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The Role of Sociocultural Context in the Leader–Follower Relationship: An Analysis of Lee Kuan Yew’s Authentic Transformational Leadership

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With globalisation and cultural diffusion, the study of cross-cultural leadership has become increasingly more important, as multi-cultural environments demand tailored communication and sensitivity to the values, beliefs, and preferences of followers. In this sense, as Bligh and Kohles (2014) note, leadership can be best understood as a “socially constructed interactional phenomenon through which certain individuals attempt to frame, define, or otherwise influence the reality of other individuals

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across different contexts” (pp. 143–144). Such an understanding of leadership suggests that cultural values, self-concepts, and situational factors can, and often do, affect leader–follower communication and the leader’s ability to shape the attitudes, motives, and behaviours of individuals. Thus, within culturally diverse groups, research shows that effective leadership requires adaptive communication styles that match each member’s cultural expectations (Hanges, Aiken, Park, & Su, 2016).

Although many leadership theories address the ways in which leaders communicate and motivate followers (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), recent research on authentic transformational leadership provides new insight into how cultural contexts moderate the leader–follower relationship. Through the formation of a strong vision and collective goals, transformational leaders inspire followers to transcend their own needs and self-interests for the good of the group. Researchers have identified four key dimensions of transformational leadership: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration (Avolio, Waldman, & Yammarino, 1991; Bass, 1991). More recently, however, some have suggested that authenticity is another important dimension and have explored the ways leaders harness character strengths and moral perspectives to produce outcomes associated with both authentic and transformational leadership styles (Price, 2003; Sosik & Cameron, 2010; Zhu, Avolio, Riggio, & Sosik, 2011). In other words, these two forms of leadership, although traditionally viewed as distinctly different, can be seen as closely related (Banks, McCauley, Gardner, & Guler, 2016), as attributes and traits associated with authentic leadership development such as establishing trust and relational authenticity with followers through shared values are also important in transformational leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Illies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005).

Although the characteristics underlying ‘authentic transformational leadership’ have received a great deal of attention (Li, Chiaburu, Kirkman, & Xie, 2013), less emphasis has been placed on *how and under what conditions* transformational leadership achieves authenticity within the leader–follower relationship. For example, to successfully motivate and gain trust, the leader’s message and values should be congruent with the cultural mindset of the group, which often vary greatly across societies (Dorfman, Javidan, Hanges, Dastmalchian, & House, 2012). Incongruent values, on

the other hand, can make the message appear less authentic and, thus, hinder the leader's ability to enhance a collective identity and promote a new and inspiring vision (Brown & Treviño, 2009; Krishnan, 2002). Therefore, to better understand the ways in which authentic transformational leadership can be culture-specific, attention should be given to how sociocultural contexts moderate the leader–follower relationship (Hunter, Bedell-Avers, & Mumford, 2007).

Through a case study analysis, this chapter examines the leadership style of Lee Kuan Yew, the first Prime Minister of Singapore, with special attention given to the ways in which he employed cultural values and ideologies to develop a compelling political vision in Singapore. Lee Kuan Yew's leadership style serves as an interesting case for exploring the influences of culture and contextual constraints in leader–follower interactions, as his 'Asian Values' model, despite being well received in Singapore, failed to inspire and motivate a larger East Asian audience (Zakaria, 1994). By addressing the sociocultural contexts in which authentic transformational leadership occurs, this chapter argues that Lee's strategy was unsuccessful at the global level because his message was incongruent with the ontologies and values of other societies in Asia, thus making his message appear less authentic and trustworthy. With this case study, we seek to further develop the authentic transformational leadership construct, as only a few studies have addressed this form of leadership and, as a result, the conditions needed to achieve 'authenticity' in the leader–follower relationship have not been adequately explored.

