A TRANSCENDENT VIEW OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AUTHENTIC IN THE CONTEXT OF LEADERSHIP

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By
David Brown Jr.
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Examining Committee Members:

John Deckop, Advisory Chair, Human Resources Management
Lynne Andersson, Human Resources Management
Matt Wray, Sociology Department
Ronald Hill, American University (reader)

ABSTRACT

Leadership is a critical aspect of organizational success. There have been many leadership styles and models that have emerged from the efforts of both practitioners and researchers. In the early 2000s, authentic leadership offered the potential to be the next prominent leadership style. However, the evolution of the theory never established significant momentum, in part because of the lack of a clear and consistent definition of what it means to be an authentic leader. This is the first study to use a multi-disciplined qualitative approach for evaluating authenticity and leadership. Using grounded theory, this study attempted to revisit authentic leadership by decoupling authenticity from leadership and exploring what it means to be authentic in the context of leadership. Study One used interviews to examine authenticity in leadership by capturing how a diverse group of leaders conceptualize, observe and experience authenticity. The grounded theory analysis revealed themes and construct variables that were consistent with existing authentic leadership literature. In addition, new construct variables of fear and shifting of shared norms emerged to provide further understanding of the relationship between authenticity and leadership. Study One proposed exploring a new conceptual model for high authenticity in leadership. Study Two seeks to refine the conceptual model by further investigating the newly identified construct variables of fear and shifting of shared norms. This will be accomplished by performing a second series of interviews with another sample of leaders. Similar to Study One, a grounded theory approach was used to interpret respondent data and draw conclusions.

This dissertation is dedicated to all of the people and experiences that have been and continue to be my greatest teachers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Table **Page**

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER1: INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a complex phenomenon that is a critical component, if not the most critical component, in an organization's success. There are many ways to define leadership. According to Chemers (1997), leadership can be defined as a process of social influence in which a person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task. Motivating individuals towards a common task is hard work. And, in order for organizations to accomplish their missions, they must solicit many individuals to complete many common tasks which leads to the outcomes that are desired. The scale and complexity of this type of coordination makes effective leadership a much sought-after capability.

The modern-day organization is operating during a time of immense environmental change and turbulence, and stakeholder demands are constantly evolving. Customers are requiring new experiences that facilitate an ease of doing business. The ubiquitous nature of technology reduces competitive barriers driving new product and service innovation that is faster and cheaper than ever before. Markets emerge and become competitive in what seems like a matter of weeks, not years. Keeping up with these demands requires tremendous organizational energy, especially from leaders.

Despite fervor to focus energy on customers, markets, capabilities and strategies, leaders are leading in a time and space where the needs of one of their largest constituents, employees, are changing. The existing and future workforce and how individual and collective satisfaction are established and maintained has become markedly different as new generations enter the workforce in large numbers. In addition, there has been a tremendous amount of organizational focus on inclusion and diversity (I&D); as women, minorities, veterans and those who identify as LGBTQ, strive to be given opportunities to flex their talents and be accepted for who they are and the perspectives

they bring. Right before our eyes, the game has changed. And, we should expect that trend to continue.

The emergence of the Millenials and Gen Z introduces an entirely new set of values into the workforce. This is not insignificant by any stretch. In the US, there are 75 million Millenials and represent nearly two-fifths of the workforce (Frey, 2018). And, 65 million Gen Zers are beginning to enter the workforce (Bridge Works, 2017). Despite many organizations developing I&D strategies and initiatives, on average those programs may not be well emphasized (HR Research Institute, 2019). Instead of trying to force-feed those with diverse perspectives, whether they are based on age, gender, race and the like, to adapt to the existing system, the leadership model to help them integrate and usher organizations into the future needs to emerge now.

Effective leadership for today's environment requires leaders to think about how to connect and motivate the collective workforce differently. Anderson et al. (2017) concede that although existing leadership theories have practical implications for managers, changes in employee personalities, values, work attitudes and motivations may decrease the effectiveness of these theories. The same rules of engagement from twenty or thirty years ago, and what made leaders successful, may no longer apply. Yet, many large organizations operate under incrementally evolved leadership development paradigms that have helped to create their current levels of success.

Regardless of what key capabilities an organization may have, everything "goes" as a result of leaders leading. How we think about developing leaders to develop the future workforce and organizations, requires a model that matches the needs and values of said workforce. It is time for leaders to be different. That creates the opportunity to introduce new leadership theory. This research project capitalizes on this opportunity by supporting the expansion of current authentic leadership theory. Organizations often talk about bringing one's whole self to work, allowing one to

be more authentic. By nature of its name, authentic leadership implies the promotion of authenticity and could be the foundation for a relevant leadership development model that matches the needs of today's evolving organizations. In order to build this bridge, we must develop a theoretical leadership model that incorporates a definition of authenticity that transcends current thinking.

Over the past several decades, transformational, charismatic and servant leadership models have become popular from a theoretical and practitioner perspective. Like most theory development, these models tend to evolve as the body of knowledge on leadership development expands. Authentic leadership theory has evolved in the same way. However, authentic leadership is challenged with a lack of clarity around its definition. According to Gardner et al. (2011) there are thirteen definitions for authentic leaders or authentic leadership (see Table 1 in Appendix) that have been developed from 1983 to 2009. In order to evolve authentic leadership theory, getting to a universally understood definition would be a large leap forward.

Rather than emphasizing the existing construct of authentic leadership, this research paper will take a different approach. I do consider the theoretical evolution of authentic leadership but put an emphasis on what it means to be authentic, which has been the subject of much historical debate. I intend to introduce new theory on what it means to be authentic, and then apply that understanding in the context of being a leader. It's important to provide clarity on the scope of this research project because I believe it signifies getting to the root of developing foundational research that could lead to a more relevant (and effective) leadership development model. There are significant findings that have contributed to authentic leadership theory by academics and practitioners such as Avolio, Gardner, Luthans, Shamir, George, etc. Those findings will be used as context and built upon as part of this research paper.

By decoupling authenticity and leadership, we can explore a new approach to understanding authentic leadership. Specifically, this study will not be limited by the current characterizations of what it means to be an authentic leader. Instead, using an interpretive grounded theory approach provides a blank slate from which to work. As a result, a natural research question begins to emerge: "What does it mean to be authentic in the context of leadership?" The answer to this question will help to inform what it means to be an authentic leader.

CHAPTER 2: PERSPECTIVES ON AUTHENTICITY

Leadership

In 2011, William J. Gardner and his colleagues published an article titled, Authentic leadership: A review of the literature and research agenda in The Leadership Quarterly. The article was significant in that it provided an analysis and summary of all authentic leadership research that had been published to date. The earliest research publication that made mention of authentic leadership was by Henderson and Hoy (1983). However, after Henderson and Hoy's 1983 article, Leader authenticity: The development and test of an operational measure, no work on authentic leadership was published again until 1997. The business phenomenon began to garner interest through the mid-2000s and peaked in 2005 with 24 publications, spurred by a Gallup Leadership Summit in 2004 that focused on the topic (Gardner et al., 2011). A review of the authentic leadership literature by Gardner et al. (2011) reveals 91 publications from 1983 until 2010. Thus, the bulk of the authentic leadership theory development and testing (90 total publications) took place over a span of approximately thirteen years.

Despite so many publications, authentic leadership doesn't have a universally agreed upon definition amongst the practitioner or research community. There are thirteen different definitions or theoretical references to authentic leaders or authentic leadership (Gardner et al., 2011). That has led to many different theoretical descriptions of authentic leaders and authentic leadership. The phenomenon of authentic leadership first emerged with Henderson and Hoy who defined it as 'the extent to which subordinates perceive their leader to demonstrate the acceptance of organizational and personal responsibility for actions, outcomes, and mistakes; to be non-manipulating of

subordinates; and to exhibit salience of self over role' (Henderson & Hoy, 1983). New iterations of authentic leadership theory can be grouped into four schools of thought. Bhindi and Duignan (1997), Begley (2001), George (2003), Ilies et al. (2005) and Whitehead (2009) definitions are focused on the importance of the values and ethics of authentic leaders. Similarly, in the arena of education, Begley (2001) produced a definition that highlighted the importance of ethically sound practices. Luthans and Avolio (2003) drew from the discipline of positive psychology. Later definitions of authentic leadership focused on the importance of self-awareness (Avolio, Luthans et al, 2004), (Begley, 2004), (Ilies et al., 2005), (Shamir & Eilam, 2005) and (George & Sims, 2007).

However, despite many different branches of authentic leadership, the most widely recognized origins stem from the work of Kernis (2003) and Kernis and Goldman (2006), who conceptualized four key components of authenticity that have been instrumental in the development of several of the theoretical foundations of authentic leadership theory. They described the four key components as follows: 1) awareness (i.e., knowledge and trust in one's thoughts, feelings, motives and values); 2) unbiased processing (i.e., objectivity about and acceptance of one's positive and negative attributes); 3) behavior (i.e., acting based on one's true preferences, values and needs rather than merely acting to please others, secure rewards, or avoid punishments); and 4) relational orientation (i.e., achieving and valuing truthfulness and openness in one's close relationships). These key components have been instrumental in the development of Garner et al.'s (2005) widely accepted self-based conceptual model.

Over the history of the leadership literature, and as empirical studies were performed to better understand consequences and outcomes, the general consensus amongst many researchers has been that the phenomenon of authentic leadership showed a fair amount of promise as a future leadership model because of its perceived "positive" impact on employees and organizations. Those

positive impacts are tied to characteristics that are beneficial for leader and follower well-being. Luthans and Avolio (2003) characterize authentic leaders as embodying positive psychological capabilities such as confidence, optimism, hope and resiliency. When coupled with a positive organizational environment, they support that these capabilities can increase self-awareness and self-regulatory behavior of the leader. Additional research performed by Luthans, Luthans and Luthans (2004), suggests that these capabilities are open to change and can be developed. Thus, there are potential broader implications to authentic leaders aiding in the development of individuals, teams and organizations (Luthans, 2002a, 2002b; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Seligman, 2002; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Snyder, 2000; Snyder & Lopez, 2002). Like the development of positive psychological capabilities, there is debate on whether authentic leaders also help to develop a positive moral perspective (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

The literature's focus on authentic leadership being a form of positive leadership also led to a belief that authentic leadership could be an underpinning component of all other positive leadership models such as transformational, servant, and charismatic leadership to name a few. Much of the historical research has been performed by academics and practitioners with a management and/or business school pedigree. However, to be authentic, has much broader implications and could be better understood by going beyond the confines of the discipline of leadership and management theory. This conclusion of expanding the development of authentic leadership theory by performing research across multiple disciplines is also supported by Gardner et al. (2011).

Philosophy

A discipline that can begin to help provide clarity towards defining authenticity in leaders is philosophy. Greek philosophy begins to provide one of the earliest theoretical concepts of authenticity (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Since the days of ancient philosophers, human beings have wrestled with understanding statements such as “to thine own self be true.” In addition to Greece, ancient civilizations in Egypt, China, India and Persia have all theorized about the workings of the human body and mind.

Newman and Smith (2016) explored various forms of authenticity and claim that the lack of definitional clarity arises from the diversity of contexts by which authenticity judgment arises. In their review of authenticity literature, they deduce authenticity to be the process of verifying whether (or the extent to which) entities are what they are purported to be (2016). They summarized a total of nine forms of authenticity.

Grayson and Martinec (2004) researched differences between indexical and iconic authenticity. Indexical authenticity is being able to distinguish “the real thing” or “original” from an imitation. This conclusion was drawn off prior work of Pierce (1974). An example of indexical authenticity is verifying that a historical artifact such as a proclaimed original sketch by Leonardo Da Vinci was indeed sketched by Leonardo DaVinci. Iconic authenticity, on the other hand, is concerned with the observers’ expectations of how an item should appear (Deighton, Romer & McQueen, 1989; Kozinets et al., 2002). For example, if one were to witness a Civil War reenactment, there are expectations about what represents authentic Civil War attire. The observer judges the level of authenticity in the reenactment based on his/her expectations.

Similar to indexical authenticity, nominal authenticity also focuses on correctly identifying an object's origin (Dutton, 2003). Dutton also researched another form of authenticity known as expressive authenticity. This highly subjective phenomenon provides concern for how things are created and whether the expression of the object aligns with an individual's or a society's values (Newman & Smith, 2016). Thus, there is ambiguity between experiences as values and perceptions may be different from one experiencer to another.

Type authenticity involves determining whether an object is authentic to its category or genre (Carroll & Wheaton, 2009). A prime example of type authenticity is how something like food is categorized (e.g. Is this an authentic Italian dish?). Carroll and Wheaton (2009) also defined moral authenticity as 'whether the decisions behind the enactment and operation of an entity reflects sincere choices rather than socially scripted responses.' This type of authenticity is relatable to the third key component of authenticity described by Kernis (2003) and Kernis and Goldman (2006).

Wang's (1999) study of authenticity through tourism provided definitions for objective and constructed authenticity, which nearly mirror the definitions for indexical/nominal authenticity and expressive authenticity respectively. However, Wang also provided a lens for a third type of authenticity, called existential authenticity. This form of authenticity focuses on the experience of an inter-subjective state of being (Newman & Smith, 2012). Existential authenticity is highly subjective and begins to shift the focus of authenticity from an object-based verification using judgment to a subjective experiential aspect that is associated with feelings, spontaneity and individuality over rationality, reason and conformity (Newman & Smith, 2012). Soren Kierkegaard, who is credited with being the first existentialist philosopher, suggested that human beings individually are responsible for giving meaning to life and living it passionately and sincerely, or "authentically" (Watts, 2003).

Existential authenticity offers a perspective that directly relates to the subjective human experience which creates potential for understanding authenticity in the context of leadership.

Psychology

Humanistic psychologists, Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, and their focus on fully functioning or self-actualized people, provides some of the earliest research related to what can be considered an authentic person. Emerging theories in the realm of psychology have attempted to define authenticity through forms of individual and social identity. These forms include ethnic/cultural identity, group identity, status identity, seeking of authentic experiences and self-reflexivity (Peterson, 2005). Medlock (2012) looks at authenticity as a fundamental way of being, aligning to the existential tradition. Lastly, psychology has produced perspectives on authenticity that connects the values and ethics of the individual to broader groups and society. Authenticity needs to be considered as an overarching good that defines a general value-orientation toward life (Taylor, 1989, 1999; Trilling, 1973) and this value framework is based on the notion that authentic individuals define an ideal self that they strive to realize, and that this ideal includes an articulation of what matters in life and the values that the individual is committed to preserving and enhancing (Taylor, 1989). That statement of what matters includes an account of our responsibilities and obligations toward others, and our interpretation of the sort of society that we affirm as good. In other words, it is both a personal statement of identity and an ethical statement of what is good or right (Medlock, 2005).

Most Recent Literature

Post 2011, the development of authentic leadership theory has continued a similar path of incremental evolution by providing insights from other disciplines as summarized by Gardner et al. (2011). Building on authentic leadership origins of developing leaders with moral and ethical perspectives, Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012) incorporated themes that align with the philosophical perspectives of existentialism. They support that the body of literature on existentialism could help with development of leadership and organization theory (Algera & Lips-Wiersma, 2012). Authentic leadership consequences were evaluated by Weiss et al. (2018) who produced research that supported authentic leadership reduces leaders' stress and increases their work engagement through follower interaction. As organizations and global society places more emphasis on overall well-being, these findings could also play a significant role in future authentic leadership and organizational development theory. Lastly, Sidani and Rowe (2018) focused on a follower-centered view of authenticity that supports value congruence leading to the impression (from the follower) that a leader is authentic. All of these theoretical insights contribute to the knowledge of authentic leadership theory in different ways. In general, the most recent authentic leadership research has focused on consequences of the construct. However, the opportunity still exists to add to the body of knowledge and development of the nomological net through additional qualitative and cross-discipline research, per Gardner et al.'s recommendation in 2011.

In 2019, Lehman et al. published a comprehensive review of the authenticity literature in the *Academy of Management Annals.* The 327 article review spanned the disciplines of management, marketing, psychology and sociology. Lehman et al.'s goal was to evaluate different perspectives and approaches for defining and understanding authenticity. Their review yielded three perspectives that

highlighted the expansive literature: authenticity as (1) consistency between an entity's internal values and its external expressions, 2) conformity of an entity to the norms of its social category and 3) connection between an entity and a person, place or time as claimed (Lehman et al., 2019). Authenticity as consistency, where the referent for determining authenticity is the entity itself, fits the context of how authenticity can be defined in leaders.

Per Lehman et al. (2019), authenticity as consistency was characterized by three research themes: self-concept, self-presentation and organizational and brand identity. To help explain these themes, Lehman et al. (2019) leveraged theoretical foundations in impression management. Specifically, they use Goffman's (1959) theater metaphor of the "front stage" (i.e. outer or public spheres) and "backstage" (i.e. inner or private thoughts) to explain how individuals in social life "play a part." And, in playing those parts, depending on the environment, there can be alignment or misalignment between the front stage and the backstage.

