

Authentic Leadership

DESCRIPTION

Authentic leadership represents one of the newest areas of leadership research. It focuses on whether leadership is genuine and “real.” As the title of this approach implies, authentic leadership is about the *authenticity* of leaders and their leadership. Unlike many of the theories that we have discussed in this book, authentic leadership is still in the formative phase of development. As a result, authentic leadership needs to be considered more tentatively: It is likely to change as new research about the theory is published.

In recent times, upheavals in society have energized a tremendous demand for authentic leadership. The destruction on 9/11, corporate scandals at companies like WorldCom and Enron, and massive failures in the banking industry have all created fear and uncertainty. People feel apprehensive and insecure about what is going on around them, and as a result, they long for bona fide leadership they can trust and for leaders who are honest and good. People’s demands for trustworthy leadership make the study of authentic leadership timely and worthwhile.

In addition to the public’s interest, authentic leadership has been intriguing to researchers: It was identified earlier in transformational leadership research but never fully articulated (Bass, 1990; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Burns, 1978; Howell & Avolio, 1993). Furthermore, practitioners had developed approaches to authentic leadership that were not evidence based, and so needed further clarification and testing. In attempts to more fully explore authentic leadership, researchers set out to identify the parameters of authentic leadership and more clearly conceptualize it, efforts that continue today.

Authentic Leadership Defined

On the surface, authentic leadership appears easy to define. In actuality, it is a complex process that is difficult to characterize. Among leadership scholars, there is no single accepted definition of authentic leadership. Instead, there are multiple definitions, each written from a different viewpoint and with a different emphasis (Chan, 2005).

One of those viewpoints is the *intrapersonal* perspective, which focuses closely on the leader and what goes on within the leader. It incorporates the leader's self-knowledge, self-regulation, and self-concept. In Shamir and Eilam's (2005) description of the intrapersonal approach, they suggest that authentic leaders exhibit genuine leadership, lead from conviction, and are originals, not copies. This perspective emphasizes a leader's life experiences and the meaning he or she attaches to those experiences as being critical to the development of the authentic leader.

A second way of defining authentic leadership is as an *interpersonal* process. This perspective outlines authentic leadership as relational, created by leaders and followers together (Eagly, 2005). It results not from the leader's efforts alone, but also from the response of followers. Authenticity emerges from the interactions between leaders and followers. It is a reciprocal process because leaders affect followers and followers affect leaders.

Finally, authentic leadership can be defined from a *developmental* perspective, which is exemplified in the work of Avolio and his associates (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2005; Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008). This perspective, which underpins the approaches to authentic leadership discussed in the following section, views authentic leadership as something that can be nurtured in a leader, rather than as a fixed trait. Authentic leadership develops in people over a lifetime and can be triggered by major life events, such as a severe illness or a new career.

Taking a developmental approach, Walumbwa et al. (2008) conceptualized authentic leadership as a pattern of leader behavior that develops from and is grounded in the leader's positive psychological qualities and strong ethics. They suggest that authentic leadership is composed of four distinct but related components: self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009). Over a lifetime, authentic leaders learn and develop each of these four types of behavior.

Approaches to Authentic Leadership

Formulations about authentic leadership can be differentiated into two areas: (1) the practical approach, which evolved from real-life examples and training and development literature; and (2) the theoretical approach, which is based on findings from social science research. Both approaches offer interesting insights about the complex process of authentic leadership.

Practical Approach

Books and programs about authentic leadership are popular today; people are interested in the basics of this type of leadership. Specifically, they want to know the "how to" steps to become an authentic leader. In this section, we will discuss Bill George's authentic leadership approach (2003).

Bill George's Authentic Leadership Approach. The authentic leadership approach developed by George (2003; George & Sims, 2007) focuses on the characteristics of authentic leaders. George describes, in a practical way, the essential qualities of authentic leadership and how individuals can develop these qualities if they want to become authentic leaders.

Based on his experience as a corporate executive and through interviews with a diverse sample of 125 successful leaders, George found that authentic leaders have a genuine desire to serve others, they know themselves, and they feel free to lead from their core values. Specifically, authentic leaders demonstrate five basic characteristics: (1) They understand their purpose, (2) they have strong values about the right thing to do, (3) they establish trusting relationships with others, (4) they demonstrate self-discipline and act on their values, and (5) they are passionate about their mission (i.e., act from their heart) (Figure 9.1; George, 2003).

