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The Transformational Influence of Authentic Leadership on Followers in Early Career Relationships

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The study outlined in this chapter fits into the body of research that adopts a social-relational approach, which attempts to understand how people perceive varying forms of leadership (Brown & Mitchell, 2010) and contributes to our understanding of how leaders help create effective organisations through their impact on the performance and psychological capital of followers (Dinh, Lord, Gardner, & Meuser, 2014). With regard to authentic leadership theory, Gardner et al. (2005) first acknowledged the role of relational context in the development of both leader and follower authenticity by proposing that an authentic leader helps their follower become "more self-aware and establish an authentic and positive relationship" (p. 359). They also suggested that authentic relationships are developed primarily through the authentic behaviours of the leader, by demonstrating informal behaviours exhibiting transparency, openness, and trust, and also more

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formalised behaviours of guiding followers towards worthy objectives and placing emphasis on their development. However, despite general agreement that authentic behaviour at work increases well-being for both the leaders and followers exposed to it (Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005), there remains a need to understand in more detail how authentic leadership operates in work relationships and whether the theory adequately captures the perceived meaning and psychological outcomes for followers.

The aim of the broader research project in which this study sits is to better understand how authentic leadership is perceived and understood by followers through their sensemaking of key leader–follower relationships across their career span. The research inductively highlights the pivotal influence that working with an authentic leader at an early career stage has on followers' current leader self-concepts and their own leadership practices, and it is this finding that is the focus of this chapter.

Theoretical Considerations

Two aspects of this research approach support its novel contribution to theory. First, the research adopts an attributional perspective seeking to understand how followers implicitly determine whether their leader is authentic or not. Second, it explores these attributions through the narratives of experienced leaders, derived from their relational perspective as followers rather than leaders. This second aspect acknowledges that the academic practice of dichotomously separating leaders and followers does not reflect the fluid and interconnected reality of organisational life, in which managers are expected to adopt both follower and leader roles across different projects and work contexts. This approach facilitates the exploration of authentic leadership as a perceptual construct and makes it possible to accommodate social context within the sphere of enquiry, thus linking those follower-centred perceptions to leaders' current attitudes and their own enactment of leadership.

Leadership as a Perceptual Attribution

The influence of implicit knowledge structures on attitudes and beliefs is widely accepted in social psychology (Uleman, Adil Saribay, & Gonzalez, 2008). In the leadership field, Implicit Leadership Theory (ILT) was proposed by Eden and Leviatan (1975) as an individual-difference term applied to the idealised characteristics and behaviours attributed to the word "leader" and the enactment of leadership reflective of "an underlying social reality" (p. 740). Researchers have previously demonstrated the influence of ILTs in both peoples' appraisal of leader effectiveness and their willingness to follow (Felfe & Schyns, 2010; Gray & Densten, 2007; Schyns, Felfe, & Blank, 2007).

Hinojosa et al. (2014) acknowledge an accepted proposition that permeates all perspectives of authentic leadership, namely that individuals' personal histories shape their understanding of authenticity, and that these personal histories are influenced by their perceptions of key developmental events and relationships they encounter over time. The purpose of the research output discussed here is to clarify and deepen our understanding of the meaning and influence of authentic leadership for followers derived from their perceptions of these formative leader–follower relationships.

A Relational Context

Eagly (2005) was the first to assert that several theoretical criticisms could be better addressed by deepening our understanding of authentic leadership's relational processes. Lawler and Ashman (2012) also call for a greater focus on relational interactions and argue that the current approach of classifying authentic leaders by a list of normative traits is itself disabling and inauthentic for individuals. They argue that authentic leadership theory must acknowledge both leaders' and followers' behavioural freedom, as well as consider the role of sensemaking (Weick, 1995). Ford and Harding (2011) express similar concerns; they suggest that accepting the theory's normative direction and ideological assumptions means

accepting that authentic leaders will have a "deleterious" (p. 464) impact on followers' identities, rendering authentic followership a conceptual impossibility. In a recent meta-analytic review, Banks et al. (2016) identify the unique influence of authentic leadership on group performance and organisational citizenship behaviours, yet also raise the point that without further research into the differential influence of the four dimensions, it is difficult to determine the discriminant and structural validity of authentic leadership as a construct that is distinct from transformational leadership.

