CHAPTER 2
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction
Historically it has been more difficult to substantiate methodology in humanities than in science. In science, control conditions are more easily created, and consistency between observations and established facts and theories make things explainable.

Executive coaching being a relatively new field presents problems of its own. In the first place we need to work from the assumption that coaching in and of itself is effective. For this I refer to the work of Kampa and White, who summarized the five empirical studies produced early in the 21st century as follows:

“The studies reviewed do provide evidence that executive coaching may positively impact individual productivity at the most senior levels, and that this increased productivity is potentially leverageable for the increased productivity of the entire organization” (Kampa and White, 2002, p.153).

It is worth considering the exhortation of Lowman who pushed the field toward what might be described as a unifying theory of executive coaching when he said:

“*In the academic enterprise, the goal is to search for universal truths, which means using microscopic and antiseptic scrutiny, and especially to identify shortcomings, perceived weaknesses, and unanswered questions.*” (Lowman, 2001)

Further to this statement he went on to analogize the study of coaching with the logical and positivistic approach taken by science in the last century (Lowman, 2001). His four-part framework included a description of case events and variables, diagnostic interpretation, interventions and plausible alternative explanations of the results.

In short, he advocated setting the discipline on a path of inquiry that would metaphorically embrace a medical clinical model for the theory and practice of coaching. Some of these methods have been employed in this research related here and denoted by each part of the above framework:

1. There is an end-to-end anatomy of the intervention itself in Chapter 3. Moreover, there are generalized qualitative remarks from past participants that precipitated this research in Chapter 1 and more specific coded interviews in Chapter 4
2. Chapter 7, in which practitioners from the field are interviewed, provides some diagnostic interpretation. Moreover, my own interpretations as a practitioner are at times interlaced throughout the text.
3. In the microcosmic sense (the overall intervention aside) there is reference throughout to the component interventions (e.g. storytelling, portrait drawing, use of 360-degree feedback instruments). These compound to create the overall intervention.
4. Plausible alternative explanations will be discussed in the conclusion.

Finally, a caveat to the whole issue. It has been demonstrated in meta-analytic studies of psychotherapy that these “listening/helping interventions,” regardless of their
conceptual foundations, produce consistent positive effects in the lives of their patients. Wampold et al. (1997), for example, conducted a meta-analytic study that stated when psychotherapies intended to be therapeutic are compared, the true differences between them are zero.

Kilburg says:

"I find it somewhat ironic, intellectually puzzling, and paradoxically reassuring that ...(there is a) conclusion that the differences between approaches would appear to be nil but nevertheless positive for patients across problem conditions." p207 (Kilburg, 2004)

He goes on to say that while conceptual and technical differences appear to be irrelevant, more research is required to reach that conclusion safely (Kilburg, 2004). Since these comments relate to psychotherapy, a discipline existent for nearly a century, we are certainly nowhere near these levels of sophistication in the field of examination of coaching interventions. A cynic may therefore argue that putting a client in any form of structured “helping/listening” environment will have the same effect. That is to miss the point. I am not attempting stir up any feelings among coaching professionals of different disciplines that suggest this is the best way of conducting a clinical coaching intervention. These battles have been waged in the psychotherapeutic field for many years with little effect. The point of developing a theory is simply to understand how and why this intervention works so well and ground it from a scientific perspective. One key indicator, which I will discuss later, is the notion of the working alliance, described as the connection between a practitioner’s analytical side and the client’s reasonable side (Gelso & Hayes, 1998). Meta-analysis of the relationship between outcome and working alliance has shown to be moderate but consistent (Garske & Davis, 2000). This is an important notion. It relates back to the work of Rogers, who posited that if he could provide a certain type of relationship, one where he was authentic, was accepting of the other person regardless of that person’s behavior or feelings, and by a deep empathic understanding of that person’s world, then the other person would likely use that relationship as an opportunity for development or change (Rogers, 1961).

2.2 Theory development

Before attempting to explain the approach I have taken in this research, a short discussion is appropriate around what constitutes a theory, since that is what I am attempting to develop.

2.2.1 What is theory in the social sciences?

There have been a series of debates in academia. To quote Merton:

“The word theory threatens to become meaningless. Because its referents are so diverse – including everything from minor working hypotheses, through comprehensive but vague and unordered speculations, to axiomatic systems of thought – use of the word often obscures rather than creates meaning” p39 (Merton, 1967).