The self-concept is focused on the backstage as a representation of the true self and is built upon from classical philosophy and how the self is conceptualized (Lehman et al., 2019). This theme focuses on how the self is defined and developing a deeper understanding of how one views oneself. In general, the feeling of acting in accordance with the true self has been associated with positive outcomes for individuals and others (Lehman et al., 2019). The converse of this also appears true. Feelings of lower authenticity has been tied to perceived negative outcomes such as immorality and impurity (Gino, Norton & Ariely, 2010).

The self-presentation theme is also established from classical philosophy but focuses on the front stage and how individuals present who they are to external audiences (Lehman et al., 2019). The key takeaway from this theme is that social factors may impact how an individual presents who they are. The individual may express their true self and be in alignment between the front stage and

backstage. Or, the individual may not express their true self, which creates misalignment between the front stage and backstage. Similar to the self-concept, alignment of the presentation of self is associated with positive outcomes, while misalignment of the self is associated with negative outcomes.

The final theme of organizational and brand identity builds on the self-concept and self-presentation theme. For the sake of this research, organizational identity is more significant than brand identity. Similar to the self-concept and self-presentation of the individual, the idea of a front stage and backstage exists for an organization. The organization's shared values serve as the backstage, while the organization's actions serve as the front stage. An organization's perceived level of authenticity has been assessed through mechanisms such as observed production processes (Carroll & Swaminathan, 2000); Voronov, De Clercq & Hinings, 2013; Weber et al., 2008), product names (Verhaal et al., 2015) and CEO portraits (Guthey & Jackson, 2005).

In summary, the research literature spanning authentic leadership and authenticity is expansive. As suggested by Gardner et al. (2011) there is an opportunity to build upon authentic leadership theory by incorporating a perspective that embraces multiple disciplines. Lehman et al. (2019) encourage future research to consider that authenticity is all in the eye of the beholder. Thus, researchers should consider what meaning of authenticity is being invoked and from what perspective. This will help in conceptualizing the construct in a way that the research process balances the ability to communicate and theorize while still allowing for creativity and flexibility (Hirsch & Levin, 1999). They also suggest considering the temporal nature of authenticity and how it may change over time. Researchers could be well-served by offering "context-specific" conceptualizations (Suddaby, 2010: 348) of authenticity to account for the dynamics of change.

Lehman et al.'s (2019) assessment of similarities, differences and the relationship between themes serves as a steppingstone towards developing an integrated framework of authenticity.

We can better understand what it means to be an authentic leader by answering the research question: "What does it mean to be authentic in the context of leadership?" This question is important because it recognizes that authenticity as an independent phenomenon of leadership must be defined in order to move towards clarity in defining what it means to be an authentic leader, which is context specific. I believe this approach integrates the spirit of both Gardner et al.'s (2011) and Lehman et al.'s (2019) recommended approaches. The answer to this question can only be fully understood by engaging leaders and how they experience and understand their own authenticity. As a result, this research paper will use an interpretive qualitative approach leveraging the grounded theory methodology to solicit input directly from leaders.

CHAPTER 3: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS – GROUNDED THEORY

According to Gephart, Jr. (2004), research needs to use methodologies that are consistent with the assumptions and aims of the theoretical view being expressed. Because authenticity is not anchored in a definition that can be easily measured, I have developed an interpretive study using a grounded theory method. As suggested by some of the literature, how one defines authenticity can be highly subjective. Interpretive research should seek to understand the meanings and concepts used by social actors in real settings (Gephart, Jr., 2004). Thus, gathering qualitative data from leaders through one-on-one interviews will provide an understanding of how the subjects make meaning of their own reality and determination of authenticity. The divergent perspectives of how each subjective reality impacts the subjects' leadership begins to steer the study towards a better understanding of what it means to be authentic in the context of leadership.

The sample of leaders interviewed were identified via my extended professional network. It's important to acknowledge how interviewing members of my extended network could lead to forms of bias. First, we tend to attract people that are like ourselves. Though I'm not categorizing interview subjects as strong or weak in authenticity, I do recognize that there is the possibility that the subjects may view authenticity in similar ways as I do. Two, I may have some level of familiarity with the people and stories that are shared. Both could potentially influence my own bias, but I will attempt to minimize that by using an independent coder for calculating inter-rater agreement.

A total of fourteen leaders participated in the interviews, and represented diverse backgrounds as it relates to age, race, gender, industries and levels of professional experience. A minimum requirement for each subject was to have at least five years of direct people leadership

experience. A detailed and summary of the interview participant profiles are outlined in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

Figure 1. Research Interview Subject Demographics Detail (Study 1)

Research Interview Subject Demographics Details							
Title	**Industry experience**	**Largest scope of direct responsibility (FTE)**	**Professional experience (yrs)**	**Leadership experience (yrs)**	**Gender**	**Race**	**Education Level**
Senior. Vice President, Chief Human Resources Officer (ret.)	Chemical, telecommunications, healthcare, business services	700	33	31	M	White/Hispanic	Master's
President (ret.)	*Diversified financial services, chemical, materials	15,000	44	35	M	Black/African-American	Master's
Chief Financial Officer	Investment banking, restaurants, consumer goods, manufacturing	900	20	12	F	White/Caucasian	Bachelor's
Founder/CEO	Home services	30	10	10	M	White/Caucasian	Master's
Senior Vice President	*Diversified financial services	1,000	35	25	F	White/Caucasian	Bachelor's
Senior Vice President	*Diversified financial services, higher education, pharmaceuticals	200	23	15	M	Black/African-American	Master's
Manager	Healthcare, facilities management, *diversified financial services	12	18	12	F	Other	Bachelor's
Chief Commercial Officer	*Diversified financial services	4,000	32	20	M	Black/African-American	Master's
Founder/CEO	*Diversified financial services, professional services	10	36	29	M	Black/African-American	Doctoral
Head of Strategy	*Diversified financial services	325	25	18	F	White/Caucasian	Bachelor's
Vice President	*Diversified financial services	180	24	21	M	Hispanic/Other	Bachelor's
Director	Military, health & wellness, *diversified financial services, telecommunications	10	37	17	F	White/Caucasian	Master's
Executive Director	Construction, *diversified financial services	250	15	8	M	White/Caucasian	Bachelor's
Vice President	*Diversified financial services	450	32	30	M	White/Caucasian	Master's

***Note:** Diversified financial services includes the following products and services: credit card, mortgage, consumer and business retail banking, corporate banking, life insurance, group insurance, annuities, retirement planning services and asset management

Figure 2. Research Interview Subject Demographics Summary (Study 1)

Research Interview Subject Demographics Summary							
# of leaders interviewed	**# of industries represented**	**Scope of responsibility**	**Professional experience**	**Leadership experience**	**Gender**	**Race**	**Education Level**
14	18 industries	10 – 15,000 FTE	27.4 years (avg.), range of 10 – 44 years	20.2 years (avg.), Range of 8 – 35 years	Male (64.3%) Female (35.7%)	Black (28.6%) Hispanic (7.1%) Other (14.3%) White (50.0%)	Bachelor's (42.9%) Master's (50.0%) Doctoral (7.1%)

The interviews were semi-structured and consisted of 23 questions divided into three themes. The goal of the interview was to understand how subjects perceived authenticity across three dimensions: conceptual, observational and experiential. The first theme included "general" questions related to authenticity and leadership. The second and third themes were related to examples of high team and low team success respectively. As with semi-structured interviews, based on participant responses, additional questions were asked which further provided insight into how leaders experience feelings of stronger or weaker authenticity. There were also eight questions asked to capture demographic information. The interview guide is included as Figure 3.

Figure 3. Semi-Structured Interview Questions (Study 1)

Dimension	Semi-Structured Interview Questions

General	- In your own words, how would you describe what it means to be authentic?
	- On a scale of 1 - 10, how would you describe your level of self-awareness? Please explain your rating.
	  o What factors/practices do you believe contribute to your level of self-awareness?
	- Tell me about a time in your leadership experience when you felt like you were most authentic (provide background and organizational context - key stakeholders, your role, your team's role, etc.).
	  o What were the predominant feelings, emotions, etc. that help to explain you feeling most authentic?
	  o How did feeling a high level of authenticity impact your decision-making?
	- Tell me about a time in your leadership experience when you felt like you were the least authentic (provide background and organizational context - key stakeholders, your role, your team's role, etc.).
	  o What were the predominant feelings, emotions, etc. that help to explain you feeling the least authentic?
	  o How did feeling a low level of authenticity impact your decision-making?
	  o In your opinion what were some of the barriers that stopped you from feeling more authentic?
	- Think about the most authentic leader you've worked with. What about them stands out to you? What makes them appear authentic to you?
	- What are some of the similarities you see in being authentic as a leader compared to being authentic in your personal life?
	- What are some of the differences you see in being authentic as a leader compared to being authentic in your personal life?

Figure 3. (Continued)

Dimension	Semi-Structured Interview Questions

High Team Success	- Tell me about how you felt you showed up as a leader in a situation of high team success (provide background and organizational context - key stakeholders, your role, your team's role, etc.).
	- How would you describe the team dynamics during situations of high success?
	- Think back to the example where your team performed at a high level and went above and beyond expectations...
	  o On a scale of 1 - 10, what would you rate your level of authenticity during that experience? Please explain your rating.
	  o On a scale of 1 - 10, what would you rate your level of clarity of the outcomes you were intending the team to create? Please explain your rating.
	  o On a scale of 1 - 10, how would you describe your level of openness to other perspectives/ideas? Please explain your rating.

Low Team Success	- Tell me about how you felt you showed up as a leader in a situation of low team success (provide background and organizational context - key stakeholders, your role, your team's role, etc.).
	- How would you describe the team dynamics during situations of low success?
	- Think back to the example where your team performed at a low level and didn't meet expectations...
	  o On a scale of 1 - 10, what would you rate your level of authenticity during that experience? Please explain your rating.
	  o On a scale of 1 - 10, what would you rate your level of clarity of the outcomes you were intending the team to create? Please explain your rating.
	  o On a scale of 1 - 10, how would you describe your level of openness to other perspectives/ideas? Please explain your rating.

Demographic	- What is your name? - What organization do you currently work for? - What industries have you worked in? - What's the most senior title you've held? - What is your highest level of education achieved? - How would you describe your race? - How many years of professional work experience do you have? - How many years of leadership experience do you have? - What's the FTE count of the largest team you've led or had responsibility for?

Data Collection

All interviews were performed face-to-face or via video conference based on the subjects' location and availability. The audio from the interviews were recorded on a smart phone and subsequently transcribed using the software service Temi. The output text data files were copy and pasted into Microsoft Word and loaded into the Nvivo software. Nvivo was then used to order and arrange the transcribed data. The data set was analyzed using the grounded theory approaches of open, axial and theoretical coding processes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This approach helped to identify themes and concepts related to authenticity in leadership.

Data Analysis

Staying true to the interplay between data collection and theorization, which is a foundation of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), preliminary analysis began after about half of the interviews were completed. Interview notes and analytic memos were created as the data were reviewed. This preliminary analysis led to augmenting some of the questions that did not lead to relevant responses from the subjects. The comprehensive analysis and interpretation of results followed four stages (e.g. Corley & Gioia, 2004; Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006).

The first phase of analysis included loading all transcribed interviews into the Nvivo software. Once loaded, I identified interview passages that were related to the interview subjects' references of authenticity. Specifically, the identified passages focused on how authenticity was conceptualized, observed and experienced. A total of 175 passages were identified and became the foundation for the second phase coding process.

During the second phase, open coding and grouping of the 175 passages into first-order codes was completed using Nvivo. The first-order codes were analyzed via several iterations so that each coded group could be discreetly defined, eliminating any duplicate or similar codes. The open coding process led to the creation of 46 unique first-order codes.

The third phase of analysis included coaxial coding where convergent and divergent themes were identified amongst the first-order codes. Here, there were also several iterations of analysis to ensure that the first-order codes matched with the second-order themes. During the first iteration, I allowed the data to drive the matching process. The second iteration included a consolidation of second-order themes. The coaxial coding process led to a total of nine second-order themes.

I assessed interrater reliability by having an independent doctoral student review the 175 coded interview passages and 46 first-order codes. The student independently re-coded each passage and we had a discussion to compare notes and share perspectives on definitions and theoretical considerations. The first iteration led to an interrater reliability rate of 65.97% at the first-order code level. After further discussion, the doctoral student and I agreed on consolidating and re-naming several of the first-order codes. This led to a final total of 44 unique first-order codes.

We performed a second test for interrater reliability using a 20% sample of all coded passages. For the second measurement of interrater reliability I focused on agreement at the second-order theme level rather than the first-order code level. This was a better measurement of agreement because interpretation of the first-order codes was nuanced. This understanding came out during the discussion between me and the doctoral student. For example, the first coder might code a passage with “desire to fit-in” while the second coder might code the same passage as “operating filtered.” There is a relationship between the codes as the subject might’ve operated filtered because of their desire to fit in. However, what is more important from an analysis

perspective is that both codes fall under the theme of “fear” which moves us towards an elevated level of theoretical abstraction and understanding. Based on the second iteration of independent coding and discussion, measuring interrater reliability at the second-order theme level led to an agreement rate of 91.43%.

The fourth and final phase of analysis was characterized by the inclusion of theoretical considerations based on the second-order themes that emerged. That led to an evaluation of how some of the second-order themes converged and diverged, along with the creation of conceptual references that were theoretically relevant. This is an important aspect to recognize because it began creating clarity around the various dimensions of authenticity in leadership based on the grounded theory methodology. This phased analysis approach of conducting interviews and coding data as an iterative process continued until I reached theoretical saturation, where no new insights, codes or themes emerged from the data (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). At that point, my conclusion was that additional interviews would no longer yield new information or conceptual insights.

Study 1 Findings

The research study results led to four key findings: 1) development of a definition of authenticity, 2) supporting evidence of seven previously identified authentic leadership construct variables, 3) discovery of two new variables that relate to a leaders level of authenticity, and 4) development of a preliminary conceptual model for the construct strong authenticity in leadership.

Finding 1 - Defining Authenticity

In order to begin answering the research question "What does it mean to be authentic in the context of leadership," it's important to recognize that authenticity has been defined in many ways across disciplines such as psychology, philosophy, literature and religion for centuries. Thus, when arriving to a definition, grounding one's underlying assumptions is important. However, for this study because a grounded theory methodology was used, I tried to limit my level of personal bias and assumptions, allowing for conclusions to be drawn from the interpretive results of the data. This approach forges a path towards validating prior researchers' assumptions about authenticity and creating new ones where appropriate.

Leveraging the strategy of understanding authenticity through conceptual, observational and experiential lenses, I was able to develop a deep consideration for how leaders perceived what it meant to be authentic by analyzing the most frequently cited first-order codes. These "descriptors" emerged from interview questions related to how the interview subjects defined authenticity, the characteristics they saw in other leaders and their own personal experiences of feeling different levels of authenticity. These descriptors were subsequently grouped based on whether they described stronger or weaker levels of authenticity.

First-Order Codes - Authenticity Descriptors

Strong Authenticity Descriptors

There was a total of nine descriptors used to characterize authenticity. Five descriptors of those descriptors were associated with stronger levels of authenticity. They included being true to

the self, acceptance, low-ego, transparency and vulnerability. The four descriptors describing weaker levels of authenticity were drained energy, operating filtered, self-preservation and hiding – not speaking up. This study's definitions for each of the nine descriptors can be found in Table 2 and Table 3 in the Appendix. However, each descriptor will also be explained in detail below.

Being true to self was described in several ways, including doing what feels "true to you" and operating in a manner that feels comfortable or at ease. However, the most common understanding from the interview subjects was that being true to the self included an orientation or anchoring around some internal set of beliefs or values. This was their "true north" in dictating how they showed up and performed their duties as a leader in their organization. One executive, a chief financial officer, defined being true to the self as

> …sticking to what you believe who you are makes you happy." They would go on to also explain the opposite: "If I'm not being true to myself, I'm not being true to my team. I'm not being true to the company. And I'm not gonna perform as well because I don't believe in it.
>
> - Chief Financial Officer

Another respondent had a similar perspective, relating being true to the self to some form of internal orientation, "*…true self in the end, consciously or unconsciously, hopefully we all have a set of principles, guiding parameters to how you conduct your life and yourself,"* Chief Human Resources Officer.

