

Authentic leadership

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Abstract:

Recent corporate and political scandals have prompted media portrayals of a ‘global leadership crisis’, which in turn has led to discussion of the nature of leadership, with both its advantages and disadvantages (Kets De Vries & Balazs, Chapter 28, this volume). In these discussions, authentic leadership has assumed an important position among strength-based approaches, having been advanced as a potential solution to the challenges of modern leadership. While authentic leadership research only developed a coherent focus in 2003, it has since attracted considerable theoretical attention and continues to figure prominently in practitioners’ treatment of leadership. Ladkin and Taylor (2010) note that it has provided the focus for three special issues of academic journals: *The Leadership Quarterly* (2005/1), the *Journal of Management Studies* (2005/5), and the *European Management Journal* (2007/2).

Keywords: leadership | authenticity | management

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INTRODUCTION

Recent corporate and political scandals have prompted media portrayals of a ‘global leadership crisis’, which in turn has led to discussion of the nature of leadership, with both its advantages and disadvantages (Kets De Vries & Balazs, Chapter 28, this volume). In these discussions, authentic leadership has assumed an important position among strength-based approaches, having been advanced as a potential solution to the challenges of modern leadership. While authentic leadership research only developed a coherent focus in 2003, it has since attracted considerable theoretical attention and continues to figure prominently in practitioners’ treatment of leadership. Ladkin and Taylor (2010) note that it has provided the focus for three special issues of academic journals: *The Leadership Quarterly* (2005/1), the *Journal of Management Studies* (2005/5), and the *European Management Journal* (2007/2).

Authentic leadership has also provided the inspiration for numerous popular books and articles (e.g. George, 2003; Goffee & Jones, 2005; Irvine & Reger, 2006). These are supported by a strong and growing interest in authentic leadership among practitioners in many industries and

professions (e.g. Gayvert, 1999; George, Sims, McLean, & Mayer, 2007; Kouzes & Posner, 2008; Nadeau, 2002; O'Connor, 2007; Pembroke, 2002; Shelton, 2008). In one striking example, the American Association of Critical Care Nurses declared authentic leadership to be one of their six necessities for a healthy working environment (American Association of Critical Care Nurses, 2005).

As a nascent endeavour, authentic leadership research is still in the process of defining itself, and so this review is primarily formative rather than summative in nature. We describe the history and content of authentic leadership theory, overview its theoretical tenets, and review the empirical evidence that has been provided to date. We conclude by highlighting some prominent opportunities and challenges that appear to lie ahead for authentic leadership theory.

MOTIVATIONS AND ORIGINS OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP THEORY

Luthans and Avolio's (2003) chapter on authentic leadership development is generally credited with being the starting point of the research programme on authentic leadership (e.g. Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Gardner, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2005; Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008). This programme is usually described as the union of Avolio's interest in full-range leadership (e.g. Avolio, 1999) with Luthans' work on positive organizational behaviour (Luthans, 2002). Nonetheless, these and other authors recognize that there had been some prior work concerning authenticity and leadership (Avolio, Gardner, & Walumbwa, 2005), particularly in the field of education (e.g. Henderson & Hoy, 1983; Hoy & Henderson, 1983), as well as Luthans' consideration of positive leadership (Luthans, Luthans, Hodgetts, & Luthans, 2001). Related issues had also figured in studies that had not explicitly focused on authenticity. For example, leaders who engaged in self-monitoring, which is a behavioural tendency to intentionally adjust one's behaviour to fit the current context (Snyder, 1974), had been shown to be perceived as less sincere and more manipulative, and to therefore receive poorer group performance from followers (Sosik, Avolio, & Jung, 2002).