Sutton and Staw (1995) have written extensively about what theory is not. It may be helpful for the reader to be apprised of these five individual facets, ahead of attempting to deal with the bulk of this research. It may also help to guide and inform the reader as well as help to understand why certain structures have been utilized.
Table 4 What theory is not, theorizing is

Adapted from Sutton and Staw (1995)

Most scientific articles contain some or all of the above. Sutton and Staw’s point is that they do not individually or bundled together constitute a theory. They posit, along with Kaplan and Merton, that identifying a strong theory requires an answer to queries of “why” (Kaplan, 1964; Merton, 1967). They then continue by stating that strong theory delves into the underlying processes so as to understand the systematic reasons for an occurrence or non-occurrence. For this research one statement is key: “It often burrows deeply into micro-processes, laterally into neighboring concepts, or in an upward direction, tying itself to broader social phenomena” p174 (Lundberg & Young, 2005).

I would like to deal with aspects of this in advance and clarify my approach. First, since this is an un-researched subject, it is broadly referenced. Nevertheless, the references in this research exist to give the reader an understanding of the synergies and analogs that seem to exist between this particular method of intervention itself and other disciplines. I do not claim through the referencing process that these amount to theory. They merely support a conjecture that an amalgam of three analogous processes in and of themselves creates a successful fourth process. I have attempted through the writing to link these references to the theory being created.

The data I have used throughout this research are qualitative. That, in itself, poses problems which I will deal with later. However, according to Kaplan, it is often quantitative data that is at risk of destroying theory because it uses empirical findings from previous research to motivate fresh hypotheses (Kaplan, 1964). In this research the data, based on interviews, while qualitative, are only drawn from the source intervention and not from other interventions. They are thus raw, and maybe subject to the challenge that they could have been posed differently or been more extensive. As discussed, I do not solely propose to use the data to create the theory, merely as a starting point for inquiry.

2.2.2 What level of theory can be expected?
In the following section there will be a brief discussion around theory development. Due to the nature of the intervention studied and the lack of research hitherto it is necessary to provide some guidelines for the reader as to what can reasonably be accomplished given the limitations of this research.

From a basic perspective, a complete theory, interchangeable with a model, must contain four critical elements (Dubin, 1976).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What?</th>
<th>The factors (variables, concepts, and constructs) of logical interest. Comprehensiveness (is there enough) and parsimony (is there too much) should be balanced.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How?</td>
<td>How are the above related? Can a logical model be drawn? Can causality be inferred?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Why?</td>
<td>Why should the model have credibility? Have the links been empirically tested? Why should we expect certain relationships to exist?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Who, where, when?</td>
<td>What are the limits of the generalizability? What are the limitations temporally or contextually?</td>
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Table 5 Dubin’s critical elements of theory

*What?* My claim is that each of the three ingredients (psychodynamics, group process and coaching) included in the model are necessary and sufficient to create a successful intervention. I have, however, provided understanding of how the intervention unfolds in Chapter 3, by describing it from a process perspective. From that process, I hypothesize we can reasonably deduce that the critical elements—coaching, group work, and a psychodynamic approach in brief form—are present. Are other factors present? Possibly, but not in the opinion of this researcher in enough proportion to represent either a flaw in the model or a distortion. Whetten exhorts the researcher on balance to include “too many factors” because these will, over time, be refined (Whetten, 1989).

*How?* I have attempted to demonstrate the relationship between the above factors by creating a model. The model by implication introduces causality. In this model three different disciplines combine to form one new discipline. They are related in that they have been utilized in social science formerly and moreover in different combinations. For example, group-therapy has taken place using psychodynamic techniques. Coaching has taken place one to one psychodynamically and using cognitive-behavioral techniques. Psychotherapy has been practised over longer periods and as will be discussed in very brief forms. Never have the combination of brief psychotherapy, group-therapy and executive coaching been combined into one intervention. Thus the model is new and as a result the links have not been tested empirically.

*Why?* Paradoxically, it is because of this lack of empirical linkage that the intervention provides such value as a subject for research. As Whetten said if all the links have been empirically verified, the model is ready for the classroom and of little value in the laboratory (Whetten, 1989). The answer to the underlying question of
why certain factors link together to form a conceptually different but socially relevant intervention to anything researched before is at the core of this work.

*Who, where, when?* My strong hope is that the intervention method will have reproducibility and a broad utility in organizational life. I would not have embarked on this study if I had felt it was limited to a certain demographic group in a certain location with temporal limitations. In order to create a baseline I have deliberately undertaken a clinical study, the limitations of which are discussed elsewhere. If researchers suspect, as I do, that there is a broader applicability to this concept there may be a number of different approaches that can be undertaken to prove or disprove that: large scale empirical testing, control groups, cultural and ethnographic studies would fall into that category and the list is not exhaustive.

To provide hope, however, and discount Whetten’s comment that few theorists focus on these contextual limits and consider social phenomena in familiar surroundings at a particular point in time, I can attest that this intervention is currently being utilized beyond the business school in organizations and more broadly across the world (Whetten, 1989). The results of these programs, if studied, may prove a fertile ground for understanding the potential to provide global, scaleable successful leadership development interventions using this methodology. Moreover, if proven, these new applications should improve it as well as affirm its applicability and substantiate the theory further.

