical childhood influences and trigger events, and developed to full potential through a combination of formal and informal leadership development interventions. Achieving full potential relies on readiness to learn and the opportunities to gain valuable experience, especially in adversity.

Childhood experiences were found to create the necessary drive and ambition to develop as leaders in later life. Opportunities to take leadership roles as a child were seen as key to future success. Difficult family circumstances in childhood were not found to be a barrier to leadership development if the child was supported in building self-efficacy and had positive role models to follow. Indeed the sense of purpose and meaning which are characteristic of positive leadership models was found to be developed by parental influence in both privileged and disadvantaged family circumstances.

Formal leadership development interventions were found to be of variable benefit in developing as successful leaders. What appears to be critical is the opportunity to put into practice the learnings from the formal interventions to enable a virtuous cycle of development. Where formal programmes were of value was in encouraging key attributes of effective leaders such as self-awareness and reflection, and in creating opportunities for networking and learning from others. Coaching, both by bosses and professional coaches was seen to be beneficial as it focused on critical learning needs and supported practical application.

The research study found that self-efficacy was a critical attribute which enabled effective leadership development. This self-efficacy enabled the research participants to have the determination and resilience to develop through both adversity and failure. This was particularly important in South Africa where many of the research participants reached senior positions early in their career. Self-efficacy was also important in that it gave the research participants the confidence to seek advice from others, and this included reading about other inspirational leaders from whom they could model successful behaviours.

This self-efficacy may also have been instrumental in enabling the research participants to have the confidence to ensure work-life balance which they had found to be critical in developing as successful leaders. The need to be authentic in their leadership behaviours may also have been supported by self-efficacy as they had the confidence to be “themselves”. This authenticity appears to be the result of personal history and early life challenges, so again we find that childhood events have been critical in creating the values, beliefs and behaviours which have enabled effective leadership development.

Critical attributes also appear to have been developed in childhood and early adult life. These reflect the concept of authentic leadership, with strong values and a sense of purpose being underpinned by a strong level of spirituality. Teamwork and empathy were also key attributes and appear to have been developed in childhood and was a sense of self-awareness which enabled the research participants to reflect and learn from experience.

Drive and determination were also common attributes which had been encouraged by parental and other influencers, but it appears to be a drive which went beyond ambition to a real sense of purpose.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This section provides a summary of the findings from both the literature review and the research analysis and discussion. This summary will be structured by main research question and sub-questions. This section will then provide recommendations for stakeholders and for future research.

The purpose of this research was to determine, in the context of South Africa, how senior executives perceive the various executive development interventions which they have experienced. The research approach was to ask the research participants to tell a narrative in which they explored their experience of leadership development from early childhood. Through this inductive process a number of themes emerged which supported findings that were of relevance to the research questions.

Significant findings included the importance of learning about effective leadership through experience. That experience started in childhood and continued throughout their career. Formal leadership development programmes were of value but typically only when they were supported by experiential learning. Non-corporate leadership development programmes, in particular Executive Education programmes were found to be of value through both the networking with faculty and the other participants and through the opportunities for reflection. Mentoring and executive coaching were also of value in leadership development but the “coach as boss” was of most value.

In addition there were significant findings which were outside the specific remit of the research questions. In particular, one key finding was the importance of specific attributes in supporting effective leadership development. These attributes included self-efficacy; resilience and determination; a deep sense of purpose which went beyond ambition; and a strong sense of values which supported the sense of purpose. The research participants suggested that some of these attributes might be innate but in large part were developed through childhood experiences, significant in which was the opportunity to take leadership roles at a young age. One conclusion is therefore

that leadership development can start in early childhood, and parents, educators and other influencers of children should be aware of the opportunities to develop skills and attributes which will position children to take advantage of further leadership development as adults.