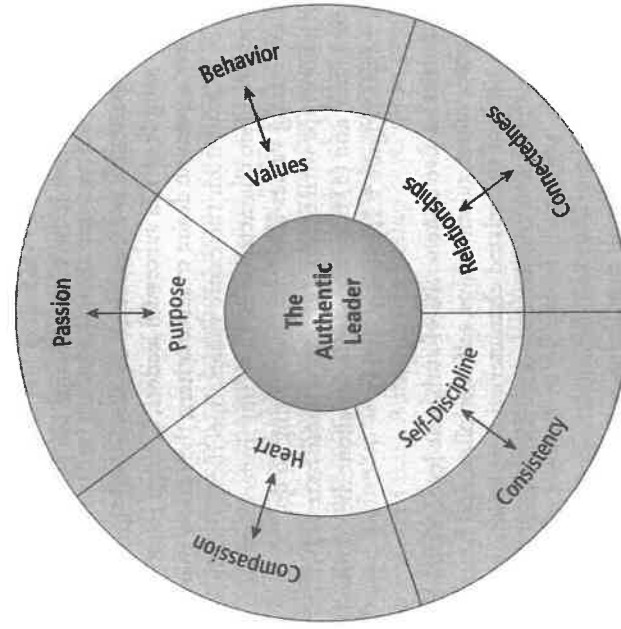
Figure 9.1 illustrates five dimensions of authentic leadership identified by George: purpose, values, relationships, self-discipline, and heart. The figure also illustrates each of the related characteristics—passion, behavior, connectedness, consistency, and compassion—that individuals need to develop to become authentic leaders.

In his interviews, George found that authentic leaders have a real sense of *purpose*. They know what they are about and where they are going. In addition to knowing their purpose, authentic leaders are inspired and intrinsically motivated about their goals. They are *passionate* individuals who have a deep-seated interest in what they are doing and truly care about their work.

A good example of an authentic leader who exhibited passion about his goals was Terry Fox, a cancer survivor, whose leg was amputated after it was overcome by bone cancer. Using a special leg prosthesis, Terry attempted to run across Canada, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, to raise awareness and money for cancer research. Although he died before he finished his run, his courage and passion affected the lives of millions of people. He also accomplished his goals to increase cancer awareness and to raise money for cancer research. Today, the Terry Fox Foundation is going strong and has raised more than \$400 million (Canadian) for cancer research (www.terryfox.org). Of the dimensions and characteristics in Figure 9.1, Terry Fox clearly demonstrated purpose and passion in his leadership.

Authentic leaders understand their own *values* and *behave* toward others based on these values. Stated another way, George suggests that authentic leaders know their “True North.” They have a clear idea of who they are,

Figure 9.1 Authentic Leadership Characteristics



SOURCE: From *Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value* by Bill George, copyright © 2003. Reproduced with permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

where they are going, and what the right thing is to do. When tested in difficult situations, authentic leaders do not compromise their values, but rather use those situations to strengthen their values.

An example of a leader with a strong set of values is Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Nelson Mandela. Mandela was a deeply moral man with a strong conscience. While fighting to abolish apartheid in South Africa, he was unyielding in his pursuit of justice and equality for all. When he was in prison and offered early release in exchange for denouncing his viewpoint, he chose to remain incarcerated rather than compromise his position. Nelson Mandela knew who he was at his core. He knew his values, and his leadership reflected those values.

A third characteristic of authentic leadership in the George approach is strong *relationships*. Authentic leaders have the capacity to open themselves up and establish a *connection* with others. They are willing to share their own story with others and listen to others' stories. Through mutual disclosure, leaders and followers develop a sense of trust and closeness.

George argued that people today want to have access to their leaders and they want their leaders to be open with them. In a sense, people are asking leaders to soften the boundary around their leadership role and to be more transparent. People want to have a trusting relationship with their leaders. In exchange, people are willing to give leaders greater loyalty and commitment.

As we discussed in Chapter 7 (leader–member exchange theory), effective leader–follower relationships are marked by high-quality communication in which leaders and followers demonstrate a high degree of mutual trust, respect, and obligation toward each other. Leaders and followers are tied together in productive ways that go beyond the stereotypical leader–follower relationship. This results in strong leader–member relationships, greater understanding, and higher productivity.

Self-discipline is another dimension of authentic leadership, and is the quality that helps leaders to reach their goals. Self-discipline gives leaders focus and determination. When leaders establish objectives and standards of excellence, self-discipline helps them to reach these goals and to keep everyone accountable. Furthermore, self-discipline gives authentic leaders the energy to carry out their work in accordance with their values.

