2005

# "Can you see the real me?" A self-based model of authentic leader and follower development

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# "Can you see the real me?" A self-based model of authentic leader and follower development

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**Abstract**

To address present and future leadership needs, a model of authentic leader and follower development is proposed and examined with respect to its relationship to veritable, sustainable follower performance. The developmental processes of leader and follower self-awareness and self-regulation are emphasized. The influence of the leader's and followers' personal histories and trigger events are considered as antecedents of authentic leadership and followership, as well as the reciprocal effects with an inclusive, ethical, caring and strength-based organizational climate. Positive modeling is viewed as a primary means whereby leaders develop authentic followers. Posited outcomes of authentic leader–follower relationships include heightened levels of follower trust in the leader, engagement, workplace well-being and veritable, sustainable performance. Testable propositions and directions for exploring them are presented and discussed.

**Keywords:** Authentic leadership development, Self-awareness, Self-regulation, Authentic followership, Engaged organizational climate

## 1. Introduction

> I have often thought that the best way to define a man's charac-
> ter would be to seek out the particular mental or moral attitude
> in which, when it came upon him, he felt himself most deeply and
> intensively active and alive. At such moments, there is a voice in-
> side which speaks and says, "This is the real me."
> > —William James, *Letters of William James*

> Can you see the real me?
> > —Pete Townsend of The Who, "The Real Me," from the
> > rock opera, *Quadrophenia*

With today's pressures to promote style over substance, dress for suc-
cess, embrace flavor-of-the-month fads and fashions, and compromise
one's values to satisfy Wall Street's unquenchable thirst for quarterly
profits, the challenge of knowing, showing, and remaining true to
one's real self at work has never been greater. Like the mixed-up mod
named Jimmy in *Quadrophenia* whose identity was split between four
separate characters, many compartmentalize their life as they assume
different personas at work, home, play and, increasingly, on-line, po-
tentially losing touch with their real selves. In the face of such pres-
sures, we are told that people look for organizational leaders of char-
acter and integrity to provide direction and help them find meaning
in their work, or unfortunately the personalized charismatic types,
who only want to take advantage of their confusion.

All too often, we have seen people looking for direction and will-
ing to offer their trust, which has been tragically misplaced, as recent
ethical meltdowns by leaders of a host of Fortune 500 companies at-
test. Yet, despite such dramatic examples of corporate misconduct, we
are struck by the uplifting effects of lower profile but genuine leaders
who lead by example in fostering healthy ethical climates character-
ized by transparency, trust, integrity, and high moral standards. We
call such individuals authentic leaders who are not only true to them-
selves, but lead others by helping them to likewise achieve authentic-
ity. We believe that through the development of such leaders, as well
as authentic followers, positive ethical climates and sustainable fol-
lower accomplishments can be achieved.

The purpose of this article is to further develop and extend an
emerging theory of authentic leadership development. Specifically,

we build-out from Luthans & Avolio's (2003) initial model of authentic leadership development, by advancing a self-based perspective of authentic leaders' and followers' development. By including followers in this model, we are recognizing the need as articulated by Howell & Shamir (2005) to include followers as a key focal point in the building of leadership models. We begin by defining the constructs of authenticity, authentic leadership, and authentic followership. Next, we provide an overview of the conceptual model, followed by more in depth discussions of the authentic leadership and follower processes. We advance researchable propositions throughout our discussion where appropriate.

## 2. Construct definitions

### 2.1. Authenticity

Although the concept of authenticity is generally recognized to have its roots in ancient Greek philosophy ("To thine own self be true"; see Harter, 2002, for a historical review), the modern conception of authenticity emerged within the past 80 years (Erickson, 1995a). Drawing from the positive psychology literature (Cameron et al., 2003, Seligman, 2002 and Snyder & Lopez, 2002), authenticity can be defined as "owning one's personal experiences, be they thoughts, emotions, needs, wants, preferences, or beliefs, processes captured by the injunction to know 'oneself'" (Harter, 2002). Thus, authenticity involves both owning one's personal experiences (values, thoughts, emotions and beliefs) and *acting* in accordance with one's true self (expressing what you really think and believe and behaving accordingly) ( Harter, 2002). As Erickson (1995a) notes, authenticity is not an either/or condition, i.e., people are neither completely authentic nor inauthentic. Instead, they can best be described as being more or less authentic or inauthentic. Hence, from our developmental perspective, we focus attention on the processes whereby leaders and followers experience growth by becoming more authentic. A more empirically grounded perspective on authenticity is provided by Kernis (2003) as part of a larger theory on the nature of "optimal" self-esteem. He defines authenticity as "the unobstructed operation of one's true, or core, self in one's daily enterprise" (p. 1). To Kernis, one product of

authenticity is optimal self-esteem characterized as genuine, true, stable, and congruent high self-esteem, as opposed to high self-esteem that tends to be fragile due to its defensive, contingent, and discrepant qualities. Four components of authenticity were identified by Kernis: awareness, unbiased processing, action, and relational. We incorporate each of these components into our proposed model of authentic leader and follower development. Additional discussion of these components of authenticity and their relationships to authentic leadership and leader and follower well-being is provided by Ilies, Morgeson & Nahrgang (2005) in their contribution to this Special Issue of *The Leadership Quarterly.*

## 2.2. Authentic leadership

First and foremost, an authentic leader must achieve authenticity, as defined above, through self-awareness, self-acceptance, and authentic actions and relationships. However, authentic leadership extends beyond the authenticity of the leader as a person to encompass authentic relations with followers and associates. These relationships are characterized by: a) transparency, openness, and trust, b) guidance toward worthy objectives, and c) an emphasis on follower development.

   In advancing their model of authentic leadership development, Luthans & Avolio (2003) build their theory using insights from positive organizational behavior (Luthans, 2002a, Luthans, 2002b and Luthans et al., 2004), full-range leadership (FRL)/transformational leadership theory (Avolio, 1999, Bass, 1985 and Bass, 1998), and ethical perspective taking capacity and development (Schulman, 2002). Using these perspectives, they define authentic leadership in organizations as "a process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development" (p. 243). By being true to one's core beliefs and values and exhibiting authentic behavior, the leader positively fosters the development of associates until they become leaders themselves. Authentic leaders are also posited to draw from the positive psychological states that accompany optimal self-esteem and psychological well-being, such as confidence, optimism, hope and resilience, to model and promote the development of these states in others. Moreover, they apply a positive

moral perspective to lead by example as they communicate through their words and deeds high moral standards and values (May, Chan, Hodges, & Avolio, 2003).

Here we concentrate our attention on the core self-awareness and self-regulation components of authentic leadership, rather than the positive psychological states and positive moral perspective that both contribute to and are enhanced by authentic leadership. Readers interested in learning more about the contributions of positive psychological capital and the moral component of authentic leadership are referred to the work of Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans & May (2004), Gardner & Schermerhorn (2004), Luthans & Avolio (2003), and May et al. (2003).

## 2.3. Authentic followership

As indicated in the above definition and depicted in Fig. 1, we treat authentic followership as an integral component and consequence of authentic leadership development. In our view, authentic followership development as shown in Fig. 1, largely mirrors the developmental processes of authentic leadership. As we will discuss, authentic followership development is largely modeled by the authentic leader to produce heightened levels of followers' self-awareness and self-regulation leading to positive follower development and outcomes. Among the desirable follower outcomes posited to arise from authentic leadership and followership are heightened levels of trust (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002 and Jones & George, 1998), engagement, which is defined as "involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work" (Harter, Schmidt, & Keyes, 2003, p. 269), and well being (Kahneman et al., 1999 and Ryan & Deci, 2000). Again, this followership process is intended to be both an important part of and product of authentic leadership development.
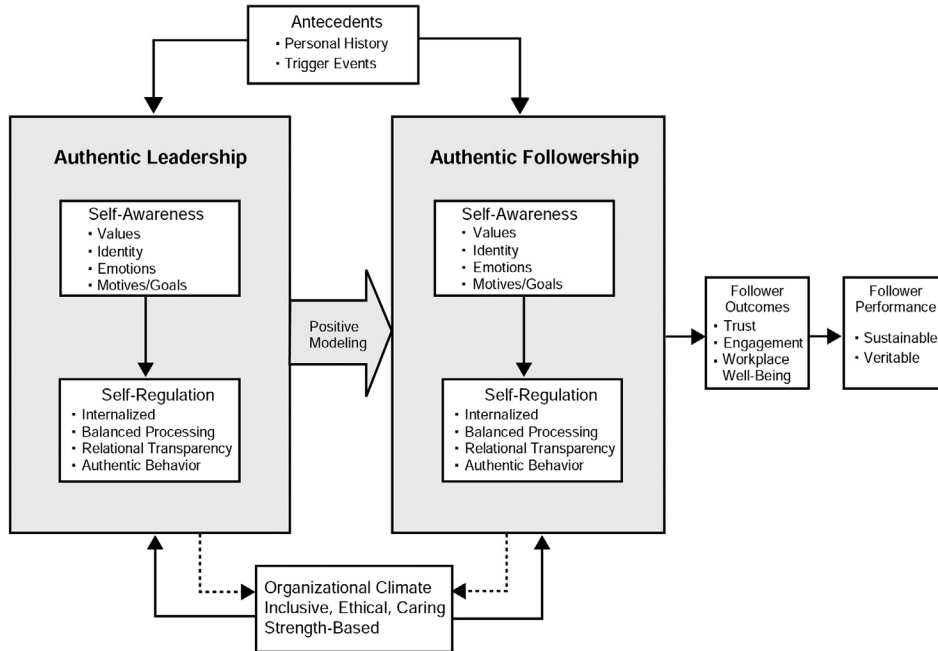
**Fig. 1.** The conceptual framework for authentic leader and follower development.

