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Review

Unlocking the mask: A look at the process by which authentic leaders impact follower attitudes and behaviors

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Abstract

The conceptual and empirical links between authentic leadership and follower attitudes, behaviors, and performance outcomes have not been fully developed. Although we have a number of articles developing the theory of authentic leadership and testing propositions that will appear in a forthcoming special issue of *The Leadership Quarterly* (Vol. 16, Issue 3, 2005), the focus of this article is to provide some of the initial foundation work for the broader theoretical framework of how authentic leaders influence follower attitudes, behaviors, and performance. Here, we draw from positive organizational behavior, trust, hope, emotion, identification, and identity theories to describe the processes by which authentic leaders exert their influence on followers' attitudes and behaviors. Research propositions based on the proposed theoretical model and implications for future theory building and research are presented.
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Keywords: Authentic leadership; Positive organizational behavior; Identity theories; Follower attitudes and behaviors

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1. Introduction

The topic of authentic leadership is generating increased interest in both practitioner (George, 2003) and academic literatures (Avolio, Luthans, & Walumbwa, 2004; Gardner & Schermerhorn, 2004; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; May, Chan, Hodges, & Avolio, 2003). We speculate that the reason why practitioners and scholars are interested in authentic leadership is because the influence of authentic leaders extends well beyond bottom-line success; such leaders have a role to play in the greater society by tackling public policy issues and addressing organizational and societal problems (George, 2003). As Avolio et al. (2004) noted, "the unique stressors facing organizations throughout society today call for a new leadership approach aimed at restoring basic confidence, hope, optimism, resiliency, and meaningfulness" (p. 3). Senator McCain and Salter (2004) summarized the importance of being authentic, as "it is not enough to be honest and just and demand that we be treated honestly and justly by others. We must learn to love honesty and justice for themselves, not just for their effect on personal circumstances, but for their effect on the world, on the whole of human experience, on the progress of humanity in which we have played our part" (pp. 106–107).

Our purpose here is to develop the beginnings of a theoretical framework as a basis for guiding future research on the underlying mechanisms that allow authentic leaders to exert their influence on followers' attitudes, behaviors and performance. Future theoretical and empirical work that will appear in a forthcoming special issue of *The Leadership Quarterly* (Vol. 16, Issue 3, 2005) will expand the focus of the current article to include topics such as what constitutes authentic followership, authentic followership development, authentic leadership development and authentic leader and follower relationships. Greater attention will also be paid in the forthcoming series of articles in the special issue to differentiating a model of authentic leadership from other leadership frameworks such as transformational, servant and spiritual leadership.

The construct of authenticity is captured well by the injunctions of ancient Greek philosophers to "Know thyself" and "To thine own self be true" (Harter, 2002). As these phrases suggest, the essence of authenticity is to know, accept, and remain true to one's self. Rather than conceiving of authenticity as an either/or construct, it is best to recognize that authenticity exists on a continuum and that the more people remain true to their core values, identities, preferences and emotions, the more authentic they become (Erickson, 1995; Heidegger, 1962).

We conceive of authentic leaders as persons who have achieved high levels of authenticity in that they know who they are, what they believe and value, and they act upon those values and beliefs while transparently interacting with others. Avolio et al. (2004) defined authentic leaders as "those individuals who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their

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│   Hope   │
└──────────┘

┌──────────────┐    ┌──────────────┐
│Identification│    │    Trust     │
│              │    └──────────────┘
│ • Personal   │
│ • Social     │    ┌──────────────┐
└──────────────┘    │   Positive   │
                    │   Emotions   │
┌──────────────┐    └──────────────┘
│  Authentic   │
│  Leadership  │
└──────────────┘

┌──────────────────────┐    ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Follower Work        │    │ Follower Behaviors   │
│ Attitudes            │    │                      │
│                      │    │ • Job Performance    │
│ • Commitment         │    │ • Extra Effort       │
│ • Job Satisfaction   │    │ • Withdrawal         │
│ • Meaningfulness     │    │   Behaviors          │
│ • Engagement         │    └──────────────────────┘
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┌──────────────┐
│   Optimism   │
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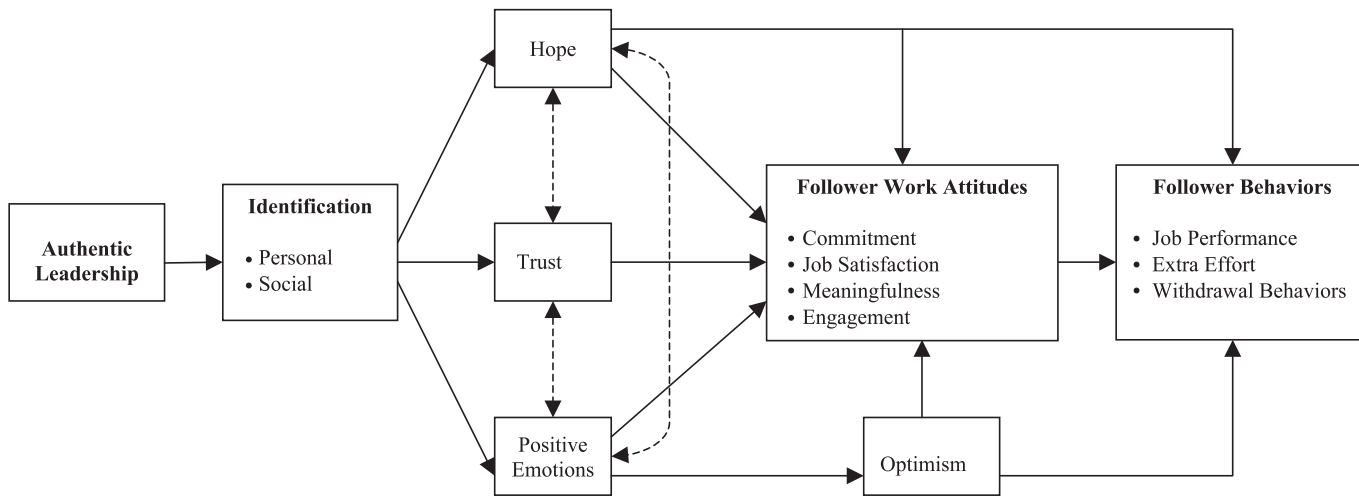
Fig. 1. Proposed framework linking authentic leadership to followers' attitudes and behaviors.

own and others' values/moral perspective, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and high on moral character" (p. 4). We suggest that authentic leaders are able to enhance the engagement, motivation, commitment, satisfaction, and involvement required from followers to constantly improve their work and performance outcomes through the creation of personal identification with the follower and social identification with the organization (Kark & Shamir, 2002).