To conclude this discussion, my claim is that the theory composition and construction is informed by and guided by the critical issues raised by Whetten in his seminal article and as such does more than tick the boxes: It reaches the standards required to be of interest both to industry practitioners, social science researchers, and of course those subject to the intervention itself—the executives themselves (Whetten, 1989).

2.2.3 Variables

I will now turn to the various variables that make group-coaching work. The intervention is described in depth in Chapter 3. The reader will notice that the construct works almost to a formula. There is a predicted set of instruments, a predicted time scale for each participant, and for the whole intervention the coach is trained to a certain standard in a certain way. The participants are of a certain age range, maturity, and organizational level. The group size on the IEP/TGM Program is usually four people although there have been exceptions. Thus the variables are quite narrow and for the purposes of this research I am inclined to dismiss them. In doing so, I am aware that even with such a narrow focus, this is no proof as to why the intervention works. The interplay of the data, referencing and the focus of the intervention, however, may at least look like a supporting framework.

Throughout the research I have modeled what I believe to be aspects of the developing theory diagrammatically. At no point do I suggest that these diagrams or constructs are the theory. They are in fact a way to help the reader understand pictorially the underlying meaning in a dense text. As Sutton and Staw (1995) said, they are in fact stage props not performance. The models and diagrams hopefully lend support to the ideas in the text but they are not the theory.

2.2.4 Large-scale empirical testing

As discussed, a theory based solely on qualitative data is not without its challenges. Breaking new territory, Sutton and Staw (1995) argue for more leeway in terms of
empirical support stating that a small pilot study or some archival data may be all that is needed to demonstrate that a particular process might be true. In order to corroborate theory, a larger scale study may be needed. This is not covered in this research. Experimental studies are complicated by the need for controlled conditions, a phenomenon that I have conjectured elsewhere is nearly impossible to do in organizational life because of the vast array of continuously changing variables. However, large-scale empirical testing is a strong possibility since this type of intervention runs on a number of different programs at INSEAD. The variables here are less apparent. While the intervention process is approximately the same, the audience differs being drawn from different strata (for example the Management Acceleration Program draws first-time leaders) or at times from single companies. The intervention appears at different stages of programs. For example, on the “Advanced Management Programme” the intervention takes place in the final week. Moreover, an ambitious researcher might wish to study the cross-cultural aspects of the intervention by looking at its effect when run on either the Abu Dhabi or Singapore Campus. The absence of empirical testing in this study implies that the theory has been developed inductively. I make no apology for that. The data are there, albeit not in quantitative form.

2.3 The International Executive Programme (IEP)

There follows for the reader a number of aspects of the International Executive Program in order to fully understand what and who is being studied.

2.3.1 Why the International Executive Programme?

At INSEAD, as at other business schools, a combination of different programs takes place during any calendar year. The Leadership Development Process (LDP) I am researching features in many of them. I have limited the discussion below to this program, comparing it with other programs to highlight some critical differences and explain my choice.

The Executive MBA is designed for those who have advanced in their careers and are often contemplating an industry change or entrepreneurial ventures. (N.B. The standard MBA program contains no leadership development intervention because of the much younger demographic.) The EMBA program often attracts people in transition. This can mean that they may experience a strong organizational positive transference effect toward the school, the leadership development process itself, or simply feel disgruntled. (Positive transference is characterized by predominantly friendly, respectful, and positive feelings on the part of the client toward the coach (transformed into the organization). Transference is confusion in time and place—a redirection of feelings from one person to the other—the inappropriate repetition in the present of a relationship that was important in a person’s childhood.) It is not uncommon for candidates on this program to be “paid off” by their companies with the gift of an EMBA course. It is equally common for the participants to be self-funded. This can mean a broad spectrum of expectations intra-group. Finally, the Management Acceleration Programme has a bias toward young managers who may never have been in a leadership role. It compresses the LDP process of both group and one-to-one coaching into a single day, and is not particularly focused on leadership issues or more functional management.

Company specific programs take place, often in short modules and custom built to address the current needs of the specific company client. Outside of these the
Management Acceleration Programme is designed for young business people aged usually between 28–35 years old who are moving toward management positions. The Consulting and Coaching for Change Programme (CCCP), attracts HR professionals and consultants who wish to apply the psychodynamic methodology in organizations. The CCCP combines a standard LDP intervention (albeit with five or more different instruments) with a “learn in the here-and-now” notion attached. Participants are expected to learn about how group-coaching works as they experience it. It is therefore not a particularly good subject for this study.

