

THE FUTURE IS RELATIONAL:  
MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW

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## ABSTRACT

### Purpose

The authors of this study aim to test a possible turn toward relational, as opposed to agentic, management development program (MDP) content.

### Design/methodology/approach

The authors performed a content analysis of the literature and qualitative interviews of management coaches/consultants from South Africa and the USA.

### Findings

In both studies, the authors found more relational than agentic content comprising MDP content. Interviews revealed a predominance of relational strategies and that agentic and relational skills are often interwoven in development efforts.

### Practical implications

This work may guide management coaches and consultants to offer clients management development (MD) with a greater focus on relational skills.

### Originality/value

Future studies should build on our findings to explore whether leadership may now require more relational as opposed to agentic skills.

### Keywords

Gender, Management development, Relational skills

### Paper type

Research paper

A popular T-shirt in the United States and elsewhere, especially during Hillary Clinton's bid for the U.S. presidency in 2016, read "The future is female." This phrase was popularized back in the 1970s,<sup>[I]</sup> but has recently come back in style.<sup>[II]</sup>

The future is female means that we must look to the female archetype, and into the myriad of women's experiences to define alternative forms of leadership. The female energy is to be found in a world that is emotionally intelligent, that is collaborative, a global society in which individuals are 'linked and not ranked.'<sup>[III]</sup>

The future is female, in essence, means that hierarchy, masculinity, competition, and individualism are not the only nor necessarily the best designs for social systems. In this paper we lever this idea to ask whether management development is becoming more relational in content and design. Using the "future is female" metaphor from popular culture, our research question is: *Is the future relational, especially when it comes to developing future managers?*

In the management and applied psychology literatures, in general, we have seen a turn toward the relational, that is, scholarly work that focuses on positive connections between people in organizations. As Ferris and colleagues (2009) relate, "Work relationships have come to form the very foundation of organizations and the contemporary embodiment of how most work gets accomplished, and there has been increased scholarly interest in this area" (p. 1379). Now, more than ever, scholars are concerned with the factors that promote high quality work relationships, e.g., leader-member exchanges, mentoring, resources obtained in social networks, and positive connections characterized by positive attitudes and emotions such as trust. Moreover, the research is finding these relationships are not positive just for the parties in the immediate relationship, as they have positive multilevel organizational implications—for teams, organizations, and society (Ferris *et al.*, 2009).

Several theories posit that leadership/management<sup>[IV]</sup> consists of two arguably orthogonal dimensions, often referred to as: communion, characterized by care, consideration, and coalition building; and agency, that is, taking charge, providing structure, and acting with authority (Abele and Wojciszke, 2007). While the traditional but enduring think manager, think male paradigm aligns male and agentic behavior with manager effectiveness (Schein and Davidson, 1993), in this paper we take a look at the other side—communion. Based on our own observations in our consulting and research, but also evidence from recently published academic studies, we ask whether being relational, *aka* communal, has more contemporary importance in management development (MD) today. We explore whether relational skills are taking precedent over agentic skills in conceptions of what makes for management effectiveness, whether management development programs (MDPs) are reflecting this, and if so, how. To do this, we performed a content analysis of the academic literature since 2000 on the components of management development programs. Second, we conducted interviews with 14 management development practitioners in South Africa and the United States to gain insights into contemporary management development practice regarding relational skills. In sum, we ask: Is the future of management development relational?

We believe our research makes two main contributions. First, we take stock of the 21 years of management development academic literature since Collins' (2002) content analysis of research published from 1986-2000. Specifically, we explore whether today's contemporary academic literature reflects a turn away from strategic leadership, to more relational skills development in managers. Second, our research asks whether a turn toward the relational is reflected in management development practice. Our primary data collection, i.e., 14 interviews with management development specialists/coaches, offers insight into what organizations want

and what practitioners are providing (i.e., specific content and tools) in regard to relational and agentic skills in management development in the United States and South Africa. These two countries were chosen as they are the primary locations of the two authors' careers, and where we have social network connections to MD practitioners. In sum, we test our research question in the academic literature, which may be of interest to MDP scholars, as well as practice, with managerial implications for leaders, consultants, and organizations.

## BACKGROUND

### The Need for Relational Skills

What we know about leadership effectiveness today has been shaped by the extraordinary circumstances of doing business during the COVID-19 pandemic. The crisis altered people's attitudes toward employers and employment (Mukerjee and Krish, 2021), with unprecedented numbers of people in the U.S. and worldwide leaving their jobs, a phenomenon called "the great resignation," where from April through June of 2021, 11.5 million U.S. workers quit (Kane, 2021). According to LinkedIn's 2021 Workforce Confidence Index, forced work-from-home has both made people rethink the meaning of the work they do and how and where they do it, as well as escalated stress and burnout, leading to dissatisfaction with their current jobs (Anders, 2021). All of this has made for a time of high uncertainty for leaders, who must support the diverse needs of those they supervise while at the same time processing their own demands and emotions. Leadership in such a time of flux is daunting, and may require "a different pacing and cadence...taking a pause to acknowledge where the [follower] is and what they need to build trust and confidence" (Schaninger in McKinsey.com, 2020).

Research evidence is mounting that some of the winning leaders of the COVID-19 pandemic may have been women. News agencies heralded Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern as the

instrument of low infection rates experienced in New Zealand, with *The Atlantic* declaring in April of 2020 that she might be the most effective leader on the planet today (Friedman, 2020). Prime Minister Ardern showed her personal side in COVID briefings, appealing to her constituents not as a distant figure, but instead dressed in a sweatshirt, as a fellow parent struggling to get her child to stay in bed. Turning to the research evidence, the first article published in *Journal of Applied Psychology*'s special call for COVID-19-related research documented the women leader effect in cold, hard outcomes: As of May 5, 2020, U.S. states with women governors had fewer COVID-19 deaths compared to states with men governors (Sergent and Stajkovic, 2020). But why? That article showed that compared to men, women governors tended to express more empathy and more confidence during their pandemic-related public briefings. Blake-Beard and scholars (2020) argue that androgynous leadership, that is, the ability to leverage both stereotypically feminine and masculine leadership behaviors as needed, reaps the best outcomes in crisis situations and beyond. And they argue that we scholars must move beyond a simple masculine-feminine dichotomy in leadership styles.