## 3. A self-based model of authentic leader and follower development

Our self-based model of the developmental processes for authentic leadership and followership are depicted in Fig. 1. As the title suggests, the theoretical foundations for our model are provided by the literature on the self and identity (Hoyle et al., 1999 and Lear & Tangney, 2003). Given that authenticity, by definition, involves being true to the self, this literature is particularly appropriate and informative for developing our model.

We view the leader's personal history and key trigger events to be antecedents for authentic leadership development. The personal history of the leader may include family influences and role models, early life challenges, educational and work experiences. Trigger events constitute dramatic and sometimes subtle changes in the individual's circumstances that facilitate personal growth and development. In organizational settings, trigger events may arise from internal or external sources that challenge leaders' abilities requiring innovative and unconventional solutions. In our model, we posit that trigger events serve as catalysts for heightened levels of leader self-awareness and can be either perceived positively or negatively.

A key factor contributing to the development of authentic leadership is the self-awareness or personal insight of the leader. We view self-awareness in part as being linked to self-reflection; by reflecting through introspection, authentic leaders gain clarity and concordance with respect to their core values, identity, emotions, motives and goals. Gaining self-awareness means working to understand how one derives and makes meaning of the world around us based on introspective self-reflective testing of our own hypotheses and self-schema. It is how we know about how we know in terms of Kegan's (1982) notion of perspective-taking capacity. As originally defined, self-awareness represents an attention state where the individual directs his or her conscious attention to some aspect of the self (Duval & Wicklund, 1972 and Hannah, 2005), without indicating whether the individual is accurate or inaccurate in his or her self-perception. Yet, by learning who they are and what they value, authentic leaders build understanding and a sense of self that provides a firm anchor for their decisions and actions, and we would argue a more authentic self. They continually ask themselves, "Who am I"?

As shown in the model, the second fundamental component of authentic leadership development is self-regulation. We identify several distinguishing features associated with authentic self-regulation processes, including internalized regulation, balanced processing of information, authentic behavior, and relational transparency. With respect to the first feature, the regulatory system is posited to be internally driven by the leader's intrinsic or core self, as opposed to external forces or expectations. Balanced processing refers to the unbiased collection and interpretation of self-related information, whether it is positive or negative in nature, such as the trigger events noted above. That is, the leader does not distort, exaggerate, or ignore externally based evaluations of the self nor internal experiences and private knowledge that might inform self-development. Authentic behavior refers to actions that are guided by the leader's true self as reflected by core values, beliefs, thoughts and feelings, as opposed to environmental contingencies or pressures from others. Finally, relational transparency means the leader displays high levels of openness, self-disclosure and trust in close relationships.

A central thesis of our framework is that authentic leaders actively and continuously model for followers through their words and deeds high levels of self-awareness, balanced processing, transparency, and authentic behavior. Hence, as a positive role model, authentic leaders

serve as a key input for the development of authentic followers. As was the case for the leader, we assert that the follower's personal history combined with certain trigger events set the stage for the emergence of authentic followership. Moreover, as followers observe the leader displaying an understanding of self-awareness and engage in transparent decision making that reflects integrity and a commitment to core ethical values, they develop trust in the leader that fosters open and authentic behavior on their part, which over time could escalate to group norms for an ethical culture. We also assert that the demonstrated integrity of authentic leaders, coupled with developmental experiences and meaningful work, produce high levels of trust, engagement and well-being among followers, while contributing to their development, which in turn fosters sustained and veritable follower performance.

Over time, we see the interactions of the leader and follower resulting in what we discuss below as constituting the 'authentic relationship'. In part we mean here that through their interactions the authentic leader and follower both come to know who they are, and how each impacts the other. Followers authenticate the leader when they see consistency between who they are and what they do. This type of relationship also conveys the idea, as Gardner & Avolio (1998) described in their dramaturgical model of charismatic leadership, that such leadership represents a relationship between leader and follower. Thus a leader cannot be viewed as charismatic without a follower and they are viewed as more or less charismatic in part based on the characteristics of the follower. Moreover, we also know from Gardner and Avolio's model and attribution theory, that judgments about the leader are not simply based on what the leader has done, but also what the follower attributed to the leader and vice versa, making the development of an authentic relationship even more difficult and vexing.

Finally, our model reflects the role that an inclusive, caring, ethical and strength-based organizational climate can play in the development of authentic leaders and followers, as well as the contributions that authentic members in turn make to fostering and sustaining such a positive organizational climate. Building on discussion concerning the authentic relationship, we escalate that relationship to the cultural level and discuss the importance of this culture to sustaining authentic relationships and vice versa. We explore each of these components of our multi-level model in more detail below.

## 4. Authentic leadership development

### *4.1. Antecedents to authentic leadership development*

#### *4.1.1. Personal history*

We propose the developmental process model for authentic leadership starts with how individuals interpret accumulated life experiences, and continues with their on-going interpretation of trigger events over time causing further self-development (Avolio, 2003, Avolio, 2005 and Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Critical elements of one's personal history include one's family, childhood, culture, education, occupation, work experience, role models, and prior leadership experiences. One's personal history of life experiences are stored in memory as self-knowledge (self-schemata) and serve to shape one's identity as one seeks to answer the question, "Who am I?" (Hoyle et al., 1999). For authentic leaders, one or more positive role models (e.g., a parent, teacher, sibling, coach or mentor) who demonstrated high levels of integrity, transparency, and trustworthiness are likely to have served as pivotal forces in the leader's personal growth and resulting self-awareness. The same would be true for authentic followers.

#### *4.1.2. Trigger events*

When viewed from a life span perspective, certain trigger events in a leader's life can be identified that served to stimulate positive growth and development (Avolio, 2005 and Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Although trigger events have traditionally been viewed as involving crises and negative events (e.g., loss of a loved one, a health problem, financial hardships), we believe that positive events can likewise trigger leadership development. Positive trigger events might include: a major promotion to a position with expanded responsibilities; a voluntary decision to change careers; pursuing a challenging advanced degree in a new field that raises questions about one's work and one's life; an expatriate assignment to a radically different culture; forming a relationship with a significant other who has a much different background and worldview; reading a book that presents a unique view or that challenges one's perspective or core beliefs; meeting someone who inspires by the example they set; and/or working with a new colleague who opens up new avenues for one's work with just one profoundly interesting suggestion, thought or reflection (Avolio, 2003 and Avolio,

2005). Both positive and negative triggers will continue to shape the leader's development to the extent they are reflected upon, and interpreted in terms of the self.

> **Proposition 1.** *Critical elements from the personal history of authentic leaders, including influential persons who model authenticity and pivotal trigger events, serve as positive forces in developing leader self-awareness.*

## 4.2. Leader self-awareness

We posit that authentic leaders experience heightened levels of self-awareness, and that increasing self-awareness is a core element of the authentic leadership development process. As Kernis (2003, p. 13) describes, the awareness component of authenticity involves "having awareness of, and trust in, one's motives, feelings, desires, and self-relevant cognitions." It encompasses awareness of both one's strengths and weaknesses, as well as the multifaceted nature of the self. Self-awareness is not an end in itself, but a process whereby one comes to reflect on one's unique values, identity, emotions, goals, knowledge, talents and/or capabilities, oftentimes triggered by external events.

Ample evidence of the positive consequences of self-awareness is available from the social psychology literature (Hoyle et al., 1999). For example, Campbell and associates (Campbell et al., 1996) investigated self-concept clarity, defined as "the extent to which the contents of an individual's self-concept (e.g., perceived personal attributes) are clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and temporally stable." Using the Self-Concept Clarity Scale, they showed that high self-concept clarity is positively associated with self-esteem, extraversion and positive affect, and negatively related to anxiety, depression, and negative affect.

Similarly, Baumgardner (1990) investigated the construct of self-certainty, which is the extent to which one is confident about one's self-views across various domains. Using the Latitude of Self-Description Questionnaire (LSDQ) as a measure of self-certainty, she confirmed that persons who possess greater certainty about the self exhibit higher levels of global self-esteem and positive affect. This relationship holds true regardless of whether one's standing on the trait

attribute being evaluated is positive or negative. Together, these research streams support Kernis' (2003) assertion that self-awareness—including the clarity and certainty of self-knowledge—is an important determinant of psychological well-being. Therefore, we expect the self-awareness of authentic leaders to be reflected in high levels of self-clarity and self-certainty.