The Advanced Management Programme focuses on senior leaders who have been general managers for at least five years. Demographically these leaders can range between 35 and 55 typically. The Advanced Management Programme is a good study subject in that it attracts senior leaders. However, its drawback is twofold: First, it can contain many pre-retiring leaders, who do not need or want specific leadership development. Second, it is a program that has been in flux in recent years having in 2009 undergone a total revamp. The LDP process has changed, moving from 1.5 days to one day, making it a somewhat swift intervention.

Finally, the International Executive Programme (IEP) (now Transition to General Management) exists to facilitate the value generation process as managers transition to leadership roles, using a combination of hard technical tools and more reflective processes. However, one of the most appealing reasons to research the IEP program was the fact that the LDP intervention had remained constant over many years. It takes place over a day and a half with a combination of group and one-to-one coaching, and a group size invariably of four people. It is always situated in the second week of the six-week program and the demographic is well bounded. Moreover, the participants are drawn from a broad array of industries. From a scientific perspective it contains fewer variables than the alternatives as I will explain.

The International Executive Programme shapes up as a good proxy for study. It has consistent demographics, has run the LDP in the same way for many years, and attracts senior executives at the same point in their career. This last point is worthy of mention. Anecdotally, executives filling evaluation forms on the last day of a program tend to score more recent modules higher. This could be attributable to a number of factors including recency, exhilaration accompanying graduation, or even collusion from the facilitators. From a scientific perspective, I take solace in the fact that the participants on the IEP have a full four weeks to reflect before evaluation of the LDP process. This fact, I propose, validates the scores on page 35 The above factors led me to decide that this was the most appropriate program to study.

2.3.2 Description of the IEP

The International Executive Programme is an opportunity for senior executives to recharge their batteries and develop their leadership skills. Focusing on impact, this high-level international forum challenges business leaders both personally and professionally. Through interaction with international and diverse peers as well as with senior INSEAD Faculty, it expands their business repertoire to include new concepts, paradigms, and practices. It is essentially targeted at executives who are about to move up in their career from a functional role to a more generalized leadership role.

According to the program notes, key benefits of the IEP were deemed to be:
• Develop greater perspective on both professional and personal life, enabling you to develop and share your vision, lead your company and motivate your employees
• Build new approaches to resolving issues, by having your thinking challenged by different perspectives, cultures and experiences
• Improve your ability to question conventional ideas and consider alternative scenarios, increasing your confidence to drive change.

The IEP participants represent the highest standards of business performance from more than 80 countries around the world. They are all senior executives, head of a product division, a geographical region, a corporate function or a major joint venture, and typically have at least three years’ experience in a general management position.

Their budget responsibility can range from $30m to several billion dollars and they are at the top level of their corporations, or destined for it shortly. They work in all sectors of the public and private economy, from large oil producers to joint ventures and large start-ups. Selection for admission into the IEP is taken very seriously. The application forms are studied carefully by the program directors, and candidates are selected along three dimensions: Leadership achievements, current level of responsibility, and a commitment to develop oneself and to continue learning. Business consultants and executives without current managerial responsibilities are not invited to apply.

2.3.3 The sample program

It is important to understand the frame that the participants had expected. The program was six weeks in length. The leadership development process comprises roughly one and a half days of that period and fell in the second week. I decided to interview participants who had been through this process one year before, in order to maintain objectivity. My choice of program is guided by differentiating participants at a certain stage of life and career. Many programs exist at INSEAD where the LDP process is replicated as discussed above and as I have shown the defining characteristics of participants on each of these programs is different.

2.4 Qualitative data

As I have previously discussed this is a qualitative research piece. This type of research has many benefits and also some limitations. I will examine these now in more detail in order for the reader to understand my rationale and also to qualify any inherent bias.

2.4.1 The research design

There are various different ways of conducting qualitative data, many with long histories and traditions. This research is concerned with analysis of a specific intervention from five perspectives: The researcher (as practitioner), the creator and designer of the intervention, practitioners, participants, and the general theory of the ingredients that seem to constitute the overall intervention. But why qualitative data? According to Silverman quantitative data lost some of their appeal as the 20th century closed due to public suspicions of data manipulation and a general ill feeling toward statistics and manipulation. That does not inform my decision to utilize qualitative data for this research although one should be mindful of trends. Far more compelling
is the proposition of Miles and Huberman when describing the strengths of qualitative data:

“They focus on naturally occurring events, ordinary events in natural settings so we can get a real handle on what life is like...the emphasis is on a specific case, a focused and bounded phenomenon embedded in its context. The influences of the local context are not stripped away but taken into account. Another feature is the richness and holism...providing thick descriptions that are vivid, nested in a real context. Typically collected over a sustained period, we can assess...how things happen as they do and even assess causality. (The data) are fundamentally well suited for locating the meanings people place on the events process and structures that take place in their lives. They often have been advocated as the best strategy for exploring a new area, developing hypotheses” p10 (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

2.4.2 Limitations of qualitative data

Qualitative data has limitations. First, the issue of reliability. Hammersley (1992) says reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which different instances are assigned to the the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions. Qualitative research, according to Silverman (2006), means that because of the potential for vast tracts of data, the arguments can be confined to brief persuasive (and for this I read biased) data extracts. Bryman (1998) encourages the publication of field notes in order for readers of qualitative data to be able to formulate their own hunches about the people who have been studied. Silverman (2006) also notes the fact that even with perfect transcription, missing is body language, voice tone pauses, etc. that constitute vital contextual information.