Another key finding which did not directly answer a research question was the importance of work-life balance in enabling leaders both to take advantage of leadership development opportunities and to perform as effective leaders. A further finding, which provided context from which to answer the research questions, was that, contrary to much research on African leaders, the AIC research participants did not find issues of cultural mismatch an issue in their own leadership development. This may well be because South Africa has developed a national culture with which leaders from different racial groups can identify, or that successful AIC corporate leaders identify with a more American-Euro centric corporate culture. This is certainly an area which requires further research to inform increased racial diversity in senior executive positions in South Africa.

5.1 HOW DO SENIOR EXECUTIVES PERCEIVE THE EFFICACY OF THE VARIOUS EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS WHICH THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED?

The research participants had a broad perspective on development interventions. In addition to the accepted areas of development such as leadership development programmes, mentoring and coaching, they focused on development opportunities in childhood, the role of boss as coach and mentor, and self-development.

In childhood, parental and other adult influencers were found to be critical in developing the sense of purpose, values, drive and ambition which would be the foundation for their leadership development. Many of the research participants had come from disadvantaged backgrounds, but, unlike research which has suggested that disadvantaged children have more negative than positive experiences which adversely impact their development (Usinger & Smith, 2010), the participants in this study typically used negative experiences, such as the loss of a parent, to build determination to overcome such adversity. This positive reaction to adversity was

supported by mothers who created positive role models for the research participants. In the study the unique situation of South Africa in the dying days of apartheid also supported childhood leadership development, with several of the participants coming from activist families which supported the development of behaviours which would enable successful leadership development.

Parental influence was critical for all the research participants in supporting their leadership development as children. This finding is supported by previous research which has found that setting high standards for achievement and role modelling of positive leadership behaviours by parents are crucial for future leadership development (Zacharatos et al., 2000).

Many of the research participants found that school was a key contributor to leadership development in childhood. In many cases leaving home to go to boarding school was found to build attributes important for leadership development such as self-efficacy, resilience and independence. In addition school provided the participants with opportunities for leadership roles in extracurricular activities such as sports teams.

The research participants gave very mixed feedback on formal leadership development programmes, despite research suggesting that customised “in company” programmes which include action learning, mentoring and coaching are effective in leadership development (Fulmer et al., 2009). The participants found such programmes to be most beneficial when they determined that they required specific development and self-selected the programme. A key finding was also that formal learning alone does not enable leadership development unless it is supported by practical application and experience.

Many of the participants attended international executive programmes and all found these to be beneficial. The benefits were found to be networking and learning from peers, and the opportunity to build self-awareness and have the opportunity for reflection. Research has suggested that business schools should engage with real management issues and challenges (H. Thomas & Cornuel, 2007). The participants in this research found the value of executive education in reflection and developing a

life-purpose and philosophy, rather than focusing on case studies, which teach you about the past and are not necessarily a proxy for the future. Another interesting finding was that being identified as a "top talent" to be sent on an executive programme, or other such selective programme, can be invaluable for leadership development as it builds confidence to take on leadership challenges. Whilst previous research has supported these findings (Martin & Schmidt, 2010), many companies still avoid the recognition of high potential employees, fearing that this will demotivate those not classified as high potential. This research re-confirms the belief that recognition provides motivation and confidence for "high potentials", and enables the targeting of leadership development investment on the most critical potential leaders.

Coaching by one's boss was seen as particularly efficacious for leadership development. Bosses who were inspirational role models, who encouraged communication and debate, and who provided challenging development opportunities with support were seen to be "first prize". Female bosses were mentioned by a number of the male research participants, who found that they taught them different aspects of leadership. There was also a view that successful leaders "breed" other successful leaders. These findings suggest that it is critical to have strong leaders to develop high potential employees. It is therefore recommended that talent management should start at an early stage in the careers of employees so that high potential employees can be positioned with bosses and mentors who can provide positive leadership development. This was seen by the research participants to be particularly important to support transformation in South Africa.

Mentoring was also seen as key for leadership development by all the research participants. Many of the participants actively sought out their mentors, which is significant given previous research findings that compatible pairing is key to successful mentoring (Baranik et al., 2010). The current research findings suggest that creating a mentoring culture, and then allowing relationships to form spontaneously, may be more successful than formal mentoring programmes where there is a significant risk of poor pairing.