The above discussion provides some initial evidence that, especially in today's tumultuous leadership environment, empathy and other relational skills may be a necessary, even primary component of effective leadership. This is something one of the authors of this manuscript has also found from her own consulting practice in South Africa (unpublished personal anecdote): A client organization in the financial services industry was troubled by why several teams were consistently falling below internal team engagement benchmarks. Analysis of team demographics and performance trends found no differentiators between teams that consistently outperformed versus teams that underperformed on engagement benchmarks. However, an examination of the behavioral styles of the 260 managers leading the teams

illuminated a predictor: Teams with a leader higher on relational as opposed to task focused style predicted team engagement. Leaders of the highly engaged teams showed a stronger focus on giving support to subordinates, with particular emphasis on empowering individuals, while leaders of the less engaged teams tended to focus more on analysis and getting to the core of problems quickly, with a constant need to improve things. This anecdotal observation is consistent with published scholarly findings that empowering, some might say more relational, leadership behavior predicts subordinates' work engagement (Cai *et al.*, 2018).

To examine the academic literature for evidence of the need for relational styles of leadership, transformational leadership can be taken as a test case. Transformational leadership is part of the “full range” of leadership styles along with transactional and laissez-faire styles (Avolio and Bass, 1991). Based on Avolio and Bass' conceptualization, transformational leaders behave in ways that inspire employees to go above and beyond, encourage creative solutions to problems, mentor, project vision, and convey plans for achieving this vision. The literature is divided on whether transformational leadership is viewed as relational or agentic behavior, with subdimensions found to fall into each. But, meta-analytic studies (e.g., Eagly *et al.*, 2003) comparing female and male managers show that women exceed men in overall transformational leadership ratings and especially on the individualized consideration subscale, which entails mentoring behavior that is supportive of other people and their specific needs—an especially relational leadership behavior (Vinkenbunrg *et al.*, 2011). So how is this associated with managerial skills needs in 2022? There's mounting academic evidence that leaders higher, as opposed to lower, in transformational leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic were more effective in protecting the well-being of followers (McCombs and Williams, 2021), lowering followers' role ambiguity and promoting work–life balance (Charoensukmongkol and Puyod,

2021), and lowering followers' stressors and weakening their effects on burnout (Kloutsiniotis et al., 2022)—all important outcomes for organizations to retain and sustain talent in contemporary times.

This evidence points to our first research question,

*RQ1: Are relational skills in managers a primary need for organizations, in contrast to agentic skills?*

### The Content of Management Development Programs

On the other hand, we posit that it is not time to abandon the other side of the leadership coin—agency. Traditional conceptions of leadership as providing strategic direction and authority are still at play, and are still taught to and developed in leaders. Leadership development has traditionally included a large range of leadership experiences that cross the agency-relational spectrum such as on-the-job experiences including role modeling and exposure to senior executives and job assignments, as well as feedback systems, coaching, and formal training programs (McCauley *et al.*, 1998). Collins' (2002) work showed that from 1986 through 2000, most studies on management development (66%) identified strategic leadership as the primary focus of MDP interventions. She interpreted this as organizations' timely response to meeting the demands of competition resulting from globalization in the 1980s and 90s—the need for strategic leaders, that is, for persons who set the future course of action and direction for organizations by understanding and manipulating emerging possibilities. This content analysis performed by Collins (2002) is now 20 years old. And based on our arguments in the previous section about the possibility of relational skills emerging as a primary managerial need, we ask:

*RQ2: According to the academic literature, are relational skills (as opposed to agentic skills) now the major component of management development programs?*

### The Practice of Relational Skills Development

To reach beyond just the academic literature, we focus also on MDP practice. This is for two reasons. First, academic research often lags practice in our responsiveness to business needs and trends (Cascio and Aguinis, 2008), so we suggest that perhaps an emergence of relational skills as a primary focus (as opposed to agentic skills) may be better detected today in MDP practice. Second, we wished to gain and offer to the reader insights into what relational skills training and coaching consists of. Therefore, we ask:

*RQ3: Are practitioners doing relational skills training and coaching?*

*RQ4: And if so, how?*

To test our research questions, we first conducted a content analysis of the literature to see what management development is comprised of since 2000. Second, we conducted qualitative interviews with 14 management practitioners in South Africa and the United States, the country of birth of both authors respectively, to understand current areas of MDP focus as well as types of interventions in MDP practice.

### STUDY 1 – CONTENT ANALYSIS

#### Method and Results

Using PsychInfo and ABIInform databases, we searched for articles published since 2000, to content analyze the MDP literature since Collins' (2002) study. Singularly and in combination, we used the search terms management development, management skills, management training, leader development, leadership development, leadership skills, leadership training, and content, program, and components. This search returned 281,065 hits. After culling articles 1) that did not refer to at least one type of skills taught in management development programs and 2) for duplicate articles across the databases, we were left with just 13 articles, which are indicated by asterisks in the reference section of the paper.

We note that our analysis of these articles to determine the content of current management development programs, that is, what is taught to budding managers, was hindered by articles' nonspecificity in describing content and a lack of consensus in MDP content terms. As examples, quite general terms were used such as "leadership practice" in Dover, Lawler, and Hilse (2008), and we detected overlap in terms such as, e.g., "problem solving" (Dover *et al.*, 2008) versus "systems thinking" (Sirianni and Frey, 2001). Our first general observation from the data is that the management development literature seems to assume that the academic audience knows what MDP consists of, as evidenced by 9 of the 13 articles on the whole or at times referring to the content of the development as simply either leadership or management skills. See Table 1.

Turning to a main research question of interest, that is, whether relational skills (as opposed to agentic skills) are the major component of MDPs based on the academic literature (RQ2), the data revealed these observations. First, we found that eight, that is, more than half of the academic journal articles content analyzed, did specify relational content. Specifically, these articles listed communication, teamwork, and group processes as relational components of management development. We categorized these as relational based on their focus on interpersonal social processes. In contrast, just three articles specified identifiably agentic content, with these three respectively focusing on problem solving, developing self-efficacy, and priority setting. We identified these as agentic in their focus on developing skills necessary for direction and guidance, as well as a focus on the self as opposed to interactions with others. In sum, eight articles were focused on MDP relational content versus three agentic content. Finally, see Table 1 for a list of (the majority of) topics which were not clearly categorizable into our agentic versus relational dichotomy.