Validity is the second issue. Often the charge against qualitative studies is that of anecdotalism or simply put that the data are selected, using telling examples, without attempts to analyze contradictory or less clear data (Silverman, 2006). This is exacerbated when, for example, the researcher emanates from the very profession or area that he or she is researching (as is the case here). Silverman (2006) suggests that one way to get around this issue is to use simple quantitative tabulations to achieve greater validity for the qualitative data. Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that another perspective on this anecdotalism is that in fact that data selection and reduction takes place as an iterative or unfolding aspect of qualitative research.

2.4.3 Data collection for the principal study

Using interviews in qualitative data analysis can be problematic as natural biases can arise. Four basic interview types are the structured interview, semi-structured interview, open-ended interview and focus group. In the first there is neutrality with no prompting. In the second there is some probing and a rapport with the interviewee. The interviewee will understand the aims of the project. In the third there is more flexibility and active listening. The fourth puts the individuals physically in the room and the interviewer acts as facilitator in order to generate broad discussion and encourage group dynamics.

For the purposes of this research I have used the second and third methods. As explanation, the first method, while most rigorous, leaves little opportunity for inductive data collection and leaves open the possibility that the information collected will be homogeneous. A structured interview is a quantitative research method commonly employed in survey research. The aim of this approach is to ensure that
each interview is presented with exactly the same questions in the same order. This ensures that answers can be reliably aggregated and that comparisons can be made with confidence between sample subgroups or between different survey periods. Structured interviews are a means of collecting data for a statistical survey. While this may be confirmatory, it would not address the primary purpose of the research to discover why and how the intervention works.

While a structured interview has a formalized, limited set of questions, a semi-structured interview is flexible, allowing new questions to be brought up during the interview as a result of what the interviewee says. The interviewer in a semi-structured interview generally has a framework of themes to be explored. In the case of this research, these themes were grouped into the three main building blocks of the theory: Group, psychodynamics, and coaching.

It is generally beneficial for interviewers to have an interview guide prepared, again relating to the themes discussed above. Interview guides help researchers to focus an interview on the topics at hand without constraining them to a particular format. This freedom can help interviewers to tailor their questions to the interview context/situation, and to the people they are interviewing. Consequently, while the questions were similar, the opportunity was afforded to the interviewee to elaborate and go “off script.” In the case of the professional practitioners, I similarly used a scripted interview in order to elicit specific information around the intervention. However, they were given the opportunity to voice material that they thought relevant and the questions were more open in nature. In social sciences a focus group is an interview, conducted by a trained moderator among a small group of respondents. The interview is conducted in an unstructured and natural way where respondents are free to give views from any aspect. While this may provide instant and credible data, my hypothesis was that this would be particularly hard to orchestrate: The participants lived across five continents in different time zones. Therefore, the interview would have to be conducted by phone as they would be unlikely to be able to physically convene. Moreover, to get the interviewees on a group conference call and then try to make sense of the data seemed implausible scientifically.

I interviewed two constituencies. Professional practitioners engaged in regular group-coaching on the IEP program and individuals who had experienced the IEP and consequently the group-coaching process. In the case of the professional practitioners, I was keen to elucidate the methodologies they deployed. I wanted to find out specifically how they went about their business in terms of creating environment, safe reflective space, and containment and also how they managed the group for a successful outcome. Since there were some pertinent themes, I used a structured interview. The interviews were recorded and transcribed within 24 hours. They were returned to the respondents in transcribed form in order that they could be corrected if the data had been incorrectly collected.

2.4.4 Bias in qualitative data collection

In this section I will try to address the concerns that the reader may have about biases. As a practitioner of psychodynamic group-coaching, it could easily be assumed that I have a vested interest in demonstrating efficacy and sustainability among other positive attributes. It will be hard to contradict this design bias charge, since I have witnessed first hand the effect this intervention has on many people. However, I would ask the reader to note that the core question in this research is how the intervention works (qualitative) not to what extent it works (quantitative).
2.4.5 Sampling bias

Sampling bias is a skew to omission of or inclusion of only those who will support the premise. I have dealt with this elsewhere in the section on theoretical sampling. Suffice it to say here that my emphasis by interviewing previous participants was to find out more about their experience, whether positive or negative, and the questions were framed that way. I have not excluded negative comments and have provided commentary about it.