Given the infancy of executive coaching as a development tool in South Africa, only a minority of the research participants had experienced formal coaching. Those who had, found coaching to be an efficacious leadership development tool. However, they did stress the importance of rapport with the coach and the need for the coach to have credibility, including an understanding of their industry. The use of multi-source feedback as a coaching tool was also supported by the experience of the research participants. Overall the research participants found that coaching was particularly critical in times of transition or particular challenge, or when a high potential individual has a major develop need.

Experience leading to leadership development was pinpointed as critical by the research participants. In particular, they referred to learning through challenges and adversity, and the importance of learning to lose from an early age. Learning from mistakes was also important. Being given early responsibility and the experience of international assignments were valued by the participants. They found experiential learning as more profound for leadership development than formal learning. In the "new" South Africa early opportunities and the challenge of cultural diversity were seen as particularly challenging and developmental by the research participants, although a safety net of transformational bosses and mentors was important as early opportunities sometimes came too soon.

As I have already mentioned, self-development was seen as important, as it suggested readiness for development and ensured that the development was targeted. All the research participants valued reading as an integral part of leadership development, although reading about inspirational leaders and philosophical texts were considered more valuable that reading "self-help" leadership books.

In conclusion, the answer to the main research question appears to be that learning from others is one of the most efficacious methods of leadership development. "Others" include parents, transformational bosses and mentors, and inspirational leaders. These individuals create role models and provide support in developing key leadership attributes such as self-efficacy, emotional intelligence and life purpose and values. Formal leadership development is important, but must be supplemented by opportunities for experiential learning. Coaching and mentoring are also valuable in

leadership development as they support growing self-awareness and reflection, and challenge the individuals in their leadership development.

How do senior executives define their development needs prior to key development interventions?

The research participants defined their development needs at various stages in their life. In childhood key needs were seen to be the development of self-efficacy, ambition, resilience and determination, and a sense of purpose and under-pinning values. They also saw that they had to learn effective teamwork and, through that, develop an understanding of and perspective on other people.

As adults they saw their development needs as an understanding of what it is that holistically makes an effective leader. To meet this need they sought out mentors and read widely about other successful leaders. This experience appears to have inculcated the research participants with a view of leadership which can be described both as authentic and transformational leadership. On reflection of their early careers, the research participants saw the need to further develop their sense of purpose and values. They also focused on learning to fail through challenging experiences, through which they developed not only self-efficacy in learning how to turn failure into success, but also a level of humility which they saw as important in leadership development.

The research participants also emphasised the importance of learning from others how to create a vision which would be compelling for followers. Aspects of emotional intelligence were also seen to be critical learning throughout their careers. These included self-awareness, empathy and social skills. Those who had been on executive education programmes saw one of the key benefits to be that of networking and developing social skills. Profound guidance from facilitators on leadership behaviours was also valued, whereas the technical knowledge and skills development often promoted as an advantage of such programmes was not seen to be a particular development need.

In conclusion, the findings support the proposition that much leadership development occurs without identification of development needs. Authoritative parents appear to have an innate understanding of how to develop their children. As adults the research participants looked to role models to provide them with an understanding of their development needs, which they then put into practice. They also valued feedback from respected individuals who could inform them of their development needs.

Recommendations from these findings are therefore that it is important for key influencers to build the foundations for leadership development in childhood. Critical attributes to develop at this stage include self-efficacy and self-awareness. These attributes will position high potential individuals to have both the confidence to learn experientially, and to understand their own development needs, with the confidence to both take advantage of opportunities and to find the means to meet their development needs.

How do senior executives describe the efficacy of the various development interventions which they have experienced?

The research participants saw childhood development experiences as a critical foundation for leadership development as an adult. A key finding was that childhood development creates critical leadership attributes such as life purpose, self-efficacy, self-awareness, empathy and resilience and determination. Parental and other influence and opportunities to build self-efficacy through challenges and leadership positions was seen to be highly efficacious.