Nonetheless, Luthans and Avolio (2003) noted that most of the previous work had examined the negative consequences of a lack of authenticity, rather trying to understand authenticity per se. Their chapter was a call to focus primarily on authentic leadership itself. In this sense, authentic leadership theory can be seen as a part of the growing popularity of positive perspectives throughout the social sciences, including psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), organizational studies (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003) and organization behaviour (Luthans, 2002). Consistent with this, authentic leadership scholars have explicitly recognized their intellectual debt to the humanistic values of psychologists such as Rogers (1963) and Maslow (1968) as important influences upon the development of this new positive perspective on leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

However, the most important influence on the development of authentic leadership theory most likely emerged from the post-charismatic critiques of transformational leadership (Michie & Gooty, 2005). As described by Díaz-Sáenz (Chapter 22, this volume), the construct of transformational leadership was developed in the 1970s as a way to understand highly influential political leaders (Burns, 1978), and was subsequently applied to business and organizational contexts throughout the 1980s (e.g. Bass, 1985). Transformational leadership involves a number

of specific behaviours and effects, but these are generally united by the leader's ability to craft and convey a compelling vision that leads followers to adopt the leader's mission as their own (Bass & Avolio, 1997). For example, transformational leaders were described as exhibiting 'idealized influence,' in that followers came to judge them as embodying desirable beliefs and therefore being worthy of emulation (Jung & Avolio, 2000).

Several commentators noted potential danger in the influence and adulation generated by transformational leaders (e.g. Conger & Kanungo, 1998). For example, it was suggested that the extreme personal identification of followers with a transformational leader could create follower dependence on the leader (see Trevino & Brown, 2007), and this fear was supported by empirical evidence (e.g. Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003). Moreover, the ethical basis for transformation was also questioned, since the leader's intentional alteration of followers' values seemed to risk – perhaps even require – manipulation (Beyer, 1999; Price, 2003). In fact, Bass described both Ghandi and Hitler as transformational leaders (Bass, 1985). Empirical evidence also showed that transformational leadership did not necessarily have to be ethical (Howell & Avolio, 1992).

The response to these concerns by the leading theorists of transformational leadership was to draw a distinction between 'authentic' transformational leaders and 'pseudo' transformational leaders (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). They noted that 'to be truly transformational, leadership must be grounded in moral foundations' (1999, p. 181). In this reformulation, leaders who are not morally and ethically sound may exhibit influence and charisma, but they are only pseudo-transformational. Authentically transformational leaders are distinguished by their personal moral character, the admirable values that comprise their agenda, and the ethical means they use when interacting with others. Consistent with this, as discussed below, authentic leadership theory stressed the moral component of leadership from the outset.

DEFINING AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP

Authentic leadership theory makes distinctions between three types or levels of authenticity: an individual's personal authenticity; a leader's authenticity as a leader; and authentic leadership as a phenomenon in itself (Shamir & Eilam, 2005; Yammarino, Dionne, Schriesheim, & Dansereau, 2008). These three types of authenticity are argued to be hierarchically inclusive, such that one cannot be an authentic leader without being individually authentic and authentic leadership is not possible without the intervention of an authentic leader (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005).

In this context, 'authenticity' is defined based on psychological research, particularly that of Harter (2002) and Kernis (2003). Harter (2002) emphasised the origins of the term in ancient Greek philosophy and described two components of authenticity: knowing one's true self and acting in accord with that true self. In consequence, 'authenticity is thus an entirely subjective, reflexive process that, by definition, is experienced only by the individual him- or herself' (Erickson, 1994, p. 35). If an individual believes she is being authentic, then by definition, she is (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Harter, 2002). However, this phenomenological emphasis contrasts with some other approaches, which require empirical validation (e.g. Terry, 1993). In this vein, Kernis (2003) defined authenticity as consisting of four components: full awareness and acceptance of self; unbiased processing of self-relevant information; action consistent with true

self; and a relational orientation that values openness and truth in close personal relationships. Combining these two views, authentic leadership scholars define authenticity as having clear and certain knowledge about oneself in all regards (e.g., beliefs, preferences, strengths, weaknesses) and behaving consistently with that self-knowledge (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, et al., 2005; Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005).