Like long-distance runners, authentic leaders with self-discipline are able to stay focused on their goals. They are able to listen to their inner compass and

can discipline themselves to move forward, even in challenging circumstances. In stressful times, self-discipline allows authentic leaders to remain cool, calm, and *consistent*. Because disciplined leaders are predictable in their behavior, other people know what to expect and find it easier to communicate with them. When the leader is self-directed and “on course,” it gives other people a sense of security.

Last, the George approach identifies *compassion* and *heart* as important aspects of authentic leadership. Compassion refers to being sensitive to the plight of others, opening one’s self to others, and being willing to help them. George (2003, p. 40) argued that as leaders develop compassion, they learn to be authentic. Leaders can develop compassion by getting to know others’ life stories, doing community service projects, being involved with other racial or ethnic groups, or traveling to developing countries (George, 2003). These activities increase the leader’s sensitivity to other cultures, backgrounds, and living situations.

In summary, George’s authentic leadership approach highlights five important features of authentic leaders. Collectively, these features provide a practical picture of what people need to do to become authentic in their leadership. Authentic leadership is a lifelong developmental process, which is formed and informed by each individual’s life story.

Theoretical Approach

Although still in its initial stages of development, a theory of authentic leadership is emerging in social science literature. In this section, we identify the basic components of authentic leadership and describe how these components are related to one another.

Background to the Theoretical Approach. Although people’s interest in “authenticity” is probably timeless, research on authentic leadership is very recent, with the first article appearing in 2003. The primary catalyst for this research was a leadership summit at the University of Nebraska. This summit was sponsored by the Gallup Leadership Institute, and focused on the nature of authentic leadership and its development. From the summit, two sets of publications emerged: (1) a special issue of *Leadership Quarterly* in the summer of 2005, and (2) *Monographs in Leadership and Management*, titled “Authentic Leadership Theory and Process: Origins, Effects and Development,” also published in 2005. Prior to the summit, Luthans and Avolio (2003) published an article on authentic leadership development

and positive organizational scholarship. The article also helped to ignite this area of research.

Interest in authentic leadership increased during a time in which there was a great deal of societal upheaval and instability in the United States. The attacks of 9/11, widespread corporate corruption, and a troubled economy all created a sense of uncertainty and anxiety in people about leadership. Widespread unethical and ineffective leadership necessitated the need for more humane, constructive leadership that served the common good (Fry & Whittington, 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2003).

In addition, researchers felt the need to extend the work of Bass (1990) and Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) regarding the meaning of authentic transformational leadership. There was a need to operationalize the meaning of authentic leadership and create a theoretical framework to explain it. To develop a theory of authentic leadership, researchers drew from the fields of leadership, positive organizational scholarship, and ethics (Cooper, Scandura, & Schriesheim, 2005; Gardner et al., 2005).

A major challenge confronting researchers in developing a theory was to define the construct and identify its characteristics. As we discussed earlier in the chapter, authentic leadership has been defined in multiple ways, with each definition emphasizing a different aspect of the process. For this chapter, we have selected the definition set forth in an article by Walumbwa et al. (2008), who defined authentic leadership as “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). Although complex, this definition captures the current thinking of scholars regarding the phenomenon of authentic leadership and how it works.

In the research literature, different models have been developed to illustrate the process of authentic leadership. Gardner et al. (2005) created a model that frames authentic leadership around the developmental processes of leader and follower self-awareness and self-regulation. Ilies, Morgeson, and Nahrgang (2005) constructed a multicomponent model that discusses the impact of authenticity on leaders’ and followers’ happiness and well-being. In contrast, Luthans and Avolio (2003) formulated a model that explains authentic leadership as a developmental process. In this chapter, we will present a basic model of authentic leadership that is derived from the research literature that

focuses on the core components of authentic leadership. Our discussion will focus on authentic leadership as a process.

Components of Authentic Leadership. In an effort to further our understanding of authentic leadership, Walumbwa and associates (2008) conducted a comprehensive review of the literature and interviewed groups of content experts in the field to determine what components constituted authentic leadership and to develop a valid measure of this construct. Their research identified four components: self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency (Figure 9.2). Together, these four components form the foundation for a theory of authentic leadership.

Self-awareness refers to the personal insights of the leader. It is not an end in itself but a process in which individuals understand themselves, including their strengths and weaknesses, and the impact they have on others. Self-awareness includes reflecting on your core values, identity, emotions, motives,

and goals, and coming to grips with who you really are at the deepest level. In addition, it includes being aware of and trusting your own feelings (Kernis, 2003). When leaders know themselves and have a clear sense of who they are and what they stand for, they have a strong anchor for their decisions and actions (Gardner et al., 2005). Other people see leaders who have greater self-awareness as more authentic.