2.4.6 Procedural bias

Procedural bias extends to the application of pressure on interviewees to answer or respond quickly. In this research I invited those who had any kind of opinion on the intervention to respond. I informed them that the researcher would call at a time of their choice, that the interview would take an hour but no more and that they were free to go as far or be as limited in their comments as they wished. Moreover, they were assured of anonymity. The two participants who elected to fill out the multiple choice online survey (same questions), were given a month to fill in the questionnaire.

2.4.7 Measurement bias

Measurement bias is relevant in qualitative research when participants give socially acceptable responses or try to please the interviewer for personal reasons. The reality is that simply performing the research has a systemic effect on the sample groups. The anonymous online questionnaire was only filled by two people so does not represent sufficient data quality to corroborate hard findings, nor can it count as a control. However, referencing my comments above, the questions were geared more to “how” than “how much?”, so the opportunity to provide pleasing responses was limited.

2.4.8 Interviewer and response bias

Interviewer and response bias is possibly the hardest to negate. The design protocol was deliberately set up to mitigate this effect. The target group had finished the IEP over a year ago so any “attachment” to me as the program director should have lapsed.

- I excluded my own group from the sample since there would have been an inherent bias to please. I sent what might be described as a scientific solicitation with a neutral tone. All of this was done in order for the respondent to begin with a feeling that they were working with a researcher, not a collaborator or friend.

- I deliberately elected to do the interviewing by phone. I felt this was businesslike and would mitigate any pre- or post-socialization: Moreover it might have led to a confusion of roles: was I also there as a coach, as a sponsor of the IEP or INSEAD? It led to a crisp and focused telephone session with a bounded time limit and in their place of work.

- I had a structured and scripted interview from which I did not deviate other than to say “can you say more” when I felt the response had been brief and there might have been more material.

- I recorded the interviews and as I transcribed them I coded for any leading remarks.

- I told them in advance that the interview would not be a dialogue and that I would not comment on their responses. Response bias does unfortunately
include errors where respondents consciously or unconsciously tell the researcher what they want to hear. I was unable to control for that given the structured nature of the interview itself.

2.4.9 Dealing with possible researcher bias

A qualitative researcher always faces the challenge of possible biased observations arising from the relationship between the researcher and the interviewees. The sources of bias may be:

1. The effects of the researcher on the case or
2. The effects of the case on the researcher (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

This has to be dealt with in the case of both sets of interviewees and in both situations. To avoid biasing the professional practitioners I did the following: The questions I posed to the interviewee were deliberately designed to elicit subjective responses. They were framed as open, process oriented questions. At no point during the interviews did I offer my own views as to “I do this…” nor was I suggestive by trying to expand the response with supplementals like “…but what about?” Hence, irrespective of either an abridged answer or a long response, the transcribed results are a faithful representation of how the interviewee thought about the question. The second bias that the case has on the researcher was mitigated largely by the fact that it is not a quantitative study. I suspect it works. I want to find out why and how. What I knew was that differing methodologies were used. I sought to find out from the practitioners what those were. Hence this set of questions and the way they were framed could not bias my research.

The framing of the questions for the previous IEP participants was, however, different. To frame the questions similarly, e.g. “How did you change?” would have biased the response by inference. I used an inductive approach. For example: “Were you able to make changes?” brought a straightforward “Yes” or “No” response. If the answer was “No” the interview did not proceed. I was not concerned with those who had not managed any change. Nevertheless I recorded the percentage of non-changers as a note for future research. The interviews of the “Yes” respondents then proceeded with a careful exploration of why they had changed and in what measure. I kept the questions focused on the group process and its outcomes. The effect of the case had no bearing on my research interview with participants as the questions were in the form of a structured interview without recourse to the temptation of deviation. While at this stage the essence of the research question began to be answered, I did not change the structure of the interviews as the information flowed in. When interviewing the participants I was aware that my role as program director of the LDP portion of the IEP might influence the interviewees to tell me what I wanted to hear. Hence I limited my interviews to those participants with whom I had had no direct contact.

2.4.10 Reporting bias

Reporting bias is a display error where only positive research or outcomes are reported and the rest buried. The interview transcripts are available in full. Again, I am not trying to prove that this works, I am hypothesizing how it works. Thus this charge is hopefully discounted.

2.5 Grounded theory approach
My methodology is based on grounded theory principles, which emphasize generation of theory from data. When the principles of grounded theory are followed, a researcher using this approach will formulate a theory, either substantive (setting specific) or formal, about the phenomena they are studying that can be evaluated (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

In a qualitative study such as this, it is problematic to isolate the different phenomena that contribute to the group-coaching process in order to generate control conditions. As an example, the outcome generated with one participant might be substantially different if he or she had been placed in a different group. Exact reproducibility of conditions is very hard to maintain. It has been my premise, therefore, to investigate those factors that may have a causal effect on the outcomes, but not to take into consideration the infinite counterfactuals that arise in such an undertaking. To distill this I attempt to investigate, describe, and explain the phenomenon of group-coaching and create a theory of what constitutes a reproducible session.