Our proposed model shown in Fig. 1 recognizes that although authentic leadership is important, it is not sufficient to achieve desired goals. As shown, there is a process linking authentic leadership to followers' attitudes and behaviors. Thus, our model contributes not only to a better understanding of the processes through which authentic leadership operates by highlighting how such leaders may influence followers' attitudes and behaviors, but also how intervening variables, such as hope, trust, positive emotions, and optimism, can be enhanced. This process seems important to address both theoretically and practically, because it provides a potential foundation and point of departure for authentic leadership development (Day, 2000; Day & O'Connor, 2003; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). All of those constructs represent states that can be positively developed, and what we consider to be essential linkages in the authentic leadership development process.

A second contribution of our proposed model is that it recognizes for the first time the possible role that positive emotions *and* trust may play in the authentic leadership process. As noted by Lord and Brown (2004), "previous leadership theories have generally focused on more cognitive elements. . ., the theory and measurement of affective processes has been ignored by leadership researchers or, alternatively, has been approached from a cognitive framework that emphasizes attitudes rather than basic emotional processes" (pp. 122–123). Recently, several researchers (e.g., Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000; Brief & Weiss, 2002; Kanfer & Klimoski, 2002) have pointed out the importance of emotions in the leadership process. A special issue of *The Leadership Quarterly* (Vol. 13, Issue 5, 2002) on the subject of emotions and leadership attests to the important role of emotions in leadership effectiveness. We respond to this call by including positive emotions as a critical component in the authentic leadership process.

Similarly, trust in leadership has been identified as a crucial element in the effectiveness of leaders (Bass, 1990). In a recent meta-analysis by Dirks and Ferrin (2002), trust in leadership was found to be associated with a variety of important organizational outcomes, including belief in information, commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, satisfaction with leaders, and intention to stay. However, in their concluding remarks, Dirks and Ferrin suggested that there is a need to examine the behavioral cues that followers use to draw conclusions about the character of the leader or, put simply, how leaders might develop trust in followers. In this article, we address this issue by suggesting that authentic leadership may help us understand such behavioral cues. In future work, we will explore how trust in followership and trust among followers facilitates the successful impact of authentic leaders on developing authentic organizations.

The follower attitudes included in our model are commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982), job satisfaction (Iaffaldano & Muchinsky, 1985; Judge, Bono, Thoresen, & Patton, 2001; Locke, 1976), empowerment (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990), and task engagement (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003). While the influence of leadership on commitment and job satisfaction is well documented (e.g., Butler & Cantrell, 1997; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Bommer, 1996; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990; Walumbwa & Lawler, 2003; Walumbwa, Wang, Lawler, & Shi, 2004), little work has been conducted that examines the relation between authentic leadership and employee empowerment.

For example, research by Kark, Shamir, and Chen (2003) has looked at the role that transformational leaders play in empowering employees and Liden, Wayne, and Sparrowe (2000) examined the relation of leader–member exchanges to employee empowerment. One specific dimension of empowerment that has garnered significant attention in the positive psychology movement is the meaning that individuals experience in life and, more specifically, in the work place (May, 2004). Indeed, May calls for more research that examines the relation between authentic leadership and experienced meaning at work and this theoretical model addresses that call. Recent developments in authentic leadership may prove the most promising as authentic leaders may inspire their followers to act authentically in the workplace and experience greater meaning by acting consistently with their moral principles (May et al., 2003).

Meaningfulness at work has been found to be a significant determinant of psychological engagement at work (May et al., 2004). However, relatively little attention has been devoted to the relationship between leadership and task engagement. We believe this relationship merits increased attention, especially in light of the results from Harter and colleagues (e.g., Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002; Harter, Schmidt, & Keyes, 2003) recent meta-analyses that indicate engagement is positively and strongly related to a variety of key business performance outcomes, including productivity, customer satisfaction, profit, accidents, and employee turnover. As defined by Harter et al. (2003, p. 269), employee engagement "refers to the individual's involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work." We view engagement as an important consequence of authentic leadership that mediates its effects on follower outcomes.

The follower outcomes included in our model are performance, extra effort, and withdrawal behaviors (e.g., turnover, tardiness, and absenteeism). Here, we have chosen to focus on work outcomes that are commonly seen as being influenced by leadership processes (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 2002), including transformational leadership (Avolio, 1999; Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996; Walumbwa & Lawler, 2003). While we recognize that other forms of leadership can be effective in achieving these outcomes, we believe that the intervening states of follower identification, trust, hope, optimism, and positive emotions our model posits to arise from authentic leadership provide an especially solid foundation for veritable and sustainable organizational performance (Luthans & Avolio, 2003).

After first providing a brief review of what we will call the "root" construct of authentic leadership, we next draw on theories of identification (Pratt, 1998), emotion (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), social identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg, 2000, 2001), transformational/charismatic leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993), trust (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995), positive organizational behavior (Luthans, 2002a, 2002b), and positive psychology and positive organizational scholarship (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003; Farina, Hearth, & Popovich, 1995; Seligman, 2002; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Snyder, 1994, 2000a, 2000b; Snyder & Lopez, 2002; Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002) to derive our proposed model. Our primary goal is to identify the process by which authentic leaders exert their influence on followers' attitudes and behaviors and advance propositions regarding the relationships between authentic leadership, the intervening variables in this process, and follower attitudes and behaviors.