With this in mind, we address the following central question: how do culture, context, and individual differences affect authentic transformational leadership? To answer this question, we first provide a brief overview of authentic transformational leadership, with a particular focus on the importance of 'authenticity' in value-based leadership. Here, we concentrate our attention on how authenticity, established through self-awareness and values congruency, can build trust to motivate and inspire followers. Second, we discuss how sociocultural context moderates the leader–follower relationship. This section addresses the ways in which cultural values and beliefs shape leadership expectations and influence leader–follower communication. Third, we discuss the importance of the follower's self-concept (i.e., individual differences) within the leader–follower relationship, as globalisation has

caused variation within cultural groups. For example, societies that have traditionally valued collectivism may have members who embrace individualism and/or fluctuate between independent and interdependent mindsets depending on situational factors. Finally, following an analysis of Lee Kuan Yew's leadership style and the social constructions of followership in Asia, this chapter offers recommendations for making authentic transformational leadership more functional across different cultural contexts.

Overview of Authentic Transformational Leadership

The construct of authentic transformational leadership refers to leading with the general well-being of humanity in mind. As Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, and May (2004) note, authentic leaders contribute to the greater good of society in addition to having a focus on profitability. These leaders are defined as,

...those individuals who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others' values/moral perspective, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and high on moral character. (p. 4)

Thus, by incorporating aspects of hope, trust, and positive emotions into the work attitudes of followers, the authentic leader encourages and motivates followers to perform at a far higher level than they thought was possible and attainable (Avolio et al., 2004).

Furthermore, by aligning their identity with that of the followers, authentic leaders assist followers in recognising their individual purpose, which, in turn, stimulates followers to become more purpose-driven (Lord & Brown, 2004) and committed (Avolio et al., 2004). In fact, Luthans and Avolio (2003) point out that a leader who does 'what is right and fair' can identify with a follower more on a personal level. In this sense, as leaders strengthen social identification through an emphasis on strong moral values, honesty, and integrity, followers become more engaged with the group (Hogg, 2001; Tajfel, 1972).

Finally, hope and optimism have also been identified as essential elements of having a strong authentic leader and follower relationship (Avolio et al., 2004). Through the promotion of positive emotions, leaders can build trusting relationships (Robins & Boldero, 2003) and encourage their followers to be hopeful about future goals.

The literature on authentic transformational leadership reveals the importance of value congruency in the leader–follower relationship, as failure to build trust and promote social solidarity can make it more difficult, if not impossible, to motivate and inspire followers. Furthermore, it highlights the role of situational factors and suggests that these factors may moderate the effectiveness of the leader’s message. Less attention, however, has been given to the effects of cultural values on perceptions of authenticity in leader–follower interactions and how these cultural effects tend to be context dependent. To further explore such relationships, the following section discusses the importance of cross-cultural perspectives for advancing the study of authentic transformational leadership.

The Effects of Culture and Context on the Leader–Follower Relationship

Previous research suggests that every cultural group has core ideas and values that organise their own socio-psychological processes and socialise members to “think, act, and feel in a more or less adaptive fashion” (Markus & Kitayama, 1994, p. 343). Culture, in this sense, can be understood as shared knowledge about the world, such as values and attitudes, which help individuals interact with others and navigate their surrounding environment (Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000). Values guide the way social actors, such as leaders, policymakers, and followers, “select actions, evaluate people and events, and explain their actions and evaluations” (Schwartz, 1999, p. 25).

With the identification of cultural variation in the leader–follower relationship, cross-cultural leadership research has shown that many business practices around the world are, indeed, distinctly different from Western practice (Dickson, Den Hartog, & Mitchelson, 2003), in turn

highlighting the importance of cultural competency for today's business leaders (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004; Javidan, Dorfman, Luque, & House, 2006). Notable studies by Hofstede (2001), Schwartz (1992), and others have highlighted key cultural value dimensions that make up national cultures (e.g., power distance and individualism/collectivism) and social cultures (e.g., embeddedness vs. autonomy and hierarchy vs. egalitarianism).