Building on this definition, and particularly the four components in Kernis (2003), ‘authentic leaders’ are defined as leaders who exhibit four behavioural tendencies: self-awareness, which is accurate knowledge of one’s strengths, weaknesses, and idiosyncratic qualities; relational transparency, which involves genuine representation of the self to others; balanced processing, which is the collection and use of relevant, objective information, particularly that which challenges one’s prior beliefs; and an internalized moral perspective, which refers to self-regulation and self-determination, rather than acting in accordance with situational demands (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008). It should be noted that the definition explicitly requires all four components be true of both the leader’s thoughts and actions (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, et al., 2005; Ilies et al., 2005). In contrast, some observers have noted that individuals may be authentically self-aware yet choose to behave in a self-inconsistent or inauthentic fashion (Harter, 2002; Kernis, 2003). Others have argued against the inclusion of a moral component, questioning whether there is any inherent difference between an authentic person who leads and an authentic leader (Shamir & Eilam, 2005; Sparrowe, 2005). Nonetheless, most authentic leadership theory has been based on the tenet that anyone lacking even one of the four behaviours cannot be an authentic leader, suggesting that some consensus has developed in support of the four-part definition (Avolio et al., 2009; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Given the four behaviours required of authentic leaders, ‘authentic leadership’ is then defined in terms of the consequences of those behaviours:

A pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development (Walumbwa et al., 2008, p. 94).

We should note that in the opening of this chapter, we referred to authentic leadership theory as a new focus for research; however, many of the central participants might object to our characterization. When definitions of authentic leadership are stated, they are typically accompanied by claims that this is not a new type of leadership or a new label for an existing phenomenon, but rather a concern with what is fundamental in leadership (e.g. Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio et al., 2009; Chan, Hannah, & Gardner, 2005; May, Chan, Hodges, & Avolio, 2003). It has been claimed that authentic leadership, as here defined, is the ‘root construct of all positive, effective forms of leadership’ (Avolio et al., 2005, p. xxii).

THEORETICAL CLAIMS

In the seven years since its formal introduction, authentic leadership has been the focus of significant theoretical attention. A number of authors have discussed its antecedents and

consequences, at all levels and in all areas of organizational life. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to restate the full arguments developing these claims. Instead, we provide a brief summary of the claims that have been made, so that interested readers may pursue the original source material for those matters with which they are most concerned.

Antecedents of authentic leadership

Numerous potential sources of authentic leadership have been proposed, which can be broadly grouped into environmental factors and individual differences. The environmental antecedents include facilitative support, particularly through established norms of authenticity (Chan et al., 2005) and a positive organizational context (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, et al., 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Such facilitative factors are predicted to assist the ongoing development of authentic leadership. Other, more active, environmental factors have also been proposed, including role models (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, et al., 2005) and direct intervention through training (Avolio & Luthans, 2006; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). These more active environmental considerations are predicted to initiate or accelerate the development of authentic leadership.

Among the individual differences that have been singled out in creating authentic leadership, personal history is particularly important (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, et al., 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Authentic leaders' interpretations of the events in their past are predicted to create a personal meaning system (Goldman & Kernis, 2002) based on specific leadership moments or 'triggers' that shape their approach to leadership (Avolio & Luthans, 2006; George & Sims, 2007). In addition to these developmental experiences, authentic leadership is said to be enhanced by a highly developed personal morality (Hannah, Lester, & Vogelgesang, 2005), higher levels of psychological capital (Avolio & Luthans, 2006; Luthans & Avolio, 2003), and a tendency towards concern for others in the form of self-transcendent values and other-directed emotions (Hannah, et al., 2005; Michie & Gooty, 2005). Ilies and colleagues (2005) also offered a series of propositions about distinct antecedents for each of the four behavioural components of authentic leadership; these included positive self-concept, emotional intelligence, integrity, an incremental theory of ability, and low self-monitoring.

Consequences of authentic leadership

The hypothesized effects of authentic leadership are extensive and varied, offering potential benefit to leaders, their organizations as wholes, and to individual followers. For themselves, authentic leaders are predicted to experience more positive emotions (Chan et al., 2005; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, et al., 2005), improved well-being (Chan et al., 2005; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, et al., 2005; Ilies et al., 2005), and greater leadership effectiveness (Eigel & Kuhnert, 2005). For groups and organizations, the most discussed benefit is fostering a more positive culture or climate (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, et al., 2005; Mazutis & Slawinski, 2008; Shirey, 2006a; Woolley, Caza, Levy, & Jackson, 2007), although authentic leadership has also been linked to organizational learning (Mazutis & Slawinski, 2008) and entrepreneurial success (Jensen & Luthans, 2006b; Shirey, 2006b).