2. Authentic leadership

Consistent with Avolio and colleagues (e.g., Avolio et al., 2004; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; May et al., 2003), we consider authentic leadership as a root construct that can incorporate transformational and

ethical leadership. As noted with transformational leadership (see Avolio, 1999), authentic leaders can be directive or participative, and could even be authoritarian. The behavioral style per se is not what necessarily differentiates the authentic from the inauthentic leader. Authentic leaders act in accordance with deep personal values and convictions, to build credibility and win the respect and trust of followers by encouraging diverse viewpoints and building networks of collaborative relationships with followers, and thereby lead in a manner that followers recognize as authentic. As this process cascades to followers, they may also operate in a similar manner portraying to leaders, colleagues, customers and other interested stakeholders their authenticity, which over time may become a basis for the organization's culture.

According to George (2003), authentic leaders genuinely desire to serve others through their leadership, are more interested in empowering the people they lead to make a difference, and are as guided by the qualities of the heart, passion, and compassion as they are by qualities of the mind. Luthans and Avolio (2003) note that authentic leaders recognize and value individual differences and have the ability and motivation to identify people's talents and help them build those talents into strengths. They are "leaders, who when called upon by the hand of fate, will be the ones who take a stand that changes the course of history for others, be they organizations, departments or just other individuals" (May et al., 2003, p. 248).

This emerging interest in authentic leadership raises some very important research questions: What constitutes authentic leadership? What behaviors constitute acts of authentic leadership? How can authentic leadership be measured? Does authentic leadership vary across cultures? How can authentic leadership and followership be developed? How does an authentic leader impact followers' attitudes, behaviors, and performance? In this paper, we address the last question.

2.1. Authentic leadership and followers' identification

Work by Bono and Judge (2003) and Shamir and colleagues (e.g., Kark & Shamir, 2002; Kark et al., 2003; Shamir et al., 1993; Shamir, Zakay, Breinin, & Popper, 2000) has shown the importance of social and personal identification in the leadership process. More specifically, it has been suggested that leaders affect the identities of followers, in turn influencing their self-regulatory processes (Day, 2000; Lord & Brown, 2001; Lord, Brown, & Freiberg, 1999; Lord & Emrich, 2000; Gardner & Avolio, 1998). Luthans and Avolio (2003) suggested that one of the authentic leader's core challenges is to identify followers' strengths and help direct and build them appropriately, while linking them to a common purpose or mission. Although we believe that authentic leadership can directly affect followers' attitudes and behaviors, we suggest that the influence of authentic leaders on followers' attitudes and behaviors is made more powerful and motivational through the identification of the people they lead. This view is consistent with the arguments advanced by Lord and Brown (2004) that the effect of leaders occurs indirectly through follower self-identities and in turn their working self-concepts.

2.1.1. Personal identification
Personal identification refers to a process whereby the individual's belief about a person [a leader] becomes self-referential or self-defining (Kark & Shamir, 2002). Kark and colleagues (e.g., Kark & Shamir, 2002; Kark et al., 2003) posited and found that transformational leaders are able to influence their followers by connecting with followers' self-concepts so that their values and beliefs become more similar to those of the leader. Since there is overlap between transformational and authentic leadership in this regard (see Avolio et al., 2004), we suggest that authentic leaders are likely to initially stimulate personal identification among their followers.

For example, authentic leadership theory stresses the idea of leading by example (i.e., role modeling) through setting high moral standards, honesty, and integrity. This idea is also certainly true for transformational leadership theory as it has been revised over time from Bass' (1985) original conceptualization and translation of Burns (1978) work. However, we argue that the focus on transparency, positivity and high ethical standards in terms of degree is far more central to authentic leadership theory. In contrast, authentic leadership theory does not necessarily delve into the essence of transforming leadership articulated by Burns, which was to transform followers into leaders.

Luthans and Avolio (2003) have noted that authentic leaders are guided by a set of end values that represent an orientation towards doing "what is right and fair" for the leader and for their followers. Such leaders identify with their followers' by leading from the front, openly discussing their vulnerabilities and those of the followers, and constantly emphasizing the growth of followers. Work by Quinn, Spreitzer, and Brown (2000) suggests that leaders who are open are more effective in influencing others than those demonstrating coercive or persuasive leadership styles–characteristics associated with traditional transactional leadership theories. Thus, we expect authentic leaders to evoke followers' self-concepts in the recognition that they share similar values with the leader, which are values modeled through the leader's and followers' behavior. The sharing of values does not necessarily presuppose a transformation of follower values, which has oftentimes been associated with charismatic/transformational leaders (Bass, 1990).

2.1.2. Social identification

Tajfel (1972) introduced the idea of social identity to refer to a process by which individuals identify with the group, feel pride in belonging, and see membership in the group as an important aspect of their identity. More specifically, he defined social identity as "the individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him [her] of this group membership" (p. 292). Hogg (2001) proposed three core processes that operate in conjunction to make prototypicality an increasingly influential basis of leadership processes that are a function of increasing social identity: prototypicality, social attraction, and identity salience. Specifically, Hogg argued that "as people identify more strongly within a group, the basis for leadership perceptions, evaluations, and endorsement becomes increasingly influenced by proto-typicality; prototypical members are more likely to emerge as leaders, and more prototypical leaders will be perceived to be more effective" (p. 191).

Authentic leaders have a highly developed sense of how their roles as leaders carry a responsibility to act morally and in the best interests of others (May et al., 2003). We suggest that authentic leaders increase followers' social identification by creating a deeper sense of high moral values and expressing high levels of honesty and integrity in their dealings with followers. Hogg (2001) noted that good leaders are people who have the attributes of the category of leader that best fits situational requirements. Authentic leaders realize their ethical behavior sends a strong message to followers affecting what they attend to, what they think, how they construct their own roles, and ultimately how they decide and behave. By reflecting on their own selves and others, such leaders are better able to grasp the moral implications of a given situation and keep their followers engaged over time for the benefit of the collective (e.g., work team, department, organization, nation). Burns (1978) argued that leaders who activate intrinsic values instill in followers a desire to follow them, even in the absence of incentives.

In summary, authentic leaders exemplify directness, openness, commitment to the success of followers, a willingness to acknowledge their own limitations, transparency and a commitment to be

held accountable for their actions and reward honesty and integrity. Such leadership behaviors enable followers to connect with their leaders and the values, beliefs, goals and activities that are identified with the leader over time. We should note that we associate identification with self-regulation, since higher levels of commitment are associated with individuals whose personal self-concepts are tied to or identified with the mission and causes being pursued by their organizations (Shamir et al., 1993).