Furthermore, the leadership literature shows that cultural beliefs and values greatly influence an individual's attitudes, behaviours, and decisions, in turn, reiterating the importance of values congruence within the leader–follower relationship (Brown & Treviño, 2009). For example, prior research has found that Chinese business leadership, in many instances, does not follow the rationalistic and participatory styles found in the West (Cheung & Chan, 2005). In fact, studies by McDonald (2012), Chen and Kao (2009) and Lin (2008) show that Confucianism, paternalism, harmony, and collectivism greatly influence Chinese business leaders; these values are not commonly found in Western business practice. Thus, the findings from these and similar studies suggest that achieving value congruence within the leader–follower relationship requires sensitivity to the sociocultural milieu of the society.

As noted earlier, authenticity is a defining feature of transformational leadership. According to Zhu et al. (2011), authenticity is, in part, achieved when followers are able to embrace the values embedded within the vision and initiatives of the leader. To motivate and inspire followers, value-based leaders either tap into the existing values or offer value-laden visions and goals that are appealing to the group (Lord & Brown, 2001). On this point, the work by Sosik (2005, p. 224) shows that by displaying and transmitting behaviours that reflect the “cherished values of the followers,” leaders are able to tap into the perceptions of followers while simultaneously conveying a message of solidarity (collective social identity) and value congruence, notably shared key attributes unique to group members (Lord, Brown, & Freiberg, 1999).

In this sense, effective leaders display authenticity and promote vision attainment by articulating the needs, desires, and hopes of followers (Sosik, 2005). Through this process, authentic transformational leaders are able to appear prototypical, convey that they are ‘one of us’ and, as a

result, “are not only seen as better leaders but are also more effective in getting us to do things and in making us feel good about those things” (Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011, p. 90). Simply put, by meeting followers’ cultural expectations and perceptions, leaders are able to better communicate and build trust across cultures (Thomas & Ravlin, 1995).

Recognising the influence of values and beliefs in the leader–follower relationship, an increasing number of studies have begun to focus on the barriers and facilitators of cross-cultural leadership. In particular, the Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) Study found that ‘societal culture’ can have a direct effect on preferred leadership style, and that certain cultural dimensions such as performance orientation are predictors of leadership expectations (Dorfman et al., 2012). Furthermore, GLOBE researchers have shown that societies can be culturally clustered (e.g., Anglo, Confucian Asia, Middle East), as they share specific culture dimensions and desired leadership traits (Gupta & Hanges, 2004). These findings reveal that the leader’s value-laden vision must match the cultural mindset of the followers, that is to say, the schemas and scripts that influence the way individuals interpret, behave, and interact within a situation (Hanges et al., 2016).

Despite noticeable similarities across societies, the findings from the GLOBE Study also suggest that some leadership attributes are culturally contingent, such that qualities such as ‘face saving’ and ‘risk taking’ are desirable in some cultures, but undesirable in others (Dorfman et al., 2012; Javidan, Dorfman, Howell, & Hanges, 2010). As Lord et al. (1999) report, leadership is a “highly contextual sensitive phenomenon”, such that constraints from culture, the organisation, and the needs and identities of followers influence how leadership is defined. Therefore, while culture matters, context cannot be ignored, as it plays a moderating role in the leader–follower relationship. For example, a study by Vroom and Jago (2007) identified three roles that situational variables play in the leadership process: organisational effectiveness, leader’s behaviour, and the consequences of the leader’s behaviour. With the third variable, Vroom and Jago (2007) argue that leadership behaviour must be tailored to fit the demands and dominant sociocultural values of each situation (also see Elenkov & Manev, 2005).

Consistent with these findings is research in social psychology that has shown message persuasiveness increases when it is framed in culturally relevant terms (Cesario, Grant, & Higgins, 2004; Uskul & Oyserman, 2010). The *culture as situated cognition* model, in particular, provides insight into how cultural values are context-specific. According to Oyserman (2011), situated cognition refers to the non-conscious impact of social context on thinking and action, suggesting that context primes an individual's cultural mindset in a way that makes individualist or collectivist thinking more accessible. In this sense, cultural values are malleable, context-dependent, and socially sensitive.