> **Proposition 2.** *More as opposed to less authentic leaders possess higher levels of self-awareness, including self-clarity and self-certainty.*

Of particular relevance to our discussion of self-awareness is Marcus & Wurf's (1987) notion of the working self-concept, which includes self-views. Self-views involve an "individual's perceptions of his or her standing on the attributes made salient by a given context" (Lord, Brown, & Freiberg, 1999, p. 177). Examples of self-views include perceptions of one's intelligence, social skills, academic ability and athletic skills. Lord, Brown and associates (Lord & Brown, 2001, Lord & Brown, 2004 and Lord et al., 1999) focus on two specific types of self-views: current goals and possible selves. Current goals involve short-term and narrowly focused standards, whereas possible selves involve long-term and broadly focused standards. Next, we consider the relation of the working self-concept to specific elements of the self that we believe are central to the development of authentic leaders and their followers: values, identity, emotions, motives and goals.

### 4.2.1. Values

Among the numerous definitions offered for values, we select as most relevant one offered by Shalom H. Schwartz (1999) who defines "values as conceptions of the desirable that guide the way social actors (e.g., organizational leaders, policy-makers, individual persons) select actions, evaluate people and events, and explain their actions and evaluations" (pp. 24–25). Values serve as trans-situational and normative standards for behavior and evaluation (Schwartz, 1992). As such, they provide a basis for eliciting actions that conform to the needs of other individuals and the community at large (Lord & Brown, 2001). However, while values are learned through socialization processes and serve to benefit groups and larger social units, once internalized, they become integral components of the self. Hence, when

speaking of authenticity, we mean that one is true to the self, and one's core values in particular, and resistant to social or situational pressures to compromise one's values (Erickson, 1995a and Erickson, 1995b). Of course, to be true to one's values, one must first have insight and knowledge of these values. Hence, self-awareness regarding one's values is a prerequisite for authenticity and authentic leadership (Bennis, 2003 and George, 2003). Here we also infer in terms of authentic leadership and followership that the values are what Burns (1978) described as end values versus modal values in terms of differentiating transforming from other leaders. As such, we suggest that authentic leadership is a root construct at the base of transformational leadership.

> **Proposition 3.** *More as opposed to less authentic leaders are more aware of, and committed to, their core end values.*

The working self-concept of the leader operates to constrain the particular values of the leader that become salient at a given point in time (Lord & Brown, 2001). Furthermore, salient values impact the likelihood that a given self-identity will be activated, and in the process, constrain the kinds of self-knowledge that is available to the actor at a particular point in time. We consider the connections between the working self-concept, self-identities, and values below.

### 4.2.2. Identity

Schlenker (1985, p. 68) defines identity as "a theory (schema) of an individual that describes, interrelates, and explains his or her relevant features, characteristics, and experiences". Self-identification is the process of "fixing and expressing one's own identity, privately through reflection about oneself and publicly through self-disclosures, self-presentations and other activities that serve to project one's identity to audiences" (Schlenker, 1985, p. 66). Personal identities involve self-categorizations based upon one's unique characteristics, including traits and attributes, which specify how one differs from others (Banaji & Prentice, 1994). In contrast, social identities are based upon the extent to which one sees oneself as being a member of certain social groups, as well as one's assessment of the emotional and value significance of this membership (Hogg, 2001). Hence, social identities supply a "we-feeling" and establish a sense that one is similar to and

belongs with other members of one's group (Hoyle et al., 1999). Personal identities are related to social identities, because they form over time as a consequence of the actor's reflections on his or her self-in-interaction with others (Erickson, 1995a).

At the *interpersonal level,* self-concepts are defined with respect to roles that delineate one's relations to others (e.g., husband–wife, parent–child, leader–follower) ( Brewer & Gardner, 1996 and Lord et al., 1999). Leader identification is the process whereby individuals come to incorporate the role of leader into their interpersonal identities; similarly, follower identification is the process whereby people come to define themselves—through their own as well as reflected appraisals—as followers of a leader ( Gardner & Avolio, 1998). We posit that these processes are operative when an authentic relationship is formed between a leader and followers, as these roles are incorporated into their respective identities through interactions characterized by openness, transparency, loyalty and trust. The key point with respect to the leader's interpersonal level identity is that the authentic individual comes to view him- or herself as a leader per se, as well as a positive role model who can be trusted to respect, honor and develop his or her followers, which become internalized aspects of the self-concept of the leader.

Collective social identities refer to the extent to which one identifies oneself as a member of a group (e.g., a work team, organization or larger collective), and hence perceives oneself as sharing key attributes with other group members (Lord et al., 1999). Recently, Hogg (2001) advanced a social identity theory of leadership that provides insight into the processes whereby leaders emerge and endure within groups. Hogg posits that group identification includes a social categorization process, whereby the social world is segmented into in-groups and out-groups that are schematically stored in memory as prototypes. Group members are evaluated based on their similarity to the in-group prototype; perceived influence is assigned to the most prototypical member(s). As members think and act more like the most prototypical member, this member appears to exert influence, and hence leadership, on the rest of the group. Moreover, because prototypical members are the most informative about the defining characteristics of the group, they attract attention and are seen as being disproportionally influential, and thereby encourage fellow members to make internal attributions to leadership ability, or in some cases, charisma.

The appearance of influence is translated into reality via depersonalized social attraction processes that cause followers to agree and abide by the leader's ideas and plans.

The distinction between personal and social identities has been further refined by Brewer & Gardner (1996), who identify two levels of social identities—interpersonal and collective. Lord, Brown and associates (Lord & Brown, 2001, Lord & Brown, 2004 and Lord et al., 1999) have applied this distinction to better understand the role of follower self-concept in leader/follower relationships, focusing on self-identity at the individual, interpersonal, and collective levels. We believe these three levels of self-identity for both authentic leaders and followers likewise have important implications for the processes whereby they relate and develop.

At the individual level, people make interpersonal comparisons regarding traits in order to differentiate themselves from others (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). Individual identity images that are especially valued by leaders in general (Gardner & Avolio, 1998), and authentic leaders in particular, include trustworthy, credible and morally worthy. By definition, authentic leaders are viewed as being more true to themselves and display high levels of moral integrity (Luthans & Avolio, 2003); hence, trustworthy is a core element of their personal identity that fosters positive relationships with their followers. To gain credibility, one's actions must match one's words. While follower trust is based on an attribution that a leader is honest and non-exploitative, credibility is established when the leader's claims are subsequently confirmed (Gardner & Avolio, 1998). Authentic leaders gain and sustain credibility by showing they possess the knowledge and expertise they say they have to consistently deliver tangible results. Finally, we assert that authentic leaders both see themselves and are seen by others as morally worthy persons who exhibit high levels of moral development and conduct (May et al., 2003).

The implications of Hogg's theory and the associated empirical support (Hains et al., 1997 and Hogg et al., 1998) for authentic leadership development are threefold. First, members who express prototypical group values and aspirations are especially likely to emerge as leaders. To the extent that integrity, credibility, justice, caring and respect are core values that resonate with group members, they will be inclined to look to fellow members who exemplify these values for leadership. Second, prototypical members who model these core values

will be viewed as socially attractive and hence influential by other members. Third, attributional processes will predispose members to assign leadership qualities, and in some cases charisma, to members whose words and deeds reveal a genuine commitment to core values. Note, however, that the emergence of authentic leadership hinges on the degree to which such values as integrity, transparency and justice are widely shared by other members of the collective. That is why a positive strength-based climate characterized by a commitment to ethical conduct and human development is most conducive to the development of authentic leadership and followership. In contrast, cultures that reflect a preoccupation with short term performance results at the expense of ethical considerations will not facilitate the development of authenticity, in part because honesty, integrity, and high moral standards are not distinctive and/or prototypical values.

> **Proposition 4a.** *More as opposed to less authentic leaders are more likely to possess trustworthiness, integrity, credibility, respect for others, fairness, and accountability as core personal identity images.*

> **Proposition 4b.** *At the interpersonal level of identity, authentic leaders will incorporate the role of leader into their identity and come to see themselves as positive models for others.*

> **Proposition 4c.** *To the extent that trustworthiness, honesty, integrity, credibility, respect for others, fairness, and accountability represent core values that are shared by members of a collective (e.g., group or organization), the prototypical member(s) who best exemplifies these attributes will be viewed as socially attractive and disproportionately influential, and hence develop an identity as an authentic leader within the collective.*

### 4.2.3. Emotions

Knowing oneself involves more than simple awareness of one's thoughts, values and motives. As the burgeoning literature on emotional intelligence suggests (Goleman, 1995, Goleman et al., 2002, Salovey & Mayer, 1990 and Salovey et al., 2002), self-knowledge also encompasses awareness of one's emotions. Indeed, emotionally

intelligent individuals are posited to not only be aware of their emotions, but understand the causes and effects of such emotions on cognitive processes and decision making, and how they change over time (George, 2000, Salovey & Mayer, 1990 and Salovey et al., 2002). Thus, emotional self-awareness is a basic component of emotional intelligence, which is posited to be one determinant of effective leadership (Avolio, 2003, Caruso et al., 2001 and George, 2000). In particular, transformational leaders are deemed to possess higher levels of emotional intelligence that heighten their awareness of their own and others' emotions and enhance their abilities to display individualized consideration (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002 and Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000).