Proposition 1. *Authentic leadership is positively related to followers' (a) personal identification with the leader and (b) social identification with the collective.*

After the identification process is complete, our model proposes the next hurdle is to sustain this relationship in order to achieve positive organizational outcomes. Three important constructs that we believe are critical to building a long-term relationship between the leader and their followers are hope, trust, and positive emotions. Thus, we propose an integrated model that brings together constructs from the leadership, positive psychology, emotion, and trust literatures for theoretical development.

2.2. Authentic leadership and hope

Hope is defined as "a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful: (1) agency (goal-directed energy) and (2) pathways (planning to meet goals)" (Snyder, Irving, & Anderson, 1991, p. 287). The agency notion of willpower reflects the individual's motivation and determination that goals can be achieved and a person's belief that successful plans can be formulated to attain the goals (Snyder, 2000a, 2000b). The waypower (pathways) component represents one's perceived capabilities at generating workable routes to attain desired goals (Snyder, Rand et al., 2002, Snyder, Shorey et al., 2002). Importantly, although agency and pathways thinking represent two distinct dimensions, they are interrelated and operate in a combined and iterative manner to generate hope.

Work by Snyder and colleagues (e.g., Snyder, 2000a, 2000b; Snyder, Cheavans, & Sympson, 1997; Snyder, Feldman, Taylor, Schroeder, & Adams, 2000; Snyder, Irving, et al., 1991; Snyder, Harris, Anderson, Holleran, Irving, Sigmon et al., 1991; Snyder, Rand et al., 2002; Snyder, Shorey et al., 2002) recognizes hope theoretically and psychometrically as being both a dispositional and state-like positive psychological capacity. Luthans and Jensen (2002) have shown how hope can be developed at the individual, team and organizational levels in today's workplace. Thus, because hope is supported by theory and research to be a psychological capacity open to development through iterative processes, the question of how hope may be developed is important not only theoretically but also practically to provide guidance on how to maximize the identification with and attainment of personal and organizational goals.

A closer look into the leadership literature reveals that hope has been a dominant feature in many leadership theories (Snyder & Shorey, 2004). For example, Gardner (1993) wrote that "the two tasks at the heart of the popular notion of leadership are goal setting and motivating–leaders point us in the right direction and tell us to get moving" (p. 11). Bass (1998) noted that teams working under transformational leaders "reorient their individual goals for the good of the team; are more cohesive, and increase their focus on achieving their team goals" (p. 116). Luthans and Avolio (2003) stated, "the force multiplier throughout history has often been attributed to the leader's ability to generate hope" (p. 253). Although the theme of hope is central in most leadership models, little is known about the processes by which leaders influence hope in their followers. We suggest that authentic leaders can play a significant role in developing hope through identification with their followers.

According to Snyder and colleagues (e.g., Snyder, 2000a, 2000b; Shorey, Snyder, Yang, & Lewin, 2003), hope is instilled through prolonged interactions with consistently hopeful and responsive actors. Such an actor could be a caregiver, teacher, coach, leader, boss, parent or another key figure in one's life (Snyder, 1994). Because authentic leaders have the ability to remain realistically hopeful and trustworthy, such leaders can enhance followers' hope by establishing not only their willpower, but also by including in their comments positive aspects of the waypower or directions to pursue that enhance a follower's sense of self-efficacy (Avolio et al., 2004). For example, by (a) maintaining high levels of commitment, sharing and transparency, (b) communicating important and relevant information needed to make informed judgments, and (c) encouraging supportive inquiry, authentic leaders are able to enhance followers' hopefulness.

It has been suggested that as high-hope leadership becomes a known quantity within the organization, it provides a sense of security and trust that enables followers to focus their creative energies on goal-related endeavors, rather than concentrating on whether communications are veridical or not (Shorey & Snyder, 2004). High-hope authentic leaders are also viewed as more credible sources of input and feedback by their followers (Avolio et al., 2004). Moreover, the waypower dimension of hope suggests that high-hope leaders should not only have well formulated plans and goals, but also should have alternative pathways clearly determined so that when faced with obstacles they can revert to alternative courses of action (Luthans & Jensen, 2002; Luthans, VanWyk, & Walumbwa, 2004). That is, a leader with a strong sense of pathways thinking sees obstacles as opportunities rather than threats, and looks for alternative means to address them to achieve desired outcomes.

However, we propose that for authentic leaders to have the greatest impact on followers' hope, such leaders must identify with their followers as followers should with the leader and share their goals with them. Such leaders' goals must be connected to followers' self-structures for them to have powerful effects on followers' attitudes and behavior (Lord & Brown, 2004). This is important because self-relevance of goals is likely to help one focus one's mental activities, especially during turbulent times, and provides the flexibility to change when appropriate (Kuhl, 1994).

Initial research on hope in organizations suggests that those who are hopeful are likely to be more motivated and engaged in positive psychological outcomes (Snyder et al., 2000). For example, Adams et al. (2002) found evidence that firms with more hopeful human resources are more profitable, have higher retention rates, and have greater levels of employee satisfaction and commitment. Similarly, Peterson and Luthans (2003) found that high-hope organizational leaders had significantly better work unit performance, subordinate retention, and satisfaction outcomes than low-hope leaders. Hope has also been found to be positively related to academic, athletic and health performance outcomes, and a number of positive psychological outcomes, including goal expectancies, perceived control, positive affect, and the ability to cope with hardships and stress (Chang, 1998; Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997; Snyder, Shorey, Cheavens, Pulvers, Adams, & Wiklund, 2002; Snyder, 2000a, 2000b; Snyder et al., 1997; Snyder, Lopez, Shorey, Rand, & Feldman, 2003; Onwuegbuzie & Snyder, 2000). Thus, based on theory and recent empirical evidence, we expect that hope will be positively related to followers' attitudes and behaviors.