Internalized moral perspective refers to a self-regulatory process whereby individuals use their internal moral standards and values to guide their behavior rather than allow outside pressures to control them (e.g., group or societal pressure). It is a self-regulatory process because people have control over the extent to which they allow others to influence them. Others see leaders with an internalized moral perspective as authentic because their actions are consistent with their expressed beliefs and morals.

Balanced processing is also a self-regulatory behavior. It refers to an individual's ability to analyze information objectively and explore other people's opinions before making a decision. It also means avoiding favoritism about certain issues and remaining unbiased. Balanced processing includes soliciting viewpoints from those who disagree with you and fully considering their positions before taking your own action. Leaders with balanced processing are seen as authentic because they are open about their own perspectives, but are also objective in considering others' perspectives.

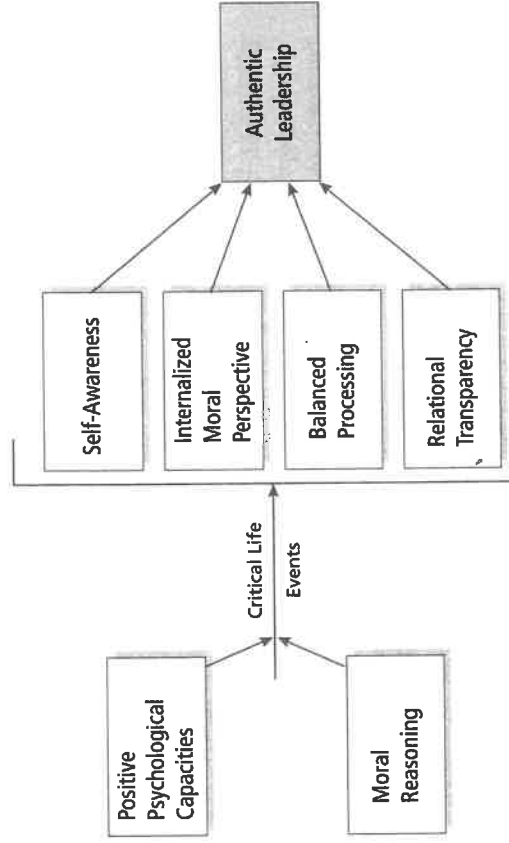
Relational transparency refers to being open and honest in presenting one's true self to others. It is self-regulatory because individuals can control their transparency with others. Relational transparency occurs when individuals share their core feelings, motives, and inclinations with others in an appropriate manner (Kernis, 2003). It includes the individuals showing both positive and negative aspects of themselves to others. In short, relational transparency is about communicating openly and being real in relationships with others.

Fundamentally, authentic leadership comprises the above four factors—self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. These factors form the basis for authentic leadership.

Factors That Influence Authentic Leadership. There are other factors such as positive psychological capacities, moral reasoning, and critical life events that influence authentic leadership (Figure 9.2).

The four key *positive psychological attributes* that have an impact on authentic leadership—confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience—have been drawn from the fields of positive psychology and positive organizational behavior

Figure 9.2 Authentic Leadership



SOURCE: Adapted from Luthans, F., & Avolio, B. J. (2003). Authentic leadership development. In K. S. Cameron, J. E. Dutton, & R. E. Quinn (Eds.), *Positive organizational scholarship* (pp. 241–258). San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler; and Gardner, W. L., Avolio, B. J., Luthans, F., May, D. R., & Walumbwa, F. O. (2005). "Can you see the real me?" A self-based model of authentic leader and follower development. *Leadership Quarterly*, 16, 343–372.

(Table 9.1; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Positive attributes predispose or enhance a leader's capacity to develop the components of authentic leadership discussed in the previous section. Each of these attributes has a trait-like and a state-like quality. They are trait-like because they may characterize a relatively fixed aspect of someone's personality that has been evident throughout his or her life (e.g., extraversion), and they are state-like because, with training or coaching, individuals are capable of developing or changing their characteristics.