However, the most dramatic benefits proposed to arise from authentic leadership are those for individual followers; gains in some of the most important outcomes of practical and theoretical concern have been proposed to result from authentic leadership. Behaviourally, followers of authentic leaders are predicted to exert greater effort, engage in more organizational citizenship behaviour, and enjoy better work performance (Avolio et al., 2004; Chan et al., 2005; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008), as well as having higher levels of creativity (Ilies et al., 2005). Followers are also predicted to experience a variety of improved attitudes and mindsets. The most frequently mentioned change is an increased trust in leadership (Avolio et al., 2004; Chan et al., 2005; Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2005; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, et al., 2005; Hannah et al., 2005), but many other benefits have been proposed, including positive emotions (Avolio et al., 2004; Chan et al., 2005; Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2005; Jensen & Luthans, 2006a), task engagement (Avolio et al., 2004; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, et al., 2005), higher motivation (Ilies et al., 2005), greater commitment (Avolio, et al., 2004; Jensen & Luthans, 2006a; Walumbwa et al., 2008), and more satisfaction (Avolio et al., 2004; Ilies et al., 2005; Jensen & Luthans, 2006a; Walumbwa et al., 2008). In addition, since follower development is fundamental to authentic leadership, predictions have been made about the developmental benefits experienced by followers, including greater empowerment (Avolio et al., 2004; Ilies et al., 2005), moral development (Hannah et al., 2005; Ilies et al., 2005), improved well-being (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, et al., 2005; Ilies et al., 2005), and increases in psychological capital (Avolio et al., 2004; Avolio & Luthans, 2006; Gardner & Schermerhorn, 2004; Ilies et al., 2005; Woolley et al., 2007).

Mechanisms of authentic leadership

To explain the many benefits expected to arise from authentic leadership, authors have suggested a number of mechanisms. These are generally of two sorts. The first is attitudinal change, such that some of the beneficial attitude changes are used to explain behavioural and developmental changes (e.g. authentic leadership increases task engagement, which contributes to improved performance; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, et al., 2005). The other mechanisms involve changes in the relationships that followers have with their leaders and their organizations. These include greater identification with the leader and the organization (Avolio et al., 2004; Ilies et al., 2005), improved communication between parties (Mazutis & Slawinski, 2008), imitation of positive role models (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, et al., 2005; Ilies et al., 2005), and greater social exchange (Chan et al., 2005; Ilies et al., 2005), all of which have been suggested as ways to explain the dramatic benefits promised to arise from authentic leadership.

In reviewing the lists of antecedents, consequences, and mechanisms, one may be struck by the overlap in some areas. For example, psychological capital has been proposed as both an antecedent and a consequence of authentic leadership. Similarly, a more positive organizational climate is predicted to contribute to authentic leadership, be a benefit resulting from authentic leadership, and be a constituent part of the authentic leadership phenomenon itself. The complexities and potential confusions of such multifunctional relationships have been recognized by authentic leadership scholars, and comprise an area that has been suggested as needing greater attention (e.g. Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, et al., 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2009). This and other future directions for the development of authentic leadership are discussed below, after a review of the empirical evidence concerning the predictions described here.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Despite the many important theoretical predictions associated with authentic leadership, and the topic's apparently considerable popularity among academics and practitioners, surprisingly little empirical research has been conducted to date. As a part of their theory-building efforts, Yammarino and colleagues (2008) searched and found only four research reports. Our more recent search found little more. In February 2009, we conducted a keyword search of the ABI-Inform and EBSCO databases, using 'lead*' and 'authen*' as word stems. We then conducted ISI forward citation searches on the authentic leadership pieces we found, as well as searching the bibliographies of all identified pieces. We found only seven empirical reports: the three book chapters and one journal article previously identified by Yammarino and colleagues (2008), as well as two other journal pieces and one refereed conference paper. Each of these is summarized in Table 26.1.