Proposition 2a. *Personal identification by followers mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and hope.*

Proposition 2b. *Social identification by followers mediates the relationship between authentic leadership behaviors and hope.*

Proposition 2c. *Hope is positively related to followers' work attitudes, which are in turn related to followers' behavior.*

2.3. Authentic leadership and trust in the leader

Trust has attracted considerable research attention in the last decade (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt and Camerer (1998) defined trust as a "psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another" (p. 395). According to Mayer et al. (1995), the best way to understand why a given party will have greater or lesser trust is to consider the attributes of the trustee (i.e., a leader). Mayer et al. identified three characteristics of a trustee that are critical for the development of trust: ability, benevolence, and integrity. Implicit in Mayer et al.'s notion of trust is the idea that a trustor attempts to draw inferences about the trustee's (i.e., a leader) characteristics such as honesty, integrity, dependability, fairness, and ability, and that these inferences have consequences for work attitudes and behaviors (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002).

Authentic leaders build benevolence and integrity with their followers by encouraging totally open communication, engaging their followers, sharing critical information, and sharing their perceptions and feelings about the people with whom they work; the result is a realistic social relationship arising from followers' heightened levels of personal and social identification. Work by Jung and Avolio (2000) suggests that leaders may build trust by demonstrating individualized concern (i.e., engagement) and respect (i.e., encouraging diverse viewpoints) for followers. We also know from social exchange theory (i.e., Blau, 1964) that a realistic social relationship is likely to lead to gestures of goodwill being reciprocated, even to the extent of each side willingly going above and beyond the call of duty (Konovsky & Pugh, 1994). Moreover, because authentic leaders exemplify high moral standards, integrity, and honesty, their favorable reputation fosters positive expectations among followers, enhancing their levels of trust and willingness to cooperate with the leader for the benefit of the organization. As a result, followers feel more comfortable and empowered to do the activities required for successful task accomplishment.

Additional insight into the processes whereby authentic leaders build trusting relationships with followers is suggested by Robins and Boldero's (2003) relational discrepancy theory. Robins and Boldero extend Higgins' (1987) self-discrepancy theory to dyads by exploring discrepancies that emerge from comparisons of a person's (e.g., a follower's) actual selves and self-guides (ought and ideal selves) with his or her perceptions of another individual's (e.g., a leader's) actual selves and self-guides. The term *commensurability* describes the degree to which the members of the dyad share self-aspects. For example, commensurability would be higher when both a leader and a follower share optimism, hope and trustworthiness as aspects of their ideal selves than would be the case if they have only two of these ideal self-aspects in common. When both members of the dyad share a common self-aspect, discrepancies may occur if differences exist in the level of that aspect present or desired. For instance, even though both members may see themselves as trustworthy, if the leader sees herself as highly trustworthy and the member sees himself as only moderately trustworthy, their actual selves are commensurate but discrepant.

Robins and Boldero (2003) propose that as the levels of congruence between dyadic partners' actual, ought and ideal selves rise, they enjoy increasingly high levels of intimacy, trust, and goal alignment. We believe this proposition may help to explain how and why authentic leaders come to form trusting and

cooperative relationships with their followers. As they transparently convey their attributes, values, aspirations, and weaknesses to followers, and encourage them to do likewise, the foundations for trust and intimacy are established. Followers come to know what the leader values and stands for, and that the leader understands who they are as well. Furthermore, if such insights reveal high levels of congruence between the attributes, values, and aspirations of both parties, the level of trust will deepen and a very close relationship will evolve. Notice, however, that such an intimate, trusting and cooperative relationship is not possible without authenticity and the self-awareness, self-acceptance, and transparent conveyance of one's actual, ought and ideal selves that accompany it.

Considerable research evidence has demonstrated that trust in leadership is related to positive organizational outcomes (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001, 2002). For example, studies (e.g., Korsgaard, Brodt, & Whitener, 2002; Pillai, Schriesheim, & Williams, 1999) have found that trustworthy managerial behavior or trust in leadership is positively related to organizational citizenship behaviors. Trust in leadership has also been found to be associated with follower attitudes, such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Butler, Cantrell, & Flick, 1999; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Podsakoff et al., 1996), and follower behaviors, such as intention to quit and performance (Dirks, 2000; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002).

For example, Dirks (2000) examined the effect of trust in leadership on the performance of NCAA basketball teams. Results showed that a team's trust in a leader had a significant effect on the team's performance. Dirks and Ferrin (2002) argued that because "trust involves beliefs about honesty, integrity, and the extent to which a leader will take advantage of the follower, it is likely to affect the extent to which individuals are willing to believe the accuracy of information they receive from that individual" (pp. 613–614). That is, when followers believe in their leader's ability, integrity, and benevolence, they are more trusting and willing to engage in risk-taking behaviors (Mayer et al., 1995). Conversely, when individuals perceive a leader as lacking in honesty, integrity, fairness, and competence, they are more likely to consider quitting, because they may be concerned about decisions that the leader might make and not want to put themselves at risk to the leader (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Thus, we expect trust in leadership to be associated with followers' positive attitudes, which in turn will be related to positive behaviors.

Proposition 3a. *Personal identification by followers mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and trust in the leader.*

Proposition 3b. *Social identification by followers mediates the relationship between authentic leadership behaviors and trust in the leader.*

Proposition 3c. *Trust is positively related to followers' work attitudes, which are in turn related to followers' behavior.*

2.4. Emotions

There is no universally accepted definition of emotion because emotion is a constellation of related reactions (i.e., positive or negative); emotion represents a response or reaction to an event or person(s) (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) noted that "although the experience of work is saturated with emotion, research has generally neglected the impact of everyday emotions on organizational life" (p. 97). To date, no one has attempted to develop a conceptual framework of leadership and followers' emotional states (McColl-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002). This is surprising because many of the new theories of leadership such as charismatic and transformational leadership

emphasize the emotional attachment of followers to the leader (Bass, 1985; Emrich, Brower, Feldman, & Garland, 2001; Gardner & Avolio, 1998). For example, House, Woycke, and Fodor (1988) argued that what differentiates charismatic from non-charismatic leaders is that charismatic leaders have their major effects on the emotions and self-esteem of followers, as opposed to non-charismatic leaders, whose primary effects are exerted on followers' cognitions and abilities. Similarly, George (2000) suggests that transformational leadership behaviors are associated with higher levels of emotional intelligence.