As a descriptor of strong authenticity, leaders described acceptance as having had a strong sense of who they were and being comfortable with that. One interview subject who led a front-line team described a scenario where they moved from weaker to stronger levels of authenticity:

> Part of it was just accepting who I am. And then just standing in my own power. That's been a big thing for me these past couple of years is like, take out the unicorn horn. It's okay. Stand in your, your unique power and just be that person. And there's gonna be people who like you. There's going to be people who don't like you. And that's okay.
>
> - Front Line Manager

They would go on to say how standing in their personal power created a sense of ease about working with their manager, peers and direct team. A senior leader in HR described how they became more accepting of themselves over time and how that has increased their level of authenticity:

> Interestingly enough, I would say in my 23 years [of professional experience] I had not been as authentic as I've been in this year, in 2019. And so I would say in my current role and what I do today, I think because I've been able to accept a lot of things about myself, it's allowed me to not carry that baggage that was always running in the back of my head.
>
> - Senior Leader, Human Resources

Beyond acceptance of self, when reflecting on observations and experiences of stronger authenticity, leaders were able to recollect acceptance of others. More specifically, the leaders embraced the perspectives of others when it came to providing decision-making input or allowing employees to bring their whole selves to work. A senior leader for a leading financial services firm explained how participative decision-making was used as a strategy to engage the team:

> …just to be attentive to the team…to listen carefully to what they had to say, to respect their input and feedback and to make decisions in a way that showed them that I cared about what they had to say.
>
> - Senior Leader, Financial Services

Another senior leader expressed how they encouraged the team to work through differences and to share parts of their world with one another:

> It looks like good conflict. Okay. Questioning to understand, not to dissuade. Celebration, sincere interests in one's assignments, in one's life. It was us going to each other's world to experience difference. I never went to a Catholic church before, but one of the trips was going to Joe's church. So as a group we went there. Claire loved heavy metal rock. So one of the trips was going to a heavy metal rock bar. It meant working together, communicating together and asking questions.
>
> - Founder/CEO, Professional Services

Acceptance was a descriptor that had multiple layers to consider. Acceptance of self and even of others can be seen pretty obviously. However, embracing differences and allowing others to bring more of themselves to the workplace are forms of acceptance that might appear a bit more nuanced.

When the leader led in a way that put the team's or organization's mission and objectives above their own, they were characterized as having a low ego. This descriptor showed up in several examples, often times when the interview subjects were observing another leader. One senior leader described their manager as operating in a highly authentic manner, and the leader never put themselves before the good of the organization and its customers:

> Everything that she does from a professional perspective, she comes at it from "What is best for the company and the customer?" And I think that that is so authentic in that it's not about what's best for me personally. She sacrificed a lot in order to be able to drive to her own value system around being focused on what's right for the company, not herself, not the U S businesses, not anything, you know, personal. And she's been successful at doing that, which I think is really inspiring.
>
> - Senior Leader, Financial Services

The fourth descriptor of strong authenticity was transparency. This descriptor was primarily explained by two different attributes: 1) open communication and 2) an inability to hide who they are. Open communication was a critical aspect, especially when details were ambiguous, or all parts

of the messaging was unknown. During times of strong authenticity, the leader was more willing to share information to engage followers. A former CTO, who led a successful organizational transformation for a large asset management firm, shared how they made communication a priority as a way to inform followers, increase transparency and reduce fear in the environment:

> I learned a ton about how to communicate openly. Even if there isn't a lot you can say to just at least make people connected and feel like I was taking them with me, and I wasn't leaving them behind. So, I had a responsibility to the people working for me. How can I talk to them about the potential that they may lose their jobs without causing them to be completely afraid or without saying anything and being untruthful? I couldn't do that. So, I pushed a lot internally to allow open communication, which was not at all well received initially by the CEO. His view was let's not say anything. And you know, my point was 'we're all adults who took jobs in a sort of, you know, employment at will basis. And so, I think individuals are owed the opportunity to hear what may or may not happen for them and being able to make a decision.' So long story, but I felt like it was a turning point for me from a leadership standpoint.
>
> - Former Chief Technology Officer

The second attribute of transparency was an inability for leaders to hide parts of who they are. Specifically, parts of them that were unavoidable in becoming public knowledge made it easier for the leader to acknowledge as part of themselves. An African American executive discussed how leaders are unable to hide differences like skin color, which can force a certain level of authenticity.

> I've seen more authenticity in different people like women and men of color who have gone to the top where they can't hide who they are. The color of their skin is not like the other colors of skin. You know, it's that those people tend, in my view, to be forced to be [more authentic], they have no choice.
>
> - Retired Business Unit President

They went on to share how the firm's transition to a female CEO began to change some of the collective attitudes and norms amongst the executive team. The new CEO was a mother of two. And,

her transparency to acknowledge the priority that she placed on her children and her desire to support them, began to create new behaviors that supported a different type of work life balance within the executive team. These behaviors also began to cascade down the organization.

The fifth and final descriptor of strong authenticity was vulnerability. Leaders were willing to share deeper parts of who they truly were to their followers and/or shared emotions or thoughts that might be considered less socially acceptable in some corporate environments. Due to the phenomenon of positive modeling, where followers emulate the behaviors of the leaders (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), the followers embraced sharing more of themselves, which in turn began to shift the environment. When describing feelings of strong authenticity during a stretch assignment that would challenge their abilities, one interview respondent described being vulnerable with their team on the first day.

> And I was honest with the group of people that we got together that represented the core to say that this is an intimidating thing for me and here's what I bring to it and here are the deficiencies that I bring to it as well. I don't have any background in technology. I'm flawed in these ways and I was completely transparent with them and we're going to work through it together. So, it changed the dynamic. I think that's probably an example when I was the most authentic because I laid out my vulnerabilities from the start and said, 'this is, these are some of the challenges I look to overcome with your help. And these are some of the things that I bring to the role, that I think you can benefit from me and following my lead.'
>
> - Senior Leader, Financial Services

The leader's overall approach challenged the team to operate differently, leading to a collaborative effort to achieve high performing results together.

Weak Authenticity Descriptors

The research conclusions yielded four weak authenticity descriptors, operating filtered, drained energy, self-preservation and hiding – not speaking up, described by the interview respondents. The most prevalent weak authenticity descriptor was operating filtered (n=17). Leaders would knowingly and unknowingly operate in ways to suppress parts of who they truly were. For this particular code, there were also two sub-codes connected to the descriptor; personal discomfort and playing the corporate game. Leaders recollected feeling misaligned or a level of personal discomfort when they knowingly operated filtered. In addition, the leaders' perception of the environment and the need to conform to organizational norms and values in order to get ahead was a reason that they often operated in a filtered manner. One executive, who prided themselves on consistently operating with strong levels of authenticity, described observing other leaders who played the corporate game and operated in a manner that wasn't true to themselves:

> You know, I see people and I've watched them as leaders. They change. They be who they think people want them to be. And it's fake, right? It is fake. It is not true to themselves. And they're just like, you don't know who they are. Their teams don't know who they are because they shift. They shift to what they believe in and the way they act in their culture based on who their leader is. And that drives me crazy.
>
> - Chief Financial Officer

The second weak authenticity descriptor, drained energy, leaders felt like they exerted significant emotional and mental energy in order to act in a manner that conformed with expectations of their organization. Some leaders described this feeling of wearing a mask that hid who they were. And, the weight of wearing that mask day in and day out was draining for them. According to one respondent, "*And I think that was probably one of the things that prevented me from being super authentic because I had different faces for different situations. And that's a lot of*

work…a lot of brain power. It's exhausting." Sometimes the weight of feeling weaker levels of authenticity also led to physical symptoms: *"I could feel like my shoulders kind of coming down, you know. It definitely impacted my energy levels and I wasn't excited about coming to work. It just started to have this domino effect," according to one interview respondent.*

Self-preservation described leaders feeling like they needed to simply survive their circumstances. This compromised their willingness to demonstrate strong authenticity. Examples of self-preservation were usually accompanied by the leaders' personal fears. Despite difficult work circumstances, when experiencing self-preservation, leaders also considered their personal circumstances when deciding how to show up. A respondent explained the experience of being identified as a high potential employee and navigating their career while working for a racist manager:

> And so, I operated for a year or so on guard…filtered that I couldn't be myself with him. I had to find how to, you know, still demonstrate capabilities while I did it in a way that everything I did I had to think through, you know, so I was almost operating through an interpreter. And that was very hard for me. It was a tough time for my family because emotionally it was just taking a lot of energy for me to survive. That's when my kids were born. Okay? So, there was a lot going on at that time. And that was a very difficult time in my life.
>
> - Retired Business Unit President

Whether it was personal financial obligations or experiencing a divorce, these factors were part of the leaders' decision-making process when determining how much of themselves to reveal in the workplace. They took on a mindset of just doing what they needed to do in order to keep everything afloat; even if that meant not being their truest self.

The final weak authenticity descriptor was hiding – not speaking up. This was experienced when leaders suppressed their opinions out of fear. The fear could be based on their perception of

potential judgment from others, belief about repercussions for disagreeing with someone of higher authority or general concern with taking an unpopular position. When describing their experience with low performing teams, one leader shared the following:

> I've been part of teams that weren't as successful. There was that hiding…it's about the manager and I don't want the manager to feel like I'm incapable. I'll blow past that important appointment for my child because I got to make sure my manager feels like [I'm capable].
>
> - Senior Leader, Human Resources

Sometimes factors such as race played a part in the decision to operate filtered. An African American senior leader expressed a concern about being too authentic during their time in banking.

> I worked directly for the director of customer service and TQM. White, female, ball buster. But she saw something in me and took me out of HR training to work directly under her for a special project. Tough. I was inauthentic at times or less authentic at times. I didn't raise my hand and ask what [something] meant. I went to go find out. I didn't want her to think I was dumb, stupid or wasn't smart enough, which meant a lot of extra work.
>
> - Founder/CEO, Professional Services

When experiencing hiding – not speaking up, leaders clearly were not presenting their truest selves due to some form of fear.

Second-Order Authenticity Themes

From an analysis perspective, each of the highest frequency first-order codes describing strong and weak levels of authenticity were reviewed and examined for convergent and divergent themes. There were two commonalities which led to the creation of the second-order themes;

"internal values and beliefs" and "external expression." Internal values and beliefs refer to the internal thoughts, feelings, emotions, beliefs or values that we are often aware of but sometimes not. They are critical in guiding whether we are being true to the self. External expression is the manifestation of the actions or behaviors that may follow the internal values and beliefs. One interview respondent described the relationship between internal values and beliefs and external expression when explaining what it means to be authentic:

> I think [being authentic] means to be in complete alignment with your personal values, and in your abilities. But primarily in your actions. I think it means that it's in line with what you're doing and how you're behaving…alignment between what you consider to be your, your personal values structure.
>
> - Founder/CEO, Home Services

In this quote, the internal values and beliefs is the personal values that the leader is using as an internal compass of being true to the self. The external expression is the associated actions or behaviors that follow.

Conceptual References

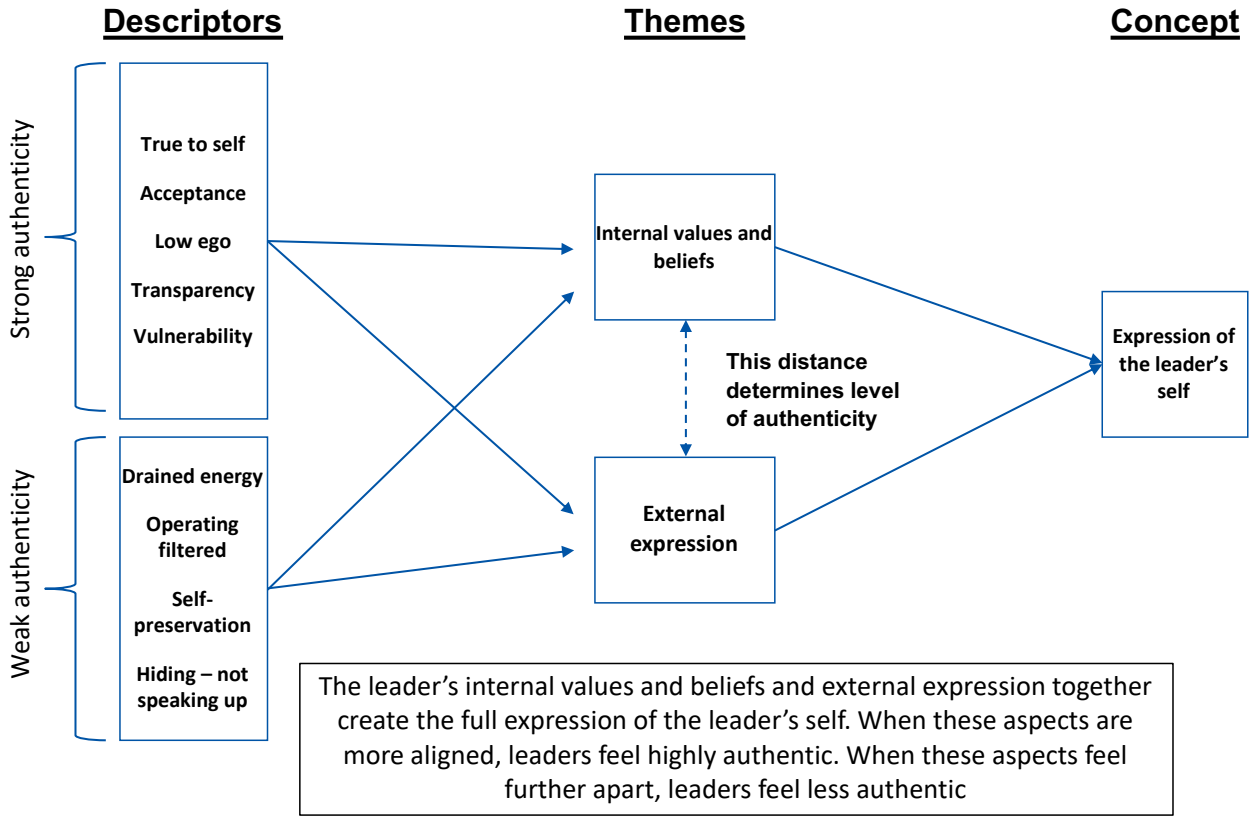
The aforementioned quote begins to offer an explanation of the relationship between the internal values and beliefs and external expression, leading to a more abstract conceptual reference that can be used to define authenticity. When there is congruence between these aspects one experiences a stronger level of authenticity. When there is an experience of misalignment or a lack of congruence, one experiences weaker levels of authenticity. This comparison mirrors the sentiment of

Roberts et al. (2009) who described authenticity as "the subjective experience of alignment between one's internal experiences and external expressions."

Consequently, stronger and weaker levels of authenticity are simply different forms of expression. Regardless of how authenticity levels are described, the internal values and beliefs and external expression together characterize how one is expressing who they are. Absent of any type of judgment, authenticity can be defined as "the expressing of one's self." And, there are infinite forms of expression. They vary from what we say, to how we say it, to the decisions we make, etc. Since these two aspects are working together all the time, we are all expressing ourselves all the time, despite authenticity levels potentially shifting from moment to moment as one's internal values and beliefs and context change. Since we are all authentic all the time, authenticity is not black or white, either or, it must exist on a continuum. This assumption about authenticity has also been described by Erickson (1995) and Heidegger (1962) who explained that authenticity is best recognized as existing on a continuum where the more people stay true to their values, identities, emotions and preferences, the more authentic they become. They also concluded that the perceived distance between internal values and beliefs and external expression can help to understand one's level of authenticity along that continuum.

Figure 4 below shows the connection between authenticity descriptors, internal values and beliefs, external expression and expression.

Figure 4. Connection Between Authenticity Descriptors and Leader's Expression of Self



Due to the nature of authenticity, only the leader can fully understand their own level of authenticity. The internal values and beliefs and external expression are completely relative and subject to the leader's prior history and experience, which informs the perspective by which they judge their own authenticity level. For example, an executive shared how their prior experiences have shaped who they are today:

> You ask about personal authenticity and authenticity in the workplace. Maybe those aren't your words, but I sort of get the sense that those may be different. So, I would say for me I have a much different perspective on it than I might have 10 years ago and 10 years before that and 10 years before that. So, a lot of it for me has been a journey.
>
> - Former Chief Technology Officer

What is clear is that how experiences are perceived makes each journey unique. Thus, every perspective of determining a leader's authenticity level is also unique. This means that the leader has the best insight into whether they are experiencing a stronger or weaker level of authenticity.

To further expand on this, outside observers cannot understand the full expression of the leader because they don't have access to the leader's internal values and beliefs. In turn, followers cannot know the full level of authenticity of a leader. Instead, when viewing the leader, what followers experience is a level of alignment or misalignment between their own internal values and beliefs and the leader's external expression because the external expression is all the follower has access to. And, this relationship doesn't tell us the leader's authenticity level. However, this scenario might help us understand the relationship between leaders, their followers and the environment. This relationship begins to introduce authenticity as conformity per Lehman et al. (2019).

Finding 2 – Existing Authentic Leadership Construct Variables

Personal History/Experience

Personal history/experience is an antecedent in Gardner et al.'s (2005) self-based conceptual model of authentic leadership. In this study, leaders expressed how their prior experiences shaped their perception of who they were at a particular moment. In addition, there was a general recognition that leaders perceived a different level of authenticity present day than what they perceived when they reflected on past experiences. This led to several leaders describing "authenticity as a journey" and as a concept that shifts:

> Early in my career I didn't want anybody to know anything about me. I just decided I wanted to be very private and I wanted to control who I connected to… but it's like nobody can hurt you even if they really know who you are. As I've grown up, as I've matured, as I've gotten more confident in like who I am…and it's okay to be who you are.
>
> - Director, Financial Services

As leaders took on roles, significant past experiences shaped how they perceived current experiences. Similar to Gardner et al.'s (2005) self-based model, there is evidence to support that personal history/experience is an antecedent in the conceptual model of authenticity in leadership.