In other words, effective authentic transformational leadership requires the leader's vision to match the follower's cultural expectations; failure to do so will only make inspirational motivation less likely. Furthermore, followers' interpretation of information depends, in part, on their active cultural mindset (e.g., concepts and schemas), such that "the same action can be interpreted as dishonest or kind, assertive or aggressive" depending on the concepts accessible at the time of judgment or information retrieval (Oyserman, Sorensen, Reber, & Chan, 2009, p. 219). Thus, when trying to articulate a shared vision, Hanges et al. (2016) argue that leaders must pay attention to the ways in which expectations regarding leadership vary within and between culturally diverse groups; this often requires changing leadership styles to 'match each member's cultural expectations' (p. 66).

Individual Differences and Follower's Self-concept

Globalisation and cultural diffusion have made the need for adapting to cultural expectations even more pressing and, in some instances, extremely difficult, as values and beliefs often change when cultures interact (Naylor, 1996). For instance, although Chinese business leadership is distinctive relative to Western practices, Faure and Fang (2008) note that modernisation has caused significant sociocultural changes within China, but not

a complete transformation of traditional value orientations. Rather, as the authors point out, Chinese business practices consist of ‘paradoxical values’ that are context-dependent, such as *guanxi* (trading personal favours to accomplish business objectives) versus professionalism, or group orientation versus individuation.

These findings are supported by recent work on global leadership that has identified ways in which globalisation and acculturation create communication challenges for leaders (e.g., Clapp-Smith & Vogelgesang Lester, 2014). Global leadership is defined here as “the process of influencing others to adopt a shared vision through structures and methods that facilitate positive change while fostering individual and collective growth in the context characterised by significant levels of complexity, flow and presence” (Mendenhall, Reiche, Bird, & Osland, 2012, p. 500). Within this perspective, a global mindset is not a static construct, but rather one that adapts to changing environments (domestic vs global) through a process that Clapp-Smith and Vogelgesang Lester (2014) refer to as ‘mindset switching.’ Therefore, the authors suggest that in some situations, leaders are required to articulate their “vision in global terms that integrate several cultural, economic, and political perspectives in a generalised fashion” (p. 220).

Mindset switching is important for authentic transformational leaders since not every follower will identify with the dominant national and/or social culture of the group. On this point, Sharma (2010) notes that Hofstede’s national cultural dimensions do not accurately predict cross-cultural differences in followers’ attitudes and behaviours, as “they may not fully represent the diversity in the cultural orientations of the citizens of a country since they may not possess the same level of their national cultural characteristics” (p. 788). For example, although the United States ranks high on individualism compared to other countries (Hofstede, 2001), not every American will be more individualistic and less collectivistic. To this point, a study by Osyerman, Coon, and Kimmelmeier (2002) found that European American participants were not more individualistic than African Americans or Latinos, and not less collectivistic than Japanese or Koreans.

Case Study: The Successes and Failures of Lee Kuan Yew's Authentic Transformational Leadership

With scant research completed on the authentic transformational leadership construct, a deeper analysis of the effects of culture, context, and individual differences on 'authenticity' is warranted. Many have pointed out the value of the case study for construct and theory development (Dooley, 2002; McCutcheon & Meredith, 1993), noting that "case studies allow a researcher to achieve higher levels of conceptual validity, or to identify and measure the indicators that best represent the theoretical concepts the research intends to measure" (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 21). This is an instrumental case study, which is the study of a person, specific group, occupation, department, or organisation to provide insight into a particular issue. In instrumental case research, "the case facilitates understanding of something else" (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010, p. 473). The purpose of this case is to facilitate a deeper understanding of Asian cultural values. We closely follow the definition of case study research, in that we explore a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals, and in this instance, Lee Kuan Yew (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003).