### Discussion

Collins' (2002) analysis of the management development literature from 1986-2000 found that management development then consisted of a strong focus on strategic direction as a requisite skill for developing competitive advantage. While we acknowledge our content analysis is hampered by few published journal articles on the subject, we did observe two things. First, this literature seems to assume rather than delineate the content of MDPs, as evidenced by the majority of the research studies ( $n = 9$ ) referring to management or leadership skills as a general category as opposed to specific content. This could be because scholars may focus on other issues besides the content of programs in our research, for example, selecting a provider/trainer (Dawes, 2000) or outcomes of development as opposed to content of programs (e.g., Abrell *et al.*, 2011). Second, we now turn to a primary research question of interest (RQ2): Are relational skills as opposed to agentic skills a major component of MDP based on a review of the academic literature? The answer is yes, as we documented a primary focus on relational skills as a component of MDP in the academic literature, with 8 out of 13 articles referring to relational content and just 3 out of 13 referring to identifiably agentic content. We say tentatively, based on articles we were able to categorize into relational versus agentic program content, relational content ( $n = 8$ ) may be growing in focus as compared to agentic content ( $n = 3$ ). We based this conclusion on our review of the MDP literature since Collins' analysis in 2002. She concluded that in the late 1980s and the 1990s, agentic content, specifically strategic skills, dominated MDP interventions. In fact, in another paper around the same time, Collins (2000) questions why just a minority of MDP studies from 1986 to 2000 had organization-level performance as their dependent variable, suggesting that the organization, and not individual persons should be the ultimate beneficiary of MDP interventions. This idea seems to contradict a focus on the

relational, or relationships, which would operate at a more micro-level of analysis. With this idea of a possible MDP turn toward the relational, i.e., the micro-level of focus, in mind, we conducted a primary data collection with MDP practitioners in Study 2.

## STUDY 2 - INTERVIEWS

### Method

To complement our initial focus on the academic literature (RQ2), we turned to management development practice in Study 2 to address RQ1 (Are relational skills a primary need for organizations, in contrast to agentic managerial skills?) and RQ3 and 4 (Are practitioners doing relational skills training and coaching? And if so, how?). In Study 2 we conducted qualitative, semi-structured interviews with a convenience sample of 14 management development practitioners from South Africa and the United States. These participants were persons from our own professional networks, and their demographic profiles appear in Table 2. This convenience sample is heavily skewed to South African participants (11 versus 3 U.S.) as South Africa was the country of residence of both authors at the time of the data collection—2021. Our sample is serendipitously comprised of 50% persons working in small consulting firms, with the other half of participants working in large consulting firms or other corporations not focused on consulting as their main offering. About two-thirds of the sample is female, and the average work experience is 21 years.

Our questions were open-ended, asking participants to think about their current practice, with some participants referring to work in larger organizations and some to their work as independent consultants and/or coaches. After the informed consent process, we asked them to share with us what are they seeing now as far as the need for various management skills and recent trends and issues for clients. We also asked about practical strategies they use and at what

levels of organizations they employ these strategies. Finally, only at the end of the interview, we shared with them our agentic and communal framework, asking them about training needs related to these, and whether their clients appreciate both dimensions. The interview protocol appears in the appendix.

All interviews were conducted in English, between July 27 and November 20, 2021. This was a period of continued lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic considered moderate-to-high level for South Africa, with a substantially more open level of commerce in the United States. All interviews were conducted via Zoom by one of the two authors, with the first two interviews conducted by both authors. The interviews were between 30 and 60 minutes each, they were recorded, and then transcribed using Otter.ai version 2.0.3. Data were analyzed via the six-stage process of thematic analysis: 1) data familiarization, 2) initial code generation, 3) themes search, 4) themes review, 5) theme definition and naming, and 6) report production (Braun and Clarke, 2006). After three interviews were conducted, the first author used a combination of abductive and inductive methods to code a first set of possible themes. Then the second author reviewed the themes, followed by a discussion between both authors. From there, the first author independently coded and identified possible themes through detailed review of the interview transcripts (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Then both authors focused on reaching a point where we understood the issues and no further dimensions or insights were revealed related to our *a priori* research questions (Hennick *et al.*, 2017). Finally, we discussed our reflexivity to identify potential influences extraneous to the phenomena under investigation (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004), recognizing our own positions as 1) a doctoral student and consultant and 2) a PhD scholar, familiar with the related practice and the academic literature.

At the point at which the first author had identified all themes coming from all interviews, we calculated the inter-rater reliability of coding by having the second author examine and recode all illustrative quotations using the themes and subthemes identified by the first author. The overall percentage of agreement between the coders was .98, exceeding the standard .70 threshold (Cohen, 1960).

### Results

Our thematic analysis of our data revealed two main themes, guided by our interview protocol: management development trends, and practical management development strategies. A summary of the subthemes of each, together with the number of mentions, is presented in Table 3. The labels of the subthemes are generally self-explanatory with the possible exception of non-traditional training, which refers to the use of alternative learning methods in MDP. Examples include: action learning (e.g., teams working on real business problems), artificial intelligence, and virtual reality. See Table 4 for an example overview of the data structure with themes, subthemes, and illustrative quotations (Pratt, 2008).

### Agentic Versus Relational Skills

We looked to the emergent themes to address research question 1—Are relational skills a primary need for organizations, in contrast to agentic managerial skills? In answering RQ1, we referred to the first part of the interview, where we asked the participants about current trends, instead of the second part of the interview, where we revealed to them that we were interested in the relational and agentic content divide in MDPs. Unprompted, most participants mentioned their management development efforts included *agentic skills*, specifically problem-solving, assertiveness, and strategic work.

*"I basically set a criteria for high performing young individuals up to 30 years of age in the business, okay. And so I went through a selection process and identified those that would then work on a real business problem. So they would get this team of young professionals together across a range of functions across a range of countries. So from different countries coming together and then working on a real life and business problem, where they have to present the problem to the exco team, okay, and come up with a solution, implement the solution, and then evaluate the impact." (Carina)*

*"I find...a lot of people struggle to assert themselves. I mean, as they always have, I don't think that's changed. I think remains a fundamental issue. And I think, I think, you know, in the old days, you got people who couldn't assert themselves and learn to be aggressive, and nowadays there's less of that." (Shaun)*

*"For three or so years I did some group coaching for a non-profit organization that was group coaching of unemployed black females. That was quite different, mostly with them being in Matric, mostly not very fluent in English, that was quite interesting. Groups of, big groups too sort of ten in a group, hour sessions twice a month. That was particularly focused on, again, assertiveness but not in leading, but in being able to sell, because they were being given the opportunity to sell clothing in the townships." (Manuela)*

*"And then I think there are things that don't change and probably never will. So it's still very much a need for people who are new to leadership or new to higher levels of leadership. Inevitably, there's a lot of tension around 'how do I step out of the weeds and into the big picture, I can't do both anymore, I really can't stay in the weeds and do all the work. But I feel like I need to, I feel like I want to, but I can't do that and do the strategic work and the higher, higher level work that is required of me in this new position.' So that's a big, that's a big one." (Diana)*

Interestingly, though, while most participants mentioned agency, each of our participants without fail mentioned their MDPs included *relational skills*. Most notably, participants referred to seeing problematic interpersonal styles as key barriers to progression rather than questions around competence, suggesting organizations are acknowledging the importance of the relational side of performance. This was further supported by an evidenced move away from autocratic to more collaborative and people-centered leadership styles.