Perception of Context

Context is recognized as a variable in the self-based authentic leadership conceptual model by Gardner et al. (2005). This research study found support for this variable and its relationship to authenticity in leadership. And, the study was able to identify some specific aspects of context that influenced leaders' authenticity levels.

The most prevalent code by frequency (n=24), environment, fell under the theme of context. However, the theme of context included not only the environment but other factors such as position within the organization and relationships. Subjects often would explain that they felt the need to be different at home than at work. Willingness to be vulnerable and different values were cited as reasons to operate at a different level of authenticity based on the environment. In essence, subjects felt more authentic in their personal lives because of the more intimate connections with family and friends. The environment that these close connections established over time felt safer than the workplace in terms of the leaders expressing themselves.

Contextually, leaders also considered their position, how high they ranked in the organization and the relationships with their managers and followers as critical factors in determining how much

of themselves they chose to reveal. The more leaders felt there was personal congruence to the context (i.e. the leader's true self aligns to the environment, their role and/or relationships), the stronger their level of authenticity. When there was a sense of misalignment, in general, they operated in a filtered way that made them feel constrained or weaker authenticity. Several subjects spoke of observing or experiencing their professional roles differently from their personal or familial roles, as shared by this interview participant:

> I think what I see in others, a lot of times it's the work person and the home person. They're very different people. To me that's too hard. Right? I just want to be me. And so I try not to be a different person at work than I am at home. I treat my team like a family or my family at work, just like my family at home. That's just sort of how I lead. But I do see people that, gosh, they're so different. You know them outside of work and at work and you're like, 'Are you the same person?'
>
> - Chief Financial Officer

This finding begins to help in understanding the various filters that leaders may apply based on the environment, roles that they are asked to play and relationships.

Positive Psychological Capital

This study found that during leaders' experiences of strong authenticity, they were able to deliver results that exceeded expectations despite using new methods or approaches and managing through setbacks. One of the subjects, who at the time was president of a 15,000 FTE organization, shares his experience of inheriting a stagnant business unit:

> And I decided that my mark on this business, what was going to be different about this business through my leadership, was we were going to break that dynamic around growth. There was a lot of skepticism in the beginning, but I was able to get people aligning around trying to figure out how to do that. I defined the goal as we're going to figure out how to double this business in the next five years. And we, in the five years, the business did achieve 90% of its goal of doubling. But the paradigm was broken! And the momentum in the business, that whole attitude about the business and the company's willingness to invest in the business, changed. And the business became a place where people wanted to be.
>
> - Retired Business Unit President

These leaders demonstrated some of the aspects of positive psychological capital, which is characterized by confidence, hope, optimism and resilience (Luthans, Luthans & Luthans, 2003). According to Luthans, Luthans & Luthans (2003), positive psychological capital can contribute benefits such as higher productivity and improved employee retention.

Trust

Gardner et al. (2005) assert that trust is built between the leader and follower in part because of the level of transparency of authentic leaders. Over time, this creates a set of expectations grounded in common beliefs and historical actions. This study found support that leaders who felt strong authenticity built relationships up and down the organization that were grounded in trust. These leaders demonstrated confidence and transparency which instilled trust from their managers, followers and stakeholders. A senior technology leader explained this dynamic in one of the interviews:

> There was a CIO and CTO that believed in me because they had worked enough with me in the past. So, I knew I had support. They actually saw me operate and how I worked with people and the relationships that I would build, not only with the team that I was gonna take over, but also with stakeholders and my business partners.
>
> - Executive Director, Financial Services

Positive Modeling

This study also found support of followers demonstrating attributes of positive modeling. As the leaders demonstrated strong authenticity, followers began to mirror the behaviors of the leader. According to Avolio & Gardner (2005), positive modeling (in addition to self-awareness and self-regulation) is a critical element of leaders helping to develop authenticity in their followers. Leaders shared stories of how when they began to see the environment shift, their followers would begin emulating their behaviors.

> I opened up; I was being authentic. But then they were too. But I think because I opened up, it started this domino effect with [the team] and it just created a really good working environment and we were able to get quite a bit done. We had a lot of tough deadlines, but folks work together really, really well.
>
> - Director, Financial Services

This emulation included demonstrations of higher transparency, willingness to be vulnerable, bringing one's whole self to work and developing environments that felt safe to speak up and express opinions.

Leader Mental Well-Being

When a leader demonstrates alignment between their internal values and beliefs and external expression, that congruence yields a sense of well-being (Kernis, 2003). The opposite is also true. When leaders feel misaligned, they have less of a sense of well-being. This study found support for both of these experiences. When leaders experienced strong levels of authenticity, they felt energized, free and unconstrained. This led to confidence, clarity and lowered stress levels. One respondent described their transition of experiencing stronger authenticity:

> Joy. A sense of freedom. Tears sometimes. Because I've carried a weight for a long time and so to not have to carry that weight any longer feels good. So, I feel light. I feel focused too, which is nice.
>
> - Senior Leader, Human Resources

On the contrary, during periods of weak authenticity, leaders felt caged and depleted of energy because they masked who they truly were. As described in the quote below, several respondents shared perspectives where not feeling true to themselves used up their psychological capital: *"And I learned in my career that if I had to put energy in trying to act, I didn't have a lot of energy left to do what I needed to do,"* retired business unit president. Gardner et al. (2005) propose that a consequence of authentic leadership and followership is increased workplace well-being.

Psychological Safety

Another variable that emerged from this research as a result of authenticity in leadership is psychological safety. Psychological safety can be described as a sense of being able to show and employ self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status or career (Kahn, 1990). When sharing observations or experiences of feeling strong authenticity, leaders perceived the environment in a way that made them and their followers feel self. When describing the feelings and emotions of feeling strong authenticity, a chief commercial officer reflected on a story of creating a safe working environment:

> …the sense of bringing people together and creating safe places where people can agree and disagree actively, constructively, and even in animated ways, right? That may seem combative, but they love each other. And I think that's a hard thing to do…to create that kind of safety place where people can just go at it and then [say] "let's have a beer and some pizza." I was really happy about that. That I could create that kind of place where people can just have agitation but love that agitation. Because that's what it's about…that you get people so focused on the intention of what you want to do, that the work is then so real and transparent.
>
> - Former Chief Commercial Officer

Conversely, when feeling weaker authenticity, leaders were sometimes concerned about expressing themselves due to fear of judgement or retribution. Thus, leaders' feelings of psychological safety support a connection to authenticity.

Finding 3 – New Construct Variables

Fear

A new variable that emerged from this research as a moderator of authenticity in leadership is fear. Fear was described in various ways, including: a desire to fit in, feeling afraid, insecurity, judgment from others and perceived retribution. When subjects explained their experience of fear, their authenticity decreased regardless of their role in the organization or level of experience. One subject, a senior leader in human resources, explained a fear of being perceived as incapable by using an analogy:

> It's almost kind of like you're running this race and there's someone behind you and they're going to catch you. And if they catch you, people are going to find out that you are not who you say you are. And that can be super terrifying…especially if you've built yourself up to be a point where people feel like you are so capable.
>
> - Senior Leader, Human Resources

On the contrary, when fear wasn't experienced, leaders felt more open to taking risks in their decisions-making and expressed more of who they were to their followers.

Shifting Shared Agreements/Norms

One of the most interesting findings relates to the interviews from the sample of executives. Four of the five executives held positions where they were directly accountable for facilitating significant change for a large function or entire business unit. When these executives shared stories of feeling their most authentic, they all explained their ability to transform the areas they were responsible for. Beyond that, there was another interesting commonality. Each of them recognized that they consciously conformed to the environment for a period of time, despite the fact that they didn't feel like they were being their truest selves. As their careers progressed, they reached a position in the organization where they felt comfortable enough to reveal more of who they were. This revealing process was characterized by attributes such as increased transparency, high levels of vulnerability, embracing of others, including the recognition of follower's personal and professional selves and putting the team's goals above their own. It was through this revealing process that leaders were able to influence re-shaping the environment and its followers. They all began to influence the context.

One operations executive who encouraged an authentic work environment described transforming behaviors demonstrated by their team after announcing plans to offshore many of the team's jobs to India:

> So, then I held another all hands meeting and said, listen, I want to help you guys with something and I want us to all have an open conversation. We have to stop using terms like 'those people.' It's just 'us.' I said, can we agree that it's just us? It's just us humans. And [the team was] like, 'you know what? Yeah!' So [the team] created work teams and they decided to have a culture day and invited the India team over. They all dressed up in Indian garb and cooked Indian dishes. They learned how to do recipes. They created partnerships with people overseas before they came, and they had this big thing in the dining room. When we transitioned, the transition office told us no team had transitioned faster than us. No team had better results than us…and saved more money than us and had less retention bonuses and kept more people.
>
> - Former Chief Commercial Officer

These executives were the catalysts for their business transformations. Their sense of openness to other perspectives, encouragement of followers to bring their whole selves to work, transparency and vulnerability were all factors in shifting the environment. As followers began to mirror the behaviors and actions of their leader, new shared norms began to manifest. The emerging new "way of being" engaged followers in a way that created a different set of outcomes, including; higher levels of follower engagement, higher productivity and improved business performance. In essence, the stronger demonstration of authenticity displayed by the leader was instrumental in transforming direct constituents and the environment. It is important to recognize that all followers didn't necessarily change as a result of the leader. During times of transformation, individuals choose to embrace the emerging norms or decide that the new environment isn't a match and may choose to leave the department or organization.

More junior leaders who were interviewed in this study had similar experiences of leading transformations in their organizations but on a smaller scale, whether it was transforming a department or a team. My conclusion is that the shifting of shared norms and subsequent outcomes stemming from leaders' stronger levels of authenticity can be applied to leaders regardless of their level in the organizational hierarchy. However, the context, specifically the leaders' role in the

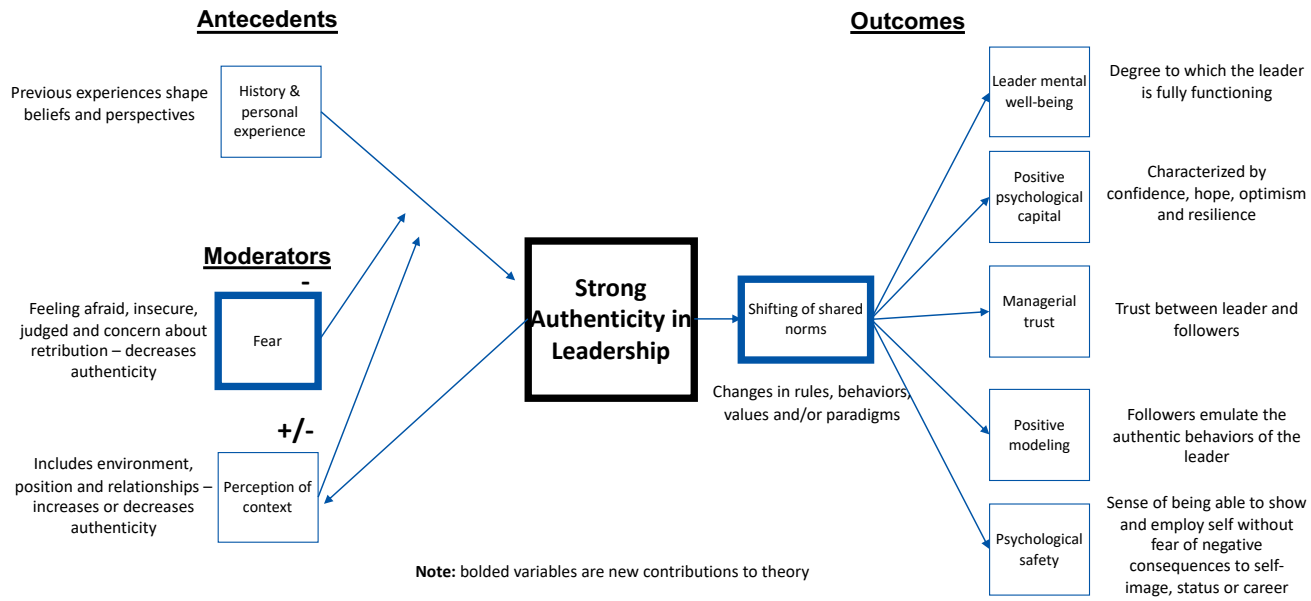
organization, can be an influencing factor on how significant the transformation can be. In addition, how the leader perceives their own role is a factor in the magnitude of the transformation.

Finding 4 – Conceptual Model

The analysis of new and existing variables from this study conclusions led to the creation of a preliminary conceptual model for the construct of strong authenticity in leadership as shown in Figure 5 below. This model is different from prior authentic leadership conceptual models in that there are no underlying assumptions regarding leadership characteristics. Instead, I'm recognizing that strong authenticity in leadership uses existing theoretical foundations of authentic leadership without defining it through a single school of thought. Instead, I've allowed the data to fully describe what it means to be authentic in leadership, rather than basing the construct solely on prior discovery, such as Avolio and Gardner's self-based model. It's important to recognize that this approach limits the conceptual model construct variables to only what was described by respondents in this study. Thus, it cannot be deemed as complete.

The construct variables for this strong authenticity in leadership conceptual model all emerged as a result of this study's grounded theory data analysis and fall into one of two categories. The first category are variables that have been discussed in prior authentic leadership literature and this study found support for them. These variables are personal history/experience, context, positive psychological capital, leader mental well-being, managerial trust and positive modeling. The second category of variables are newly identified variables that emerged from this study's data. They are fear, shifting of shared norms and psychology safety. This preliminary conceptual model creates an opportunity for further study of high authenticity in leadership.

Figure 5. Strong Authenticity in Leadership Conceptual Model



Study One Conclusion

In summary, this study used an interpretive grounded theory approach to 1) define authenticity in leadership, 2) identify support for existing variables of the authentic leadership construct, 3) identify new variables related to authenticity and leadership and 4) develop a preliminary conceptual model for the construct of strong authenticity in leadership. These conclusions align to prior authentic leadership findings yet are still preliminary in nature. This provides a basis for further authentic leadership theory discovery.

The next chapter describes Study Two, which builds on the findings of Study One. Study Two was conducted to focus and two key areas: 1) further investigate fear and shifting of shared norms, which are related to authenticity and leadership, and 2) refine the preliminary strong authenticity in leadership conceptual model presented in Study One.

CHAPTER 4: STUDY TWO – REFINING THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Introduction

Study One took a multi-disciplined approach and used a new methodology, grounded theory, to understand authenticity in the context of leadership. The results from Study One yielded four conclusions: 1) defined authenticity in leadership, 2) identified support for existing variables of the authentic leadership construct, 3) identified new variables related to authenticity in leadership and 4) developed a preliminary conceptual model for the construct of strong authenticity in leadership. In addition, Study One generated characteristics that describe both high and low levels of authenticity in leaders. Building on these conclusions, Study Two was designed to further develop two specific focus areas: 1) increase the level of understanding of the new construct variables of fear and shifting of shared norms discovered in Study One and 2) refine the strong authenticity in leadership conceptual model.

Fear and Authenticity

For the sake of this research project, I used the definition of fear that is aligned to several of Merriam-Webster's definitions (2019): 1) an unpleasant often strong emotion caused by anticipation of danger, 2) anxious concern and 3) reason for alarm. In Study One, the theme of fear was derived as a second-order theme based on the coding analysis. The first-order codes that described fear included: a desire to fit in, feeling afraid, insecurity, judgment from others and perceived retribution. Whenever fear was expressed by respondents, they always experienced weaker authenticity. Fear has not been explicitly mentioned as an antecedent or moderator in prior authentic leadership

literature. Thus, it's worth exploring its relationship to authenticity further. However, fear is a very complex phenomenon. And, understanding the connection between fear and authenticity could potentially require a full research program. As a result, understanding fear in Study Two will have a much more limited scope. However, understanding any additional ways that leaders may experience fear can help to refine our understanding of the conceptual model.

The first-order codes describing fear all emerged from a stimulus outside of the respondents. In the code "desire to fit in" respondents didn't feel comfortable being themselves and so they didn't reveal their true feelings in order to conform to the group. This phenomenon aligns with Lehman et al.'s (2019) description of authenticity as conformity. In Study One, this tension between individual authenticity and conforming to a group was mentioned or implied by many of the respondents. Often times, leaders revealed less of themselves out of fear in order to fit in and/or get ahead. As these leaders progressed in their careers and they become more comfortable, or in positions of power, they revealed more of themselves. As mentioned in my primary Study One conclusions, this was the impetus for transformational change of the group. However, in order to achieve that level of transformation, the leader was willing to demonstrate the courage of being a more authentic version of themselves as their perception of the context, which includes the environment and their role, changed. In essence their fear level was reduced as the context changed. Study Two intends to further understand the relationship between fear and perception of context.