Through an in-depth examination of Lee Kuan Yew's leadership style and the critical response of some East Asian leaders to Lee's political vision (i.e., the Asian Values model), this section seeks to refine the authentic transformational leadership construct by addressing the importance of cultural value congruency and mindset switching in the leader-follower relationship.

Lee Kuan Yew was the first Prime Minister of Singapore (1959–1990) and, according to former U.S. President Richard Nixon, "a world statesman of the first rank" (Josey, 2013, p. 152). In fact, because of his "never-ending struggle to overcome the nation's lack of natural resources, a potentially hostile international environment and a volatile ethnic mix of Chinese, Malays and Indians" (Mydans, 2015), Lee Kuan Yew is considered by many to be the 'patriarch' of Singapore and one of the most influential Asian leaders in the twentieth century (Leong, 2000, p. 99).

His notoriety is, in part, because of his influential role in the transformation of Singapore following independence from British Rule in 1959 and during the country's separation from Malaysia in 1965.

Since Lee was able to transform Singapore into a wealthy and influential nation (with a gross domestic product currently ranked 37th by the World Bank), his leadership and policymaking style has received a great deal of attention, as many attribute Singapore's economic development to Lee's political vision, charisma, and strong principles. Lee's leadership style has been characterised as paternalistic and pragmatic (Josey, 1974; Leong, 2000), as well as consistent with Confucian values that "place great emphasis on forms of conduct within relationships, personal virtue, obedience to authority, family loyalty, and education" (Barr, 2000, p. 311; also see Tan & Wee, 2002).

Lee called for an authoritarian state and voiced strong opposition to the Western liberal democratic model, which he viewed as hedonistic and hyper-individualistic. In Lee's mind, Asia, and 'Asian Values', conflicted with Western values and forms of governance since "Eastern societies believe that the individual exists in the context of his family. He is not pristine and separate" (as cited in Zakaria, 1994, p. 113). Thus, Lee's view of effective leadership required the reinforcement of communitarian values so that the needs and interests of the society or organisation take precedence over the individual. As Roy (1994) points out, this argument assumes that followers in Confucian East Asia "are more inclined than liberal Westerners to accept constraints on individual rights in exchange for stability and economic growth in society as a whole" (p. 234).

Lee Kuan Yew took this argument one step further by asserting that 'culture is destiny' and Confucian values, specifically respect for authority and family, were the driving force behind East Asian economic development. According to Lee, Singapore's economic and social development had deep-seated Asian roots and to deviate from these authentic cultural values would only hinder the country's performance ('Chinese Culture Outside', 1991). Embracing Lee's vision, Goh Chok Tong (1988), Singapore's second Prime Minister (1990–2004), proclaimed that the ideal political leader is a "Confucian gentleman, a *junzi*, someone who is upright, morally beyond reproach, someone people can trust." In this view, the legitimacy and authenticity of the leader are derived from

personal qualities, and the belief that individuals are expected to follow certain hierarchical structures is consistent with long-standing customs and traditions (Leong, 2000).

As Singaporean society experienced rapid modernisation and industrialisation, Lee Kuan Yew pushed for the retention of traditional Confucian values in order to prevent Singapore from becoming another poor imitation of the West, “with all the fads and fetishes, the disorders and aberrations of contemporary Western societies” (as cited in Chen, 1977, p. 22). In other words, according to Lee (2013), “the exuberance of democracy leads to undisciplined and disorderly conditions which are inimical to development” in Asia (p. 27).