Table 26.1. Summary of empirical research in authentic leadership

Source	Design	Participants	Authentic leadership operationalization	Key findings
Dasborough & Ashkanasy (2005) Study 1	Three focus groups	Sample of 24 employees from three randomly selected Australian organizations	None	Followers describing negative emotional interactions with supervisors attributed their negative emotion to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supervisor's inconsistency with previous behaviour 2. Supervisor's failure to keep them informed 3. Supervisor's lack of technical skill 4. Supervisor's lack of concern for anything but income/performance
Dasborough & Ashkanasy (2005) Study 2	Experimental: video of charismatic leader requesting effort on behalf of organization, for collective goals. Follow-up email from leader uses either 'we' phrasing (authentic condition) or 'I' phrasing (inauthentic condition)	One hundred and thirty-seven undergraduate students in Australia	Manipulated through (in)consistency between 'we' or 'I' phrasing in video and email	Leader inconsistency led to follower attributions of manipulation (vs sincerity), causing negative emotion and reducing positive emotion. Follower positive emotion predicted trust in leader and ratings of transformational leadership. Negative emotion, trust, and transformational leadership influenced follower intention to comply with request
Eigel & Kuhnert (2005)	Semi-structured clinical interviews	Twenty-one board-elected executives of large public corporations in diverse industries	None. Describe five 'Leadership Development Levels' (LDL) and link the highest, level 5, to authentic leadership	LDL 5 is associated with leadership effectiveness in all environments, assessed by subject matter experts
Pittinsky & Tyson (2005)	Six structured focus group discussions	Snowball sample of 28 African Americans born between 1965 and 1980,	Structured question format about 'what makes an	Found seven 'authenticity makers': <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Experience of racism –recognize its importance

Source	Design	Participants	Authentic leadership operationalization	Key findings
		stratified for low, middle, and high SES	African American leader authentic' (p. 262)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Policy positions – equality, affirmative action, community development, etc. 3. Party affiliation – liberal 4. Speech patterns and mannerisms 5. Experience of struggle – easy life is 'not real' 6. Black Church participation 7. Connection to other African Americans – embrace historical events, reach out socially, etc.
Jensen & Luthans (2006a)	Survey	Convenience sample of 179 employees in 62 Midwestern firms that had been in operation for less than 10 years	'Authentic <i>entrepreneurial</i> leadership' as summed scale composed of selected items from MLQ (Bass & Avolio, 1997), future orientation (Knight, 1997), and ethical climate (Victor & Cullen, 1988)	Followers who perceived their managers as more authentic reported greater job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and work happiness
Jensen & Luthans (2006b)	Survey	Convenience sample of 76 owner-founders of small Midwestern businesses that had been in operation for less than 10 years	Authentic entrepreneurial leadership, as in Jensen & Luthans (2006a)	Managers' self-reported psychological capital predicted self-reported levels of authentic entrepreneurial leadership
Woolley & colleagues (2007)	Survey	Stratified random sample of 863 working adults in New Zealand	Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) using a second-order construct composed of self-awareness, relational transparency, internal moral perspective, and balanced processing (see Walumbwa et al., 2008)	Followers who perceived their supervisors as more authentic reported greater psychological capital. This relationships was predominantly mediated by followers' assessment of their supervisor's positive impact on the work environment
Walumbwa & colleagues (2008) Study 1	Survey	Two hundred and twenty-four full-time employees of US manufacturer; 212 full-time employees of state-owned firm in Beijing	ALQ (Walumbwa et al., 2008)	Second-order factor structure of ALQ supported. American and Chinese samples showed measurement equivalence
Walumbwa & colleagues (2008) Study 2	In-class survey	One hundred and seventy-eight American adult students and 236 evening students working full time in the USA	ALQ (Walumbwa et al., 2008)	Authentic leadership measured by ALQ shown to be a related to, but distinct from, ethical leadership and transformational leadership. Followers who perceived their supervisors as more authentic reported greater OCB, organizational commitment, and satisfaction with supervisor
Walumbwa & colleagues (2008) Study 3	Two-stage survey (six weeks apart)	Four hundred and seventy-eight employees of 11 US MNCs in Kenya, and their supervisors (N = 104)	ALQ (Walumbwa et al., 2008)	Followers who perceived their supervisors as more authentic reported greater job satisfaction and had higher supervisor-rated job performance