Method

A Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) Approach

PCP (Kelly, 1955) offers a unique methodological approach to address the key theoretical criticisms surrounding authentic leadership. PCP explores the ILTs of leaders themselves in a manner that acknowledges the influence of their personal histories and follower roles on the construction of their own leader identities. A personal history perspective is theoretically congruent with the life-story and narrative approaches to authentic leadership theory proposed by Shamir and Eilam (2005) and Sparrowe (2005), as well as by George (2003) and George and Sims (2007), but has not been widely used in empirical research.

The Repertory Grid Method

Lord and Maher (1991) argue that understanding leadership as a perceived phenomenon relies on identifying how perceivers interpret the information they receive across varying situational contexts. Within PCP, repertory grids are the most common method for exploring in depth how people make sense of a given phenomenon and are a recognised investigative tool for unearthing people's implicit perceptions of others that cannot be captured by self-report measures (Uleman et al., 2008). To achieve a breadth of contexts and ensure that the grid in this study

represented the phenomenon under investigation (leadership), each participant was asked to select, compare, and rate a range of positive, negative, and average actual leaders (grid elements) with whom they had worked, and then to use their elicited attributes to construct an authentic leader prototype.

Participants

Twenty-five leaders with at least ten years' management experience gained in UK-based organisations of over 500 employees were recruited for the wider project. Of these, 20 participants (8 male and 12 female) were included in this study because they all freely selected an early career leader (ECL) as one of their grid elements, with this ECL being identified as either their first or second close leader relationship in their career chronology. Participants for the ECL study were aged 38–55 years (mean age = 48 years), managing a range of team sizes (from <10 to >100 employees). The sample provided a spread of experiences across a range of organisations (15), industry sectors (10), functions (10) and managerial level (functional managers to board directors).

Procedure

Before each interview, participants were asked to compile a chronological career history, listing all the leaders with whom they had worked (including both direct and indirect reporting lines) over their career span. In the interview, each participant was asked to think about these leaders in the context of how enabling they felt their working relationship had been, and the first six grid elements were chosen to reflect their two most positive leader relationships, their two most negative, and two they would describe as average. Constructs (being the discriminatory, bipolar distinctions that explain people's attributions) were freely elicited using the triadic method for comparing elements (see Denicolo, Long, & Bradley-Cole, 2016, for a review) and laddered as the conversation unfolded to surface core beliefs (Bannister & Fransella, 1986). After all constructs

were elicited and scored on a Likert scale of 1–5 (where 1 = the emergent pole and 5 = the contrast pole), participants were asked to score each leader against the provided construct of "Behaves authentically–Behaves far from authentically". Then they were provided with the prototypical element of an "authentic leader" and asked to score this element against their elicited constructs and add any additional constructs they thought may be relevant. Finally, the constructs were cross-verified by asking participants some semi-structured questions relating to authentic behaviour, an authentic leader, and which leader had the most impact on how they feel about themselves today, their ability to do their job and their own leadership style.

Analysis

To identify how the participants make sense of authentic leadership in the context of their own leader relationships, each grid was analysed in RepGrid5, a programme that sorts elements and constructs using "nearest sum of differences" measures appropriate to the data level. Focus plots were produced to determine which constructs clustered most closely with the provided "Behaves authentically" construct and which leaders most closely personified the prototypical idea of an "authentic leader". To ensure that the analysis remained close to each narrative account, the verbatim transcribed interviews were analysed ideographically using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, guided by the six-step process advocated by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009). All names were replaced with pseudonyms in the analysis.

From the inductive analysis above, thematic patterns emerged from the data indicating clear distinctions in both the element positions (positive versus negative leader relationships) and narratives relating to leaders that participants scored as behaving authentically compared to those they described as behaving inauthentically. The six non-prototypical elements were then re-analysed on the dimension of leader impact, which surfaced differences in the influential nature of authentic and inauthentic ECLs.