Similarly as an adult the research participants found the “boss as coach” to be efficacious as a means of leadership development, although it was critical to find an inspirational boss who could provide the opportunities and guidance necessary for leadership development. Mentoring was seen to be efficacious, although, as research has shown, it is critical to have positive pairing in mentoring relationships. It is significant that all the participants had found their own mentors rather than taking part in a formal mentoring programme.

Executive coaching was also seen as efficacious when the coach had credibility through understanding the business of the coachee, and could provide challenge and enable self-insight. The use of multi-source feedback by the coach was also seen as efficacious particularly in times of transition or challenge or if a high potential individual has a significant development need.

Overall the most efficacious influencer was an inspirational boss, and, if this finding has wider application, it will be important for high potential employees to be identified at an early stage in their career so that they can be allocated to the most capable "bosses". These influencers were seen to be efficacious both because they were role models and because they encouraged and supported experiential learning. Learning by experience was seen to be the most efficacious method of leadership development.

Self-development was seen as efficacious, although this finding has to be understood in the context of a sample group who were confident, self-aware and had a strong sense of purpose. This finding does suggest that it is important to develop these attributes in childhood or early career in order to enable more self-directed learning. Generic leadership programmes were not seen to be particularly efficacious, although Executive Education programmes were valued for the opportunities to reflect, network and learn from others. The participants did not value case-study approaches in executive education as they saw this as "backward looking", but did value programmes which focused more on setting vision and finding purpose and meaning. This would suggest that Business Schools should be selected on the basis of their learning approach rather than simply their prestige.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that leadership development should start in childhood, requires early career identification of talent, and the positioning of that talent with inspirational leaders. High potential employees should be encouraged to take accountability for much of their development, and should be provided with opportunities and challenge to provide efficacious experiential learning.

5.2 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The theoretical implications of the findings are that whilst certain leadership attributes appear to be innate, these attributes and skills can be enhanced through development. For the research participants significant development occurred in childhood and the implication of this is that childhood leadership development is critical to create a strong foundation for adult leadership development.

Effective leadership development in childhood appears to develop individual attributes which enable efficacious leadership development in adulthood. These attributes include self-awareness; self-efficacy; resilience and personal drive. The implication of this finding is that it is important for childhood experiences to focus on the development of these attributes.

Adult leadership development appears to benefit from appropriate leadership development. Given that self-aware leaders are likely to have good insight into their development needs, an implication is that self-development should be encouraged, with organisations providing the support to utilise required development interventions. Another finding is that for formal leadership development to be effective it must be supplemented by experiential learning. The implication of this is that formal leadership development interventions should be structured around appropriate action learning or work opportunities.

Finally, given that many of the critical leadership attributes are developed during childhood, an implication is that the selection of potential leaders should incorporate an assessment of these attributes. A further finding was that great leaders develop great leaders and the theoretical implication is that high potential leaders will develop most efficaciously if they work for the best leaders. Another finding was that being recognised as “top talent” supported the development of such talent, with the theoretical implication being that identifying and recognising key talent is an important element in leadership development programmes.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STAKEHOLDERS

The findings from this research suggest that parental influence can be particularly important in developing positive attributes in children which positions them for leadership development as adults. It is important for parents to take an authoritative parenting approach (Avolio & Gibbons, 1988). Educators should also be encouraged by the findings to provide challenge and opportunities for children to develop self-efficacy, values, determination and resilience and a sense of purpose.

The findings also suggest that organisations should identify high potential employees at an early stage in their career. This will enable effective recognition and the pairing of such employees with transformational leaders who can provide guidance and challenging experiences. Although the findings do not suggest that generic leadership development programmes have no value, it is clear that for high potential future leaders it is important to provide them with development and experiential learning which meets their particular development needs. If the individuals have developed the necessary self-awareness and developmental readiness, the findings suggest that self-directed development is very effective. Organisations should therefore be encouraged to create a learning culture within which high potential employees can determine their own developmental needs with guidance from bosses, mentors and multi-source feedback. This research does not suggest that formal mentoring programmes should be avoided, but the findings suggest that it is important to ensure that positive pairing takes place, and, to the extent that a mentoring culture can be developed, it is recommended that flexibility in selection of mentors by mentees be allowed.