Shifting of Shared Values

The most meaningful contribution from Study One was that leaders who experienced strong authenticity were able to transform the work environment by shifting shared norms, which included

changing values, rules, behaviors and paradigms. This finding is significant because authenticity as a catalyst for transformation and shifting of organizational norms has not been widely studied. However, there have been several studies that link authentic leadership to influencing organizational change and change processes. Alavi & Gill (2017) propose a theoretical framework whereby authentic leaders influence followers' attitudes towards change, resulting in higher levels of change readiness and support for change implementation. Similarly, Bakari, Hunjra and Niaji (2017) found support for how authentic leaders impact leader-follower behavior dynamics during planned change.

What was clear from Study One was that leaders sometimes experience personal tension as they participate in the work environment, which is fluid and unplanned. More specifically, they often adapt by learning to "play the game," which requires them to conform to the ever-changing environment they are in. When their perception shifted, either through feeling more comfortable or safe, or changing of roles, they began to reveal more of themselves to the environment. This revealing process led to shifts in aligning their internal values and behaviors and external expression (i.e. they became more authentic). Through these stronger demonstrations of authenticity, the environment changed as followers developed higher levels of trust in the leader, emulated the behaviors of the leader and felt safe to reveal themselves. In essence, there was a collective shift in the environment.

For Study Two, I made a slight change in how the variable shifting of shared norms is defined. And, rather than focusing on a shifting in shared norms, the focus was on a shifting in shared values. Rokeach (1973) proposed a definition for organizational values and states that "a value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence." Using this definition, there is an important distinction between values and norms. Norms are behavioral in nature. And, values are

antecedents of behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Per the preliminary conceptual model, it's the shifting of shared values that led to new (behavioral) outcomes for both leader and followers.

Furthermore, the definition of values not only better fits the phenomenon that surfaced in Study One, but it also creates alignment between the language that describes individual authenticity (i.e. internal values and beliefs) and collective or group authenticity (i.e. shared values). We understand shared values as being an important part of organizational culture, which further supports how leaders with stronger authenticity can be a catalyst for transformation that in theory could support organizational culture shifts.

Interview Questions

The interviews for Study Two were semi-structured and consisted of 26 questions. The questions were divided into three categorical themes: transformation and shifting of shared values, authenticity as consistency and conformity and fear. Following the approach of Study One, the questions were designed to understand how the categories of transformation, authenticity and fear are conceptualized, observed and/or experienced. Since the interviews were semi-structured, based on interview participant responses, additional questions were asked as needed to extract insights. There were also seven questions that captured demographic information from each respondent. The interview guide is included below in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Semi-Structured Interview Questions (Study 2)

Dimension	Semi-Structured Interview Questions
Successful Transformation / Shifting of Shared Norms Construct – Observed or Experienced	- Tell me about your experience of leading or participating in a **successful transformation** involving people needing to establish new behaviors or values (i.e. change of climate or culture, setting a new vision and mobilizing people, organizational changes, etc.) - Describe the environment before the transformation (including generally accepted behaviors or values) - Post-transformation, what were the new behaviors or values that emerged? - What do you think are some of the key factors that influenced the new behaviors or values that emerged? - During the transformation, what role did the leader (or you) play in the support of new behaviors or values? - After the transformation, how was the environment different?
Unsuccessful Transformation / Shifting of Shared Norms Construct – Observed or Experienced	- Tell me about your experience of leading or participating in an **unsuccessful transformation** involving people needing to shift their mindset (i.e. change of climate or culture, setting a new vision and mobilizing people, process change, etc.) - Describe the environment before the transformation (including generally accepted behaviors or values) - What do you think leaders (or you) could've done differently to support establishment of new behaviors or values? - What do you think are some of the key factors that influenced new behaviors or values not emerging?

Authenticity as Consistency and Conformity – Experienced	- Reflect on a time in your career when the climate or culture was changing. Think about the old culture and the new/emerging culture.
	  o Did you find yourself aligning to the old or new culture?
	- If aligned to the old culture…
	  o With the old culture, how did those feeling of alignment impact your ability to be true to yourself?
	  o With the new/emerging culture, how did those feeling of misalignment impact your ability to be true to yourself?
	- If aligned to the new culture…
	  o With the old culture, how did those feeling of misalignment impact your ability to be true to yourself?
	  o With the new/emerging culture, how did those feeling of alignment impact your ability to be true to yourself?

Figure 6. (Continued)

Dimension	Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Fear Construct – Conceptual, Observed and Experienced	- Reflect on a time when you've worked with or observed a leader who you thought operated from a position of uneasiness (i.e. they might've held back)…
	  o What did you specifically observe that led you to this conclusion?
	  o In your opinion, what was the impact to their performance?
	  o How would you describe the leader's level of being true to themselves?
	  o What are some of the factors that you think impact a leader's uneasiness?
	- Reflect on a time when you've worked with or observed a leader who you thought operated with a sense of ease…
	  o What did you specifically observe that led you to this conclusion?
	  o In your opinion, what was the impact to their performance?
	  o How would you describe the leader's level of authenticity (being true to themselves)?
	- As a leader, tell me about a time when you personally felt like you operated from a position of uneasiness…
	  o How did it impact your ability to be true to who you truly were (i.e. acting out your personal values and beliefs)?
	  o How do you believe it impacted your overall effectiveness and the outcomes you created?
	- As a leader, tell me about a time when you personally felt like you operated with a sense of ease…
	  o How did it impact your ability to be true to who you truly were (i.e. acting out your personal values and beliefs)?
	- How do you believe it impacted your overall effectiveness and the outcomes you created?

Demographic	- What organization do you currently work for? - What industries have you worked in? - What's the most senior title you've held? - How do you identify in terms of race? - How many years of professional work experience do you have? - How many years of leadership experience do you have? - What's the FTE count of the largest team you've led or had responsibility for?

Interview Participants

Leaders who participated in Study Two were a part of my extended network. These individuals also represented a diverse set of backgrounds and experiences; including diversity in age, race, gender and industries. Study One comprised leaders whose experience levels spanned middle management, senior leadership and executive leadership. Study Two included representation from only senior leaders and executive leaders. This adjustment was made because a primary emphasis for Study Two was to understand how authenticity can be a catalyst for transformation and the shifting of shared values. Because of the depth of their experience, leaders with more seniority will have a higher probability of being exposed to a variety of transformational types of initiatives. Middle-managers, on the other hand, usually have much more limited scopes in terms of responsibility and are rarely required to drive strategic change that is transformational in nature. The minimum qualifications for Study Two were to have operated in a senior or executive leadership capacity and have had at least ten years of direct people leadership experience. A detailed and summary of Study Two interview participant profiles are outlined in Figure 7 and Figure 8.

Figure 7. Research Interview Subject Demographics Detail (Study 2)

Research Interview Subject Demographics Details							
Title	**Industry experience**	**Largest scope of direct responsibility (FTE)**	**Professional experience (yrs)**	**Leadership experience (yrs)**	**Gender**	**Race**	**Education Level**
Senior Vice President, Human Resources	Research, non-profit, science and technical, professional services	45	25	20	M	White/Caucasian	Master's
President	Financial services, transportation, manufacturing, oil & gas	100	34	20	M	Black/African-American	Master's
Senior Vice President, Human Resources	Legal, manufacturing, industrial, retail, healthcare	300	21	10	M	White/Caucasian	Doctoral
Senior Vice President	Financial services	50	22	12	M	Black/African-American	Master's
Vice President	Financial services, publishing	60	24	15	F	Black/African-American	Bachelor's
Executive Vice President	Government, professional services, non-profit	180	20	14	M	Black/African-American	Master's
Chief Executive Officer	Engineering, professional services, healthcare	35	18	18	M	Asian	Master's
Vice President	Healthcare, professional services, education	125	34	16	F	White/Caucasian	Master's
Vice President	Financial services, military, non-profit, legal	3,000	30	30	F	White/Caucasian	Bachelor's
Vice President	Financial services	50	37	30	F	White/Caucasian	Bachelor's
Chief Executive Officer	Hospitality, retail, semiconductor, education	80	40	36	F	White/Caucasian	Master's
Senior Vice President	Nonprofit, health insurance, financial services	500	26	23	F	Black/African-American	Bachelor's

***Note:** Diversified financial services includes the following products and services: credit card, mortgage, consumer and business retail banking, corporate banking, life insurance, group insurance, annuities, retirement planning services and asset management

Figure 8. Research Interview Subject Demographics Summary (Study 2)

Research Interview Subject Demographics Summary							
# of leaders interviewed	**# of industries represented**	**Scope of responsibility**	**Professional experience**	**Leadership experience**	**Gender**	**Race**	**Education Level**
12	18 industries	35 – 3,000 FTE	27.6 years (avg.), range of 18 – 40 years	20.3 years (avg.), Range of 10 – 36 years	Male (50.0%) Female (50.0%)	Black (28.6%) Hispanic (7.1%) Other (14.3%) White (50.0%)	Bachelor's (33.3%) Master's (58.3%) Doctoral (8.3%)

Date Collection

The data collection process for Study Two followed nearly identical protocols from Study One. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no interviews were completed face-to-face and instead were conducted via Zoom video conference. Zoom was the primary data source, while an iPhone also recorded the audio from the interviews as a back-up data source. Overall, this actually improved the data quality because the interview environments were very controlled. The recorded audio interview data from Zoom, the primary data source, was transcribed using Trint, a software transcription service. Upon transcribing and cleaning the data, each cleaned interview data file was loaded into Nvivo. Similar to Study One, Nvivo served as both a data repository and analysis tool. All relevant documentation such as interview transcripts, literature review research articles, analytic memos and other research notes were housed in Nvivo.

Data Analysis

Following the theoretical coding processes of Glaser & Strauss (1967), the data set was analyzed using the grounded theory approaches of open, axial and theoretical coding. Again, this approach helped to uncover convergent and divergent themes related to transformation, fear and authenticity that were shared by interview respondents. I also followed the same four stage analysis and interpretation approach (e.g. Corley & Gioia, 2004; Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006) from Study One.

For the first phase of analysis, after interviews were transcribed, I identified passages that were related to the three areas of transformation, authenticity and fear. The focus was on how these phenomena were conceptualized, observed or experienced. This initial phase led to the identification of 204 interview passages. Each interview passage was assigned a code in Nvivo. This initial coding process characterizes phase two, open coding, and led to a total of 128 codes to be analyzed in phase three.

Before beginning phase three, coaxial coding, I decided to assess interrater reliability immediately after the open coding process. I was concerned that when compared to the number of first-order codes in Study One (46), there would be challenges with drawing conclusions in Study Two due to the high volume of codes. In Study One, the discussion that followed the independent coding process was very helpful in clarifying my own insights and understanding.

To measure interrater reliability, I solicited a doctoral student to independently code a 20% sample of the identified 204 passages. After the independent coding process, we discussed the coding results, compared notes and shared perspectives. Our results yielded an interrater reliability

rate of 78.05%. Based on the conclusions of our discussion, I further refined and consolidated the first-order codes, leading to a total of 73 unique codes.

Phase three of the analysis was coaxial coding. During this phase, I analyzed the 73 codes for convergent and divergent themes. Again, I went through several iterations of analysis and allowed the data to drive the matching process. This phase of the coding process led to the identification of eight second-order themes.

After the eight themes were identified, I used the same doctoral student to perform a second test of interrater reliability. Using another 20% sample of interview passages, the doctoral student performed independent coding. Though the doctoral student was coding at the first-order code level, similar to Study One, I focused the interrater reliability on agreement at the second-order theme level. Because of the high level of variability in responses, I again saw nuanced subjective differences in how interview respondent's passages were coded. As mentioned in Study One, the focus on the theme is more important than the individual code from an analysis perspective because of the higher level of theoretical abstraction. The second test for interrater reliability at the theme level led to a 90.91% agreement rate.

For the fourth phase of analysis I analyzed the eight second-order themes, and evaluated their relationship to conceptual references. This was an extension of the approach from Study One. The iterative process of conducting interviews and coding continued until no new insights, codes or themes surfaced (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

Study 2 Findings

Building on the foundations of Study One, Study Two led to four key findings: 1) the importance of value congruence between the leader and the environment, 2) identification of "transformation enablers" that support facilitating the shifting of shared values, 3) a deeper understanding of perception of context and its connection to fear and authenticity and 4) a refined conceptual model for the construct strong authenticity in leadership.

Finding 1 – Value Congruence

Study Two interview questions were designed to understand leaders' observations and experiences being involved in both successful and unsuccessful transformations. In this study, success was defined by the emergence of new values, which could also lead to new behaviors and eventually influence culture. Transformations such as technology implementations, process improvements or strategy roll outs weren't necessarily ruled out. However, the focus point of the study was on the emerging values that resulted from those transformations, not the change in technology, process or strategy itself.

Based on their responses, 100% of the time the interviewed leaders felt strong authenticity during a successful transformation, and weak authenticity during an unsuccessful transformation. This is important to recognize because the essence of how the transformation is deemed successful or unsuccessful was solely determined by the perspective of the observer or experiencer; in this case, the leader. The determination of "successful" or "unsuccessful" was made based on whether the leader had value congruence (or not) with the outcome state. When describing an unsuccessful

transformation that they were a participant in, a senior leader in financial services explained their level of disengagement after the transformation:

> And I look at the change that has occurred and I say it's nominal and it's ineffective. And it's not a good use of my time and my life. Because of that I was deflated, unenthusiastic about the role, didn't really care much about the role...only cared about the people. Found ways to add value around things that were more important to me personally.
>
> - Senior Leader, Financial Services

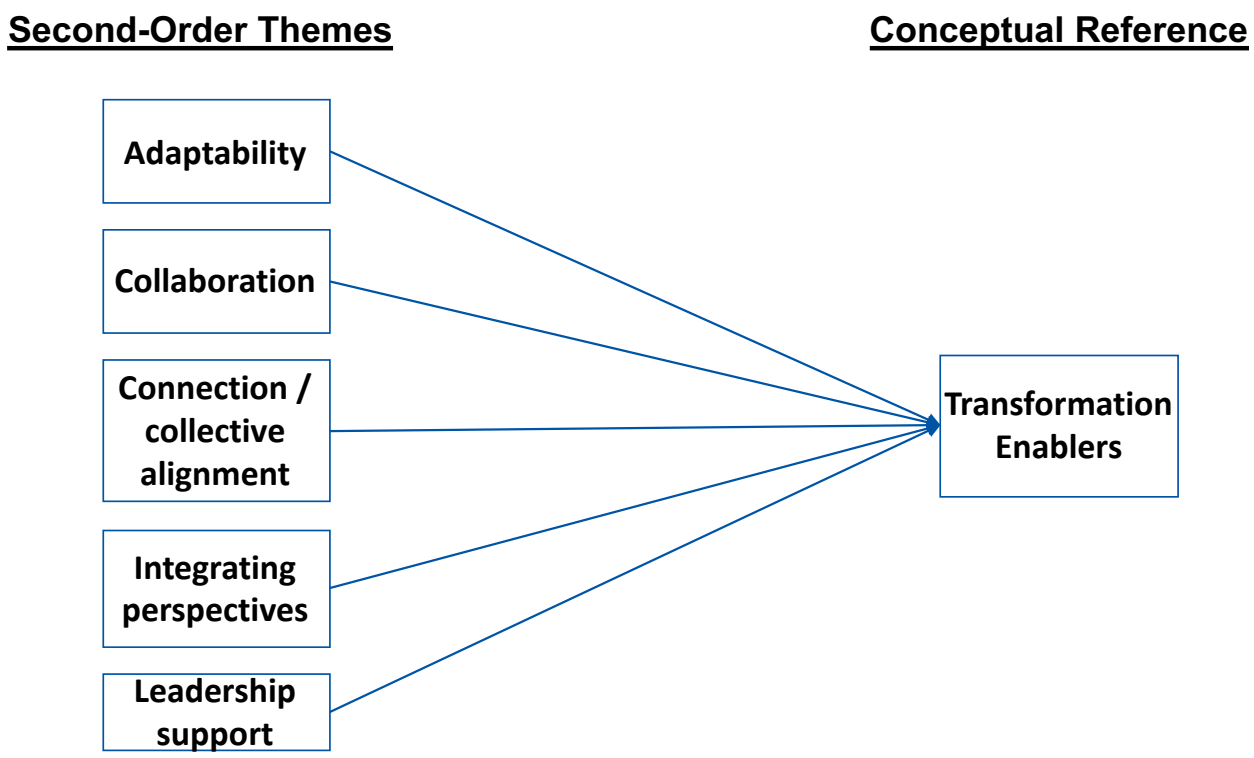
This same type of misalignment also existed when some of the respondents described the pre-transformation environment of a successful transformation. Again, they didn't align with the values of the environment, and they took on the role of change catalyst. One respondent described the complacency they were trying to change in the pre-transformation environment: *"So, you know, obviously the culture there was one that was, you know, relying on successes of the past...and the successful model of the past,"* former healthcare leader.