Table 9.1 Related Positive Psychological Capacities

- Confidence
- Hope
- Optimism
- Resilience

SOURCE: Luthans, F., & Avolio, B. J. (2003). Authentic leadership development. In K. S. Cameron, J. E. Dutton, & R. E. Quinn (Eds.), *Positive organizational scholarship* (pp. 241–258). San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Confidence refers to having self-efficacy—the belief that one has the ability to successfully accomplish a specified task. Leaders who have confidence are more likely to be motivated to succeed, to be persistent when obstacles arise, and to welcome a challenge (Bandura, 1997; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). *Hope* is a positive motivational state based on willpower and goal planning (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Authentic leaders with hope have goals they know can be accomplished; their hope inspires followers to trust them and believe in their goals. *Optimism* refers to the cognitive process of viewing situations from a positive light and having favorable expectations about the future. Leaders with optimism are positive about their capabilities and the outcomes they can achieve. They approach life with a sense of abundance rather than scarcity (Covey, 1990). *Resilience* is the capacity to recover from and adjust to adverse situations. It includes the ability to positively adapt to hardships and suffering. During difficult times, resilient people are able to bounce back from challenging situations and feel strengthened and more resourceful as a result of them (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003).

Moral reasoning is another factor that can influence authentic leadership (Figure 9.2). It is the capacity to make ethical decisions about issues of right or wrong and good or bad. Developing the capacity for moral reasoning is a lifelong process. Higher levels of moral reasoning make it possible for the authentic leader to make decisions that transcend individual differences and align individuals toward a common goal. They enable leaders to be selfless

and make judgments that serve the greater good of the group, organization, or community. Moral reasoning capacity also enables authentic leaders to use this ability to promote justice and achieve what is right for a community.

A final factor related to authentic leadership is *critical life events* (Figure 9.2). Critical events are major events that shape people's lives. They can be positive events, like receiving an unexpected promotion, having a child, or reading an important book; or they can be negative events, like being diagnosed with cancer, getting a negative year-end evaluation, or having a loved one die. Critical life events act as catalysts for change. Shamir and Eilam (2005) argued that authentic leadership rests heavily on the insights people attach to their life experiences. When leaders tell their life stories, they gain greater self-knowledge, more clarity about who they are, and a better understanding of their role. By understanding their own life experiences, leaders become more authentic.

Critical life events also stimulate growth in individuals and help them become stronger leaders (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). For example, Howard Schultz (founder and CEO of Starbucks) tells a story about when he was little: His father, who was a delivery driver, fell and was hurt on the job. His father did not have health insurance or worker's compensation. Seeing the problems that resulted from his father's difficulties, when Schultz built Starbucks he provided comprehensive health insurance for employees who worked as few as 20 hours a week. Schultz's style of leadership was triggered by his childhood experience.

As the theory of authentic leadership develops further, other antecedent factors that influence the process may be identified. To date, however, it is positive psychological capacities, moral reasoning capacities, and critical life events that have been identified as factors that are influential in a person's ability to become an authentic leader.

HOW DOES AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP THEORY WORK?

In this chapter, we have discussed authentic leadership from a practical and theoretical perspective. Both perspectives describe authentic leadership as a developmental process that forms in leaders over time; however, both perspectives provide different descriptions for how authentic leadership works.

The practical approach provides prescriptions for how to be authentic and how to develop authentic leadership. For example, the George approach (2003)

focuses on five characteristics leaders should develop to become authentic leaders. More specifically, George advocates that leaders become more *purposeful*, *value centered*, *relational*, *self-disciplined*, and *compassionate*. The essence of authentic leadership is being a leader who strongly demonstrates these five qualities.

Rather than simple prescriptions, the theoretical approach describes what authentic leadership is and what accounts for it. From this perspective, authentic leadership works because leaders demonstrate *self-awareness*, an *internalized moral perspective*, *balanced processing*, and *relational transparency*. Leaders develop these attributes through a lifelong process that is often influenced by critical life events. In addition, the literature suggests that positive psychological characteristics and moral reasoning have a significant impact on authentic leaders.

Authentic leadership is a complex process that emphasizes the development of qualities that help leaders to be perceived as trustworthy and believable by their followers. The leader's job is to learn to develop these qualities and apply them to the common good as he or she serves others.

STRENGTHS

Although it is in its early stages of development, the authentic leadership approach has several strengths. First, it fulfills an expressed need for trustworthy leadership in society. During the past 20 years, failures in public and private leadership have created distrust in people. Authentic leadership helps to fill a void and provides an answer to people who are searching for good and sound leadership in an uncertain world.

Second, authentic leadership provides broad guidelines for individuals who want to become authentic leaders. Both the practical and theoretical approaches clearly point to what leaders should do to become authentic leaders. Social science literature emphasizes that it is important for leaders to have self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency to be authentic. Taken together, these approaches provide a map for becoming an authentic leader.