Executive Education is a costly investment and a number of researchers have questioned the value of such developmental opportunities (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Ghoshal, 2005). The findings of this research suggest that they are of value for selected executives who are being groomed for "top" positions and need to build networks, gain global exposure and have the recognition which attendance on such programmes provides. Where in-house leadership development programmes are provided, it is suggested that these should be modular to support the particular needs of participants and should focus on developing key leadership attributes in addition to the more usual focus on leadership skills.

Finally, given the findings on critical attributes developed in childhood, which research has shown are then relatively stable (Zacharatos et al., 2000), it is recommended that organisations ensure that future leaders are selected not only on the basis of academic success, but also with an assessment of their current leadership attributes especially self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, resilience and determination, and a sense of purpose and strong values.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research study was based on qualitative research methodology with the use of phenomenology as the research design. The sample size was twelve and saturation was met. Whilst there was no quota by race, the sample was representative of the current racial mix at the senior executive level. However, the sample was random with a significant number coming from the financial services sector. In future research it may therefore be appropriate to take a sample which is more representative of industry throughout South Africa.

Given the inductive nature of the research a number of findings occurred which had not been anticipated by the research questions. The importance of childhood development in providing leadership attributes and experience of early leadership was an important finding. It is therefore recommended that future research focuses specifically on childhood leadership development. In such research it may be beneficial to have a sample of parents and possibly educators in order to have an understanding of their approach to the development of their children.

Another finding which had not been anticipated was the importance of work-life balance in the successful development of leaders. Limited research is found on this topic. The findings suggest that the research participants did not merely find work-life balance important, but developed a sense of purpose which integrated not only work but other aspects of their life. Given the well researched issues around executive burn out and stress, it is recommended that future research consider how executives develop the necessary sense of purpose and work-life balance to mitigate such problems.

Another finding was the importance of humility in balancing self-efficacy and ensuring that the leaders understood the need for continuing leadership development. There has been relatively little research on the value of humility for efficacious leadership and leadership development, and it is recommended that further research looks specifically at the importance of humility as a leadership attribute.

Research has considered the value of executive education but in many cases this has suggested the need for case study approaches and action learning. Given the consistent views of the participants on the importance in executive education of networking and the development of a more philosophical understanding of leadership, it is recommended that further research considers in more depth the real value of executive education to senior executives.

Mentoring was also found to be critical in leadership development. Research has emphasised the importance of mentoring in leadership development and determined that positive pairing is critical in successful mentoring relationships. However, many organisations focus on formal mentoring programmes and a key finding of this research was the value of mentees identifying their own mentor, which is often not possible in formal programmes. It is therefore recommended that further research consider how best to ensure positive pairing in mentoring relationships.

In the context of South Africa it is important to ensure that greater diversity is achieved in senior executive positions. Given the importance placed on childhood and early adult experiences it is suggested that research, possibly a longitudinal study, be undertaken to determine the benefits of early identification and development of diverse talent as opposed to a compliance driven appointment process where candidates may not have received appropriate early development.

Finally, some previous research in South Africa has found that corporate culture needs to change to become more favourable for African, Indian and Coloured leaders (Littrell & Nkomo, 2005). The findings of this research suggest that some organisations have already developed a South African corporate culture which can be inclusive for leaders of all races, and it is recommended that further research on South African corporates explores the cultural context that will be most conducive to true diversity at senior executive levels.

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APPENDIX A

MMBEC RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Executive development in South Africa: the lived experience of the senior executive

Information Sheet and Consent Form

Hello, I am Elizabeth Warren. I am conducting research for the purpose of completing the MMBEC at Wits Business School. I would like to invite you to participate in this research.