This fundamental conclusion is important because it begins to support that when leaders are driving transformational change, the values of the post-transformation environment begin to reflect the values of the leader. In addition, those employees who stay or are attracted to that environment, there must also be a level of value congruence. Leaders spoke about employees having to choose whether they fit into the new environment or not. In some cases, the leaders made the choices for them. This finding around value congruence begins to describe an intersection between Lehman et al.'s (2019) consistency and conformity definitions of authenticity. Further investigation can help to determine the potential causal relationship between the leader's authenticity level and their determination of a successful transformation.

Finding 2 – Transformation Enablers

A second finding in Study Two was that leaders who experienced strong authenticity held perspectives or took specific types of actions that helped to support the successful transformation. There were five second-order themes: adaptability, collaboration, connection/collective alignment, integrating perspectives and leadership support, that converged to create a conceptual reference that I've labeled "transformation enablers" in Figure 9. The five themes and several first-order codes for each are shown in Figures 10 through 14 and described in the following section.

Figure 9. Transformation Enablers



The first of the five transformation enablers was adaptability. This theme included the first-order codes adapt, conflict between cultures, people stay or people go, time and turn on a dime. The

theme of adaptability is characterized by an understanding that the process of adaptation includes components of both willingness and time. For employees who were a part of the pre-transformation environment, they had to be willing to make changes in order to align to the new environment. The time horizon for that adjustment period was variable depending upon the individual who was required to change. An HR executive described how a critical mass of adaptability helped support alignment to their HR organization's future state:

> You are going to have people who are more willing to adapt to a certain behavioral style than others or others who are just more wired toward that behavioral style anyway. And I think really having a lot of people in the organization that were ready to adapt to that style was important.
>
> - Executive, Human Resources

The most prevalent first-order code was "people stay or people go" (n = 10). An important part of adaptability was understanding who was aligned to the future state values, and where resource changes in the organization could be made to tip towards the desired future state. Several executives clearly understood the importance of having "the right" people on board to help move the organization forward. A small business president who led a successful organizational transformation in the manufacturing industry shared their perspective on they approached having the right people on board:

> And some people it's been very difficult to lay them off or fire…whatever term you want to use. But, transition them out I think is probably the nice P.C. term, because of their value to the company. But, in the long run, they were not ideal for the future of the company. They culturally just...it wasn't going to work. So, what I've done since I've been president over the last two and a half years is systematically training or replacing key people.
>
> - President, Government Contracting Firm

The decision of people staying or going is multi-faceted. There are choices on the part of both the leader and employee, depending upon the circumstances (i.e. the future direction of the organization, required skills sets, current workforce disposition, etc.). A CEO in the consulting industry described several scenarios when transitioning into the organization to lead it through its next era:

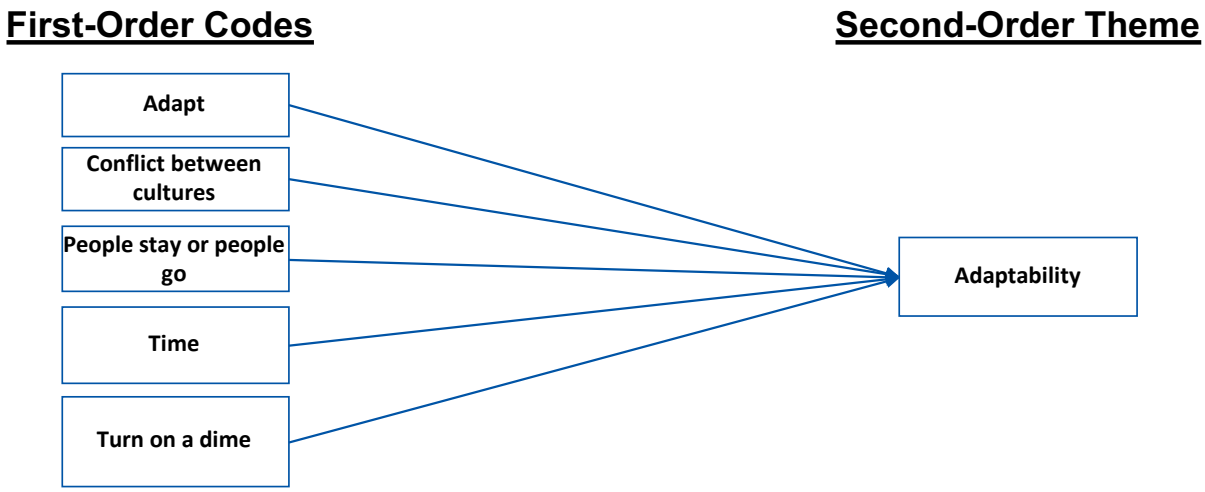
> So, people some...it was very much a split. There were some people who are very, very bought into the old and very shortly after, they left the company. There were some people who were you know…this is your company now. Whatever you envision, whatever you want to do, I'm all for it. And then there were other people who were kind of...I like the way that things are, but I'll give you a shot and see where you want to take things and where you want to go. Like I said, if I see strong vision, strong core values and strong culture alignment, I think it's very, very easy for people to at least understand. And sometimes people self-select out, you know, this organization isn't for me. I don't display these things or I don't believe in this the way that everybody else here does. Other times, people try to integrate.
>
> - Sr. Executive Vice President, Professional Services

The CEO experienced employees operating within one of three groups: 1) those aligned to the future state, 2) those aligned to the current state and 3) those who want to "wait and see." The number of employees sitting within each of those three groups is important to understand in order to grasp the level of critical mass for the transformation to gain traction and lead to successful creation of new values. The owner of multiple restaurants discussed needing to make resource changes to ensure individuals who were perceived as less adaptable didn't disrupt the transformation:

> And because we have a sense of people, we knew that there was a couple of key people that we would have to watch and maybe get rid of right away. Just, you know, if they were too far gone negatively.
>
> - Chief Executive Officer, Hospitality

Overall, being aware of the collective adaptability and having people who already operated or were open to the shared values of the future state of the organization was a critical element in developing a critical mass for facilitating a successful transformation.

Figure 10. Second-Order Theme: Adaptability



The second transformation enabler was collaboration. This second-order theme is described by two first-order codes, collaborative (n = 14) and everyone contributes (n = 6). Together, the two codes explain not only the act of working together in a traditional collaborative sense, but also leaders reinforcing the concept that every employee can add value. Below is a quote from one executive:

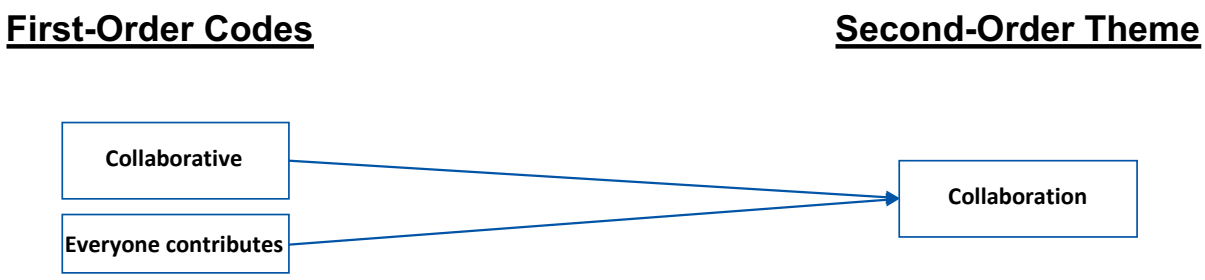
> And I believe everyone can contribute. It's just…do you realize what you as an individual can contribute? And are you willing to do it? I'm not going to kick someone out because they're not the fastest X or Y? I try to find value in every single person.
>
> - President, Government Contracting Firm

An HR executive at a large manufacturing firm shared the experience of a significant HR transformation where collaboration was a hallmark of advancing their strategic HR agenda:

> You know, that kind of giving off that kind of vibe to a more 'Hey, let's partner, let's diagnose, let's design together. You know, let's walk hand in hand to advance the change that we want to advance.' We're not driving change. We're advancing change, which I think goes a long way.
>
> - Executive, Human Resources

The theme of collaboration was a consistent hallmark as it was referenced by ten of the twelve interview respondents.

Figure 11. Second-Order Theme: Collaboration



The third transformation enabler identified was connection/collective alignment. This enabler focused on the connection between people and even a sense of higher purpose or greater good being more important than individual needs. Of the five first-order codes associated with this theme, three of them had fairly high frequencies: organization is bigger than individuals (n = 5), purpose – part of something bigger (n = 5) and connection (n = 4).

This theme puts an emphasis on the connection between individual values and the shared values of the organization. Using Lehman et al.'s (2019) authenticity definitions for consistency and

conformity, this highlights that intersection. In several respondent's examples given, not only was alignment of these two authenticity definitions important, but the definition associated with conformity or collective authenticity was more important. The organization was a bigger force than any particular individual. Two executives shared stories where the shared values of the organization were too strong to be changed by any individual. And, as a result, those individuals would exit: *"The culture, the capabilities, the talent, the leadership does not match the words or the actions. And people who are true change agents can't really exist in that environment for a very long time,"* senior leader financial services.

> The organization will win out, if it's a good one, because it it'll continue to move on, to continue to move on and continue to move on. And you will probably fall off if you're not ideal for it. And that is what has happened in some cases. Some people have, you know, quite frankly, in a few cases they've just decided, hey, I can't do this anymore.
>
> - President, Government Contracting Firm

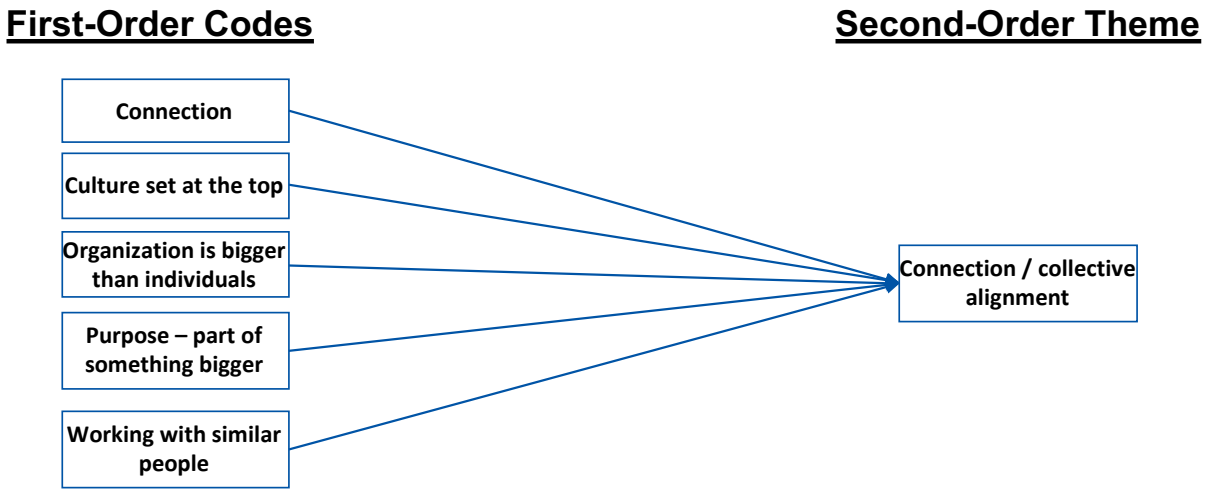
On the contrary, leaders also shared their (and their employee's) own experiences of value congruence and how they aligned to the sense of higher purpose afforded by the organization:

> And I'm like intrinsically motivated by working together for a greater purpose. Right. Like, that's my intrinsic motivation. And what I think I recognize in people where I have a big conflict is when their intrinsic motivation is to better themselves. And it's about them. It's not about a bigger purpose.
>
> - Senior Leader, Healthcare

> I'd say a sense of identity, feeling like they were part of something bigger. I didn't just come in every day and I take phone calls and I log off and I go home. But I'm feeling like I'm really part of a change within the organization.
>
> - Senior Leader, Financial Services

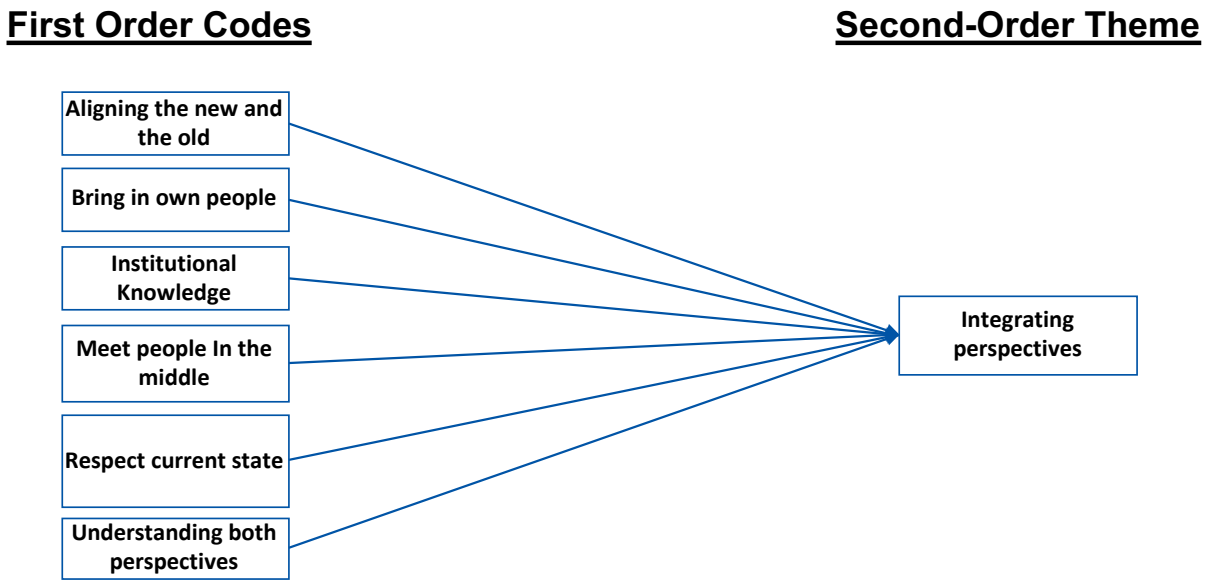
Being a part of something bigger than themselves was fuel for leaders and their followers for transforming towards a set of future shared values.

Figure 12. Second-Order Theme: Connection/Collective Alignment



Integrating perspectives was the next second-order theme and fourth transformation enabler discovered in Study Two. This theme identifies the importance of marrying the current and future state by gathering multiple perspectives. Leaders respected institutional knowledge and found ways to build upon that knowledge by incorporating new ways of thinking. The process of integration was characterized by the two most frequently identified first-order codes, aligning the new and the old (n = 2) and bring in own people (n = 2).