*"I work with an executive, for instance, who was going to get to the next level but the organization made it very clear to this person that if they don't fix some of their interpersonal style issues within their team that they wouldn't be considered for the next promotion. And it was also one of those up or out kind of situations, it's an organization which very much believes in up or out, so the person has to be promoted into a very senior position or they were going to be sort*

*of asked to leave... So, the brief was very much about helping them overcome an obstacle, you know, or removing some interpersonal style stuff they had, which was standing in their way, you know." (Mark)*

*"So, obviously it's about the building of the relationships, but I think with all of us now almost two years down the line, I also sense a level of call it frustration call it exhaustion, which simply adds to this unfolding onion, but just adds another layer of making things more difficult." (Andrew)*

*"I'll break it down into industry specific, okay. So, if you look at certain industries, they have prominent leadership style or dominant leadership styles. So, if you look at your mining sector, your more hardcore manufacturing sectors etc. The leadership styles are more autocratic. So, they're less collaborative, less people centered etc. It's very task focused. So, I think in those industries, people were asking for to bring in the most of the aspect of leadership, to bring in the more collaborative aspect of leadership. Yeah." (Hannah)*

And sometimes the agentic and relational content seemed *interwoven*. In certain instances, participants spoke about agentic issues presenting as the initial development need, but further investigation pinpointed relational issues such as interacting and engaging with others as being the true underlying need. In others, participants highlighted seeing attention turning to relational development needs once agentic aspects of performance had been met. This supports our earlier observation of interpersonal issues increasingly becoming a barrier to progression in the organization: Technical skills allow one to progress only so far in the organization before relational skills become more important.

*"I'm finding that there's a common trend for needing resilience, coping with pressure as well as assertiveness, which is quite interesting, a lot of them already in management positions and all quite introverted managers." (Anna)*

*"You know, other things I've seen definitely come out strongly is the general theme of how to do how to deal with subordinates, and discipline and performance management, that sort of thing. I think that that is a strong theme I've discovered in my own practice throughout the years, you know, that, I don't know....that managers really battle with discipline, performance management, dealing with difficult team members, dealing with bad talent in your team, that sort of stuff. So that's definitely one." (Mark)*

*“So, I tend to come across people who, who don’t need skills, but who run into themselves, who lack self-awareness, who have self-defeating habits, who have low self-concept, who have that inner critic, things like that... I’m thinking of the leader I worked with yesterday, ‘I need to be more strategic.’ But if you unpack it, then you see he pleases people... too worried about not upsetting people. And therefore, I spend most of my energy on that, instead of working at the strategic level. It’s not a lack of skill. It’s that it’s a subconscious belief that this is the way things work, and this is the way it needs to be.” (Henrich)*

*“As one differentiates and grows developmentally, one as a teenager, you’re finding your voice, you’re asserting yourself, you’re finding agency, you’re searching yourself, you’re finding your voice, and that’s where we get the performance achievement element. The minute you are okay with finding your voice, and then it’s about using your voice in a compassionate way, now we’re crossing the divide now into the development coaching. So you can map these systems together: Ego development then becomes not only finding your voice, but it’s about using your voice compassionately and allowing other voices to come in.” (Shaun)*

In sum, we view the relational element as looming large in MDPs, with more mentions from participants than agentic skills, and when agentic elements were mentioned, they were often interwoven with developing relational skills in clients.

#### Are Practitioners Doing Relational Skills Training and Coaching?

Research questions 3 and 4 asked: “Are practitioners doing relational skills training and coaching? And if so, how?” The overwhelming answer to RQ3, again mentioned by all participants was yes. Most participants reported coaching for relationship building and behavioral issues, rather than coaching for technical or more traditional management matters.

*“So, the clients that I have, the coaching will only be for behavioral issues, and so not at all for any technical or traditional management kind of factors. So, so they focus mostly on the behavioral and the values side.” (Carina)*

*“So people want to be able to network, they want to be able to collaborate, they want, they want, you know, they want connectedness between people. So there’s a lot of that...I have and do coach some extremely senior people, some kind of CEOs of kind of big companies, and they have the same kind of issues. I mean, a lot of this stuff is relationships. A lot of this stuff is understanding the people that report to them.” (Simon)*

*“So, you [clients] need to have coaching skills, because now we’re dealing with more social issues, we’re dealing with mental health issues we’re dealing with I mean, I was reading the stats around mental health and they saying that there’s been a 42% increase in mental health issues globally. Okay. And that brings with it, they said that the numbers were estimated in the span of*

*one year, \$1 trillion, in terms of global losses, based on product-, lack of productivity, absenteeism, presenteeism is insane. So now, the pressure for manager to be all, he needs to be a coach, he needs to have psychology skills, because now he has to pick up things that, you know, previously, a manager would just say, you know, your mental wellbeing is your problem, not my problem... So, you need to now make sure the range of skills that a manager has is insane. Like I said, you need to be the wellness practitioner, you need to be the coach, you need to be the psychologist.... But you still need to be because now you're working virtually. Yeah." (Hannah)*

As suggested by Hannah at the end of the previous quotations, many participants attributed their current focus on the development of relational skills in clients as heightened by the needs presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and virtual work.

*"So pre-COVID, we were more...I'll call them task than people focused. We were more task focused, let's do this. Let's get on with the program. And the people I think we were all still trying to say, 'let's look at the people issues, the softer issues as well.' And they were not hearing us. But that has, for me, it has been a complete switch. Let me get the people side of things, get them engaged, so that we can move along, so that I can have fully present people when I re-strategize or re-engineer my business and my strategy and reconfigure things." (Manuela)*

*"So, a lot about how to manage situational issues. So, you know, virtual teams, teams coming together or sort of not coming together in the virtual space. So some more kind of immediacy driven. Managing, managing people being sick, not at work, not wanting to work, kind of people being disengaged. That's been some of what has come through." (Gina)*

*"So you know, the pandemic, of course, and and being able to, to change and thrive within change, not just survive, but thrive. I think that was there before, I think in the last three years through this pandemic, and all of the global changes that we've seen, and politically within this country. So change management is another one, how do I how do I motivate my people? How do I stay engaged and motivated? How do I deal with the complexities of the change?" (Diana)*

The predominant focus of how to “do” relational skills development was through self-awareness.