As a root construct underlying transformational leadership as well as other positive forms of leadership, we assert that authentic leaders are likewise in touch with their emotions and their effects on themselves and others. Moreover, such recognition assists authentic leaders in their efforts to both consider and, where appropriate, factor in their emotions in making value-based decisions. The implication for authentic leadership development is that heightened levels of self-awareness will help leaders to understand and take into account their own and others' feelings, without being ruled by emotional impulses triggered by the moment (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002, Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000 and George, 2000).

> **Proposition 5.** *More as opposed to less authentic leaders possess higher levels of emotional intelligence.*

### 4.2.4. Goals and motives

Within the context of the working self-concept, goals can be defined as "contextualized schema that direct current information processing" (Lord et al., 1999, p. 180). For leaders, goals may range from a superordinate goal articulated as an idealized vision to specific performance benchmarks (e.g., quarterly sales quotas) to personal strivings (i.e., the goals one seeks to accomplish as part of one's everyday behavior, Emmons, 1986).

Particularly relevant to our discussion of goals and motives is the distinction between self-views and possible selves (Lord & Brown, 2001, Lord & Brown, 2004 and Lord et al., 1999). Whereas self-views reflect one's standing on certain attributes made salient by the context,

possible selves reflect who one could be, including one's hopes and fears for the future, emerging context (Markus & Wurf, 1987). For authentic leaders, we expect their hoped-for selves will reflect the leader's role as an agent for positive change with respect to themselves and others. Such leaders may also imagine a feared self who lets followers down by failing to live up to core organizational values, and thereby compromises the organization's mission. Although possible selves are future oriented and hypothetical, they nevertheless have important effects on actors' goals, current activities and affective reactions (Lord et al., 1999). Indeed, as the preceding examples of hoped-for and feared selves suggest, authentic leaders may be at least partially motivated by such images to pursue pro-social goals and maintain high ethical standards, which could contribute to their own as well as their followers' development.

Lord, Brown and associates (Lord & Brown, 2001, Lord & Brown, 2004 and Lord et al., 1999) propose that when current goals are primarily tied to self-views, self-enhancement motives become salient as people seek to see themselves in a more favorable light. In contrast, when goals are primarily linked to possible selves, self-verification motives should be more salient as people seek out accurate information to gauge their progress. According to self-verification theory, one of the basic motives underlying interpersonal behavior is a desire to verify, validate and sustain one's existing self-concepts (Swann, 1983 and Swann et al., 2003). People develop self-views as a means of making sense of the world, organizing their behavior, and predicting the responses of others, which we described earlier as representing self-clarity. Consequently, it is critical that self-views maintain some level of stability and integrity; the alternative would be perspectives of reality that are unstable and unreliable. For all of these reasons, people seek to anchor their self-views and they do so by working to make others understand and verify their authentic self (Swann, Polzer, Seyle, & Ko, 2004).

As future-oriented individuals who strive for self- (and follower) development (Luthans & Avolio, 2003), we expect authentic leaders to be driven by self-verification motives, as they seek out accurate feedback from key audiences (e.g., followers, peers, superiors, customers) to not only confirm current self-views, but to identify discrepancies from self-relevant standards (Avolio, 2003). Indeed, a focus on possible selves has been postulated "to motivate and guide people's

pursuit of goals and typically promote self-improvement" (Hoyle et al., 1999, p. 133). Thus, in their quest for self-improvement, authentic leaders are posited to provide genuine self-presentations of their strengths and weaknesses to secure accurate reflected appraisals and facilitate attainment of their hoped-for selves by developing a better understanding of their actual selves.

> **Proposition 6.** *More authentic leaders are primarily motivated by self-verification and self-improvement goals, whereas less authentic leaders are primarily driven by ego defense motives to pursue self-enhancement and self-protection objectives.*

Also relevant to understanding the impact of internal goals and standards on the development of authentic leadership is the notion of self-guides from self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987). Self-guides represent standards that people have regarding desired self-aspects, and provide goals toward which they strive (Boldero & Francis, 2002). Ideal self-guides specify self-aspects that an individual (or a significant other) would like to possess, whereas ought self-guides specify self-aspects that an individual (or a significant other) thinks he or she should possess. Thus, ideal self-guides represent hopes and aspirations, whereas ought self-guides constitute duties and obligations. As leaders' gain greater self-awareness and learn to be true to themselves, we expect them to experience greater congruence between their ideal and actual selves. That is, as part of the process of authentic leadership development, discrepancies between a leader's actual and ideal selves will decline as they achieve increasing self-congruence. We also expect them to experience the positive emotions and sense of well-being that arise when one's authentic self reflects congruence between one's actual and ideal selves (Kernis, 2003).

> **Proposition 7.** *More as opposed to less authentic leaders achieve greater congruence between their actual and ideal selves, resulting in more positive emotions and well-being.*

### 4.3. Leader self-regulation

Self-regulation involves the exertion of self-control through (a) the setting of internal standards, which can be existing standards or newly

formulated ones, (b) the evaluation of discrepancies between these standards and actual or potential outcomes, and (c) the identification of intended actions for resolving these discrepancies (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). In the prior section, we identified internal goals and standards that once fully understood are expected to guide the behavior of authentic leaders. Here, we consider the regulatory processes associated with authenticity, and posit that they constitute defining components of authentic leadership. In doing so, we draw from Deci & Ryan's (1995) self-determination theory which asserts that authenticity is associated with internalized regulatory processes, as well as Kernis' (2003) arguments that authenticity involves balanced (unbiased) processing, authentic behavior, and relational transparency.

A basic assumption of self-determination theory is that the integrative processes of self-development are motivated by fundamental needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2003). The authentic self evolves as "one acts volitionally (i.e., autonomously), experiences an inner sense of efficacy (i.e., competence), and is loved (i.e., feels related to) for who one is rather than for matching an external standard" (Deci & Ryan, 1995, p. 33). Hence, a person who identifies himself or herself as a leader would be expected to find satisfaction in that identity to the extent that it: 1) helps him/her feel connected to other members of a collective; 2) elicits feelings of efficacy; and 3) provides a means for expressing his/her true self (Ryan & Deci, 2003).

Four types of motivation that reflect progressively higher levels of internalization and integration are identified by Deci & Ryan (1995). The first is external regulation, which describes behaviors that have yet to be internalized but are instead prompted and sustained by consequences external to the actor. For example, behavior that is explicitly driven to secure a reward or avoid punishment involves external regulation for compliance purposes. Second, is introjected regulation, which involves behaviors that are driven by internal prods and pressures that arise from regulatory processes that have been introjected without integration. When one engages in a behavior because one thinks one should, or because one would experience guilt if one did not, the behavior is regulated by introjected processes. Third is identified regulation, which occurs when the actor accepts a behavior as valuable or important. Here, the actor identifies with the underlying value associated with an activity; having begun to incorporate the value into his or her sense of self, the actor is moving in the direction

of self-determination for an instrumental or extrinsic activity. Finally, integrated regulation is the highest and most autonomous form of external regulation; it arises from the full integration of identified values and regulations into the actor's sense of self. An extrinsic regulation process that is fully integrated is coherent with the actor's sense of self, and hence authentic.

In an extension of self-determination theory, Kennon Sheldon and his colleagues (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999 and Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001) propose a self-concordance model of goal striving. A basic thesis of the model is that people achieve higher levels of personal adjustment and growth when they set goals that align with their true or actual values, needs and interests. Consistent with Deci and Ryan's model, self-concordant identities are those that satisfy one's basic needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness and are experienced as authentic, in that they are internalized and operate at the integrated level of regulation. In contrast, non-concordant identities are most often introjected and in some cases externally regulated based on compliance.

The degree to which integrated regulation is achieved is assessed by considering the extent to which personal strivings are helpful in realizing possible selves. Using longitudinal designs, Sheldon and associates (Sheldon & Elliot, 1998 and Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001) demonstrated that attainment of self-concordant goals relative to non-self-concordant goals produced higher levels of well-being and personal development, which in turn produced greater concordance (Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001), fostering an upward spiral of adjustment, well-being, and self-concordance. Sheldon et al. (2004) showed that self-concordance predicted subjective well-being (happiness) across four different cultures (U.S., Chinese, South Korean and Taiwanese), suggesting that the importance of "owning one's actions" generalized across these cultures.

We expect the behavior of authentic leaders to be primarily driven by internalized regulatory processes and their identities to be self-concordant as they pursue an integrated set of goals that reflect personal standards of conduct. Note that both intrinsic motivation and integrated regulation involve internalized processes. With respect to intrinsic motivation, we assert that authentic leaders often become so engrossed in their work that they are motivated solely by a sense of curiosity, a thirst for learning, and the satisfaction that comes from

accomplishing a valued task/objective (Deci, 1975). Indeed, many experience the sensation of flow, which Csikszentmihalyi (2003, p. 18) defines as "a subjective experience of full involvement with life." Other researchers refer to the total immersion of the self at work in terms of cognitions, emotions, and physical actions as engagement of the self at work (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004). On other occasions, we expect integrated regulatory processes to be dominant as opposed to the external, introjected, and even identified levels of self-regulation. That is, as authentic leaders develop increased knowledge of their true self, they are more likely to achieve self-concordant identities and display a deep commitment to their internalized values, identity and goals.