Findings

Evaluation of ECL Elements

Table 7.1 highlights the 9 participants who recalled overall positive relational experiences with their ECL and the associated authentic leader behaviours displayed by them. Seven participants selected their ECL as one of their two most positive leader relationships throughout their career, with 4 selecting them as the leader who has had the most impact on their own leadership identity (marked with a[b]). In contrast, Table 7.3 highlights the 11 participants who recalled overall negative relational experiences with their ECL, with 10 selecting their ECL as one of their two most negative leader relationships throughout their career, and 4 selecting them as the leader who has had the most impact on their identity (marked with a[b]).

The impact response indicates the enduring influence of ECLs on current leadership practice. The average career length for all 20 participants was 27 years and, despite the numerous and varied leader relationships each would have had during this time, 17 participants selected their ECL as one of their most profound managerial relationships, and 8 participants felt that their current sense of leader identity was most impacted by this ECL. Carol explained the impact of working with an authentic leader at an early career stage had on her: "when I worked with Nancy I was 19–20 years old, [and] thought I knew everything and yet had everything to learn … she knocked me into shape and made me a nicer person".

The Meaning of Authentic Leadership in ECL Relationships

Table 7.1 illustrates that all 9 positive ECLs were rated as behaving authentically, with 5 rated as always authentic (score = 1) and 4 rated as usually authentic (score = 2). Comparison of the two means scores show how closely each ECL meets that participant's prototypical view of an

Table 7.1 Participants with positive ECL relationships and associated authentic leader behaviours

| Participant[a] | Kathy | Carol | Phil | Colin | Juliet | Nick | Darren | Katherine | Helen | Total |
Early career leader (ECL)	Harry	Nancy	Gordon[b]	Guy	Paxton[b]	Ken	Gareth[b]	Lawrence[b]	Nigel	constructs
Behaves authentically rating[c]	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	
Number of authentic leader (AL) constructs by theme:										
Inclusive	2	3	3	1	4	d	4	5	3	25
Integrity	3	3	1			2	4		5	18
Collaborative	3	7	1	1	1	1	2			16
Transparent	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	12
Courage			2	1	2	d	1			6
Empowering	1	d		2						3
Vision				d	d					0
Total constructs elicited for ECL	10	14	8	7	9	4	13	6	9	80
Total constructs elicited for AL prototype	10	18	8	7	10	6	13	6	9	87
Mean score for ECL	1.55	1.96	1.56	1.8	1.93	2.87	1.55	1.41	2.1	
Mean score for AL prototype	1.33	1.13	1.59	1	1	1.43	1.13	1.29	1.3	

[a]All participant names are pseudonyms
[b]This leader had the most (positive) impact on my own leadership identity and practice
[c]Likert scale, 1 (always behaves authentically) to 5 (never behaves authentically)
[d]Behaviours associated with an Authentic Leader, but not associated with this leader

Table 7.2 Behaviours associated with an authentic leader

Master theme	Lower level themes (not weighted)
Inclusive	Personal interest, mutual regard/respect, open for debate, cares, individualised consideration, friendly, understands my role, trusts me, I feel special, emotional warmth, can be me
Integrity	Does right thing, moral, sincere, respected by others, genuine, true to self, higher motive, confident, passionate/creates energy to do the right thing, role model, leads by example, trust, credibility
Collaborative	Supportive, invests time in others, unselfish, fair, equitable, finds solutions, supports me/others, helps, honest feedback, champions the team.
Transparent	Honest, open, what you see is what you get (WYSIWYG), consistent/no surprises, delivers promises, no ego, content/nothing to prove, clear messages
Courage	Brave, takes risks, challenges status quo, thinks outside the box, instinctive, decisive, engenders fun, stands up for others/team
Empowers	Empowers, delegates, inspires growth and confidence
Vision	Creates a vision, charismatic

authentic leader. Gordon (mean = 1.56) is an almost direct match to Phil's prototypical view (mean = 1.59), whereas Ken (mean = 2.87) exhibits a number of authentic behaviours but is more removed from Nick's prototypical view of an authentic leader (mean = 1.43). Gordon was also identified as the leader who had the most impact on Phil's own leadership style, whereas Nick did not select Ken as one of his most profound managerial relationships.