The foundational idea was that to relate to others, the client knowing oneself is first required.

*"Yeah. So the values and that self-awareness about understanding what drives your behavior. So that is where I found the self-awareness. So becoming aware of not just your behavior, but what drives the behavior, and then the impact of that on the people around you to understand you know, and then after becoming aware of understanding the impact, it's about taking action to address those gaps. So yeah, so that's sort of how I base my approach on." (Carina)*

*"I'm seeing some of the women from last year, it's more focused on, and this was a common theme, it was about how to position themselves within the company. So, they were quite ambitious, they wanted to progress and be promoted. And it was a better management of their own brand, if you like, and how to come across in a way that people heard and how to make kind of clearer statements in terms of who they are and their contribution. So, it was less about team leadership more about how to understand themselves and progress." (Gina)*

Fern calls this "where the inside matches the outside:"

*"Yeah, one of the one of my favorite definitions of authenticity is when the inside matches outside, you know.... And when, you know, so many people want to be authentic leaders these days. And we all do, you know, I do too. And it's, it's essential for me to go 'Okay, wait, is this matching?' You know, is it a match here? I want to make sure." (Fern)*

All participants mentioned their practice involved the development of self-awareness in clients, with many participants mentioning this idea more than one time. And the focus was on self-awareness as key to understanding one's own, relational, social self-presentation.

*"Coaching is a focus on balancing all of that, so if they are more agency related, more agentic as you say, which they usually are, they tend to realize that they need to dial that back and they need to balance out the more compassion, less compliance and more compassion, which is [Boyatas'] Land. So they definitely do realize—interesting--that people you think people know, but they don't even know they know...they don't until it kind of hits them 'would you say that to your child? Would you model that to your child?' And they suddenly go, they have a realization—how am I talking to my colleagues or my staff? But I certainly wouldn't model that to my child or my wife or my husband or whatever the case is and suddenly they make a connection which they didn't before, which is interesting." (Shaun)*

*"It's really eye opening. And sometimes, you know, especially with 360s, when you start picking up trends, sometimes those trends are from something that, you know, are real blind spots for the client. And, you know, they don't even realize like, 'Oh, I've been, I thought I was doing good, because I'm delegating and all of that,' while you're delegating so so far, so much so that no one's keeping an eye on it. Or you're not actually building relationships with the right people. Because, you know, it comes across like you're avoiding them or, you know, whatever it might be." (Jane)*

### Practical Strategies for Relational Skills Development

Following from the previous section, the primary means participants mentioned for developing relational skills in clients (RQ4) was through the development of self-awareness. Six

participants mentioned that the first step was ensuring a trusting relationship with the client characterized by safe vulnerability.

*"I've really been inspired by people's willingness to open themselves up for a different way of thinking. And it's as if they just never had that type of influence in the life of someone. . . You know, giving them another type of mirror, or another type of lens to view things. So, and I guess this is where the neuroscience helps." (Elizabeth)*

*"Often, it's a safe place to talk about vulnerability, fear..." (Jane)*

*"If you feel safe and psychologically safe and connected, which is the state that we want, that a coachee needs to be in to heal... But the minute they have the courage to see that defence mechanism and to release it and to look at what's underneath the shame and the sadness and the grief underneath it, then you can work with it... It's accessing deeper to develop a solid level of awareness. If you can't recognise your trigger or you're not present when your trigger happens, how on earth are you going to manage it? ... When the whole emotional regulation story comes into play, how are you going to regulate if you can't see it?" (Shaun)*

*"I think women are more, in my experience, more easily inclined to be vulnerable. Maybe because I'm a man it's like, 'I'm really not aware of where my boundaries are in terms of this.' Maybe it's easier for cross genders to be vulnerable." (Henrich)*

For some participants the process involved helping the client think more clearly en route to a plan to modify their relational skills. This often took the form of asking the client questions to enable them to find their own solutions, rather than the participant (coach) giving them a solution.

*"So they have leadership experience, they've kind of figured out that they, you know, what, what got them here isn't going to get them there. And so they're looking for that next level. And so they come with, I think, some realization, in particular, some of my male clients. This isn't how I'm wired. I recently had a client that I worked with, and he was so aware of the fact that he was not particularly good at the relationship part. But he didn't really know what to do about that. And so that was where coaching was really able to help. So I was able to give him suggestions. Then he started coming with suggestions, we engaged in experiments. And our coaching would be largely around. Okay. 'Did you try this this past week? Two weeks? What happened? What worked? What didn't work? What should we tweak to go forward? Let's try it again.'" (Diana)*

*"So, so my job is to help them think. So I, I ask the questions, to help them raise their thinking to find solutions. So those solutions would be absolutely unique. I think part of the process is to just first and understand as fully as possible what what is. And, because part of what I feel often if we go too fast into solution mode, it's not really addressing the core of the issue. So, there would be*

*some time exploring and analyzing, understanding the current as fundamental as possible what is the core issue? And also just as far as the individual is willing to go with that, with that kind of analysis, what is the trigger for that outcome, and so forth.” (Elizabeth)*

*“When people understand and know that they have the answers within themselves. I don't have answers for them. I can ask them questions, but I don't have the answers. But when they know that they can connect to that very clear decision making process, they just feel, they feel so empowered from that.” (Fern)*

*“Being an outsider being an expert, being a PhD, asking the right questions and, you know, opening their eyes to like, ‘oh, yeah, you know, I think I should have been presented more at our national meeting.’ That changes everything.” (Jane)*

For the majority of study participants, the initial stages of developing self-awareness entails sharing with clients their results on a self-assessment.