> **Proposition 8.** *As authentic leaders gain self-knowledge and awareness, they achieve self-concordant identities as their decisions and actions become increasingly self-determined and consonant with their internalized values and goals.*

### 4.3.1. Balanced processing

As part of his discussion of authenticity and optimal self-esteem, Kernis (2003), uses the term unbiased processing to refer to an absence of denials, exaggerations, distortions, or ignorance of internal experiences, private knowledge, and external evaluations of the self which he posits is a basic component of authenticity. Authenticity is characterized by objectivity and acceptance of one's strengths and weaknesses. However, because ample evidence from social psychology makes it abundantly clear that humans are inherently flawed and biased as information processors, particularly when it comes to processing self-relevant information (Tice & Wallace, 2003), we prefer to use the term balanced processing instead.

Balanced processing is best understood by considering how motivational biases impact the processes by which people with low or fragile high self-esteem select and interpret information (Kernis, 2003). Such persons find it difficult to acknowledge personal shortcomings, such as a lack of skill in a particular area, personal attributes that they deem to be undesirable, or certain negative emotions (e.g., anxiety or anger). Research on ego defense mechanisms (Ungerer et al., 1997 and Vaillant, 1992) indicates that immature or maladaptive defense styles that involve information distortion or failure

to acknowledge and resolve negative emotions, contribute to a wide variety of psychological and interpersonal difficulties and we suspect a lack of self-clarity.

A much different pattern of information processing and outcomes is apparent for relatively authentic persons who possess optimal self-esteem (Kernis, 2003), including authentic leaders. Because they are much less ego-involved, they are able to more objectively process both self-esteem relevant and non-relevant self-esteem information. That is, they are able to more objectively evaluate and accept both positive and negative aspects, attributes and qualities of themselves, including skill deficiencies, suboptimal performance, and negative emotions. Persons who exhibit adaptive ego defense styles that reflect minimal distortion of reality experience high and sustained levels of physical and psychological well-being (Vaillant, 1992). Once again, the implication is that more as opposed to less authentic leaders will be driven by self-verification motives to make accurate and "balanced" self-assessments, as well as social comparisons (Swann, 1983 and Swann et al., 2003), and subsequently act upon these assessments to pursue core beliefs and end values, without getting sidetracked by ego-defense motives such as self-enhancement and self-protection.

> **Proposition 9.** *More as opposed to less authentic leaders engage in more balanced processing of self-relevant and other information to arrive at more accurate perceptions of themselves and others.*

### 4.3.2. Authentic behavior

As Kernis (2003) describes, "behaving authentically means acting in accord with one's values, preferences, and needs as opposed to acting merely to please others or to attain rewards or avoid punishments through acting 'falsely'... Authenticity is not reflected in a compulsion to be one's true self, but rather in the free and natural expression of core feelings, motives and inclinations" (p. 14). When environmental contingencies call for behaviors that are inconsistent with such expressions, internal conflict will arise. How one goes about resolving such conflict has important implications for one's felt integrity and authentic leadership development. In such instances where one's needs and end values are incompatible with those of the larger group,

authenticity occurs when one responds to internal cues, as opposed to societal pressures (Deci & Ryan, 1995 and Ryan & Deci, 2003). In contrast to persons with contingent self-esteem who are dependent upon others for validation, persons with optimal self-esteem possess genuine and secure feelings of self-worth and are hence more resistant to external pressures to compromise their beliefs and end values.

Because authenticity as conceived by Kernis (2003) is made up of mutually interdependent components, it is best understood by considering the interactive effects that the self-awareness and balanced processing components, in conjunction with environmental contingencies, exert on one's behavior. For example, if a leader conforms to social pressure by embarking on a popular course of action that violates his core values, he appears to be operating authentically at the awareness and processing levels only; at the behavioral level, he is inauthentic. Alternatively, a leader may be highly aware of her core values and initially act in accord with them, only to have severe sanctions imposed for doing so by some external entity. As a consequence, the leader may fail to abide by her true end values when faced with a similar situation in the future for fear of suffering harsh sanctions.

Indeed, there are many times when leaders' needs and values are incompatible with the demands of their group, organization or society (Kernis, 2003). In such cases, authenticity may be reflected by the leaders' awareness of their needs and a balanced assessment of the situation as it relates to their self-concept. As for the leader's behavior, it may be authentic in some cases, but not others. Hence, we agree with Kernis that the awareness, processing, and behavioral components are complementary, but separate components of authenticity. Still, to achieve authentic leadership, authenticity must be attained at each level with respect to interactions with others. That is, because followers' perceptions of, and trust in, the leader are based largely on the leader's actions, these actions must be aligned with espoused values to convince followers of the leader's integrity. Moreover, to be truly authentic (i.e., true to the self), the leader's core and espoused end values must be coincide.

> **Proposition 10a.** *To be authentic, a leader's behavior must be consistent with felt, and espoused, end values, identities and beliefs.*

**Proposition 10b.** *Leader self-awareness and balanced processing are positively related to behavioral authenticity.*

### 4.3.3. Relational transparency

The final component of authenticity identified by Kernis (2003, p. 15) "is relational in nature, in as much as it involves valuing and achieving openness and truthfulness in one's close relationships." That is, it involves a commitment to helping close others see both positive and negative aspects of their true selves. Thus, relational transparency involves presenting one's genuine as opposed to a "fake" self through selective self-disclosure to create bonds based on intimacy and trust with close others, and encouraging them to do the same.

Following sensational examples of corporate misconduct, the popular press is becoming increasingly aware of the benefits of leader transparency, along with the pitfalls of secrecy and obfuscation (George, 2003 and Pagano & Pagano, 2004). Similar observations have been made by management scholars. For instance, Jones & George (1998) identify the "free exchange of knowledge and information" as an element of unconditional trust that leads to interpersonal cooperation and teamwork. Popper & Lipshitz (2000) explicitly identify transparency and leadership as factors that contribute to organizational learning. Brown & Starkey (2000) posit that self-reflexivity and identity-focused dialogue among organizational members play important roles in the formation of organizational identity and organizational learning processes.

The need for transparency to openly share information is a critical facet of authentic leadership development (Avolio, 2005, Luthans & Avolio, 2003 and May et al., 2003), as is pointing to the importance of serving the common interests of the group, sometimes in direct conflict with individual self-interests (Avolio, Jung, Murry, Sivasubramaniam, & Garger, 2003). We also believe authentic leaders will be relatively transparent in expressing their true emotions and feelings to followers, while simultaneously regulating such emotions to minimize displays of inappropriate or potentially damaging emotions. That is, as authentic leaders come to know and accept themselves, they will display higher levels of trustworthiness, openness, and willingness to share (when appropriate) their thoughts and feelings in close relationships.

**Proposition 11.** *As leader self-awareness and self-acceptance increases, leaders become more transparent in communicating their values, identity, emotions, goals and motives to others.*

### 4.4. Positive Modeling

One of the primary mechanisms, but not the only one, whereby authentic leaders influence the development of followers is through the modeling of positive values, psychological states, behaviors and self-development, which they oftentimes learn vicariously through observations of other leaders. Bandura (1997) indicates that the credibility, prestige, and trustworthiness of the person being modeled are all critical to being salient and valued by the observer, thus gaining the observer's attention and motivation to learn. (Other processes whereby authentic leaders influence followers such as emotional contagion and positive social exchanges are described by Ilies et al. (2005) in their contribution to this Special Issue).

The impact of "leading by example" or role modeling as a source of leader influence is frequently cited in the popular press (Bennis, 2003 and George, 2003), and the social cognitive (Bandura, 1997), ethics (Trevino, Hartman & Brown, 2000), and neo-charismatic (House & Aditya, 1997) literatures, including theories of charismatic (Conger & Kanungo, 1987, Gardner & Avolio, 1998, Kark & Shamir, 2002 and Shamir et al., 1993) and transformational/full-range (Avolio, 1999, Bass, 1985 and Bass & Avolio, 1994) leadership. Among the core behaviors leaders seek to model or exemplify are confidence, high moral standards, innovative problem solving, commitment, and self-sacrifice, which may cascade across organizational levels when followers emulate the behaviors and actions of their leaders (Bass et al., 1987, Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1998, Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1999, Gardner & Avolio, 1998 and Luthans & Avolio, 2003).

We see positive modeling as playing a key role in the formation of authentic relationships between leaders and followers (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). That is, positive modeling represents a basic means whereby authentic leaders impart positive values, emotions, motives, goals and behaviors for followers to emulate. For example, authentic leaders' confidence, hope and optimism (Avolio et al., 2004, Gardner, 2003 and Luthans & Avolio, 2003) originate from a deep knowledge

of and belief in themselves, in their awareness and regulation of positive psychological strengths, and in making clear to associates through their words and deeds exactly what is required of them to achieve desired outcomes. By modeling such self-awareness authentic leaders encourage followers to likewise embark on a process of self-discovery whereby they nurture their strengths, resulting in desirable followers' outcomes.