In this sense, according to Lee, authority and hierarchy are important dimensions of the leader–follower relationship, such that the paternal relationship between the leader and follower was akin to that of the father and son. As Barr (2000) notes, Lee’s vision of society reflected a ‘social pyramid’ that consisted of ‘top leaders’ at the top, ‘good executives’ in the middle, and a ‘highly civic-conscious broad mass’ at the base (p. 322). Thus, to transform society, it is the duty of a determined leader to discipline and educate followers since, according to Lee (1959–1990), ‘if you don’t get social discipline, everybody does what he likes to do, or will not bustle about what he is told to do’. He further adds that even with a strong leader, followers need a ‘rugged national culture’, one that has the capacity, stamina, and sufficient social cohesiveness needed to promote the good of the national community (Yao, 2007, p. 58). This understanding of social transformation led Lee to warn business leaders in the Philippines of the need for ‘discipline more than democracy’ (‘Mr. Lee Goes to Manila’, 1992).

Lee often spoke of the need to inspire and motivate followers, as failure to do so would lead to a dispirited and directionless society. In particular, a political leader “must paint his vision of the future to his people, then translate that vision into policies which must convince the people are worth supporting, and finally galvanise them to help him in their implementation” (Lee, 2013, p. 114). To achieve this, Lee (2013) argued for ‘leading by example’ to promote authenticity in the leader–follower relationship. Moral character is critical in this regard, as “there is no better way than personal example of managers and grassroots leaders to bring about this change of attitudes and values” (p. 90).

Lee Kuan Yew's promotion of Confucian ethics was well received in Singapore and, as a result, has shaped management styles in Singaporean firms, which tend to place a great deal of emphasis on efficient political leadership and a disciplined workforce (Lu, 1998; Scarborough, 1998). Within Lee's Confucian heritage cultural model, good relationships between the leader and follower, in which employees are treated like family members, is a defining feature of authentic business practice. On this point, a study by Low (2006) on Singaporean corporate and business leaders found that participants valued hierarchy and 'fatherly' roles to a high degree such that experience, seniority, and filial piety were considered to be the most important dimensions of effective management decision making. Along similar lines, a study of the influence of Confucian values on individual job attitudes in Singapore by Leong, Huang, and Mak (2014) found that participants who endorsed Confucian diligence and Confucian harmony felt more satisfied with their jobs and committed to the success of the organisation. These findings are consistent with research on the Confucian foundations of leadership in other Asian countries, notably China and parts of Southeast Asia, which have revealed the distinctive long-standing ideological and cultural orientations shaping leader–follower relationships (McDonald, 2012).

Having succeeded in uniting Singaporeans under this Asian Values model, Lee Kuan Yew attempted to replicate the model throughout East Asia, as he believed the region faced many of the same problems that once plagued Singapore, particularly the negative effects of westernisation. In this sense, Lee sought to transform the region, which he believed shared a distinct cultural heritage, by leading other Asian leaders in opposition to the individualism and liberal democratic values of the West. Thus, taking a global leadership role, which Beechler and Javidan (2007) note involves crossing a variety of boundaries, Lee attempted to inspire and unite the political elite of East Asia under a positive vision and clear set of 'authentic' Asian values that would support growth and development throughout the region.

However, although Lee's political vision and call for paternal leadership fit well within the sociocultural milieu of Singapore as well as mainland China in the 1980s (Englehart, 2000, p. 549), other East Asian societies rejected his anti-democracy message and its emphasis on intrinsic Asian

values. In fact, Thompson (2001) notes that although officials in Singapore championed Asian values, societies throughout East Asia experienced the rise of democracy movements and growing individualism. By acknowledging that leadership is not a value-neutral process, void of context (Haslam et al., 2011), we can see that Lee Kuan Yew failed to accomplish what effective cross-cultural leadership requires to achieve authenticity in the leader–follower relationship: recognition of, and adaptation to, various situational factors (Hanges et al., 2016). In other words, the different histories and experiences of countries throughout East Asia produced cultural mindsets that were incongruent with Lee’s worldview.