Third, similar to transformational and servant leadership, authentic leadership has an explicit moral dimension. Underlying both the practical and theoretical approaches is the idea that authenticity requires leaders to do what is "right" and "good" for their followers and society. Authentic leaders understand their own values, place followers' needs above their own, and

work with followers to align their interests in order to create a greater common good.

Fourth, authentic leadership emphasizes that authentic values and behaviors can be developed in leaders over time. Authentic leadership is not an attribute that only some people exhibit: Everyone can develop authenticity and learn to be more authentic. For example, leaders can learn to become more aware and transparent, or they can learn to be more relational and other-directed. Leaders can also develop moral reasoning capacities. Furthermore, Luthans and Avolio (2003) contended that leaders could learn to develop positive psychological capacities such as confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience, and could use these to create a positive organizational climate. They contended that there are many ways that leaders can learn to become authentic leaders over a lifetime.

Finally, authentic leadership can be measured using the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ). The ALQ is a validated, theory-based instrument comprising 16 items that measure four factors of authentic leadership (Avolio et al., 2009; Walumbwa et al., 2008). As research moves forward in refining authentic leadership theory, it is valuable to have an established instrument of this construct that is theory-based and can be used to measure authentic leadership in future research.

CRITICISMS

Authentic leadership is still in the formative stages of development, and a number of questions still need to be addressed about the theory. First, the concepts and ideas presented in George's practical approach are not fully substantiated. While the practical approach is interesting and offers insight on authentic leadership, it is not built on a broad empirical base, nor has it been tested for validity. Without research support, the ideas set forth in the practical approach should be treated cautiously as explanations of the authentic leadership process.

Second, the moral component of authentic leadership is not fully explained. Whereas authentic leadership implies that leaders are motivated by higher-order end values such as justice and community, the way that these values function to influence authentic leadership is not clear. For example, how are a leader's values related to a leader's self-awareness? Or, what is the path or underlying process through which moral values affect other components of authentic leadership? In its present form, authentic leadership does not offer thorough answers to these questions.

Third, researchers have questioned whether positive psychological capacities should be included as components of authentic leadership. Although there is an interest in the social sciences to study positive human potential and the best of the human condition (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003), the rationale for including positive psychological capacities as an inherent part of authentic leadership has not been clearly explained by researchers. In addition, some have argued that the inclusion of positive leader capacities in authentic leadership broadens the construct of authentic leadership too much and makes it difficult to measure (Cooper et al., 2005). At this point in the development of research on authentic leadership, the role of positive psychological capacities in authentic leadership theory needs further clarification.

Finally, it is not clear how authentic leadership results in positive organizational outcomes. Given that it is a new area of research, it is not unexpected that there are few data on outcomes, but these data are necessary to substantiate the value of the theory. Although authentic leadership is intuitively appealing on the surface, questions remain about whether this approach is effective, in what contexts it is effective, and whether authentic leadership results in productive outcomes. Relatedly, it is also not clear in the research whether authentic leadership is sufficient to achieve organizational goals. For example, can an authentic leader who is disorganized and lacking in technical competence be an effective leader? Authenticity is important and valuable to good leadership, but how authenticity relates to effective leadership is unknown. Clearly, future research should be conducted to explore how authentic leadership is related to organizational outcomes.

APPLICATION

Because authentic leadership is still in the early phase of its development, there has been little research on strategies that people can use to develop or enhance authentic leadership behaviors. While there are prescriptions set forth in the practical approach, there is little evidence-based research on whether these prescriptions or how-to strategies actually increase authentic leadership behavior.

In spite of the lack of intervention research, there are common themes from the authentic leadership literature that may be applicable to organizational or practice settings. One theme common to all of the formulations of authentic leadership is that people have the capacity to learn to be authentic

leaders. In their original work on authentic leadership, Luthans and Avolio (2003) constructed a model of authentic leadership development. Conceptualizing it as a lifelong learning process, they argued that authentic leadership is a process that can be developed over time. This suggests that human resource departments may be able to foster authentic leadership behaviors in employees who move into leadership positions.

Another theme that can be applied to organizations is the overriding goal of authentic leaders to try to do the “right” thing, to be honest with themselves and others, and to work for the common good. Authentic leadership can have a positive impact in organizations. For example, Cianci, Hannah, Roberts, and Tsakumis (2014) investigated the impact of authentic leadership on followers’ morality. Based on the responses of 118 MBA students, they found that authentic leaders significantly inhibited followers from making unethical choices in the face of temptation. Authentic leadership appears to be a critical contextual factor that morally strengthens followers. Cianci et al. suggest that the four components of authentic leadership (i.e., self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency) should be developed in organizational leadership to increase ethical organizational behavior.