> **Proposition 12.** *Authentic leaders serve as positive models for followers by displaying through their words and actions core values, positive emotions, motives, and goals and a concern for followers' growth and development.*

## 5. Authentic follower development

### 5.1. Antecedents to authentic followership

The personal histories of followers including their early childhood, education, family, friendships, role models, and work experiences contribute to the development of their unique conception of the self, as do ongoing trigger events (Hoyle et al., 1999). As described above, we view authentic leaders as key models for positive values, emotions, motives and goals, self-determination, transparency, and authentic behaviors. New entrants to the workforce may readily embrace a leader who displays candor, integrity, and a developmental focus to discover their strengths and build a foundation for a long and productive career. More established associates, many of whom may have become cynical as a result of organizational politics, opportunistic leaders, and unfulfilled promises, may be more wary of the leader (Dean, Brandes, & Dhwardkar, 1998). For such individuals, an encounter with an authentic leader, once they overcome their initial suspicions, may serve as a trigger event that causes them to at least question if not abandon their cynicism, establish an ethical basis of conduct, and rediscover more admirable ambitions. We explore in more detail the processes whereby authentic leaders help followers to become more self-aware and establish an authentic and positive relationship with the leader below.

**Proposition 13.** *Follower exposure to an authentic leader can serve as a trigger event that heightens self-awareness and initiates a path towards self-development and authentic followership.*

## 5.2. Follower self-awareness

Just as self-knowledge and acceptance is critical to achieving leader authenticity, it is basic to the development of authenticity among followers (Kernis, 2003). As Fig. 1 depicts, we include followers' knowledge of their end values, identity, emotions, motives and goals as key aspects of follower self-awareness. By modeling authentic values and behavior, and actively encouraging follower self-development, authentic leaders can foster the process of self-discovery among followers. However, we expect the extent to which the leader's message and conduct resonate with associates to depend, in part, on the clarity of his or her self-concept (Campbell et al., 1996 and Howell & Shamir, 2005), in similar vein to that described above for authentic leaders, and the degree to which their values, identity and goals are aligned with those of the leader.

As part of a model of charismatic relationships based on routinized charisma and follower characteristics, Weierter (1997) identifies follower self-clarity and value congruence among leaders and followers as variables that impact follower responses to charismatic messages and personal leader charisma, and hence the ensuing charismatic relationship. Similarly, Howell & Shamir (2005) posit that followers with low self-concept clarity will be more likely to form personalized charismatic relationships with the leader, whereas those with high self-concept clarity will tend to form socialized charismatic relationships with the leader.

We believe these factors are likewise relevant to the relationships that develop between authentic leaders and their associates. Specifically, for persons high in self-concept clarity, the congruence between the leader's and their own values will be a key factor in determining the extent to which they identify with the leader and his/her end values, mission and vision. Like the authentic leader, such individuals enjoy clarity with respect to their values, beliefs, emotions, motives and goals. Hence, while they will most likely respect an authentic leader

whose values and goals are incongruent with their own, they are un-likely to follow him or her willingly. In contrast, high self-clarity associates who discover that their end values and objectives are well aligned with those of the leader are likely to identify with and welcome the opportunity to follow the leader, perhaps with the goal of learning from the leader until they can one day assume leadership responsibilities of their own. Thus, followers are developed into leaders, not necessarily because the leader set out to do so, which is a core proposition of Burns' definition of transforming leaders, but because of the nature and modeling of the leader.

> **Proposition 14.** *For associates with high self-concept clarity, high congruence between their values and those of the leader will cause them to identify with and emulate the leader; in cases of low value congruence, identification with and emulation of the leader will be low.*

The responses to authentic leadership of persons low in self-clarity are likely to be more complex. Because they lack insight regarding their core values, identities, emotions, motives and/or goals, many will find a leader who possesses such clarity to be at least interesting, if not attractive. Indeed, they may come to personally identify with the leader and adopt his or her end values and objectives as their own (Gardner & Avolio, 1998, Howell & Shamir, 2005, Kark & Shamir, 2002, Lord & Brown, 2001, Shamir et al., 1993 and Weierter, 1997). In such cases, followers are clearly not authentic due to a lack of self-awareness (Kernis, 2003) and their reliance on an external source of regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2003). Weierter (1997) speculates that the values and beliefs of such persons may be susceptible to manipulation by unscrupulous leaders with whom they form a personalized charismatic relationship.

Given their focus on associate building, we expect authentic leaders to instead encourage such individuals, often through modeling processes, to look inward to achieve greater self-knowledge. We also expect such leaders to urge followers to identify less with them personally, and more with the core values of the collective (work group, organization, profession, nation) that they represent (Howell & Shamir, 2005 and Weierter, 1997). Means whereby leaders can foster a collective identity suggested by Shamir and associates (Kark &

Shamir, 2002 and Shamir et al., 1993) include stressing the shared values and attributes of the organization, group or movement and linking the organization's mission, associated goals, and desired behaviors to the collective identity. Finally, we suspect that in many cases, this process will result in the internalization of the core organizational values, allowing them to achieve the high levels of self-clarity and autonomy that accompany authenticity (Deci & Ryan, 1995 and Kernis, 2003).

In other cases, we believe persons low in self-clarity may be especially defensive (Campbell et al., 1996) and threatened by the authenticity and transparency of the leader. Such individuals would not possess a clear and confident sense of their beliefs and core perspectives, which would make it difficult for them to build an authentic relationship with their leader. Hence, their inner confusion may cause them to reject the leader as a source of influence, at least initially. Over time, however, consistent, genuine, and respectful behavior by the leader may elicit feelings of trust that likewise trigger the process of self-discovery, identification, and value internalization described above.

> **Proposition 15a.** *Followers with low as opposed to high self-concept clarity are more likely to personally identify with and display dependence on the leader as they adopt the leader's end values, beliefs and goals as their own.*

> **Proposition 15b.** *Authentic leaders will seek to develop followers with low self-concept clarity by modeling self-discovery processes, shifting them away from personal identification with and dependence on the leader to identification with the collective and autonomy, and ultimately, internalization of the core values and mission of the collective.*

Further insight into the potential influence of authentic leaders on follower self-awareness is provided by Lord, Brown and their associates (Lord & Brown, 2001, Lord & Brown, 2004 and Lord et al., 1999), who posit that leaders can impact followers' cognitive, affective and behavioral processes by priming particular patterns of values and activating specific components of follower identity. Recall that Lord, Brown and associates, building on the work of Brewer & Gardner (1996), differentiate between the individual (independent), interpersonal (relational), and collective levels of identity, with the latter

two levels reflecting social identities. Leadership has its most powerful effects on followers thoughts, feelings and conduct when the values made salient are congruent with the level of follower identity invoked (Lord & Brown, 2001). Congruence between values and self-identities is achieved when a coherent set of values and follower self-identities is activated.

Values can be differentiated based on their placement on an underlying higher-order dimension ranging from self-enhancement and modal values (hedonism, power, achievement) to self-transcendence or what we have called end values (universalism, benevolence) (Ros, Schwartz, & Surkiss, 1999). Lord & Brown (2001) argue that when leader activities prime self-enhancement values, coherence is achieved if a follower's working self-concept is activated at the individual (independent) level. Conversely, if leader activities make self-transcendence values salient, coherence is achieved when a follower's working self-concept is activated at the interpersonal (relational) or collective levels. In cases where both self-enhancement and self-transference values are made salient, leader influence is posited to be weak. Consider, for example, a leader who urges followers to act in the best interest of the organization (e.g., self-sacrifice), but whose actions reflect motives for personal gain. Lord and Brown posit that because these two messages are incompatible, they will cancel each other out causing all identity levels to be only weakly activated and poorly developed.

As suggested by our earlier discussion of leader values, we expect authentic leaders to demonstrate through their words and deeds the importance of integrity, trust, transparency, openness, respect for others, and fairness—end values that are more closely aligned with self-transcendence than self-enhancement. We also expect the future-orientation and concerns for associate building of authentic leaders (Luthans & Avolio, 2003) will cause them to focus followers' attention on their possible selves over current self views. Lord et al. (1999) postulate that when goals are linked to followers' self-views, self-enhancement motivations become salient; in contrast, linking goals to followers' possible selves promotes self-verification motives. Hence, to the extent authentic leaders' associates follow their example by striving for personal growth and development, self-transference values and self-verification motives will cause them to seek out accurate and self-diagnostic feedback from others.