Five master themes were identified that relate to the behaviours these 9 participants implicitly associate with an authentic leader and explain their categorisation of these ECLs as authentic: (1) inclusion, (2) integrity, (3) collaboration, (4) transparency and (5) courage. Table 7.2 presents the lower level themes for each master theme.

In the discussion that follows, quotations were selected from the detailed transcripts of the repertory grid interviews to illustrate how participants elaborated their meanings, summarised on the grids as bipolar constructs.

Table 7.3 Participants with negative ECL relationships and associated inauthentic leader behaviours

Participant[a]	Peter	Brian	Ann	Jessica	Sarah	Amanda	Emma	Simon	Craig	Melinda	Ava	Total
Early career leader (ECL)	Philip[b]	Gerald	Eddie[b]	Roger[b]	Dianne	Trisha	Gerard	Howard	Len	Aileen[b]	Sajan	constructs
Behaves authentically rating[c]	5	5	5	5	4	3	3	3	3	2	1	1
Number of inauthentic leader constructs by theme:												
Self-centred	2	4	3	6	2	4			3	2	2	28
Emotionless	1		4	2		1	2	2	3	3		18
Autocratic	3	3	2			5			1	1	1	16
Critical	1	1	4	1			2		1	1	1	12
Manipulative	2	3	1	2							1	9
Erratic			1		1				2	1		5
Lacks expertise		d					1	1	1		1	4
Total constructs elicited for ECL	9	11	15	11	3	10	5	3	11	8	6	92
Total constructs elicited for AL prototype	9	13	15	11	3	10	9	4	11	8	14	107
Mean score for ECL	4.41	4.05	4.26	4.52	4.45	4.76	2.44	3.27	3.42	3.09	2.94	
Mean score for AL prototype	1.3	1.76	1.06	1.64	1.75	1.4	1	1.5	1.14	2.14	1.33	

[a]All participant names are pseudonyms
[b]This leader had the most (negative) impact on my own leadership identity and practice
[c]Likert scale, 1 (always behaves authentically) to 5 (never behaves authentically)
[d]Behaviours associated with an Inauthentic Leader, but not associated with this leader

Inclusion

This theme denotes a quality of the dyadic exchange relationship, in which the leader makes the subordinate feel they care for them. Darren explained that his ECL, Gareth, "took you on board and didn't just leave you out to the side. [He] wanted you to be part of [his] team".

Juliet and Katherine both reported paternalistic work relationships with their ECLs and vividly recalled examples of pivotal events from the 1980s where these leaders made them feel nurtured and valued. Katherine described her relationship with Lawrence as one where she "absolutely [had] always been myself", therefore she has retained an essence of open self-expression and non-conformity as core aspects of her current identity as a leader:

> So, the older I've got and the more confident I have felt in being myself, which is a woman and not a shoulder padded fake man who is working in the City, that is better for me and the people working with me and I recognise that. So, the more like myself I am and the more like myself I become, I think the more effective I am.

Integrity

This theme concerns the leader's perceived moral goodness, which is associated with participant perceptions of them as being genuine and "real". It relates to "doing what's right" and is manifested through behaviours that demonstrate the leader's originality and non-conformity, which also relates to the theme of courage. Katherine described it as "acting on his or her own beliefs and not playing a role, acting, being themselves. I think those are the two most important things".

Darren described Gareth as behaving "true to himself" and Juliet, who referred to Paxton as "a really good guy" because of his integrity, perceived this as an internal moral code, where the leader consistently acts in accordance with "what they believed was right, not necessarily what they thought was political or flavour of the month. They would be consistent in that".