Emotions are important to the authentic leadership process because they provide people with invaluable information about their own self, other people, and the various dynamic transactions that people share inside organizational environments (Lazarus, 1991). Thus, emotions can help individuals to develop more adaptive responses to setbacks and stressors that they face in their work environments. By tapping into the rich information that emotions provide, authentic leaders can often alter followers' thinking and behavior in ways that allow them to more effectively negotiate organizational challenges.

Such altering of thinking and behavior may also provide clues to how emotions impact the authentic development of leadership. Specifically, certain positive or negative emotional events can trigger in individuals a deep sense of self-reflection, which may ultimately influence the directions the individual pursues in terms of subsequent leadership development. The idea to emphasize here and to be expanded upon in a more in-depth discussion of authentic leadership development is how *both* positive and negative moments and events can trigger deep change in an individual's self-identity, bringing into clearer focus alternative "possible selves" that eventually may replace the current individual's "actual self" and day to day working self-concepts (Lord & Brown, 2004).

To be clear, our focus in our proposed framework is on how positive emotions impact the relationship between authentic leaders and their followers. Positive psychologists (e.g., Seligman, 1998; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Sheldon & King, 2001) have argued that the field of psychology has been too preoccupied with what is wrong with people and their weaknesses instead of asking questions about how people can build on strengths (e.g., How do life's tragedies transform people into leaders?). Specifically, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) note: "it is about identifying and nurturing their strongest qualities, what they own and are best at, and helping them find niches in which they can best live out these strengths" (p. 6). Thus, we are interested in how positive emotions evolve and how they can be developed and reinforced for maximum positive impact on leaders, followers and their organizations.

2.5. Authentic leadership and positive emotions

Research suggests that positive emotions can predict positive human attitudes and behaviors, such as coping with adversity, commitment, satisfaction, stress, performance, and developing long-term plans and goals. For example, work by Fredrickson and her colleagues (e.g., Fredrickson, 1998, 2000, 2001; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002; Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998) suggests that positive emotions broaden people's thought action repertoires, encouraging them to discover novel lines of thought for action, and enable flexible and creative thinking. These authors argue that as individuals discover new ideas and actions, they build their physical, intellectual, social, and psychological reserves or resources.

On a more pragmatic level, it has also been suggested that emotional awareness serves as a guide for fine-tuning on-the-job performance, including accurately gauging the feelings of those around us, managing our unruly feelings, keeping ourselves motivated, and helping to develop good work-related

emotional skills (Zeidner, Mathews, & Roberts, 2004). There is also evidence that positive affect is related to employee work-related attitudes, motivation, and performance (Brief & Weiss, 2002; Connolly & Viswesvaran, 2000; Erez & Isen, 2002; Fisher & Ashkanasy, 2000; Gardner, Rozell, & Walumbwa, 2004; George & Zhou, 2002; Isen, 2000; McColl-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002; Weiss, Nicholas, & Daus, 1999).

Given the dominant role of leadership in the workplace (Redmond, Mumford, & Teach, 1993), one key situational factor that may have substantial impact on positive emotions, in turn elevating followers' positive attitudes and behaviors, is leadership, and in particular authentic leadership, through positive identification between the leader, followers, and their organization. Authentic leaders are more likely to create positive feelings among followers and a sense of identification with the central purposes of the leader and/or organization, which would broaden their thinking (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001), and in turn produce "leaner" behaviors over time focused on value-added actions (Emiliani, 1998). Authentic leaders create the conditions for higher trust and elicit positive emotions from followers, enhancing decision making, improving the well-being of organizations, and ultimately building positive emotional states and high levels of engagement throughout the workforce.

Thus, we propose that authentic leadership will positively affect follower positive emotions through identification with leaders, which then will promote positive follower attitudes and behaviors.

Proposition 4a. *Personal identification by followers mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and followers' positive emotions.*

Proposition 4b. *Social identification mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and positive emotions among followers.*

Proposition 4c. *Positive emotions positively impact followers' work attitudes, which in turn elicit desirable follower work behaviors.*

2.6. Authentic leadership and optimism

Seligman (1998) defined optimism as a cognitive process involving positive outcome expectancies and causal attributions that are external, temporary, and specific in interpreting bad or negative events and internal, stable, and global for good or positive events. Optimists tend to exhibit higher levels of work motivation, performance, job satisfaction and morale, persevere in the face of obstacles and difficulties, analyze personal failures and setbacks as temporary, and experience both physical and mental invigoration (Seligman, 1998; Wanburg, 1997). That is, because of the adaptive attributional styles of people who exhibit "realistic" optimism, they are more likely to remain committed, satisfied, engaged, and feel empowered, and hence achieve superior performance and engage in fewer withdrawal behaviors (Peterson, 2000; Schneider, 2001; Seligman, 1998).

Recently, more direct links between authentic leadership and optimism have been suggested in the literature (Avolio et al., 2004; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Gardner & Schermerhorn, 2004; McColl-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002; Quinn, Spreitzer, & Brown, 2000; Wunderley, Reddy, & Dember, 1998). As Luthans and Avolio (2003) assert, there is hardly an inspirational leader throughout history who made a positive difference in his or her organization or community, who has not been labeled "optimistic". McColl-Kennedy and Anderson (2002), using a sample of sales representatives from Australia, reported

that transformational leadership was positively related to optimism, or to be more specific, mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and performance.

Gardner and Schermerhorn (2004) succinctly state, the "task of the authentic leader is to raise optimism." Although this statement is consistent with the assertions made by Avolio and colleagues (e.g., Avolio et al., 2004; Luthans & Avolio, 2003), the questions of the underlying process by which authentic leaders influence optimism, and ultimately followers' positive attitudes and behaviors, have not been addressed in the literature. This issue is important to understanding the inner workings of authentic leadership and why followers of authentic leaders would be expected to be more optimistic and in turn demonstrate higher levels of commitment, performance, engagement, satisfaction, and empowerment.