**Proposition 16.** *By modeling self-awareness, making self-transcendence motives salient, and focusing followers' attention on desired possible selves, authentic leaders activate self-verifying motives among followers, causing them to seek out accurate feedback to facilitate personal growth and development.*

### 5.3. Follower self-regulation

Just as the development of leader authenticity involves internalized regulatory processes, the development of authentic followers requires self-regulation in pursuit of internalized values and goals. Here again, we draw on the work of Kernis (2003) and Deci & Ryan, 1995 and Deci & Ryan, 2000 in positing that authenticity among followers is characterized by self-awareness, internalized regulatory processes, balanced information processing, authentic behavior, and relational transparency. Below we consider how authentic leaders impact the self-regulatory processes of followers to help them realize these elements of authenticity.

As a starting point and a follow-up to ideas initially presented by Avolio et al. (2004), we explore the implications for authentic leadership and followership of Robins & Boldero's (2003) relational discrepancy theory, an extension of Higgins (1987) self-discrepancy theory to dyadic relationships. Self-discrepancy theory examines the cognitive, affective, and motivational effects of discrepancies between individual's actual selves and self-guides (ought and ideal selves). Robins and Boldero extend Higgins' theory by examining discrepancies that arise from comparisons of an individual's (e.g., a follower's) actual self and self-guides with his or her perceptions of another person's (e.g., a leader's) actual self and self-guides.

Robins and Boldero use the term commensurability to refer to the extent to which self-aspects are shared by both members of the dyad. For instance, if both a leader and a follower would ideally like to be trustworthy and transparent, commensurability is greater. Even when two individuals share a quality as a self-aspect, discrepancies may arise from differences in the quantity or level of an attribute present. For example, while both a leader and follower may value transparency as an ideal, if the leader believes that she is highly transparent while the follower thinks that he is only moderately transparent,

these self-views are commensurate but discrepant. The term consistent commensurability is used to refer to commensurability between two persons with self-guides that are not opposed, as would be the case for an attribute such as wealth if one person was rich and the other poor. Thus, the preceding example represents a case of consistent commensurability since the level of actual transparency is not opposed, only discrepant.

In exploring the implications of relational discrepancies, Robins & Boldero (2003) make a distinction between unconstrained contexts where people have considerable freedom to choose their relational partners, and constrained contexts where they have limited discretion. From a leadership perspective, volunteer organizations represent a relatively unconstrained context since leaders and followers are free to choose whether or not they want to work together, whereas such freedom is less likely in more constrained contexts such as military and business organizations.

In unconstrained contexts, the motivation to form initial relationships is posited to be greatest when the perceived degree of consistent commensurability between the actual self and self-guides of potential partners is high. However, the source of high commensurability is critical in interpreting the meaning the person assigns to the relationship. For instance, if the source is the actual self, a follower may describe the relationship by saying "This leader is like me" and experience feelings of reassurance and familiarity; if the source is the ought self, they may believe "This leader is how I should be" and experience feelings of approval; if the source is the ideal self, they may think "I would like to be like this leader" and feel admiration.

Robins & Boldero (2003) propose that dyadic relationships will become more intimate and trusting as the level of consistent commensurability of a person's actual self, and perceptions of the other's view of his or her actual self, increases. The implication for the development of authentic leader–member relationships in unconstrained settings is that followers and leaders will be most likely to form trusting and close relationships with persons who see them as they see themselves, i.e.—persons who see their true selves. Moreover, when ought selves serve as the source of commensurability, the follower will conclude the leader "has the same standards as me" (Robins & Boldero, 2003, p. 64), producing interpersonal feelings of justification. Finally, when the ideal selves serve as the source of commensurability, the

follower will conclude that the leader "has the same ideals and aspirations as me" (p. 64) and experience feelings of cooperation and alliance. Thus, the highest levels of interpersonal trust, intimacy, cooperation, and goal alignment will be achieved when the follower and leader have congruent actual, ought and ideal selves. We believe such high levels of consistent commensurability are especially conducive to the formation of authentic leader–follower relationships, as both parties share similar ought and ideal selves, and accurately present and perceive their actual selves.

Particularly relevant to our focus on follower self-regulation are instances where ought and ideal selves of relational partners are congruent, but their actual selves are discrepant. Robins & Boldero (2003) assert that this is the combination of actual selves and self-guides that is most likely to cause the partners to assume leader and follower roles. Essentially, by adopting the role of follower, the partner with the discrepant actual self is able to address the discrepancy by shifting from an "I" (individual level of identity) to a "we" (interpersonal or collective level of identity) orientation (Lord et al., 1999). For instance, if both members of the relationship value confidence as an ideal, but one member is much more confident than the other, the more and less confident partners are likely to assume the leader and follower roles, respectively. Together, the two partners can cooperate as a team in displaying greater confidence toward others, with the leader serving as team spokesperson. Consistent with Hogg's (2001) argument that the most prototypical group members will emerge as leaders, Robins and Boldero speculate that the enactment of the leader and follower roles based on the levels of desired attributes will extend beyond dyads to groups and organizations. The implication for authentic leadership development within unconstrained contexts is that in groups and organizations where authenticity is a quality of members' ideal selves, the most authentic members will emerge as leaders, and followers will work in cooperation with the leader to achieve desired goals, including a positive ethical climate.

When ought and/or ideal selves of relational partners are not congruent, Robins & Boldero (2003) predict more superficial, hierarchical, or dominant roles and relationships will emerge. In addition, they note that consistent commensurability is less likely to occur in constrained settings where people who share relatively little overlap in their self-aspects are required to work together. In such cases, the

formally designated leader may ask followers to be something they don't aspire to be and/or that they don't think they ought to be. While members may comply to earn desired rewards or avoid sanctions, their behavior is externally as opposed to internally regulated, and hence not self-determined or authentic (Deci & Ryan, 1995, Deci & Ryan, 2000 and Ryan & Deci, 2003). Nevertheless, there are cases in constrained environments such as work organizations where followers find high levels of consistent commensurability with the ideal and ought selves of their leaders. We assert that such congruence is more likely for followers of authentic leaders who provide them with choices and opportunities for self-determination.

Authentic leaders seeking to develop authentic followers will do so by showing them how to move from external and introjected regulation to progressively more internalized (identified and integrated) forms of regulation (Deci & Ryan, 1995 and Ryan & Deci, 2003). Through positive modeling and direct communications, authentic leaders can help followers achieve authenticity and self-concordant identities (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999 and Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001). Followers' needs for competence and autonomy can be met by helping them discover their talents, develop them into strengths, and empowering them to do tasks for which they have the capacity to excel (Clifton & Harter, 2003 and Liden et al., 2000). Providing opportunities for task engagement (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002) through mastery experiences would bolster followers' feelings of confidence and competence (self-efficacy) (Bandura, 1997). In addition, to the extent that authentic leaders boost followers' identification with the collective by emphasizing a common mission and overarching goal, and foster the development of high-quality connections (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003), followers' relatedness needs are more likely to be fulfilled and the meaningfulness of their work enhanced (Kark & Shamir, 2002 and Shamir et al., 1993).

> **Proposition 17a.** *Authentic leader–follower relationships are most likely to emerge when high congruence with respect to the leader's and followers' actual, ought and ideal selves exists, contributing to high levels of trust, intimacy, cooperation and alignment of goals.*

**Proposition 17b.** *In unconstrained organizational contexts where members view authenticity as a quality of their ideal selves, the most authentic members will assume the role of leader, with followers working in cooperation with the leader to achieve shared goals, including a positive ethical climate.*

**Proposition 17c.** *Authentic leaders can foster authentic and self-concordant identities for followers by providing them with opportunities for self-determination, and thereby enable them to fulfill their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness.*

## 5.4. Follower outcomes

Although a wide variety of outcomes may accrue for the followers of authentic leaders, we focus attention on three outcomes consistently linked to authenticity (Erickson, 1995a, Harter, 2002, Harter et al., 2002, Harter et al., 2003 and Ilies et al., 2005): trust, engagement, and well-being. While these outcomes are discussed separately, in reality there is some overlap and mutual interdependence among them; hence high levels of trust will contribute to follower engagement and workplace well-being, and vice versa.

### 5.4.1. Trust

A central premise of classic social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) is that an expectation of unspecified obligations based on trust is formed that ensures that gestures of goodwill are reciprocated at a future time. We assert that because authentic leaders recognize the importance of transparency, the psychological contract (Rousseau, 1995) that they establish with followers has a far stronger and more resilient foundation (Avolio et al., 2004). Each party knows better where the other is coming from due to high congruency between beliefs and actions, as well as what was actually accomplished. Over time followers realize the decision that the leader would have made, even when absent, because they have been so thoroughly debriefed and have reflected on earlier challenges. Once formed, the psychological contract generates a common understanding about the plan of action and the responsibilities of each party. Meeting both parties' expectations establishes a foundation for trust that fosters additional growth in the relationship and ultimately enhances and sustains performance.