Looking across these studies reveals at least two important patterns. The first is their relative success in finding support for theoretical predictions. Allowing for the limitations imposed by their designs, the studies suggest that leader authenticity is in fact a relevant and potentially important issue for followers. Organization members care about how authentic their leaders are, and they appear to respond favourably to those they perceive as authentic. Follower attributions of leader authenticity have been linked to positive emotion (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2005; Jensen & Luthans, 2006a), organizational commitment (Jensen & Luthans, 2006a; Walumbwa et al., 2008), psychological capital (Woolley et al., 2007), and performance (Eigel & Kuhnert, 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

The second pattern, which has already been noted earlier by others (Yammarino et al., 2008), is that the empirical data are almost entirely at the individual level. To the extent that conclusions from focus groups can be considered collective or aggregate phenomena, there may be some preliminary evidence at a collective level (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2005; Pittinsky & Tyson, 2005), but this is tenuous. Similarly, while one study examined organizational climate as a potential mechanism for authentic leadership's effect on followers (Woolley et al., 2007), the measurement remained at the individual level. Despite the theoretical emphasis upon the collective and relational effects associated with authentic leadership, nothing beyond individual perception and behaviour has yet been tested.

In summary, the empirical evidence concerning authentic leadership is limited. There are only seven published research reports, and only four of these were subject to peer review. Authentic leadership has only been measured at the individual level, and has almost exclusively concerned followers' attributions of leader authenticity. As such, we may tentatively conclude that the construct of authenticity is meaningful to followers, and that individual followers' attributions of leader authenticity are associated with beneficial attitudes and behaviours. However, the strongest conclusion to be drawn is that much more empirical research is needed.

OPPORTUNITIES, QUESTIONS, AND CONCERNS

Definition of authenticity

The two foundational sources on which this literature bases its definition of authenticity (i.e., Harter, 2002; Kernis, 2003) may not be compatible concerning the phenomenological status of authenticity, which in turn creates some conflict in the definition of authentic leadership. More importantly, current operationalizations are inconsistent with the definition of authenticity as a personal experience. With only one exception (Jensen & Luthans, 2006b), the empirical measurement of authentic leadership involves observer attributions of authenticity, taking no account of the leader's experience. Whereas follower responses to a leader's authenticity are clearly determined by their attributions of that leader's authenticity, these attributions are not necessarily accurate (e.g. Douglas, Ferris, & Perrewe, 2005; Ferris et al., 2007). In recognition of this, the awkward distinction between 'genuine' authentic leaders and 'pseudo' authentic leaders has already been raised (Chan et al., 2005). Moreover, even when third-party judgements are accurate, they still do not reflect the phenomenological nature of a leader's authenticity (Harter, 2002; Harter, Waters, Whitesell, & Kastelic, 1998). This conflict can be seen in current writing,

where authenticity is defined as purely phenomenological (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio et al., 2004; Chan et al., 2005; Erickson, 1994), but also as depending on follower responses: ‘followers authenticate the leader’ (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, et al., 2005, p. 348; see also Goffee & Jones, 2005).

Ontological status of authenticity

Even more fundamental than clearly defining a construct is the need to answer the question of the extent to which authenticity is even possible. The assumption underlying authentic leadership theory derives from the modernist psychological belief that each individual has a ‘true’ self, one that is independent of context and behavioural presentations; in other words, there is something constant to be authentic about (Goffman, 1959; James, 1890). Doubts have been raised about the appropriateness of this belief (Erickson, 1994). Conceptually, it has been argued that one’s self is an ongoing project, rather than an essential constant (Ricoeur, 1992; Sparrowe, 2005), and this may be particularly relevant now, given that modern society and technology have made life so fluid and complex as to make a single constant self either impossible or impractical (Gergen, 1991). Moreover, others have argued that even if there is a relatively ‘true’ self, it is necessarily defined in relation to others, and thus cannot be constant in the sense required for authenticity (Peterson, 2005; Sandelands, 1998). In either case, authenticity, as the sort of behavioural goal implied by authentic leadership theory, becomes a paradox: the simple act of intentionally ‘being authentic’ undercuts any possibility of achieving it (Guthey & Jackson, 2005; Hochschild, 1983).