The notion of integrity appears to be intertwined with the belief that this person is trustworthy, as highlighted by Carol, "I would trust Nancy with my keys, with my son, anything". Similarly, Phil explained:

> [Gordon] was a guy you'd follow. You know if he told you something, you'd follow, you just trusted the guy … he had no concept of lying and he was straight talking … Gordon was the best leader.

Collaboration

This theme identifies that what an ECL does to create a supportive and collaborative environment at the team level is seen by participants as an important aspect of perceiving the leader as authentic. Kathy explicitly described Harry as being authentic because of his "supportive" and "developmental" approach to his team and because "he wouldn't really step on you to get where he wanted to go". Collaborative behaviours appear to manifest themselves in the leader's informal, rather than formal, encounters with others, as Helen recalled:

> I learnt so much from [Nigel]. I learnt the basics from him about good management of people, which is quite close involvement with them, understanding them and then giving them what they need.

Phil described how an informal approach to collaboration permeates his leadership style today:

> If people come to me … I can give little tips on how to cope with issues. I do get a lot of that and am quite flattered that people feel able to share their problems with me, if I can help them out I will. I would say I am an authentic manager.

Similarly, Darren said:

> Gareth [was] quite a relaxed person and I see my management style as quite relaxed … my view is give people space and let them grow within that … I like to be seen as someone you can go and talk to, someone who is approachable, that fits more with the Gareth style.

Transparency

This theme reflects an association between authenticity in leadership and social competence behaviours such as openness, honesty, and straight-talking, along with an absence of impression management and self-serving political behaviours. Nick summed it up as being "upfront", "so you absolutely understand where you are in relation to this other person"; Darren talked about Gareth having "his heart on his sleeve". Similarly, Juliet described Paxton as "very much an authentic person I would say. What You See Is What You Get". Katherine illustrated the value of transparency in dealing with organisational change:

> [When you] give people difficult messages, then you … do it honestly and give people … respect for their intellect and their own emotions … you always need to tell people the whole thing.

Courage

This theme is linked to the theme of Integrity, because "doing the right thing" often requires the leader to challenge the status quo and stand up for others. Katherine, when talking about her own leadership style, explained "it is quite a brave thing, I think to be authentic … you have to hold your eye on the horizon".

Courage is a unifying construct across all participants except Ava and Colin and, as a manifestation of authenticity, is commonly perceived as maverick type behaviours enacted in situations where the leader is seen to champion the interests of their group or team above those of the organisation. For example, Juliet recalled several events where Paxton's decisions were biased in favour of his team and apparently driven by a sense of paternalistic responsibility, which required him to stand in opposition to the organisation and, as a result, engendered a sense of mutual trust and an affective connection.

The Meaning of Inauthentic Leadership in ECL Relationships

Constructs are bipolar (where the meaning of the elicited descriptor – the emergent pole – is elaborated through the choice of the contrast pole/descriptor). As such, a person's beliefs can best be understood from the exploration of both poles (Denicolo et al., 2016). Therefore, in order to understand how leaders construe the authentic behaviour of their ECLs, we need to also understand what behaviours they construe as inauthentic in the context of those relationships. Table 7.3 illustrates that, in the 11 negative ECL relationships, 5 ECLs (Philip, Gerald, Eddie, Roger and Dianne) were rated as always or usually behaving inauthentically (score = 5 or 4).

Five master themes were identified that relate to the inauthentic behaviours of these 5 ECLs: (1) self-centred, (2) emotionless, (3) autocratic, (4) critical and (5) manipulative. Table 7.4 presents the lower level themes for each master theme, and all 5 can be grouped together under the superordinate theme of "egocentric orientation". Collectively, these themes explain the importance of adopting a prosocial orientation to be perceived as authentic. For example, Peter described his ECL, Philip, as emotionless because he dealt with people as "a resource to use" rather than as individuals. Ann regarded Eddie as manipulative because he would:

Table 7.4 Behaviours associated with an inauthentic leader

Superordinate theme: 'egocentric orientation'	
Master theme	Lower level themes (not weighted)
Self-centred	Unsupportive, ego-driven, inconsiderate, lacks morals, personal motives, unaware of impact on others, non-reflective, doesn't grow/recognise others
Emotionless	Cold, disconnected from others, lacks empathy, doesn't care, ignores people implications
Autocratic	Directive, aggressive, not one of team, not listening, closed body language, controlling, not hands on, doesn't sort problems, delegates problems, task focused (not people focused)
Critical	Micromanaging, no trust, focusing on deficits, no fun, blames others
Manipulative	Impression management, hidden agenda, divisive, inner circle, unprofessional, game player

… say one thing to one person and the polar opposite to someone else, with the result of creating confusion. Undermined people, made them feel they weren't sure about what they were doing, made them feel there was actually something going on that they didn't know about … could make people feel scared for their jobs.

Egocentric Orientation

This overarching theme suggests that a leader who is perceived to act predominantly in their own interests and who treats others in their group or team without proper regard is categorised as inauthentic. The case of Melinda's ECL, Aileen, demonstrates this (see Table 7.3). Melinda rated Aileen as usually behaving authentically because she exhibited openness and honesty, was not manipulative and was brave in standing up for her beliefs. However, she was not implicitly categorised as an authentic leader because she also lacked emotional warmth and focused her bravery towards satisfying her own motives, rather than those of the team. The strength of the relationship between follower perceptions of authenticity and the leader's prosocial orientation is also illustrated by the ECLs Howard and Dianne, who both exhibited only a few inauthentic behaviours, yet were not categorised as authentic leaders because they were not perceived as championing group interests.

The Impact of Authentic Versus Inauthentic ECLs on Leaders' Identity and Practices

Gordon, Paxton, Gareth, and Lawrence (see Table 7.1) were rated as being authentic leaders and as having a profound and enduring positive impact on participants' own leadership style. The 4 participants who worked for these authentic ECLs speak of a more personal, emotionally connected relational experience, which helped them develop a stable sense of self-confidence. As Juliet explained, her relationship with Paxton "made me feel very confident about myself, my possibilities and my potential". They also made more explicit links between their own authentic behaviours at work and these early relationships, particularly

in relation to their personal willingness to stand up for others, be supportive, take risks, and express their own individuality.

Philip, Eddie, and Roger (see Table 7.3) were rated as inauthentic leaders who had a profound and enduring negative impact on participants' self-esteem. Peter described his relationship with Philip as "destructive" and "humiliating," Ann portrayed Eddie as having "a massive ego" that was "off the Richter scale," and Jessica remembered Roger as being "totally unethical". These negative early leader relationships disrupted trust, which lingers in how these leaders continue to approach their current work relationships, as Peter said:

> If I disclosed to someone I couldn't trust the fear is that they would use it against me and try and undermine me in front of others.

This view was shared by Brian:

> If you mistrust someone, you are not going to say what you think because you're going to be worried about, is he going to take it the wrong way, is it going to be used against me … I'm super protective and that then becomes quite negative.

Helen explained how the leader's authenticity improves the perceived quality of the managerial relationship:

> I think it's just things like trust and confidence and actually it's taking away that worry isn't it? If you know where you stand with somebody and you know what their views are and where they're going, you can focus on the job, so it's one less distraction.

Discussion

In line with the suggestion by Ruiz, Ruiz, and Martinez (2011) that more can be learnt about leadership from understanding the reasons why people are motivated to follow; this study contributes to our understanding of authentic leadership in three ways. First, it challenges the current conceptualisation of authentic leadership and the differential

contribution of the four dimensions first proposed by Gardner et al. (2005). Second, it introduces more clearly the role of the leader's prosocial and moral orientation and, third, it identifies a lasting legacy of authentic ECLs on the development of followers own authentic leadership identity and practices. The following discussion explores these contributions in more detail.