Figure 13. Second-Order Theme: Integrating Perspectives



The fifth and final transformation enabler was leadership support. Leaders took several actions to help facilitate transformations. They protected and supported individuals/teams (n = 5), reinforced/modeled behaviors (n = 2), coached (n = 1) and were visible (n = 1). Providing support was a phenomenon that went both up and down the organization. The leader responsible for the transformation often had support from their leader. This is evidenced by a quote from the small business president of the government contracting manufacturing firm:

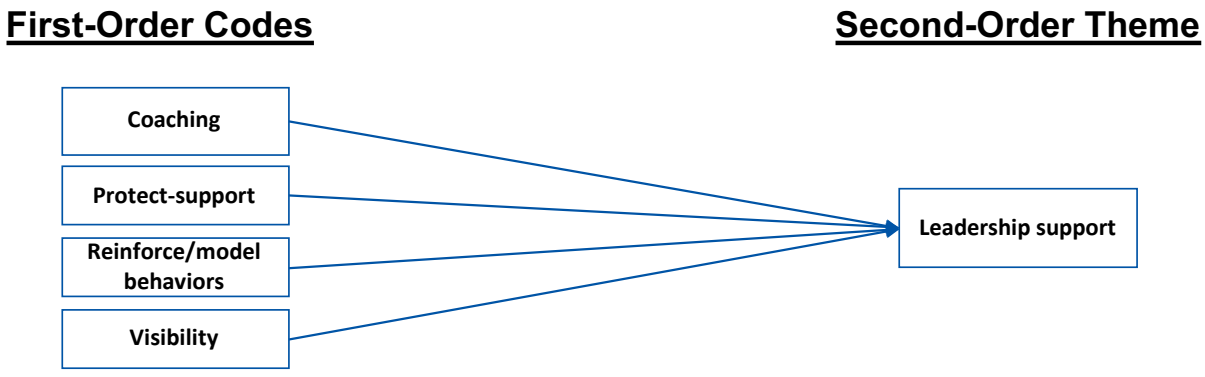
> And if I didn't have his (the owner's) support, and this is a guy who never let anyone have the kind of support I've had or the leeway to do what I want, no, none of this would have happened. This would've been a complete failure.
>
> - President, Government Contracting Firm

The leaders facilitating the transformations also saw it was important to provide support to their teams, whether there was alignment to the future state or not. One of the financial services executive shared two quotes that demonstrated that:

> And if folks didn't buy in, to start counseling, counseling them, making them feel OK...that if you're not on board, that's all right. I want you to be happy. So maybe you'll be happy somewhere else. And I will help you to find that somewhere else. Not a bad situation. This will be a good situation. And, you know, trying to do it that way.
>
> What's the one thing or two things that we need to always remain focused on? And the one thing that I gave them was the team. We're going to do our best to protect the team.
>
> - Data & Analytics Executive, Financial Services

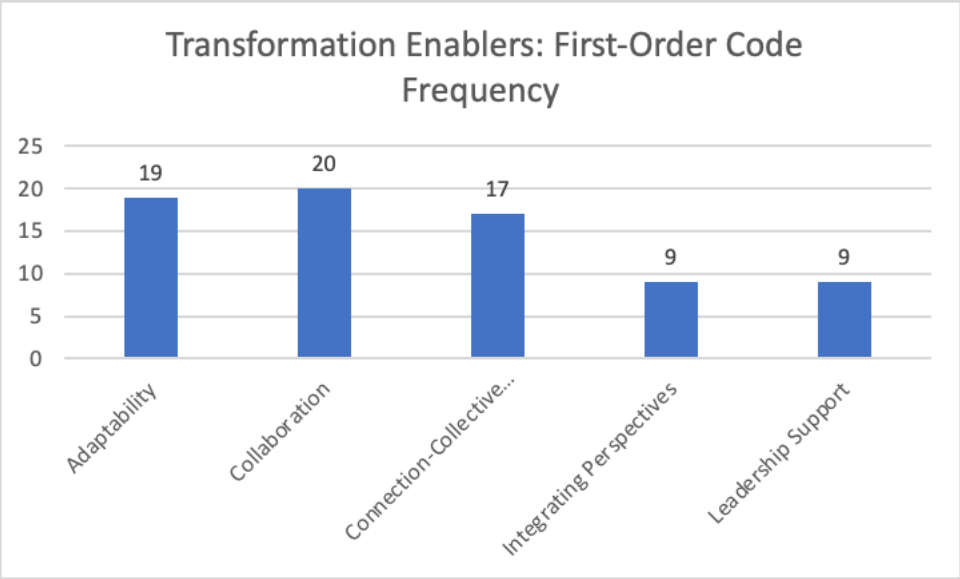
The actions that leaders experiencing strong authenticity exhibited was an important part of transforming their organizations. This particular enabler is powerful because whether employees were aligned to the future state or not, whether they were staying in the organization or not, the leaders treated employees with the same level of humanity.

Figure 14. Second-Order Theme: Leadership Support



The five transformation enablers were important aspects of facilitating transformational change for leaders experiencing strong authenticity. Figure 15 shows the frequency distribution of the number of first-order codes that aligned to each transformation enabler. The frequency distribution provides insight into how prevalent an enabler was throughout the study.

Figure 15. Transformation Enablers: First-Order Code Frequency



Finding 3 – Perception of Context and Fear

Study Two set out to better understand the relationship between perception of context and fear in order to refine the preliminary strong authenticity in leadership conceptual model presented in Study One. In the first study, perception of context considered the general business environment and the leader's position in the organization as primary factors that influenced the leader's level of authenticity. Results of Study One showed the potential of a relationship between the leader's perception of context and fear. In Study Two, I asked leaders to share observations and experiences

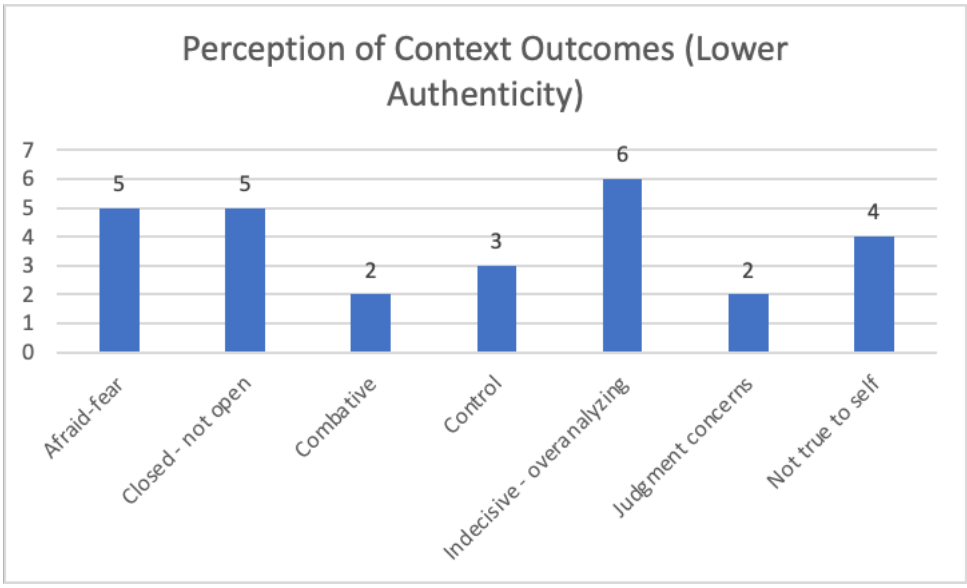
of “uneasiness” and how it impacted levels of being true to the self. By using the term uneasiness, and not fear, which can be loaded, I hoped to obtain more insight into understanding how leaders may experience fear. Moreover, I wanted to understand how their perception of context could impact that experience.

One result of my analysis concluded that how leaders perceive the context could indeed cause fear. An executive went so far to explicitly state that relationship when describing the pressure and anxiety of working on the post-merger environment of a financial services firm:

> So it wasn't that. It was clearly he's at risk of something. And ultimately end up leaving the firm after I did. But, you know, that's just...that's what I've seen before. It was basically the fear that was created because of the environment.
>
> - President, Government Manufacturing Firm

However, beyond finding support of the perception of context causing fear, which was explicitly mentioned once, there were additional outcomes beyond fear that tell a much richer story about the effects of how the context is perceived. There was a total of thirteen first-order codes identified that related to the perception of context and leaders observing or experiencing “uneasiness.” Figure 16 captures the first-order codes that appeared at a frequency of $n > 1$.

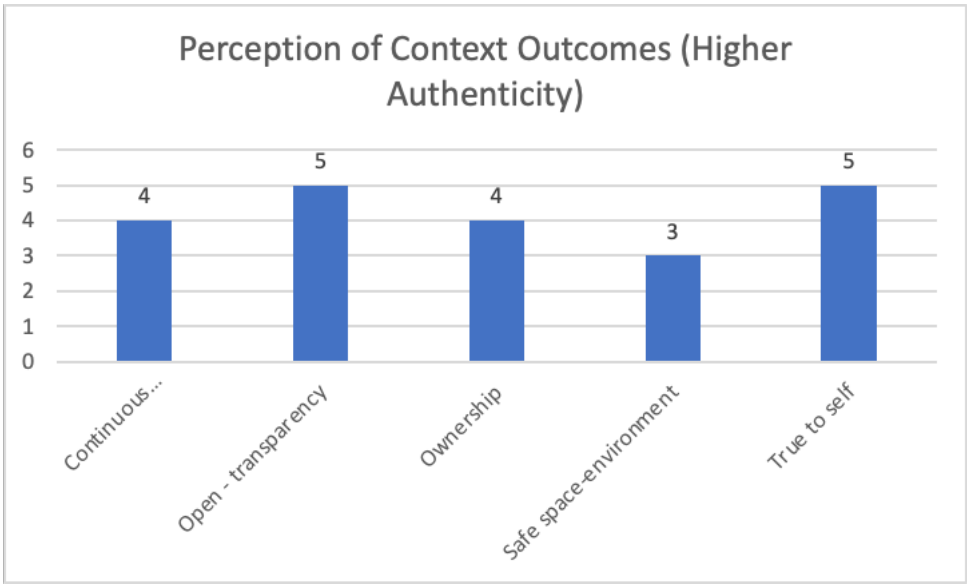
Figure 16. Perception of Context Outcomes (Weaker Authenticity)



The most common context outcome that weakened authenticity was the feeling of being indecisive or overanalyzing. Feeling afraid or experiencing fear was tied with closed – not open as the second most common outcome. Based on the seven first-order codes listed in Figure 16, they can all be classified as weaker authenticity characteristics. What's important to mention is that the leader's experience of these characteristics was attributed to the environment or circumstance that they found themselves in. Under "normal circumstances," the leaders did not exhibit these behaviors. The perception of context weakening authenticity was explained in the conceptual model for strong authenticity in leadership from Study One. However, Study Two provides a richer understanding of the types of outcomes that leaders can experience which weakens their authenticity.

In addition to asking leaders questions about observed or experienced "uneasiness," I also asked them about their context specific observations or experience of ease, or flow. Their responses supported characteristics associated with a sense of feeling stronger authenticity. The highest frequency first-order codes from their responses are captured in Figure 17 below.

Figure 17. Perception of Context Outcomes (Stronger Authenticity)



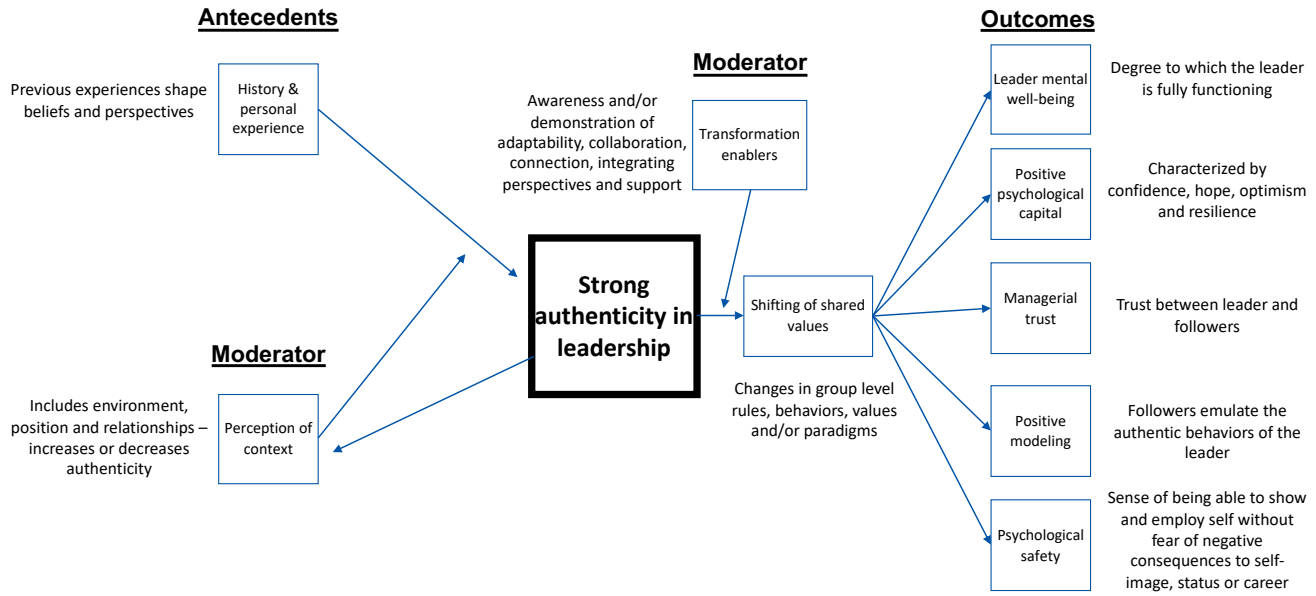
By assessing leaders' levels of uneasiness and easiness, the data supports that outcomes can be created that strengthen or weaken authenticity depending on the leader's perception of the context. Thus, leader's perception of the context is a stimulus that can cause the leader to feel misaligned or aligned. This connection is important because it is a factor that influences the relationship between the leader's individual authenticity and the collective authenticity, which is rooted in how the leader perceives the context. This is another reference to the intersection of Lehman et al.'s (2019) authenticity as consistency and conformity. Leaders may experience strong individual authenticity (i.e. consistency). But, as their perception of the environment or role changes, their desire to "conform" is influenced. That impacts their experience of authenticity.

Though my intention was to understand fear and its relation to perception of context, using the term uneasiness provided additional characteristics and data points which shifted and refined my analysis. I believe the conclusions that have been drawn make for a much more meaningful interpretation of the proposed conceptual model for high authenticity in leadership.

Finding 4 – Refined Conceptual Model: Strong Authenticity in Leadership

In an attempt to refine the strong authenticity in leadership conceptual model from Study One, I've drawn the conclusion that there are various possible outcomes that could influence a leader's experience of authenticity based on how they perceive the context. Based on this, I've refined the original conceptual model of strong authenticity in leadership by removing the variable fear as a moderator. This leaves space for the model to acknowledge that there are a plethora of feelings, emotions and behaviors resulting from the leader's perception of context that can influence the experience of authenticity. Understanding these feelings, emotions and behaviors could lead to further research study. In addition, the "transformation enablers" were added to the model as the moderate the variable shifting of shared values. The refined conceptual model for strong authenticity in leadership is presented below in Figure 18.

Figure 18. Refined Strong Authenticity in Leadership Conceptual Model



Study Two Conclusion

In summary, Study Two used an interpretive grounded theory approach designed to further investigate two specific focus areas from Study One: 1) increase the level of understanding of the new construct variables of fear and shifting of shared values discovered in Study One and 2) refine the strong authenticity in leadership conceptual model. The results from Study Two support several conclusions: First, value congruence between the leader and the environment are important in determining whether leaders perceive transformations as successful or unsuccessful. Two, the study also found that leaders who experienced strong authenticity were able to facilitate successful transformations by demonstrating actions and behaviors described as "transformation enablers." Three, fear is an outcome of a leader's perception of context. But, it is not the only outcome. There are a variety of outcomes based on how the leader perceives the context which can lead to stronger or weaker levels of authenticity. Finally, a refined conceptual model for strong authenticity in leadership was presented.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Discussion

This research project used two multi-disciplined interpretive studies to better understand the phenomenon of authenticity in the context of leadership. Study One used a grounded theory approach, resulting in: 1) defining authenticity in leadership, 2) identifying support for existing variables of the authentic leadership construct, 3) identifying new variables related to authenticity and leadership and 4) developing a preliminary conceptual model for the construct of strong authenticity in leadership. Building on the conclusions of Study One, Study Two also used a grounded theory approach, resulting in: 1) an increased understanding of leader and organization value congruence when determining successful or unsuccessful transformations, 2) identification of "transformation enablers" that supported the process of shifting shared values, 3) a deeper understanding of perception of context and its connection to authenticity and 4) a refined conceptual model for the construct strong authenticity in leadership.

Drawing upon the conclusions of both studies, I was able to take a highly subjective (and much debated) aspect, authenticity in the context of leadership, and develop a conceptual model. Finding support for existing authentic leadership variables and identifying new variables through new research methods begins to chart a new path and open the door for future theory development. However, building on the work of Lehman et al. (2019), I believe authentic leadership in its current state needs to be thought about differently. Authenticity in the context of leadership is language that recognizes the importance of researching authenticity in context. Who or what is being deemed authentic and under what conditions is a distinction that needs to be made in future research related

to authenticity. As a stand-alone leadership theory, authentic leadership already suffers from a tremendous amount of commonality to other leadership theory (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). I see this research project as the first step in a series of progressive studies that could help to move the study of authenticity in leadership further, creating distinction amongst contemporary leadership theory. En route, there are opportunities to impact the evolution of leadership theory while potentially having theoretical implications in psychology, sociology and philosophy.

Limitations

Qualitative research is inherently biased. Though I used the grounded theory methodology, the formulation of questions that I used to conduct the interviews start from a point of view that reflects me. That level of innate bias is something that will not go away. However, it's important to recognize the perceived limitations of my own bias.

The interview subjects for both Study One and Study Two were a part of my extended professional network. My relationship with some of the interview subjects was more intimate than others. And, having familiarity with some of their stories and circumstances could have introduced additional bias into the results. Though, having an independent coder could reduce some of this bias, it is important to recognize that some form of bias probably still exists. Performing additional interviews with a random selection of leaders outside of my network could help to reduce this bias.

Theoretical Contributions

From a theoretical perspective, this research study adds to the research literature in several ways. This is the first qualitative interpretive authentic leadership research study of its kind. The

study presents a new conceptual model that begins to explain key moderators and outcomes of strong authenticity in leaders. This builds on prior authentic leadership research. A further contribution to the body of knowledge is that authentic leaders, through demonstration of their own values, hold the potential to shape the shared values of large groups and organizations. How strong authenticity in leaders shifts shared values is explained by "transformation enablers" which are specific leadership approaches and actions. The foundational work of Lehman et al. (2019) stresses the importance of studying authenticity in a context specific way. By decoupling authenticity from leadership, and evaluating authenticity in the context of leadership, this study accomplishing that.