At initial points in the leader–follower relationship, an emphasis on transparency would be expected to result in conditional levels of trust being enhanced, e.g. "I know exactly where you are coming from and why you are taking the actions you have chosen." Followers are also better able to monitor the leader's actions in a transparent context. Over time, followers come to learn what the leader values and desires and how those values and desires match with their own. To the degree that the leader takes into consideration the needs of all stakeholders and is considered fair in his or her actions, use of procedures, and decisions, conditional trust will evolve to a deeper sense of relationally-based trust, where followers come to believe in the leader, even when the leader violates certain preconditions or expectations. As intentions and capabilities are clarified by repeated interactions, and viewed positively, developmental trust should emerge among leaders and followers (Jones & George, 1998). Moreover, by realistically and honestly taking inventory of social assets, authentic leaders should be able to move positive goals to the forefront and elevate their own as well members' efficacy beliefs in the process. Their honest focus builds relational trust and idiosyncratic credits with followers (Hollander, 1958); when faced with more difficult times, they can tap into these reserves of trust to sustain themselves and followers and to continue moving towards achieving performance goals unabated.

As higher levels of trust emerge among followers, it becomes imperative that they are dealing with authentic leadership. Why? Followers will be willing to give their leaders the benefit of the doubt, because they have come to trust in the leader's intentions, going beyond a simple transactional basis for trust (Avolio, 1999). Their willingness to trust the leader without question represents a dangerous transition point if the leader's intentions are inauthentic and harmful. Certain charismatic leaders emerge who build deep trust among followers, and then violate that trust over time for their own selfish interests. However, when trust in leadership is well placed, as is the case with authentic leaders guided in their actions by end values, it has been shown through meta-analysis (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002) to be related to elevated levels of job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviors, organizational and goal commitment, and job performance among followers—all factors that contribute to sustained and veritable organizational performance.

**Proposition 18a.** *Through honest assessments of personal, associate and organizational assets, authentic leaders build reserves of relational trust that they are able to tap during difficult times to foster resilience for themselves and followers.*

**Proposition 18b.** *Followers of more as opposed to less authentic leaders will have higher levels of trust, and relational and development trust in particular, in their leaders.*

*5.4.2. Engagement*

An especially key factor we see as mediating the relationship between authentic leadership and followership and veritable organizational performance is follower engagement. Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi (2003, p. 87) use the term vital engagement to describe "a relationship to the world that is characterized both by experiences of flow (enjoyed absorption) and by meaning (subjective significance)." People enter a state of flow when their perceived capabilities are balanced against perceived challenges, and they maintain this state as long as this balance continues (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, Csikentmihalyi, 2003 and Ilies et al., 2005).

Extending Csikszentmihalyi's work on flow, May et al. (2004) view engagement as the employment and expression of the self physically, cognitively, and emotionally through role performances. These authors explored how meaningfulness at work, psychological safety, and availability influence engagement at work. Meaning at work displayed the strongest relation with engagement. This and subsequent work by May (2004) on the determinants and outcomes of meaning at work has demonstrated that work-related meaning is influenced by such important organizational factors as the work itself, high quality co-worker relations, and the fit individuals have with their work roles.

The term employee engagement as used here "refers to the individual's involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work" (Harter et al., 2002, p. 269); hence, it represents a more specific form of engagement. We assert that the demonstrated integrity and, over time, sustained performance results of authentic leaders (Luthans & Avolio, 2003), coupled with developmental experiences, psychological safety, and meaningful work (May et al., 2004), produce high levels of engagement among followers. We also expect authentic leaders to

facilitate the experience of engagement by helping followers discover for themselves their true talents and to facilitate the use of those talents, helping them to create a better fit between work roles and salient self-goals of the authentic self (May et al., 2004). Further, as Harter et al.'s (2002) meta-analysis of the relationships between employee engagement and work outcomes demonstrates, employee engagement is positively and strongly associated with critical business performance outcomes, including customer satisfaction, productivity, profit, employee turnover and safety. Thus, we assert that authentic leadership and followership, through employee engagement, contribute to veritable performance outcomes for followers and the organization that are sustainable over time.

> **Proposition 19a.** Followers of more as opposed to less authentic leaders will experience higher levels of engagement.

> **Proposition 19b.** Authentic leaders facilitate the experience of engagement among followers by helping them discover their talents, fitting them with an appropriate position, providing enriched work, and the opportunity to develop rewarding coworker relations.

> **Proposition 19c.** Employee engagement contributes to elevated levels of veritable and sustainable follower performance.

### 5.4.3. Workplace well-being

Closely related to vital engagement is the construct of eudaimonic well-being, which involves self-congruence, vital functioning, life satisfaction, and psychological health (Ryan & Deci, 2001). As Ilies et al. (2005) describe in detail in their contribution to this Special Issue, eudaimonic well-being can be distinguished from hedonic well-being, which focuses on pleasure and pain with the goal of maximizing felt happiness (e.g., subjective well-being). Waterman (1993) argues that the eudaimonic conception of well-being calls on people to live in accordance with their true self, thereby linking authenticity and wellbeing. Importantly, ample empirical evidence documenting the causal relationships between authenticity, vital engagement, and eudaimonic well-being is available (Kahneman et al., 1999, Kernis, 2003, Ryan &

Deci, 2000, Sheldon & Elliot, 1999 and Sheldon et al., 2004). Given the theoretical and empirical relationships between authenticity, engagement and psychological well-being, we assert that increases in what Harter et al. (2003) call workplace well-being will naturally arise as a consequence of authentic leadership and followership. Hence, we concur with Ilies et al.'s assertion that by modeling, encouraging, and nurturing authenticity, leaders can help followers to become self-concordant and engaged, and thereby contribute to their workplace well-being. Over time, as these positive effects compound one another and spread through social contagion processes (Ilies et al., 2005) to establish a vibrant, strengths-based and positive climate, a competitive advantage emerges to produce sustainable, veritable follower performance (Luthans & Avolio, 2003), as Harter et al.'s (2002) meta-analysis documents.

> **Proposition 20a.** *Followers of more as opposed to less authentic leaders will experience higher levels of workplace well-being.*

> **Proposition 20b.** *Employee engagement arising from authentic follower behavior will promote increases in workplace well-being among followers.*

> **Proposition 20c.** *Workplace well-being contributes to elevated levels of veritable and sustainable follower performance.*

## 6. Organizational climate

All leader and follower development occurs in a dynamically and emerging context (Day, 2000). As shown in Fig. 1, a supportive organizational climate provides greater opportunities for authentic leadership and followership to be sustained, while potentially altering the climate itself to make it more authentic (Avolio, 2003). Structural theory of organizational behavior (Kanter, 1977), and specifically an inclusive structure, provides a theoretical basis for examining the relationship between authentic leadership and followership and the organizational climate. In this theory, work environments that provide open access to information, resources, support, and ample opportunity

for everyone to learn and develop both empower and enable leaders and followers to accomplish their work. In particular, this theory suggests that for self and followers to be effective, leaders must create and sustain an organizational climate that enables themselves and followers to continually learn and grow. Transparency in the culture is a core facilitating condition for such learning and growth.

Research confirms that when followers are treated in a fair and positive manner, they are more committed and likely to display positive attitudes (Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001), resulting in greater trust in the leader and the system as a whole (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). It follows that in order to elicit positive follower outcomes, authentic leaders should provide work climates that give full access to information, resources, and support and that provide opportunities to learn and develop procedures that are structurally and interactionally fair. Creating such an organizational climate takes considerable time and energy on the part of both leaders and followers, which makes the climate and culture of the organization a sustainable, competitive advantage as it cannot be easily replicated.

> **Proposition 21.** *More as opposed to less authentic leaders will create "proximal" organizational climates that are more inclusive, caring, engaged, and more oriented towards developing strengths.*

## 7. Conclusion and implications

What then are the implications of our proposed model? We are entering into an age where nearly all information is readily accessible. In this period of organizational transformation and change, more and more individuals are involved in the "leadership processes" of organizations and therefore more people know what was the right and wrong thing to do. Information now penetrates organizations at all levels, and oftentimes the person in a position at the bottom of the traditional hierarchy knows the most about technology implementation, customers, vendors, changes in markets and variations in performance. One could argue that to be inauthentic and to be undiscovered is time limited. Again and again, leaders who believe they can manipulate the system, managing an impression of doing what's right, come

to find out that in a relatively short period of time they can completely lose all that was gained by manipulation and subterfuge.

In a recent public forum, Warren Buffett, the Chairman of Berkshire Hathaway reviewed a short memo that he had just sent to his CEOs. In his memo, he indicated that they could lose money, even lots of it, but they can not afford to lose their reputation for honest and high ethical behavior, not a shred of it! He went on to say that it took Berkshire Hathaway 37 years to reach a third place ranking in terms of the most admired companies in the world, and that an inauthentic action on the part of leaders at Berkshire could result in a catastrophic loss of reputation in less than 37 min! Just ask the editors of the NY Times, the employees of Worldcom or Enron, or Martha Stewart's company. Even before her trial and conviction, Martha Stewart's company had lost billions simply based on her "allegedly" violating insider trading laws. As is true in almost every aspect of business today, time is compressed and it takes a shorter amount of time to place and receive orders, to learn new market intelligence, to get feedback from every employee in a global organization and to develop a new, complex product. Unfortunately, it also takes much less time to lose one's authenticity, perhaps less than 37 min. The time has come to understand more fully how to develop authenticity in our leaders and their followers; we cannot afford to wait for life experiences to do it for us.

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