A Flexible Construct

A constructivist methodology adopts the position that the experiential reality of authentic leadership can only be understood through people's perceptions and interpretations. Within ECL relationships, authentic leadership appears to be a more flexible construct than is suggested in the mainstream theory and not something that adheres rigidly to the four dimensions of self-awareness, balanced processing, relational transparency and internalised moral perspective (Gardner et al., 2005; Walumbwa & Wernsing, 2013). The following sections consider the key challenges to mainstream theory presented by the findings and alternative perspective offered by this study.

Self-Awareness

Gardner et al. (2005) originally framed this dimension around an identity reflection process in which the leader is presented as knowing and trusting their values, motives, feelings, and self-relevant cognitions. Participants did not make any references to their authentic leaders being particularly self-aware or reflective and made more references to emotional responses, such as being instinctive, decisive, and fun. They also talked more about consideration and behavioural consistency, which suggest the leader has achieved a level of self-direction and self-acceptance that is not adequately captured in this dimension as it is currently framed. The notion of consistency is also referenced by Sparrowe (2005) as a central tenet of authentic leadership, which he presents as one who acts within character across events. Participants also perceptually associated behavioural consistency with caring, raising their self-esteem, and being dependable.

Balanced Processing

Kernis' (2003) original view placed this dimension closer to being an outward expression and consequence of self-awareness. Gardner et al. (2005) similarly presented it and described it in the context of accurate self-assessments and social comparisons. They also referenced high self-esteem and absence of ego-defensive behaviours. Ten years later, Walumbwa and Wernsing's (2013) definition bears little resemblance to its roots and presents it as an overarching decision-making skill that encompasses objective analysis, opinion seeking, critical reflection, and accurate judgement. The ALQ (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008) factor references opinion seeking, listening, and objective judgement. Overall, the findings do not support these later interpretations of balanced processing as a perceptual trigger of authentic leadership. In fact, participants frequently recalled events where their authentic ECLs behaved emotionally rather than objectively. Juliet related Paxton's authenticity to his emotionally open and straight-talking approach. Gardner et al.'s (2005) absence of ego-defensiveness can be related to the lack of impression management that was commonly mentioned and is reflected in phrases such as "transparent", "What You See Is What You Get", and "know where you stand". In isolation, these associations appear to relate more to the relational orientation of the authentic leader than to their cognitive processing style. Therefore, findings suggest that the dimension of balanced processing, in its current form, does not capture the emotional nature of authentic expression in leaders or the affective ties it creates in followers.

Relational Transparency

This refers to the leader's presentation of their authentic-self to others in the context of their close relationships. Terms such as openness, honesty, transparency, and self-disclosure are used throughout this dimension's various iterations, which is congruent with the terminology used by participants in this study. Walumbwa and Wernsing (2013) make three-dimensional additions: they broaden the relationship definition

to include accountability; they include the process of introspection for increasing leader self-knowledge, and; they rationalise the leader's behaviour by specifically referencing their efforts to "minimize displays of inappropriate emotions" (p. 396), although the nature of what is deemed inappropriate is not made clear. The authors appear to have moved the dimension towards a more objective, sanitised notion of acceptable leader behaviours, which again fails to acknowledge the leader's outward emotional expression of their inner values that feature strongly in participants' attributions of authentic leadership.

These findings suggest that authentic leadership is an emotionally expressive and prosocial concept, which alters the nature of the relationship experience for followers. Whilst this dimension utilises some similar terminology, it arguably does not go far enough to adequately explain the transformational effects that this deep, emotionally laden connection can have on followers' relational experiences and identity processes. Walumbwa and Wernsing (2013) make no reference to experiences of collaboration, inclusion, caring, warmth, or fairness that dominate participants' narratives. Therefore, it can be argued that this dimension has been narrowly interpreted, is not reflective of the relationally derived emotional connections that are created by the leader's authentic behaviour, and does not do justice to its overall relational value.