Initially, I have looked at the three unavoidable conditions that contribute to the process: Psychodynamics, group dynamics and elements of group-therapy, and executive coaching. I earlier demonstrated a satisfaction with the overall process by supporting quantitative data (see page 35). I have conducted a series of structured interviews with 14 previous participants of the leadership development process in order to supplement the qualitative data provided.

Four types of factors were in mind as I investigated this process:

1. Triggering factors for change: What were the triggers that moved each participant to their own tipping point where they felt ready to commit to doing something differently?
2. Promoters and enablers: What were the factors that promoted and enabled these phenomena to occur?
3. Necessity and sufficiency: What were the necessary and sufficient conditions that were in place for change to occur?
4. Motivation, opportunity, and rationale: What generated the motivation to change, what was it about the opportunity that was relevant, and how did the participant rationalize it?

My aim is to generate theory based on people’s experience during this particular intervention and is therefore based on themes that are unearthed from qualitative assessment from the participants and a more detailed analysis of their experience based on the four factors above.

2.5.1 Theoretical sampling

Theoretical sampling, according to Glaser and Strauss (1967), is used in qualitative research studies, (such as this one), to gain a deeper understanding of analyzed cases and facilitate the development of the fluid analytic frame, referred to earlier, and concepts used in the research. Qualitative data are not a preference but have been driven by the research question. In order to elucidate theory it would not be appropriate to run a clinical trial as this produces quantitative data. As stated earlier, the qualitative data are best deployed when trying to answer “why and how” questions, questions which again essentially drive this research. That said, the sampling is of major interest in the development of this new theory, in order for it to
be intellectually robust. Three aspects are of note: Whether to use random sampling, the size of the sample, and its justification and the sample strategy.

First it may be useful for the reader to understand and legitimize the fact that qualitative data are used at all. Table 6 below is adapted from Marshall (1996), who wrote extensively on the use of sampling in qualitative research. He stated that while a random sample provides the opportunity to generalize an outcome to a wider population, it is not the best way to develop an understanding of complex human issues such as those being studied here. Moreover, picking a sample provides the qualitative researcher with the chance to work with informants whose input is “richer” according to Marshall and therefore provides insight and understanding. However, this should not be interpreted as bias.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Quantitative</th>
<th>Qualitative</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philosophical foundation</td>
<td>Deductive reductionist</td>
<td>Inductive, holistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aim</td>
<td>Test pre-set hypothesis</td>
<td>Explore complex human issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study plan</td>
<td>Step-wise, predetermined</td>
<td>Iterative, flexible</td>
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<tr>
<td>Position of researcher</td>
<td>Aims to be detached and</td>
<td>Integral part of research process</td>
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<td>Assessing quality of</td>
<td>Direct tests of validity and</td>
<td>Indirect quality assurance methods of</td>
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<td>outcomes</td>
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<td>Measures of utility of</td>
<td>Generalizability</td>
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Table 6 Quantitative and qualitative approaches to research compared
Adapted from Marshall (1996)

When considering sample size, it is difficult to answer the question “how much is enough?” While it is undoubtedly the case that if the sample size is too great, new ideas and emergent themes will dwindle, it is critical to strike the balance between magnitude and parsimony. In practice the sampling in this study was driven by two things: Convenience, which is a legitimate scientific protocol, and judgment or a purposeful sample (Marshall, 1996). A theoretical sample offers the opportunity to build interpretative theory from the emerging data. While only one sample group was utilized in this study, I deem the result good enough to form a baseline of theory upon which future research can be based. Owing to the scarcity of information on this intervention from any other source, this approach serves to put a clean boundary around the intervention. There is of course overlap between the three sampling approaches.

My approach was simple. I solicited data from a single cohort from the program. I justify this because the spread of outcomes from the intervention over a number of programs was small. No single program was outstanding in either direction from the participant’s perspective. I wanted to find a group with whom the experience was still relatively fresh, but with whom the possible euphoric feelings had dissipated. Hence I chose a group from one year prior to interview. I also chose participants who elected to respond to the electronic survey I provided. Again, the reader may suppose that there is inherent (pro-) bias built into the respondent who replies to a survey, versus (con-) bias implied by those that do not respond. Why not try to encourage an
interview with non-respondents to see why they were uninterested? Again the response lies in the baseline argument, outlined above. Moreover, as it transpired, there was enough criticism in the actual responses I did collect to mitigate the challenge. The sample group was therefore self-selecting, random (rather than targeted), and no control was used.