For many outside of Singapore, liberal democracy was considered to be compatible with the traditions and customs found in Asia (Subramaniam, 2000). According to Ng (1998), democracy was desired in Hong Kong because it would give the people “a say in decisions concerning their lives, and because it was the only instrument that could provide real protection for human rights against an authoritarian government” (p. 6). Moreover, others argued that the growth of democracy in Asia is an “unfinished project” that needs to be “clarified, refined, and developed” (Tatsuo, 1999, p. 29).

Therefore, despite the prevalence of Confucian cultural traditions, some have correctly pointed out the cultural diversity in East Asia and that national conditions and histories have shaped the region in different ways (Friedman, 1994). For example, Indonesians are overwhelmingly Islamic, Filipinos disproportionately Catholic, and communist regimes in China and Vietnam rejected Confucianism, all of which suggest that adherence to Confucian principles and values varies considerably across East Asia (Dalton & Ong, 2005).

A clear rejection of Lee Kuan Yew’s vision, along with his failure to inspire and motivate the political elite in the region, can be seen in the critiques of the Asian Values model put forth by Kim Dae-jung, former President of South Korea (1998–2003), and Lee Teng-hui, former President of Taiwan (1988–2000). For Kim Dae-jung, many Asian countries have successfully adopted the Western free-market economy model and have made great strides toward democracy. The paternal leadership and soft authoritarianism rooted in Lee’s political vision, according to Kim (1994), was inconsistent with the experiences of South Korea, as

“policies that try to protect people from the bad elements of economic and social change will never be effective if imposed without consent” (p. 193). Rather, Kim believed that policies arrived at through an open public debate “will have the strength of Asia’s proud and self-reliant people” (p. 193).

A similar stance was taken by former Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui who argued that culture is not immutable and Confucianism can improve democratic systems in Asia (Chen & Chen, 2015; Mirsky, 1998). Therefore, according to Lee Teng-hui (1999), “this choice does not compel us to give up Confucianism, but rather encourages us to embrace those of its ethical concepts that are not only compatible with democracy, but able to mend democracy’s possible shortcomings” (p. 18). Kim Dae-jung and Lee Teng-hui rejected Lee’s vision and paternal leadership style because they both strongly believed that Confucian values could be moulded to improve democratic governance in the region (Shin, 2011, p. 58).

Within the cultural context of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew was an effective authentic transformational leader, as his message, values, and vision were congruent with the cultural mindsets within the country. By articulating the needs, desires, and hopes of Singaporeans, Lee appeared authentic and trustworthy. Furthermore, by emphasising dominant sociocultural values (i.e., Confucian diligence and harmony), Lee was able to tap into the perceptions of his followers and convey an inspiring and motivating message of solidarity.

However, as Hanges et al. (2016) and Mendenhall et al. (2012) suggest, the effective cross-cultural communication needed for global leadership requires adaptation to situational factors and constant adjustments in leadership style. By assuming that ‘culture is destiny’ and, thus, failing to tailor his Asian Values message to the needs and interests of a larger East Asian audience, Lee Kuan Yew’s vision was rejected by many as it appeared inauthentic and untrustworthy. A close examination of the cultural diversity and historical experiences in East Asia shows that Lee’s emphasis on Confucian ethics within the leader–follower relationship was incongruent with the expectations and values of many Asian societies. For Kim Dae-jung, Lee Teng-hui, and other democracy advocates in East Asia, Confucianism was not immutable and, therefore, Lee’s anti-democracy

message and sharp distinction between East and West were incompatible with the personal experiences and self-concepts of his targeted audience. Simply put, Lee was unsuccessful at balancing domestic and global leadership behaviours and, as a result, he appeared inauthentic to many in Asia.

As in case study research, our case study does have limitations. Case studies are not necessarily generalisable on a larger scale and in a straightforward manner. Although Lee Kuan Yew was one individual, his role is not necessarily applicable throughout the diverse populations within Asia. As a result, future research should address the effects of cultural and situational factors on authentic transformation leadership styles in other regions of the world, as these factors may have stronger or weaker influences in societies with different historical, political, and economic experiences. For this, a large-N analysis can be employed to further support theory development in that “generalisation and complex relationships are better supported by large-N comparisons, which provide the degrees of freedom necessary to handle many variables and complex relationships” (Coppedge, 1999, p. 473).