Internalised Moral Perspective

This dimension overlaps considerably with the moral person element of ethical leadership proposed by Trevino, Hartman, and Brown (2000). Its inclusion within authentic leadership theory is contested by Shamir and Eilam (2005, 2013), who stay closer to the root idea of authenticity being 'to know thyself'. Kernis (2003) also made no reference to morality in his definition of personal authenticity and spoke more in terms of behaving true to one's self as a self-liberating experience and a method of enabling others to "see the real you, good and bad" (p. 15), a view supported by Ilies et al. (2005). Other authors, however, have linked authenticity to the notion of intrinsic morality. Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) regarded authenticity as the defining moral difference in transformational leadership, and it was part of Luthans and Avolio's (2003) original conceptualisation.

The findings in this study strongly support the inclusion of the moral self as the foundation of authentic leadership. In the latest iteration by Walumbwa and Wernsing (2013) the authors make specific reference to authentic leaders demonstrating increased prosocial and ethical behaviours, which is also substantiated by this study. These findings support the presentation of authentic leadership as the enactment of the moral self, which encompasses both the integration of morality into one's sense of self and its manifestation within cognitive and affective self-regulation processes (Jennings, Mitchell, & Hannah, 2014).

Gardner et al. (2005) also included being a positive role model in this dimension, which has been lost in subsequent elaborations and does not explicitly feature in any of the measures of authentic leadership. However, these findings indicate that the role modelling of high ethical and moral standards is a key discriminant for the attribution of authentic leadership, which participants associated with their own leadership aspirations. The diffusion of positive role modelling to subordinates' enactment of their own leadership role can be explained in social learning terms (Bandura, 1977). As such, this dimension may be better explained as acting as an ethical role model, or, in social identity terms, creating a cohesive team identity and positively promoting group interests (Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011).

Summary

The findings strongly support the dimension of an "internalised moral self-concept" that is consistently enacted across observable behaviours and events, which, in turn, may be better explained in social learning or social identity terms. The relational enactment of authentic leadership has been identified as having a potentially transformative psychological impact on followers that is not adequately captured in the narrow description of "relational transparency". This dimension could be broadened out to a holistic relational orientation level that encompasses the aspects of psychological voice and lack of ego-defensiveness/impression management that are currently encapsulated within the balanced processing dimension. "Self-awareness" could be more usefully expressed as a state of

self-acceptance where leaders feel liberated from organisational and role pressures and are able to act in a self-directed, considerate and consistent manner. Finally, findings suggest that the dimension of "balanced processing" does not relate to perceptions of authentic leadership, which appears to be based more on emotional connections and affective ties that are themselves inextricably intertwined with group processes and social understanding.

The Prosocial and Moral Orientation of an Authentic Leader

As discussed above, these findings clarify the key role of perceived moral goodness in attributions of authentic leadership, which is counter to the view presented by Shamir and Eilam (2005). An authentic leader here is perceived as being ethical, with descriptions such as "do the right thing", "integrity", and "honest". There is also the suggestion of them being value driven or non-conformist in "instinctive" and "brave". Participants also use mostly relationally oriented words, rather than competency based, supporting an association between authenticity and prosocial behaviours, with terms such as "cares", "fair", and "emotional warmth". When encountered at an early career stage, authentic leaders create a sense of psychological attachment for followers through the adoption of a nurturing/caring role, collaboration and focusing on building high-quality work relationships that transcend formal boundaries.

Impact of Authentic Leadership in Early Career Stages

Overall, the findings suggest that authentic leadership transforms both the early career experiences of followers and helps shape their ideological view of leadership, which encourages them to aspire to behave in similar ways as they develop their own leadership style. This study addresses a key criticism levelled at the current theory by Ford and Harding (2011), namely that, by dictating the dominant values to be followed, authentic leaders subsume followers' identities and render authentic followership a false ideology because followers are expected to align themselves to the

collective. By providing greater insight to the experience of authentic leadership in early career relationships, findings indicate that authentic leaders, within a more flexible definition of authentic leadership, develop other authentic leaders by role modelling and legitimising self-expression and non-conformity at work. Leaders who had an authentic ECL demonstrated greater self-acceptance, inter-personal trust, and less self-doubt in the enactment of their current roles than those participants who had worked for an inauthentic ECL.

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