*“And we do three days of residential training, of deep dive self-awareness, psychometrics various kinds. More, more behavioral, less behavioral, drawing yourself. So, tapping into various perspectives of yourself.” (Henrich)*

*“I used a very specific product when I did more coaching called the Enneagram which is really about an understanding that, what drives your behavior and about understanding that you may... It's really about getting a bigger self-awareness...and understanding where, why you behave the way you do and what.” (Carina)*

*“I use an assessment tool called the Berkman...So I use that tool to, for really, to help them, the client in their own level of self of self-awareness of what their, what their leadership style is, and also for me, and because I want to know, how do we enhance their you know, their more tactical side of leadership with the emotional component.” (Fern)*

*“I work a lot with the Enneagram, which is very linked to ego Enneagram of personality, in particular is very linked to core motivation, underlying intention and defence mechanisms So, it's actually very useful...to access different types of personalities, which each have their different or unique core defence mechanisms so at least it gives us a language for you to see that...” (Shaun)*

Another dominant theme in practical strategies for relational skills development was visioning, that is, helping a client to see the person they wanted to become or goal they wished to achieve.

*“I would say that the process of coaching remains the same regardless of the challenges that the client is facing. So my role is to reflect and to ask powerful questions and to hold that person accountable. So to really help them sort through the muckiness of their thinking of their challenges, to begin to prioritize, to begin to make sense of where they want to go.” (Diana)*

*"But what I do after, you know, that deep dive with folks, is we explore what it is that they actually want to focus on for development. And then I have them take ownership of putting together an outline of their plans. Because I want to see how much they're able, I don't want to project onto them, you need to develop these three things." (Jane)*

*"I call it the discovery and the design process, like the discovery is all the emotional awareness that they have. And then the design is all about the visionary elements and how to how to step through the ability to the replicable process to, to have a design of a life that they love. So those are kind of the two elements that I've over just over the years, that kind of look at my, my, my experience, as you know, this is my life experience in my experiment really on what works best and most effectively with people to get results that they want, you know, and so it's. . . I kind of simplify it with the discovery, which is the emotional work. And then the design, which is much more of the scientific visual processing." (Fern)*

### Discussion

Through this research we wanted to know if relational content is the primary component of management development today, and how it compares in frequency to agentic components. We also wanted to know “how;” how are relational skills being developed as part of MDPs?

To address RQ2—whether a review of the academic literature indicates a turn toward relational as compared to agentic program content—we contrasted our content analysis with a content analysis performed by Collins (2002) of the MDP literature from 1986-2000. Collins found a clear focus on strategic leadership, arguably agentic content, in the majority (66%) of management development programs. Twenty-one years after Collins’ review, we found that this had flipped: eight out of thirteen (62%) academic journal articles documented the content of MDPs as relational skills development while just three out of thirteen (23%) listed agentic skills content. While Collins (2000) viewed the outcome of MDP as increased organizational performance, we offer that the contemporary focus of MDP on relational skills likely means that the individual and his/her/their performance is now the outcome of interest for organizations. We do not infer that the effect of MDP on organizational performance should not be a concern of

management, rather, we would argue that it may be a distal, rather assumed outcome not easily measured. Kirkpatrick's traditionally popular model of the evaluation of training and development (e.g., Kirkpatrick, 1960) features organizational-level performance outcomes, that is, measuring the MDP against an organization's business outcomes, as the pinnacle of measuring MDP effectiveness. Yet, as we argued in the beginning of the paper, the communal side, that is work relationships, "have come to form the very foundation of organizations and the contemporary embodiment of how most work gets accomplished" (Ferris *et al.*, 2009, p. 1379). The bottom-line impact of positive relationships in organizations may be hard to quantify, yet we know that poor relationships between managers and followers accrue proximal psychological distress (Tepper, 2000), negative family spillover (Carlson *et al.*, 2012; Kiewitz *et al.*, 2012), and even problem drinking (Bamberger and Bacharach, 2006), which bring costly distal effects for organizational safety, mistakes, absenteeism, healthcare costs, and turnover. So while the impact of managers' relational effectiveness may be harder to measure than, e.g., their strategic decisions, we assert it is not less important to organizational effectiveness, and that organizations may now realize this.

Study 2 addressed RQ 1, 3, and 4, that is, whether relational skills are a primary need for organizations today (in contrast to agentic managerial skills), the extent to which practitioners are doing relational skills training and coaching, and how this type of training and coaching is being done. Speaking to the question of whether relational skills are a primary need for organizations today and the extent to which practitioners are doing it, we noted that every participant mentioned their practice involved relational skills development, not all mentioned agentic skills, but even the agentic skills development that was mentioned was often interwoven with relational aspects, as noted in the Results section. For example, many participants

mentioned agency as far as coaching for assertiveness and self-confidence, but at the same time assertiveness and self-confidence can be more broadly considered relational skills—how one presents themselves in social situations. Perhaps Jane summed this up best when she said,

*"...the more STEM focused [clients], almost invariably, need help with the interpersonal, because the higher or lower level you are, the less you are supposed to be an individual contributor and work with others. Now, the strategy, I mean, that's complicated, because you need to, for me, when I work with folks, often what I'm talking about with strategy is actually, you know, playing ideas off of others. So even then, yeah, so even strategy has a communal aspect. That's interesting... It's so hard for me to separate them out though, because it's like, a Venn diagram, you know."*

As suggested by an anonymous reviewer, perhaps what we have uncovered here is that the association between the relational and the strategic/agentive is that relational skills facilitate the achievement of strategic goals. This is indeed how Day (2000) sees it in his review of leadership development, that the “emphasis on acquiring specific types of knowledge, skills, and abilities [is] to enhance task performance in a managerial role” (p. 582) which can be considered a source of strategic competitive advantage (p. 581). While the two do seem to be interwoven, taken together, we noted a concerted focus on relational skills development for MDPs, with a less prominent focus on agency.

Turning now to the questions posed by RQ4, how relational skills development training and coaching are being done, that is, the practical strategies, we found several consistent themes. First, several participants conveyed that relational skills required stage setting—the creation of a trusting, safe space where clients can feel comfortable being vulnerable about shortcomings and fears. Second, many participants shared how their practice involved baseline assessment, that through knowing oneself one could then begin working to relate well to others. Third, many participants shared that much of their practice involved simply asking questions to help clients

clear out “the muckiness of their thinking of their challenges, to begin to prioritize to begin to make sense” (Diana). The final theme was that working to develop new or hone underdeveloped relational skills involved helping the client look to the future, to understand “who they are and what they really want” (Henrich).