We suggest here a two-step process mechanism by which authentic leaders influence followers' optimism, namely by first identifying with followers and then evoking followers' positive emotions. This suggestion is consistent with recent claims that authentic-like leaders (e.g., transformational) employ emotions to persuade their followers to engage in positive thinking in terms of developing both a positive vision and new ideas (Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000). According to these authors, such leaders are able to interpret information, exchanges, and interactions with followers from a positive perspective, thus evoking positive emotions. Work by Grossman (2000) also suggests that leaders who understand emotions appear to motivate followers to work more effectively and efficiently. Moreover, because optimism can be acquired through modeling (Peterson, 2000), we suggest that one way authentic leaders can influence their followers' optimism is to increase follower identification with the leader by modeling desired positive emotions, leading to realistic optimism, which in turn fosters positive attitudes and high levels of performance (Avolio et al., 2004; Luthans & Avolio, 2003).

Proposition 5a. *Followers' positive emotions are positively related to followers' optimism.*

Proposition 5b. *Optimism mediates the relationship between followers' positive emotions and followers' positive attitudes, which in turn influences followers' behaviors.*

2.7. Summary of the model

Our proposed model draws on and integrates existing theories and research on leadership, emotions, social identity and identification, trust, positive psychology, positive organizational behavior, and their outcomes. Our aim in this article is to focus on the process mechanisms by which authentic leaders influence followers' attitudes and behaviors, thereby establishing guidelines for future research. Again, further discrimination between the theoretical framing of authentic leadership and existing models of leadership will be explored in the upcoming special issue of *The Leadership Quarterly* (Vol. 16, Issue 3, 2005).

Some aspects of our proposed framework need to be further highlighted in this summary. Given a variety of perspectives on the nature, origins, components, and classification of emotions, we chose to focus in this article on positive emotions (e.g., happiness, love and joy) that occur frequently in the workplace. We do this for two reasons. First, there is evidence suggesting that positive emotions (as opposed to negative emotions) are linked to positive behaviors such as creativity, coping with adversity, commitment, satisfaction, stress, motivation, and performance (Erez & Isen, 2002; Fredrickson, 1998, 2000, 2001; Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002; Isen, Daubman, & Nowicki, 1987)—competencies that are required in today's workplace.

Second, this approach is consistent with more established research approaches in positive psychology (Gardner et al., 2004; Seligman, 2002; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Sheldon & King, 2001; Snyder & Lopez, 2002), positive organizational scholarship (Cameron et al., 2003), positive organizational behavior (e.g., Luthans, 2002a, 2002b), and the strength-based approach (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001; Buckingham & Coffman, 1999; Clifton & Harter, 2003), which shifts attention to the positive attributes of people and their strengths, and away from becoming fixated on fixing weaknesses.

Our model proposes that authentic leadership influences followers' attitudes and behaviors through the key psychological processes of identification, hope, positive emotions, optimism, and trust. However, it is also important to point out that we recognize there are key linkages among the intervening variables, since each may influence one another, as the dashed lines in Fig. 1 indicate. For example, it is possible that a condition of higher trust is likely to facilitate the development of more positive emotions. Similarly, although hope and emotions are theoretically and psychometrically distinct constructs, they share some similarities (Farina et al., 1995). For example, emotional and hopeful behaviors are experienced not only as a result of early socialization, but as a consequence of social interaction with other persons (Snyder, 2000a, 2000b; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996).

Finally, although the proposed model stresses the role of psychological states in the authentic leadership process, we recognize that many contextual factors also influence this process. As Gardner (1993) asserts, leaders "are an integral part of the system, subject to the forces that affect the system. . . In the process leaders shape and are shaped" (p. 1). Contextual factors that may be relevant to the study of the authentic leadership process may include organizational power and politics, organizational structure, gender, and organizational culture and climate. For example, the culture of an organization, as expressed by its values, norms, and politics may influence the effectiveness of authentic leadership.

3. Conclusions and future research directions

We offer several suggestions for future research. First, because the theory and study of authentic leadership is still emerging, we recommend that researchers incorporate a number of alternative research designs. As stated by Avolio and colleagues (e.g., Avolio et al., 2004; Luthans & Avolio, 2003), authentic leadership is a multifaceted construct and thus calls for multifaceted research designs. Thus, although we recognize the need to identify the level at which authentic leadership occurs, we are of the view that considering only one level of analysis and excluding others can cause researchers to miss or improperly identify effects of this emerging leadership phenomenon (Yammarino & Dansereau, 1995). Clearly, future research needs to explore what constitutes individual differences in authentic leadership, the authentic leader–follower relationship, shared authentic leadership and ultimately authentic organizational cultures. The constructs comprising our proposed model can be translated across levels as future theory builds on what constitutes authentic leadership and its development.

Another critical issue that deserves research attention is how authentic leadership develops and evolves, which was not the focus of the current article. For example, Luthans and Avolio (2003) proposed a leader's personal history (i.e., family influences, early life challenges, educational and work experiences, role models) and trigger events (i.e., internal and external sources of turbulence that challenge the leader's ability) in a leader's life as potential antecedents to authentic leadership emergence. By choosing the term authentic leadership development, Luthans and Avolio (2003) argued

that, in effect, life is the most authentic leadership development process, and that the challenge for the field of leadership is to improve on life's program of leadership development, making it more efficient, cost effective and perhaps less risky.

Thus, understanding the moments that matter in life that accelerate authentic leadership development and recreating those moments may help to accelerate leadership development faster than life's program. More importantly, future leadership work must bring to the foreground what constitutes leadership development by getting much closer to what actually develops people. It is time that the field of leadership demands that all attempts at "developing leadership" be authenticated. Nevertheless, the deeper issues regarding authentic leadership development will need to be discussed in subsequent work on this topic.

With respect to emotions, hope, and trust, it might be interesting to examine the dynamics of emotions and trust and how they change over time as a result of authentic leadership. Researchers could also pursue the effect of authentic leadership on emotions and trust at the individual, dyad, group, and organizational levels and assess if the impact of authentic leadership might differ as a function of level of analysis. Recent work on emotion as a group level phenomenon suggests that emotion can act as a catalyst for a variety of group-related outcomes, including task effectiveness, social identity and decision-making processes (Barsade, 2002; Barsade, Ward, Turner, & Sonnenfeld, 2000; Estrada, Isen, & Young, 1997; Staw & Barsade, 1993).