Last, authentic leadership is shaped and reformed by critical life events that act as triggers to growth and greater authenticity. Being sensitive to these events and using them as springboards to growth may be relevant to many people who are interested in becoming leaders who are more authentic.

CASE STUDIES

The following section provides three case studies (Cases 9.1, 9.2, and 9.3) of individuals who demonstrate authentic leadership. The first case is about Sally Helgesen, author of *The Female Advantage: Women’s Ways of Leadership* (1990). The second case is about Greg Mortenson and how his mission to promote schools and peace in Pakistan and Afghanistan came under fire when he was accused of lying and financial impropriety. The final case is about Betty Ford, former First Lady of the United States, and her work in the areas of breast cancer awareness and substance abuse treatment. At the end of each of the cases, questions are provided to help you analyze the case using ideas from authentic leadership.

CASE 9.1

Am I Really a Leader?

Sally Helgesen was born in the small Midwestern town of Saint Cloud, Minnesota. Her mother was a housewife who later taught English, and her father was a college professor of speech. After attending a local state college, where she majored in English and comparative religion, Sally spread her wings and moved to New York, inspired by the classic film *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.

Sally found work as a writer, first in advertising and then as an assistant to a columnist at the then-influential *Village Voice*. She contributed freelance articles to magazines such as *Harper's*, *Glamour*, *Vogue*, *Fortune*, and *Inside Sports*. She also returned to school, completing a degree in classics at Hunter College and taking language courses at the city graduate center in preparation for a PhD in comparative religion. She envisioned herself as a college professor, but also enjoyed freelancing. She felt a strong dichotomy within her, part quiet scholar and part footloose dreamer. The conflict bothered her, and she wondered how she would resolve it. Choosing to be a writer—actually declaring herself to be one—seemed scary, grandiose, and fraudulent.

Then one day, while walking on a New York side street in the rain, Sally saw an adventuresome black cat running beside her. It reminded her of Holly Golightly's cat in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, an emblem in the movie for Holly's dreamy temperament and rootlessness. It made her realize how much the freedom and independence offered by her "temporary" career as a writer suited her temperament. Sally told the cat she was a writer—she'd never been able to say the words before—and decided she was going to commit to full-time writing, at least for a time. When she saw the opportunity to cover a prominent murder trial in Fort Worth, Texas, she took it.

While covering the trial, Sally became intrigued with the culture of Texas, and decided she wanted to write a book on the role of independent oil producers in shaping the region. Doing so required a huge expenditure of time and money, and for almost a year Sally lived out of the trunk of her car, staying with friends in remote regions all over Texas. It was lonely and hard and exhilarating, but Sally was determined to see the project through. When the book, *Wildcatters* (1981), was published, it achieved little recognition, but Sally felt an enormous increase in confidence and commitment as a result of having finished the book. It strengthened her conviction that, for better or worse, she was a writer.

Sally moved back to New York and continued to write articles and search around for another book. She also began writing speeches for the CEO at a Fortune 500 company. She loved the work, and particularly enjoyed being an observer of office politics, even though she did not perceive

herself to be a part of them. Sally viewed her role as being an "outsider looking in," an observer of the culture. She sometimes felt like an actor in a play about an office, but this detachment made her feel professional rather than fraudulent.

As a speechwriter, Sally spent a lot of time interviewing people in the companies she worked for. Doing so made her realize that men and women often approach their work in fundamentally different ways. She also became convinced that many of the skills and attitudes women brought to their work were increasingly appropriate for the ways in which organizations were changing, and that women had certain advantages as a result. She also noticed that the unique perspectives of women were seldom valued by CEOs or other organizational leaders, who could have benefited if they had better understood and been more attentive to what women had to offer.

These observations inspired Sally to write another book. In 1988, she signed a contract with a major publisher to write a book on what women had to contribute to organizations. Until then, almost everything written about women at work focused on how they needed to change and adapt. Sally felt strongly that if women were encouraged to emphasize the negative, they would miss a historic opportunity to help lead organizations in a time of change. The time was right for this message, and *The Female Advantage: Women's Ways of Leadership* (1990) became very successful, topping a number of best-seller charts and remaining steadily in print for nearly 20 years. The book's prominence resulted in numerous speaking and consulting opportunities, and Sally began traveling the world delivering seminars and working with a variety of clients.