#### Limitations

Our findings must be tempered by the limitations of our studies’ designs. For Study 1, we realize that a content analysis of the MDP research since 2000 may not reflect today’s trends. As Cascio and Aguinis (2008) state in their review of whether the human resource management (HRM) literature is addressing current HRM problems, academic study lags practice in our responsiveness to business needs and trends, even by up to three years. Hence, our pairing of Study 1 with “today’s trends from the field” in Study 2 may be a mismatched picture of contemporary issues. Another limitation of Study 1 is, as Collins (2002) shared regarding her earlier content analysis of MDPs, the difficulty of searching and locating all published articles on the content of MDPs. This is “because all management development interventions are not structured, formal training programs, [and therefore] intervention categories...vary greatly” (p. 96). So, as Collins did, we “loosely interpreted” the content of programs based on the widely varying names for the content of programs presented in the papers we reviewed. As Table 1 indicates, categorizing across these names was difficult, and indeed not possible, for 16 content areas across the 13 total journal articles we located. Following Collins’ (2002) methodology, we categorized programs mentioned in the literature across the full range of leadership development experiences described by McCauley *et al.* (1998). A third limitation of Study 1 is that, due to the many names for MDP content areas as well as for management development itself, we acknowledge our search terminology may have excluded some of the published work on MDPs.

In Study 2, we conducted 14 interviews of management practitioners/consultants from two countries. While we did identify consistent themes across the interviewees from both South Africa and the U.S., we have little way of knowing whether our results generalize to MDP practice in other nations. One reason is variance in cultural collectivism, where relationships and the group vary in importance as compared to individual achievement and “getting ahead.” While South Africa is significantly higher in collectivism than the U.S. (<https://www.hofstede-insights.com>), and we found similar themes for MDP across respondents from both nations, it is possible that relational skills have always been of primary importance for South Africans, meaning what we have uncovered here is not a “turn” for that culture. Or perhaps the turn is happening in South Africa, but it is a more significant change for U.S. practitioners, that is, those in more individualistic cultures. Another way of looking at this is that the turn toward the relational may be a turn away from the dominance of Post-Colonial, Western ways of doing business that are assumed to be scientific or rational. Nkomo (2015) observes a general questioning of the prioritization of bottom-line performance (more aligned with agency) over other important societal, relational outcomes in management education and development, the focus on the bottom line generally attributed to a value held by the Global North, particularly the U.S. She cautions that transported, Western management models should not be assumed by leaders in emerging economics as “inevitable” or “the right or only path” (see also Banerjee *et al.*, 2009). Hence, our findings may suggest a departure from the Western way as the right, or only, way, even for the West. But this is a matter requiring further study.

The final limitations relate to our research design in Study 2. First, our sample was comprised of a large number of coaches and our findings were that they primarily focused on developing relational skills in management development practice. Perhaps this could be viewed

as an artefact of what coaches inherently do—work with people’s interpersonal issues. If we had asked, for example, a large number of internal corporate trainers who perhaps work with larger groups of management trainees, our results could have varied: That is, the relational-agentic divide in content may have been smaller due to less intimacy in these trainers’ process. Second, our design involved asking participants to speak about MDP trends. This means we inherently asked interviewees to contrast today with the past, that is, to think retrospectively. A better method would have been to interview MDP practitioners twenty years ago and also today, to examine changes in MDP practice. We realize our technique of asking for recollections is a shortcut to examining change, subject to recall bias, and a potential mismatch of qualitative method with research question (Howard-Grenville *et al.*, 2021).

#### Conclusion

We began with the dictum the future is female. We found, more specifically, that the future is likely relational, and we do not essentialize men as low and women as high in relational skills. In fact, we would argue that the more society values relational skills in all persons, the more effective leaders may be, as evidenced by research on the best leaders during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The future is relational is a call to acknowledge the relational skills that members of all sexes can exhibit and that should be developed through MDPs for leadership success today and tomorrow.

## END NOTES

[I] <https://medium.com/items/research-spotlight-the-radical-story-behind-the-famous-the-future-is-female-graphic-t-shirt-accdbbe37b65>

[II] <https://www.today.com/parenting-guides/when-future-female-what-do-we-tell-our-boys-t179135>

[III] <https://wallonia.be/en/events/future-female>

[IV] We realize that many scholars emphasize differences between the practice of leadership versus management (e.g., Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003), but we use the term interchangeably in our reference to development programs that build the skills necessary to direct other persons' behavior (i.e., lead, manage) in organizations.

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Table 1  
 Content of Management Development Programs  
 Published Academic Journal Articles  
 2000-September 2021

<u>Agentic Content</u>	<u>Number of Articles</u>
Problem Solving	1
Self Efficacy	1
<u>Priority Setting</u>	<u>1</u>
<i>Total</i>	3
<u>Relational Content</u>	<u>Number of Articles</u>
Communication	3
Teamwork	3
<u>Group Processes</u>	<u>2</u>
<i>Total</i>	8
<u>Neither Agentic nor Relational Content</u>	<u>Number of Articles</u>
Leadership/Mgmt Skills (nonspecified)	9
Transformational Leadership	2
Adaptability	1
Business Skills	1
Innovation	1
Systems Thinking	1
<u>Writing</u>	<u>1</u>
<i>Total</i>	16 <sup>1</sup>

Source: Authors' own work.

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<sup>1</sup> Number of articles does not sum to  $k = 13$  due to multiple mentions of type of content within the same articles.

Table 2  
Study 2 Demography of Participants

Name	Age	Type of company	Location	Gender	Race	Educational level	Position	Years' experience
Andrew	48	Small consulting firm	RSA	Male	White	Master's Degree	Leadership development	18
Anna	51	University	RSA	Female	White	Master's Degree	OD consultant	28
Carina	43	Small consulting firm	RSA	Female	White	Doctorate	IO psychologist	22
Diana	48	University & small consulting firm	USA	Female	White	Doctorate	Professor and coach	8
Elizabeth	42	Corporation	RSA	Female	White	Master's Degree	Results-based coach	6
Fern	56	Small consulting firm	USA	Female	White	Bachelor's Degree	Founder	25
Gina	53	Small consulting firm	RSA	Female	White	Master's Degree	IO psychologist and coach	15
Hannah	44	Corporate consulting	RSA	Female	Indian	Master's Degree	IO psychologist and coach	21
Henrich	51	Corporate consulting	RSA	Male	White	Master's Degree	IO psychologist and OD consultant	33
Jane	52	Small consulting firm	USA	Female	White	Doctorate	IO psychologist and consultant	23
Manuela	46	Small consulting firm	RSA	Female	African	Master's Degree	IO psychologist	26
Mark	51	Corporate consulting firm	RSA	Male	White	Master's Degree	Psychologist and coach	20
Shaun	63	Small consulting firm	RSA	Male	White	Master's Degree	Founder	37
Simon	50	Small consulting firm	RSA	Male	White	Master's Degree	Founder	16

Source: Authors' own work.