To take on the role of leadership or simply being a leader means nothing absent of context. And within that context, especially in organizations, shared values play an important part in how leaders feel aligned or misaligned in their role. There is constant tension between the leader's individual level of authenticity (i.e. authenticity as consistency) and their connection to the collective authenticity of the organization (i.e. authenticity as conformity) especially as the context changes. So, it's important that future studies account for the shifting contexts that leaders operate within. This could have a direct impact on authentic leadership as a theoretical construct.

Per Gardner et al. (2011), authentic leaders and authentic leadership has thirteen theoretical definitions that have been brought forth. Language is important. And, I believe the lack of a universal definition and concerns of discriminate validity to other leadership theories, will continue to create challenges with evolving authentic leadership as an independent construct. Prior research has been instrumental in getting researchers to the current understanding of authentic leadership, its limitations, and its path forward. Building on the work of Lehman et al. (2019) and evaluating authenticity as a context specific phenomenon introduces a new dimension to consider for leadership. As a result, the language of "authenticity in the context of leadership" may be more

appropriate than the language of “authentic leadership” going forward. Considering the idea that authenticity shifts and changes over time, all leaders are inherently authentic on some level. It’s just a matter of degree. Pursuing an understanding of a leader’s authenticity can only happen in context because a leader’s role only exists in context. This is an important understanding that creates provocative next steps in further developing meaningful theory of authenticity in the context of leadership.

Since the foundational literature used in this study was multi-disciplined, it’s important to recognize that the theoretical implications are more far-reaching than just authentic leadership/authenticity in the context of leadership. As human beings, we all vacillate through our own levels of authenticity. Like leaders, our contexts are constantly changing. Based on the labels that society uses, we all feel associated with groups. And in many cases, we are expected to demonstrate the values and beliefs of those groups, as part of who we are. Our association becomes a part of how we define ourselves. This is the essence of the conformity that Lehman et al. (2019) discussed. In that vein, I consider authenticity to be a multi-dimensional part of the human experience. There isn’t a single and sole source of authenticity because of how we flow from one context to the next. And, our associated authenticity holds the potential to flow as well.

Using myself as an example, I am a part of many groups. I am a male, African American, Gen X, corporate leader, a brother, a son, a father, an ex-husband, etc. All of these labels have an associated set of values and behaviors that society espouses to them. Absent a very specific criteria for membership, which doesn’t exist for these particular groups, my own level of authenticity changes as I move from playing one role to another. The relationship between my own personal values to that of the group values has an impact on my own perceived and experienced authenticity. When I feel aligned with a particular group, I feel strong authenticity. When I feel misaligned with a particular

group, I feel weaker authenticity. The fundamental issue, which Lehman et al. (2019) so eloquently describe is the paradox between who is determining authenticity. At an individual level, I determine my authenticity level. At a group level, someone outside of me is making that determination. We see this playing out in our society in so many ways and it is the root of tremendous suffering. People outside of us tell us how we need to be, rather than allowing us the freedom to be who we are.

From an authenticity research perspective, this has implications well beyond leadership. In the domain of business, authenticity on a collective or group level can be connected to our understanding of organizational behavior, development and culture. Beyond business, authenticity is a part of the human experience (again business is simply contextual). And authenticity's connection to identity and human behavior at an individual and group level clearly spans the disciplines that were included as part of this study's literature review. There are considerations to psychology, sociology, philosophy and even religion. Our fundamental understanding of what it means to be human could be influenced by our understanding of what it means to be authentic. And researchers could capitalize on refining our understanding by seizing future research opportunities across the aforementioned disciplines.

Practical Implications

As a business leader, I believe the practical implications of this study can be applied in ways that could have a tremendous impact. Two primary implications would be in the areas of leadership development and change management. I do believe there could be practical implications in organizational behavior and organizational development. But, the heart of this study, focusing on

leaders and transformations, really lends itself to a direct connection with leadership development and change management. I also see the potential for practical implications in the everyday human experience.

From a leadership development perspective, increasing a leader's level of authenticity can create desirable business outcomes. At scale, employees emulating strong authenticity in leaders, trusting the leader, embracing collaboration, feeling safe, having a sense of hope and optimism, etc. enables creating an environment where people feel connected, creative and productive. Many organizations aspire to do just that. But, the feat is not so easily accomplished. This is where developing strong authenticity in leaders could be a solution. And, pointing to one of my original motivations for this research project, the diversity of the present and future workforce desires to be recognized for who they are. That requires a strong sense of acceptance, which is a characteristic of strong authenticity in leaders.

Tools such as coaching and leadership training programs can be designed to support this shift towards developing strong authenticity in leaders. Characteristics of strong authenticity such as true to self, acceptance, low ego, transparency and vulnerability are leadership qualities that many organizations would embrace. Though there are no perfect leadership styles, l believe leaders who operate in a space of strong authenticity hold the most potential to support the evolution and business transformations of organizations. And based on the outcomes that leaders from this study were able to create during times of strong authenticity, if organizations truly wish to allow their employees to be who they are, they would be wise to pursue developing stronger authenticity in all of their leaders, regardless of personal styles.

As an executive coach, I see how being clear on what it means to be authentic and understanding a leader's authenticity at any given moment can be very powerful in solving key

leadership issues. Essentially, the experience of authenticity is part of the leader's perspective. The level of congruence between internal values and beliefs and external expression is a good barometer for where leaders might be challenged. Orienting around the who, what and why of the leader's perceived authenticity opens the door to a deeper level of self-exploration around the leader's openness, which is connected to the internal values and beliefs, and willingness, which is connected to the external expression. In essence, how open is the leader to new thoughts, feelings, emotions, beliefs and values? And, how willing is the leader to establish new actions and behaviors as a result of their openness? These are two important questions. However, leaders may be unaware of their level of congruence because of how they've been socialized. I see an opportunity where coaching can help raise awareness of these aspects, which creates a new perspective for the leader. In my opinion, that's how leaders can begin shifting their authenticity and creating new experiences for themselves, their followers and their organizations.

Change management is the other area that I believe has practical implications from this research project. Leading through change is one of the most difficult tasks for leaders. And, we understand that how well an organization manages through change can have a direct impact on organizational performance. Both Study One and Study Two revealed that when leaders experienced strong authenticity they were able to not only successfully drive transformational change in their organization, but it shifted the shared values as well. Transformations led by leaders experiencing strong authenticity could lead to methods for effectively changing an organization's culture.

Authenticity in leadership could become more relevant as leaders experiencing strong authenticity are catalysts for transformation. Many organizations are trying to transform. And these transformations can touch every cell of the organization: strategy, leadership development,

organizational development, culture and products and services. Authenticity in leaders can have a direct impact on all of these aspects.

Though this research study is context specific, authenticity in humans is universal. Thus, there is an aspect of generalizability to be considered. We are all authentic as we move from context to context in our everyday lives. We all have internal values and behaviors and external expressions that express who we are in any given moment. Specificity and universality are happening simultaneously for us. Even though this study focuses on the specific context of leaders, raising awareness of how we express and choose not to express ourselves can have a transformational impact on other general aspects of our lives. My hope is that this research project becomes the foundation that begins to bring to light that the only path to the highest levels of authenticity is to integrate our personal and professional perspectives of self.

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APPENDIX

Table 1.

Conceptual Definitions of Authenticity, Authentic Leaders and Authentic Leadership		
Discipline / Construct Label	**Author & Year**	**Definition**
Leader Authenticity	Henderson & Hoy (1983)	"The extent to which subordinates perceive their leader to demonstrate the acceptance of organizational and personal responsibility for actions, outcomes, and mistakes; to be non-manipulating of subordinates; and to exhibit salience of self over role. Leadership inauthenticity is defined as the extent to which subordinates perceive their leader to be 'passing the buck' and blaming others and circumstances for errors and outcomes; to be manipulative of subordinates; and to be demonstrating a salience of role over self" (Henderson & Hoy, 1983, pp. 67–68)
Leader Authenticity	Henderson & Hoy (1983)	"The extent to which subordinates described their leader as accepting responsibility for actions, as being non-manipulating, and as demonstrating a salience of self over role. In contrast, the inauthentic leader was viewed as one who 'passes the buck,' blames others and circumstances for his/her errors, manipulates and uses subordinates, and is engulfed in the bureaucratic role requirements of the position" (p. 124; adapted from Henderson & Hoy, 1983).
Leadership Development Level	Eigel and Kuhnert (2005)	As leaders move from lower to higher LDLs [Leadership Development Level], there is a transition in the knowing self realm (intrapersonal) from an externally defined understanding of self to an internally defined understanding of self, in the knowing others realm (interpersonal) from self-focus to other-focus, and in the knowing our world realm (cognitive) from simplicity to complexity.... The highest LDLs exhibit ... a more authentic way to lead (p. 361).
Authentic Leadership	Jensen and Luthans (2006a)	"A process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behavior on the part of leaders and employees, fostering positive self-development. The authentic leader is confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, transparent, moral/ethical, future-oriented, and gives priority to developing employees to be leaders" (p. 647; from Luthans & Avolio, 2003, p. 243).
Authentic Entrepreneurial Leadership	Jensen and Luthans (2006b)	"An authentic leader is one who is not only true to him/herself, but behaves in such a way that followers are also able to gain self-awareness and psychological strength" (p. 256; adapted from Luthans & Avolio, 2003). "An authentic leader knows him/herself, and acts in accordance with those beliefs, creating a future oriented ethical, follower-building climate" (p. 263; Avolio, Gardner et al., 2004; Avolio, Luthans et al., 2004; Luthans & Avolio, 2003).
Leader Authenticity	Spitzmuller and Ilies (2010)	"Goldman and Kernis (2002) described relational authenticity as 'involving valuing and achieving openness and truthfulness in one's close relationships ... and the development of mutual intimacy and trust' (p. 19). Based on this definition, Ilies et al. (2005) proposed that leaders with a relational authenticity will strive for open and truthful relationships with their followers and such orientation will have a number of positive outcomes" (p. 307).

Discipline / Construct Label	Author & Year	Definition
Authentic Leadership	Brown and Gardner (2007)	"A process that draws from both positive psychological capabilities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of both leaders and associates, fostering positive self development" (p. 56, from Luthans & Avolio, p. 243).
Authentic Leadership	Tate (2008)	"...a form of leadership concerned with developing positive leader–follower relationships (May et al., 2003), high moral standards, and integrity (Avolio, Gardner et al., 2004)" (p. 18). Authentic leadership measure was based on George's (2003) five dimensions of authentic leadership: demonstrating self-discipline, leading with heart, establishing enduring relationships, practicing solid values, and passion for purpose.
Authentic Leadership	Walumbwa et al. (2008)	"[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" (p. 94)
Authentic Leadership	Clapp-Smith et al. (2009)	"A process by which leaders are deeply aware of how they think and behave, of the context in which they operate, and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others' values/moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths" (p.229; adapted from Avolio, Gardner et al., 2004; Avolio, Luthans et al., 2004)
Authentic Leadership	Toor and Ofori (2009)	"[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" (p. 301, from Walumbwa et al., 2008, p. 94).
Authentic Leadership	Wong & Cummings (2009a, 2009b)	Authentic leadership is "a process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development" (p. 7, from Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 321).
Authentic Leadership	Giallonardo et al. (2010)	"A process that 'draws from both psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and selfregulated positive behaviours on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development'" (p. 993, from Luthans & Avolio, 2003, p. 243).
Authentic Leadership	Walumbwa et al. (2010)	"Authentic leaders display four types of behaviors. These include balanced processing, internalized moral perspective, relational transparency, and self-awareness" (p. 902; from Gardner, Avolio, Luthans et al., 2005; Gardner et al., 2005a, 2005b; Ilies et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008).
Authentic Leadership	Wong et al. (2010)	Authentic leadership "focuses on the positive role modeling of honesty, integrity and high ethical standards in the development of leader–follower relationships" (p. 890).

Discipline / Construct Label	Author & Year	Definition
Indexical Authenticity	Grayson and Martinec (2004)	"Drawing from the work of Peirce (1974), indexical authenticity is concerned with distinguishing 'the real thing' or 'original' from imitations and copies. People evaluate an entity as indexically authentic through spatiotemporal cues that verify that an entity is indeed the particular thing in question." (p. 610, from Newman and Smith, 2016)
Iconic Authenticity	Grayson and Martinec (2004)	"Iconic authenticity…refers to whether or not an item fits with an observer's expectations about how the item should appear, and is often used synonymously with the term verisimilitude (Deighton, Romer, and McQueen 1989; Kozinets et al., 2002). Thus, iconic authenticity is not concerned with a specific spatiotemporal fact, but rather with the degree to which the item satisfies one's prior expectations about how something ought to be, which can be reflected in terms such as 'authentic reproduction' (Bruner 1994; Crang 1996; Peterson 1997)." (p. 611, from Newman and Smith, 2016)
Nominal Authenticity	Dutton (2003)	"Dutton defines a construct of nominal authenticity as 'the correct identification of the origin, authorship or provenance of an object" (p. 259)." (p. 611, from Newman and Smith, 2016)
Expressive Authenticity	Dutton (2003)	"The second form of authenticity that Dutton discusses is concerned with the manner in which something was created. He calls this expressive authenticity and defines it as the 'true expression of an individual's or a society's values and beliefs' (p. 259). Dutton considers expressive authenticity far more ambiguous and 'contentious' than nominal authenticity, which is, at its root, 'a plain empirical discovery'" (p. 267)." (p. 611, from Newman and Smith, 2016)
Type Authenticity	Carol (2015)	"…involves an assessment of whether an entity is true to its associated type (or category, or genre) (Carroll and Wheaton 2009). Food is particularly susceptible to questions of type authenticity (e.g., What is 'real' Mexican food?)." (p. 611, from Newman and Smith, 2016)
Moral Authenticity	Carol (2015)	"…defined as the attention to 'whether the decisions behind the enactment and operation of an entity reflect sincere choices (i.e., choices true to one's self) rather than socially scripted responses' (Carroll and Wheaton 2009, p. 255)." (p. 611, from Newman and Smith, 2016)
Objective Authenticity	Wang (1999)	"On Wang's view, judgments about tourism objects (e.g., cultural artifacts and museum pieces) can involve two different forms of authenticity: one he refers to as objective authenticity, which involves verifying the 'authenticity of originals'." (p. 611, from Newman and Smith, 2016)
Constructed Authenticity	Wang (1999)	"Wang also suggests that judgments about objects can involve a notion of constructed authenticity, wherein authenticity is 'projected onto toured objects by tourists or tourism producers in terms of their imagery, expectations, preference, beliefs, powers, etc.' (p. 351)." (p. 611, from Newman and Smith, 2016)

Discipline / Construct Label	Author & Year	Definition
"Activity-related" or existential authenticity	Wang (1999)	"Existential authenticity is concerned not with verifying attributes of objects but with achieving a certain personal and inter-subjective state of being (in Wang's case, through engagement in tourist experiences). For instance, people seeking existential authenticity may be attuned to the way in which a Native American dance makes them feel connected to the self and others. Wang points to the work of existentialist philosophers (e.g., Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Heidegger) and political theorists (e.g., Montesquieu and Rousseau), as critical to the theoretical development of this type of authenticity. Often, the desired state of being is to be 'true to oneself' and free of the stultifying influences of modernity and societal pressure (Wang 1999, p. 358). This 'ideal of authenticity' is often associated with feelings, spontaneity, and individuality over rationality, reason, and conformity. Thus, perceptions of existential authenticity are often experienced as highly personal and varied, making it a fundamentally different model of verification than object-based authenticity." (p. 612, from Newman and Smith, 2016)
Self-concept	Cable et al. (2013)	"Alignment of 'our internal experiences with our external expressions'"
Self-concept	Kernis and Goldman (2006)	"The unobstructed operation of one's true, or core, self."

Table 2. - High authenticity descriptors definitions

Code Name	Code description
True to self	The leader's behaviors are directly tied to their values and beliefs, or what is considered their true selves.
Accepting one's self	Leader has high sense of accepting who they are
Low ego	The leader leads in a way that puts the team's and organization's mission and objectives above their own. There may also be a sense of higher purpose.
Transparency	Authentic leader exhibits a strong sense of openness. This includes acceptance of other ideas, open communication and revealing of themselves to others.
Vulnerability	The leader is willing to share/expose to followers the deeper parts of who they truly are. They are also willing to share emotions and thoughts that might be considered less socially acceptable in corporate America.

Table 3. - Low authenticity descriptors definitions

Code Name	Code description
Drained energy	Leader exerts energy acting in a way that conforms. As a result they experience reduced/lower energy
Operating filtered	Operating in a filtered way…sometimes to conform to the environment
Self preservation	Operating to "survive" or "stay afloat" while dealing with difficult situations
Hiding - not speaking up	Suppressing of an opinion or hiding and not being willing to speak up. Usually doesn't speak up due to fear of being wrong, going against the grain or judgment from others