The title of my research is Executive development in South Africa: the lived experience of the senior executive. My main research question is "How do senior executives perceive the efficacy of the various executive development interventions they have experienced?"

My research methodology is qualitative and will involve interviews with key executives lasting 60-90 minutes. If you agree to take part in this research, I would be grateful if you would allow me to record the interview so that I can transcribe accurately what you have said.

Any record made of the interviews will be kept confidential to the extent possible by law. The records may be reviewed by my supervisors, but all of these individuals are required to keep your identity and the information contained in the records confidential.

There will be no immediate benefits to you from participating in the study. However, it is hoped that the research will provide findings which will enable more effective selection of leadership development interventions for future leaders in South Africa.

If you would like to receive feedback on the study I would be happy to send you the results when it is completed at the end of 2016.

This research has been approved by the Wits Business School. If you have any complaints about ethical aspects of the research please contact the Research Office Manager at the Wits Business School, Mmbatho Leeuw Mmabatho.Leeuw@wits.co.za.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research you may call my academic research supervisor ……

CONSENT

I agree to participate in the research study Executive development in South Africa: the lived experience of the senior executive. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may decide not to participate at any time.

I understand that my participation will remain confidential.

I agree to the recording of the interview.

_____ _____

Participant signature Date

APPENDIX B

RESEARCH INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Opening Remarks

Introduce myself and explain why I am doing the research and my background in leadership development.

Remind the interviewee of the interview timing, the confidentiality of the information and the use of recording equipment and ensure that they are comfortable with this approach.

Explain the format of the interview with open exploratory questions which will enable them to explain fully their experiences.

Briefly test the equipment.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

BACKGROUND

Tell me about your background:

School ☐

Tertiary Education ☐

Family ☐

Career Choice ☐

Early career experiences ☐

Tell me about how you progressed in your early career:

Choices made :…….

Influences-other people; interests; experiences: ……..

How did you feel in your first managerial/leadership position?

Perceptions of capability : ……

Gaps in knowledge and skills : ……

Feedback from others : ……

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

As you developed as a leader what were your strengths? ……

How were they displayed as strengths? ……..

Did others give you feedback that they were strengths? ……

What did you see as your development needs? ……

Why did you believe they were development needs? ……

What feedback did you have from others? ……

DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS

Describe your key leadership development interventions both formal and informal?

……

What made them developmental?

……

Which development needs were they enhancing?

……

Why were the interventions effective?

……

Do you see any particular transitions in your leadership career which have been particularly developmental? Why? In what way?

……

Were there any key individuals who influenced your development? In what way? How?

……

Describe which interventions you believe were most effective in enhancing your development needs. Why? How?

……

Which interventions had little impact? Why?

……

Closing remarks

……

……

……

Thank the interviewee for their insights and briefly summarise some of the key feedback from the interview.

Explain next steps: research analysis of all interviews and initial findings; possible short re-interview to confirm findings; ask further questions which have become key as a result of further research interviews and check understanding of interview responses. Check if interviewee is willing to participate in a possible future interview.

Remind interviewee of confidentiality of information and identity.

Explain timing of research project and when report is likely to be completed and ask whether or not they would like a copy and if so hard copy of soft copy.

Thank interviewee once again for their participation and answer any final questions they may have.

APPENDIX C

TABLE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Given Name	Position	Race	Gender	Age
Simon	Country CEO	White	Male	49
Saras	CEO	Indian	Female	46
Ravi	Deputy Governor	Indian	Male	44
Mary	CEO	White	Female	47
Stefan	Rest of Africa CEO	Indian	Male	42
Zweli	Regional CEO	African	Male	43
Alex	Head of Marketing	Coloured	Male	46
Richard	Country CEO	White	Male	48
John	Retired CEO	White	Male	60
Don	CEO, Business Banking	White	Male	41
Jack	COO	White	Male	59
Nelis	Head of Risk	White	Male	45