Table 3  
Summary of Key Themes and Subthemes Identified

<b>Main theme</b>	<b>Subthemes</b>	<b>No. of mentions</b>	<b>Further subthemes</b>	<b>No. of mentions</b>
Management development trends	Relational versus agency	37	-	-
	Self-awareness	34	Emotional intelligence	24
			Behavioral problems	7
			Overcoming early life baggage	4
	Getting more from work	14	Meaningfulness	8
			Relatedness	6
	Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic	14	-	-
	Transitioning to a manager role	11	-	-
	Work-family spillover	9	-	-
	Team dynamics	9	Cross-cultural management	2
			Diversity and inclusion	2
Non-traditional training	6	-	-	
Practical management development strategies	Developing self-awareness	24	Vulnerability	8
			Mind-body awareness	3
	Visioning	13	-	-
Organizational development	5	-	-	

Source: Authors' own work.

Table 4  
Example Overview of Data Structure

Theme	Subtheme	Illustrative Quotation from Participant
Trends	Self-awareness	<p>"So it's really about understanding that that those deeper drivers or motivators of behavior, and then trying to see where, yeah.... So in essence, it's about creating a self-awareness and then evolving or working with that person to identify where that deeper drivers or motivators of behavior that they might not have been aware of impact their behavior and how to manage it going forward." (Carina)</p>
		<p>"When people understand and know that they have the answers within themselves. I don't have answers for them. I can ask them questions, but I don't have the answers. But when they know that they can connect to that they just feel, they feel so empowered from that." (Fern)</p>
		<p>"Self-awareness. I'm very much aware that my coaching style is a projection of me into this process. So, I tend to come across people who, who don't need skills, but to run into themselves who lack self-awareness, who have self-defeating habits, who have low self-concept, who have that inner critic, things like that." (Henrich)</p>
	Work-family spillover	<p>"The natural tendency is still the way females are burdened with kind of domestic tools and the offers work, but I think that was the case before Covid. I think what's definitely there, and perhaps that's for both sexes is just the difficulty in boundary management in terms of understanding when I'm at work and when I'm not at work and I can be at home but I can still be at work and how that impacts the family dynamic for both sexes, I think that becomes difficult." (Andrew)</p>

"that's just popping into my mind now with the women is that the anxiety and the fear is higher... And it comes out of the responsibility for how are they managing the home environment? Which has also been put in terms of kids are at home, we don't have helpers, and whatever else is happening in their world, and having to stretch themselves there and stretch themselves in the workplace as well. So, a lot of the women are more anxious, and they're feeling even more irrelevant" (Manuela)

"...like some of them are, you know, struggling in in, you know, in balancing, you know, family and marriage, like some of the high level women are like, how do I balance my raising my kid, I have young kids and I'm working all these hours and I have this relationship with my husband and you know, and they hire me to, to work with them to create that balance, which is really what I experienced when I became when I was coached many, many years ago. I mean, that was my experience myself. I had two young kids, and that's what got me into coaching in the first place." (Fern)

"So I adopt, probably a sort of a, if you want to take it back to its roots, maybe a rational emotive behavior therapy kind of. . I use bits of everything but I'm very into perspective. And I find that people, a lot of the problems people have with all of those kinds of areas that I mentioned just now is a lack of perspective. You know, and so the more you give people perspective, and the more you can give them affirmation to build their self-esteem. So those are two big things that I work with: affirmation, self-esteem, on the one hand, and help them to see their capabilities. I suppose one can call that positive psychology approach. But it's not, it's just, you know, I think people under. . .99% people, as you know, underrate themselves, that's a big thing. But a huge thing from his perspective, you know, to get people to see things, what they are. " (Shaun)

Practical strategies

Developing self-awareness

"And we do three days of residential training, of deep dive self-awareness, psychometrics various kinds. More, more behavioral, less behavioral, drawing yourself. So, tapping into various perspectives of yourself." (Henrich)

"I start with diagnostics. Yes. So, I like accommodation of leadership inventories. My favorite is the Hogan but it's expensive. So, it depends on the client. And all three it's got to be the full suite. Um, bright side dark side and values, right? Um, but if I can't do that, there's a couple of tools I like the leadership effectiveness analysis, LEA. Or the WAVE by Saville, I think SHL, turning the Saville. Um, I like starting with something like, you know, I like it two or three, online inventories that are self-report, right, so they're looking inward." (Jane)

## Visioning

"And, and, you know, sort of individual sessions - on the zoom whiteboard works so well, point out kind of...where do you think the solutions or options lie? .... You know, why do you think something? How do you think your client base might develop in the future? Like, where would you put them? What do you think they're thinking? Okay." (Gina)

"So from there, I would ask the question and use our kind of critical questioning technique to help generate insights. So, the whole idea is to help the individual create insightful kind of solutions that then together we experiment, so experiment with those to form new habits." (Elizabeth)

"already in the coaching session, you know, you don't tell people what to do, you ask a few questions so that they can start to think why did I miss that? Okay, in that direction, where do you think we can end? Okay, fine, you work on steps to get there so that I can then support you cooperatively from a coaching perspective." (Manuela)

Source: Authors' own work.

Appendix  
Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about your consulting/coaching practice/company—who are your clients, what do you do for them, what is the size, etc.?
2. What do you see as recent trends in management development? What do clients/employees need? Have these needs changed in recent years? Do these needs differ by the organizational level of the client (e.g., top versus middle management)?
3. Do you coach managers/leaders? Or do you hire coaches?
  - a. If yes, what are managers' coaching needs? What do they tend to struggle with/what do you help them with? Can you give us some examples?
  - b. How do you do this? What practical strategies do you put in place to assist these managers?
  - c. Do you coach both women and men? Do you see any systematic differences between the issues they have/skills they wish to develop? Examples please. Do you see differences in the issues addressed by management level?
4. One way of thinking about leadership is to think of it as comprised of agentic (assertive, decisive) roles and behaviors as well as communal (caring, relational, bridging) roles and behaviors.
  - a. Do you think managers appreciate both of these sides of leadership? Does this differ by organizational level?
  - b. Do you think the companies that hire you appreciate both of these sides of leadership? Can you give us some examples?
5. Anything else you'd like to mention?

Demographics:

Age

Name of company

Gender

Racioethnicity

Education Level

Position

Years of experience