One particularly promising theoretical perspective for investigating the interrelationships of emotions, hope, trust and authentic leader–member relationships is provided by Robins & Boldero's (2003) relational discrepancy theory. Recall that Robins and Boldero introduce the concept of commensurability to describe the cognitive appraisals dyadic partners make regarding their own and their partner's actual, ought and ideal selves. Central to their arguments is the notion that these appraisals, and any resultant emotions, will be influenced by the source of commensurability. Importantly, their arguments apply directly to leader–member dyads. For example, when actual selves provide the source of commensurability for a follower, he or she will conclude that "The leader sees me as I really am" (Robins & Boldero, 2003, p. 64) and interpersonal feelings of trust and intimacy are posited to emerge. When ought selves serve as the source of commensurability, the follower will believe that the leader "has the same standards as me" (p. 64), creating interpersonal feelings of approval.

Lastly, when ideal selves constitute the source of commensurability, the follower will perceive that the leader "has the same ideals and aspirations as me" (p. 64) and experience feelings of cooperation and alliance. Here again, relational discrepancy theory suggests that interpersonal trust, intimacy, cooperation and goal alignment will be highest for leaders and followers when their actual, ought and ideal selves are congruent. Moreover, we believe that high levels of consistent commensurability are particularly conducive to the development of authentic leader–follower relationships, since the two parties share similar ought and ideal selves, as well as transparent portrayals and accurate perceptions of their actual selves.

Of particular relevance to our focus on authentic leader–follower relationships are cases where dyadic partners experience congruence between their ought and ideal selves, but discrepancies in their actual selves. Robins and Boldero (2003) argue that this combination of actual selves and self-guides is especially likely to cause the partners to adopt leader and follower roles. By assuming the role of follower, the party with the discrepant actual self can address the discrepancy, and ameliorate any resultant emotional distress (e.g., anxiety), by moving from an "I" (individual identity level) to a "we"

(interpersonal or collective identity level) orientation (Lord & Brown, 2004; Lord et al., 1999). Consider, for example, the case where both partners value optimism as an ideal, but one is much more optimistic than the other. Under these circumstances, the more optimistic partner is likely to emerge as the leader, while the less optimistic partner cognitively addresses the actual–ideal self-discrepancy, and lessens any associated negative emotions (e.g., depression), by coming to see himself or herself as a member of an optimistic team. In a truly authentic relationship, we believe the leader will understand and accept the follower as a less optimistic partner, while simultaneously helping the follower to grow by developing a more optimistic outlook. The preceding example illustrates well the potential utility of relational discrepancy theory as a framework for further explicating the proposed model's linkages between authentic leadership and follower trust, optimism, hope and emotion, as well as their effects on follower work attitudes and behavior.

As mentioned, the influence of context cannot be overlooked in the study of authentic leadership and for that matter leadership development in general (Day, Zaccaro, & Halpin, 2003). A more thorough understanding is needed of whether different contextual factors, including those that can be shaped by the leader and those that are not within a leader's control, foster different identities and moderate the authentic leader's effects (Kark & Shamir, 2002). By integrating context into our understanding of the authentic leadership process, there will a greater opportunity to control for any contextual nuisances and thus enhance the predictability of any leadership model. Additionally, when incorporating context in future models of authentic leadership, it will be necessary to incorporate the context that is the remembered or historical context, the current/emerging context, and the future/possible context. The context is by no means a fixed entity and indeed is quite dynamic, varying depending on the experience, awareness and nature of the leader and follower at any one point in time, as well as across time.

Finally, a word of caution is necessary in studying the employee affect variables in our proposed framework, with the exception of task engagement. As we know, commitment, empowerment, satisfaction, and trust have been defined and operationalized differently. Researchers are encouraged to take greater care in clarifying exactly what commitment, empowerment, and satisfaction they are measuring because leader behavior might have a stronger impact on some than on others. For example, Schriesheim (1979) argued that leadership behavior is expected to have a greater impact on satisfaction with supervisor and satisfaction with work than say satisfaction with co-workers. Dirks and Ferrin (2002), in reviewing the literature on trust in leadership, observed that researchers have either focused on trust in a leader (i.e., supervisor) or focused on organizational leadership (i.e., senior leadership). They concluded that these two different leadership referents are likely to show systematically different trust relationships with antecedents and work outcomes.

We have proposed a framework of the authentic leadership process that is only a very preliminary attempt at explaining the underlying mechanisms by which authentic leaders influence followers' positive attitudes and behaviors. We believe that one contribution of this model is that it attempts to bring together several theories that have not been previously jointly connected to leadership, in general, and authentic leadership in particular, to better understand the impact of authentic leaders on followers' attitudes and behaviors. Of course, there is still a need for a greater theoretical integration between authentic leadership and other process variables, such as self-concordance (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999; Sheldon, Elliot, Ryan, Chirkov, Kim, Wu et al., 2004; Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001) and value congruence (Jung & Avolio, 2000; Meglino, Ravlin, & Adkins, 1991; Schwartz, 1999).

More importantly, further work is needed on differentiating authentic leadership from existing theories of leadership such as transformational, charismatic, inspirational and servant. From our point of view, the main differentiation is that we view authentic leadership at the very base or core of what constitutes profoundly positive leadership in whatever form it exists. As a root construct, we argue that it is necessary but not sufficient to explain how some leaders are able to "inspire" masses of people to achieve extraordinary accomplishments; how some leaders who are humble servants of their followers engage the deepest levels of commitment; and how some leaders are able to take even the most recalcitrant followers and "transform" them into the most capable leaders.

In conclusion, a significant emphasis in our work grew out of the idea that the positive qualities and emotions of people and in turn leaders had been mentioned throughout the literature of leadership dating back to Socrates and Plato, if not before. We are also cognizant of the fact that for centuries, authors have written about the importance of honesty, trust, ethics and their influence on leadership, followership, organizations, communities and nation states. Indeed, we can say without reservation or apology, that we have attempted to go to the oldest, oldest, oldest wine with respect to leadership and to then build a new blend and bottle that provides a unique perspective on what constitutes the very core aspects of authentic leadership. By starting where the Greeks left off, we hope to rediscover the lessons on authenticity that the Enron's, Worldcom's and Global Crossing's have unfortunately forgotten or ignored.

Acknowledgements

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