Clarity of nomological status and level of analysis

In part owing to potential confusion in the definition of authentic leadership, it is sometimes unclear where authentic leadership begins and ends. For example, as noted above, authors variously treat a positive organizational climate as a source of authentic leadership, a part of authentic leadership, and a consequence of authentic leadership. Such issues need to be clarified, not only for purposes of defining the nature of the construct but also its appropriate level of analysis. For example, Kernis’ (2003) definition of authenticity is restricted to the individual level by including only a personal orientation towards truthful relationships; in contrast, the definition of authentic leadership includes reference to the actual leader–follower relationship, which is necessarily not at the individual level of analysis. Although different elements of the authentic leadership phenomenon may operate at different levels, these need to be made distinct (see Yammarino et al., 2008 for a proposal to address this issue).

Contextualizing authentic leadership

Although the authentic leadership questionnaire has been shown to function well and have predicted relationships with outcomes in four different cultures and a variety of settings (Walumbwa et al., 2008; Woolley et al., 2007), there is also evidence that the meaning and effect of authentic leadership can vary by context (Chan, 2005). Pittinsky and Tyson (2005) showed that what counts as authentic depends on the particular leader and follower in question, and others show that the effects of authenticity may vary by gender and/or personal values (Harter et al., 1998; Woolley et al., 2007). It has also been suggested that other differences may be important, including ethnicity, class, and education (Eagly, 2005). Similarly, interpersonal

congruence and cultural values may also be moderators of the effect of authentic leadership (Chan, 2005; Chan et al., 2005; Ilies et al., 2005; Woolley & Jackson, 2010).

Authentic leadership versus authentic leadership development

The motivation to develop practical interventions has been an explicit part of authentic leadership theory from the beginning, and has arguably been the one thing that all writers in this area share (Cooper, Scandura, & Schriesheim, 2005; Eagly, 2005; Eigel & Kuhnert, 2005; Ilies et al., 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Shamir & Eilam, 2005; Sparrowe, 2005). However, there appears to be an increasing emphasis on the issues of development and intervention. The initial work tended to emphasize the nature and effect of authentic leadership, and this early emphasis was arguably crystallized by the scale development paper (Walumbwa et al., 2008), which specifically defined and measured how much authentic leadership a given leader exhibited. In contrast to this early emphasis on understanding authentic leaders, more recent discussions suggest a subtle shift towards emphasizing development over authenticity per se (e.g., Avolio, 2007, p. 29ff; see also Faber, Johanson, Thomas, & Vogelzang, 2007). That is, the discussion of authentic leadership development now seems more concerned with whether a given leadership intervention authentically (i.e. genuinely) develops leadership ability (e.g. Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009, p. 423). Interestingly, it seems that the focus may be moving from developing *authentic leadership* to *authentically developing* leadership (Luthans & Avolio, 2009, pp. 303–304). Given some reports that current leadership interventions offer little benefit (Reichard & Avolio, 2005), this may be an appropriate move, and it is not inconsistent with the previous work; however, it is nonetheless an important change in focus. Developing authentic leadership is much more specific than authentically developing effective leadership of any sort. Whereas either focus, or both, may be fruitfully pursued in the future, it will be important for authors to clearly specify which matter they are concerned with to avoid the sort of fundamental confusion that had plagued other research programmes: for example, organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) and the nature of ‘extra-role’ Organ (1997).

Role of emotion

Emotions have had a central role in the development of authentic leadership theory. They figure prominently as antecedents and consequences of authenticity (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2005; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans et al., 2005; Hannah et al., 2005; Ilies et al., 2005; Michie & Gooty, 2005). In addition, the most common definition given for authenticity is taken from Harter (2002) and refers to being true to one’s inner thoughts and feelings. However, the role of feelings in authenticity has received little attention (see Zhang, Wang, & Caza, 2008). Far more attention has been paid to authenticity with regard to values and morality than to emotion. This is surprising, given the prevalence of emotion management in most organizational contexts (Glaso & Einarsen, 2008; Goffman, 1973), and the strong intuitive link that practitioners make between authenticity and emotion (Turner & Mavin, 2008). For an extended discussion of the link between leadership and emotion, see Ashkanasy and Humphrey (Chapter 27, this volume).