Nonetheless, through an in-depth analysis of Lee Kuan Yew’s successes and failures as an authentic transformational leader, we are able to gain a better appreciation for how individual differences, culture, and context influence the leader–follower relationship. Such an understanding provides deeper insight into the underlying dimensions of the authentic transformational leadership construct. Building from the conclusions drawn from our case study, the following section offers recommendations for improving authentic transformation leadership in cross-cultural settings.

Recommendations and Conclusions

What can we learn and apply from Lee Kuan Yew’s successes and failures as an authentic transformational leader to cross-cultural organisation settings? Although Lee Kuan Yew’s paternalistic and pragmatic style worked for Singapore, an effective leader must understand that one management style does not apply to all cultures, even though those cultures may seem similar. With this mind, a manager should avoid cultural stereotypes and

simple assumptions about an employee's career direction; rather, emphasis should be placed on developing a deeper understanding of the employee's goals and ambitions. To show support for their employees, managers should be able to articulate the needs, desires, and hopes of followers so the followers are committed to fulfilling company objectives. Although these examples primarily focus on the human resources functional area of an organisation, similar applications may be applied to the marketing, finance, and manufacturing operations of a business.

With this in mind, we recommend three primary areas for applying the lessons of Lee Kuan Yew to the leader–follower relationship in cross-cultural business environments:

1. The cultural competence of the global leader is vital to the sustainability of a constructive work environment for all employees.
2. Global leaders must acknowledge and appreciate the importance of the followers' culture as a positive contribution to the work environment.
3. Global leaders must recognise the cultural differences among employees and must also acknowledge individual differences among employees, even if the employees may belong to the same or similar cultural groups.

By acknowledging the role of value congruency and situational factors, the authentic transformational leadership model provides us with a deeper understanding of how managers, who must also be global leaders, may motivate culturally diverse employees in the workplace. As an organisation conducts strategic planning efforts, the leadership should be mindful of how their decisions may be interpreted differently by employees of different cultures and, thus, impact the overall effectiveness of the organisation. By adapting to different groups, managers are better able to develop an organisation that is growth-oriented.

When considering how to manage human resources, the manager, as a global leader, must have a comprehensive understanding of the nuances in cultural differences within the workplace. There must be an atmosphere that fosters acceptance of, and appreciation for, cultural differences among workers, no matter how slight the differences may seem.

Managers should hire employees who share an appreciation and acceptance of cultural difference. By doing so, leaders within the organisation are more apt to have an organisation that is committed to the overall success of all members within the organisation.

Company leadership should also take into account the contextual environment when making decisions. Findings from the GLOBE Study have identified important cultural clusters that are more specific to varying cultural dimensions. Again, if we were to consider these different cultural clusters from a human resources perspective, different employees may have distinctly differing needs. For example, when making a decision about management in an organisation, leadership should consider whether employees who are selected for future leadership positions reflect what are considered to be the five primary traits of authentic leaders (George, 2003):

- Understanding their purpose—values and integrity
- Practicing solid values—study introspection, and consultation with others
- Leading with the heart—caring for others
- Establishing connected relationships—deeply rooted relationships
- Demonstrating self-discipline—staying on course, being focused on goals

Furthermore, managers need not be afraid of vulnerability and openness when making mistakes. This will enable workers to be more open-minded risk takers, an essential element for a growing, innovative company. Managers also need to tap into the attitudes, behaviours, and decisions that influence employee behaviour. These influences could come from outside the company, such as economic, social, legal, or political variables that may impact behaviour. The manager needs to understand the overall context under which decisions are made and then must be able to tailor solutions to fit the demands of each situation. Through these approaches to the leader–follower relationship, authentic transformational leadership can be more functional across different cultural environments.

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