My sample group is a study of participants who went through the International Executive Programme at INSEAD between 2008 and 2009. Moreover, in order to triangulate the data I also interviewed ten senior coaches who serve as directors of the Insead Global Leadership Centre and who work or have worked on similar programs in order to try to understand what specifically they contribute to the process both individually and collectively. Finally, I interviewed the founder of the center and designer of the group-coaching process who is not only still an active coach but also created the underlying principles upon which the work is based.

2.6 Participants’ interviews

In the case of the participants I used an open-ended approach. I wanted to give them minimal reason to try to “please” the interviewer. Hence the way the interview was set up was simply to state that for the purposes of research I wanted to ask some questions about their experience of the LDP aspect of the IEP. Both sets of interviews were recorded, transcribed within 48 hours of the original interview and lasted around half an hour. They are available in full. To address the question I sent all participants on the programs a short email inviting them to participate in a 15 minute interview about the group-coaching process assuring them of confidentiality of responses. Participants were promised an overview of my findings and a possible presentation of the results on completion of the research.

Why should we depart from naturally occurring data and use contrivances like interviews? I adjudged that to answer my research question, “how does change occur in group-coaching and what are the circumstances that allow it to arise?” would not be facilitated by looking at the raw scores from the group-coaching portion soon after the event on page 35. There is not enough detail. All we can understand is that there is self-reported satisfaction, possibly attributable to a number of factors. For example, at that point there can be a naturally occurring “high” from the experience. Moreover, change has not actually happened at this point. The participants are in a state of psychological flux. I posit that the data are of no great use. They do, however, raise the research question itself.

One other possible method was to employ a formal questionnaire which I also did. Byrne suggested that open ended and flexible questions are more likely to get a more considered response than closed questions and that they would therefore provide better access to participants’ views, interpretation of events, understandings, experiences, and opinions (Byrne, 2004).

2.7 Data reduction and display

Miles and Huberman (1994) state that qualitative analysis occurs in three streams that occur to an extent simultaneously in qualitative research. These streams can be seen diagramatically in Fig. 6 but are worthy of some discussion since they are the foundation upon which this research is based.
Data reduction or condensation takes place even before the research has begun, in the selection of questions or area for study. It continues as an iterative process as the research proceeds. In this case the interviews were not open ended but structured and formulated in order to tease out themes. According to Miles and Huberman (1994) it is not separate from analysis, it is part of analysis. The choices I have made in defining and sharpening the questions are all part of that data reduction process. I have advisedly, as a predicate to these interviews, imposed a quantitative element into the analysis, albeit in a raw form in order to give the reader a minimal baseline upon which the interviews stand. These quantitative data testify to a few simple elements:

1. That in the eyes of the participants the intervention worked, was successful in that it exceeded their expectations.
2. That it was valid in that it gave them an opportunity to assess their leadership development.
3. That the paradigm of working in a group was useful to them (since they may have had other desires) and,
4. That the practitioners, who are trained in group-coaching were successful in delivering. These scores can be seen in Table 3 (Chapter 1) and provide that baseline.

Data display is often criticized in qualitative work since it involves large tracts of material that is cumbersome to read and sift effectively. It can lead to reader bias as well as researcher bias. I have tried where possible to provide diagramatic interpretations of the data in order to help the reader understand the material. With that said, this study is for the most part an exploratory study and codifying the data in that way never seemed appropriate. The logical next step for future research would be a large scale empirical test, which I will discuss later. This type of study would lend itself more readily to matrix and network displays.

It is not uncommon for a qualitative researcher to be accused of having made conclusions before beginning. This can be the case if the researcher comes from the field. Miles and Huberman (1994) make a distinction between final conclusions and lightly drawn conclusions that are a naturally occurring phenomenon as the research unfolds. There is a directive toward verification of meanings extracted from qualitative data that points toward validation. In their view, this validates the study.
2.8 Ex-ante limitations of the research methodology

There are troubling aspects to collecting interview data. Interviews do not give us direct access to the facts. Moreover interviews to not tell us directly about people’s experiences but instead offer indirect “representations” of those experiences. What an interview produces is a particular representation or account of an individual’s views or opinions. Since the purpose of the research was to develop a theory of how change takes place, the grounded theory approach is useful in that it implies a constant revisiting of both literature and data until such analysis serves no further useful purpose. Thus there were times when the data supported the theory and vice versa. What emerged that became intrinsic to the project was that the data supported the proven theory of how change occurs in a clinical psychoanalytic setting. The links between coaching and psychoanalytic theory are tenuous due to lack of research. What also emerged was a strengthening of those links. In order to fully comprehend this intervention I need to explain what happens. I will endeavor now to illuminate the end-to-end psychodynamic group-coaching process.