This acclaim and visibility were somewhat daunting to Sally. While she recognized the value of her book, she also knew that she was not a social scientist with a body of theoretical data on women's issues. She saw herself as an author rather than an expert, and the old questions about fraudulence that she had dealt with in her early years in New York began to reassert themselves in a different form. Was she really being authentic? Could she take on the mantle of leadership and all it entailed? In short, she wondered if she could be the leader that people seemed to expect.

The path Sally took to answer these questions was simply to present herself for who she was. She was Sally Helgesen, an outsider looking in, a skilled and imaginative observer of current issues. For Sally, the path to leadership did not manifest itself in a step-by-step process. Sally's leadership began with her own journey of finding herself and accepting her personal authenticity. Through this self-awareness, she grew to trust her own expertise as a writer with a keen eye for current trends in organizational life.

(Continued)

(Continued)

Sally continues to be an internationally recognized consultant and speaker on contemporary issues, and has published five books. She remains uncertain about whether she will finish her degree in comparative religion and become a college professor, but always keeps in mind the career of I. F. Stone, an influential political writer in the 1950s and 1960s who went back to school and got an advanced degree in classics at the age of 75.

Questions

1. Learning about one's self is an essential step in becoming an authentic leader. What role did self-awareness play in Sally Helgesen's story of leadership?
2. How would you describe the authenticity of Sally Helgesen's leadership?
3. At the end of the case, Sally Helgesen is described as taking on the "mantle of leadership." Was this important for her leadership? How is taking on the mantle of leadership related to a leader's authenticity? Does every leader reach a point in his or her career where embracing the leadership role is essential?

CASE 9.2

A Leader Under Fire

(The previous edition of this book includes a case study outlining Greg Mortenson's creation of the Central Asia Institute and highlighting his authentic leadership qualities in more detail. For an additional perspective on Mortenson, you can access the original case study at www.sagepub.com/northouse6e.)

By 2011, there were few people who had never heard of Greg Mortenson. He was the subject of two best-selling books, *Three Cups of Tea* (2006, with David O. Reelin) and *Stones Into Schools* (2009), which told how the former emergency trauma room nurse had become a hero who built schools in rural areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

His story was phenomenal: Lost and sick after attempting to scale K2, Greg was nursed back to health by the villagers of remote Korphe, Afghanistan. Greg promised to build the village a school, a monumental effort that took him three years as he learned to raise money, navigate the foreign culture, and build a bridge above a 60-foot-deep chasm. His

success led him to create the Central Asia Institute (CAI), a nonprofit organization that "empowers communities of Central Asia through literacy and education, especially for girls, promotes peace through education, and conveys the importance of these activities globally." By 2011, the CAI had successfully established or supported more than 170 schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and helped to educate more than 68,000 students (CAI, 2011a).

Greg's story seemed too good to be true. In April 2011, television news show *60 Minutes* and author Jon Krakauer alleged that it was. *60 Minutes* accused Greg of misusing money and benefitting excessively from the CAI. The show's reporter visited schools the CAI had built overseas and claimed that he could not find six of the schools and that others were abandoned. The show featured an interview with Krakauer, who claimed Greg had fabricated parts of his best-selling book, *Three Cups of Tea*. When *60 Minutes* approached Greg for comment at a book signing, he refused to talk to the program.

The next day, Krakauer (*Into Thin Air* [1997] and *Under the Banner of Heaven* [2003]) published a short online book, *Three Cups of Deceit* (2011), in which he claimed Greg lied many times in *Three Cups of Tea*, starting with his initial tale of being in Korphe.

Greg and the CAI were caught in a firestorm of media and public scrutiny. An investigation into the alleged financial improprieties was launched by Montana's attorney general (the CAI is based in Bozeman), and two Montana legislators filed a \$5 million class action lawsuit claiming Greg fooled 4 million people into buying his books.

Greg withdrew from the public eye. The day the *60 Minutes* program aired, he posted a letter on the CAI website saying he stood by his books and claiming the news show "paints a distorted picture using inaccurate information, innuendo and a microscopic focus on one year's (2009) IRS 990 financial, and a few points in the book *Three Cups of Tea* that occurred almost 18 years ago" (CAI, 2011b). Many criticized the organization's founder for not more aggressively defending himself.

What many people did not know, however, was that two days before the *60 Minutes* segment appeared, Greg had been diagnosed with a hole and a large aneurysm in his heart and was scheduled for open-heart surgery in the next few months. Meanwhile, the CAI worked to ensure its transparency by posting its tax returns and a master list of projects and their status. The report documented 210 schools, with 17 of those receiving "full support" from the CAI, which includes teachers' salaries, supplies, books, and furniture and monitoring by CAI contractors (Flandro, 2011).

(Continued)