Embodied authentic leadership

Notions of embodiment and how the body functions within the field of organizational studies have received increasing attention, but are still relatively rare in leadership studies (see Sinclair, Chapter 37, this volume). Nonetheless, the issue of embodiment is a potentially important one for authentic leadership theory. For example, Ladkin and Taylor (2010) note that the widely publicized incident involving Hillary Clinton breaking down in tears during the Democratic primary election shows that authenticity has an embodied, aesthetic dimension (see also Hansen & Bathurst, Chapter 19, this volume). Ladkin and Taylor (2010) argue that the way in which the leader's 'self' is embodied is a critical determinant of the experience of authentic leadership, noting that,

Although it may be obvious, for the purposes of our argument, it is important to point out that it is the leaders' body, and the way in which he or she uses it to express their 'true self', which is the seemingly invisible mechanism through which authenticity is conveyed. (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010, p. 65)

They highlight how the system of method acting developed by Constantin Stanislavski uses the somatic sense of self (i.e. the body) to contribute to the feelings of authenticity, and how through engaging with somatic clues, leadership can be performed in a way which is experienced as authentic, both to the leaders and their followers. They close by inviting researchers to empirically investigate how leaders who are widely considered to be 'authentic' actually experience themselves at a somatic level of awareness. In concert with this, there is a need to better understand how followers make aesthetically based assessments of their experiences with leaders (e.g., Rule and Ambady, 2008, 2009; Nana, Burch, & Jackson, 2010).

Disadvantages of authenticity

One element that all of the authentic leadership theory reviewed here shares is the implicit belief that authenticity is wholly desirable, that it produces only positive outcomes. However, it seems unlikely that authenticity is in all ways and at all time unremittingly beneficial. For example, Harter (2002) shows that inauthenticity may be important for some kinds of positive change (see also Ibarra, 1999; Kernis, 2003). It also may be possible to be too authentic, such that authenticity not only limits possibilities but also actually produces negative results (Harter, 2002; Woolley et al., 2007). Although the potential drawbacks of authenticity have yet to be examined, it seems unlikely that one could understand the phenomenon of authentic leadership without addressing them. It is to this task that we turn to in the concluding section of this chapter.

CONCLUSIONS

In the past decade, authentic leadership has seized the popular imagination in a way that few leadership ideas have. This is evident in the business media and through our interactions with managers in the MBA and executive development classes that we teach. Many people seem taken with the idea of authenticity and are keen to learn more about it. In part, we suspect that authenticity's appeal derives from its face validity and commonsense value. After all, who would advocate for inauthentic leaders? However, we believe that the source of the appeal goes deeper still. Authentic leadership resonates with widespread disillusionment about the performance of business, political, and religious leaders. Authentic leadership seems to provide a ready answer

to concerns about the intentions and morality of these leaders. This combines with managers' fears and concerns about their own leadership ability to make the notion of authenticity particularly appealing. As the well-worn cliché runs, authentic leadership is an idea whose 'time has come.' It is a powerful response to the entrenched scepticism and suspicion towards established leaders and it accords with a general desire for selfless, enlightened leadership.

Given this general appeal, it is not surprising that leadership scholars have been attracted to the concept of authenticity. As we have shown in this review, in a relatively short period of time significant strides have been made in defining the concept and its antecedents, mechanisms, and consequences. Unfortunately, however, most of this work has been confined to the theoretical realm; there are very few empirical studies. This imbalance is unhealthy and will need to be rectified if the concept is to have a sustainable future within the larger field of leadership studies. In terms of direction, we used the previous section to highlight the issues that seem most pressing and most promising. We also believe that more variety in methods and data are essential, including mixed sources of data and multiple levels of analysis.

These empirical developments are important to sustain the momentum of authentic leadership and to respond to its critics. In fact, somewhat ironically, the most encouraging sign for the future of authentic leadership theory may be in the intensity of the critical response it has provoked (e.g. Caza & Carroll, in press; Collinson, Chapter 13, this volume). The idea of authenticity clearly has great power to provoke and attract attention. We do not believe that the critics' concerns are insurmountable, but it is important to the further development of authentic leadership theory that they be addressed. As described in this chapter, this will likely require new directions, additional techniques, and a broader constituency than has previously been engaged in the theory's development.

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