An Ecological Approach for Developing Authentic Leaders in the Church: A Literature Review

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Abstract: The repercussions of the leadership crises in the last quarter-century have spurred new approaches to leadership and its development. This article argues for the use of Uri Bronfenbrenner's bioecological development theory as a framework for developing authentic leaders in the church. The first section overviews the components of authentic leadership. The next section examines four facets of the bioecological theory that directly influence leadership development. In the final section, four action steps are proposed to enhance leadership development in the church.

Keywords: *bioecological development theory, Bronfenbrenner, Christian leadership, leadership development*

Introduction

The last decade witnessed the eruption, across the societal spectrum, of four leadership crises that had been simmering for years. The collapse of Theranos and the pending criminal charges for its executives exemplified the leadership façade in corporate circles (Echols, 2019). The unearthing of decades-long sexual abuse by Catholic church leaders shattered faith in the church's top leadership (Madhani, 2018). The demise of evangelical megachurches and denominational leaders called into question the integrity of prominent churches (Bailey, 2018; Goodstein, 2018; Welch, 2014). The tidal wave of #MeToo accusations swept away entertainers, members of Congress, and business leaders from positions of power and erased the secrecy that had encompassed their actions (Gillaspie, 2018). No segment of society remains unaffected by the current leadership crisis.

The repercussion of these crises spurs a fresh examination of the nature of leadership and the characteristics of leaders from every sector. Business leader Bill George issued a charge for a new direction in leadership: "We need authentic leaders, people of the highest integrity, committed to building endur-

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ing organizations. We need leaders who have a deep sense of purpose and are true to their core values" (George, 2003, p. 5). Church leadership expert Aubrey Malphurs echoes the same challenge for church leaders: "If we're to minister effectively with a dynamic sense of leadership, it's imperative that we clarify and understand the issues surrounding what it means to be a leader in today's innovative, fast-changing ministry landscape" (Malphurs, 2003, pp. 10–11).

One response to the crisis has been the development of the authentic leadership paradigm. The very nature of authenticity lies in knowing one's self and functioning in a continually self-reflective capacity (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005; May, Chan, Hodges, & Avolio, 2003). Harter (2002) provides a baseline definition of authenticity as:

> Owning one's personal experiences, be they thoughts, emotions, needs, preferences, or beliefs, processes captured by the injunction to "know oneself." The exhortation "to thine own self be true" further implies that one acts in accord with the true self, expressing oneself in ways that are consistent with inner thoughts and feelings. (p. 382)

The authentic leadership paradigm extends beyond embracing a revised definition of leadership, however. Church leaders must develop authenticity in themselves, as well as in emerging leaders.

While our understanding of authentic leadership has developed through both scholarly and practitioner writing, challenges inhibit authentic leadership development in the church. Authentic leadership values soft skills (i.e., reflection, relationships, and decision making), which prove elusive to identify and measure. Programs that develop authentic leaders are challenging to create. As a result, traditional programs have focused on the short-term acquisition of skills rather than long-term character development (Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, & McKee, 2014). A new leadership paradigm requires new approaches to leadership development. If the church desires to remain relevant and effective in this current culture, developing authentic leaders must become a priority.

This article will argue for the use of Uri Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory as a framework for developing authentic leaders in the church. In the context of this article, a Christian leader is defined as "a servant who uses his or her credibility and capabilities to influence people in a particular context to pursue their God-given direction" (Malphurs & Mancini, 2004, p. 20). Three specific points of commonality between authentic leadership development and bioecological theory suggest this approach. First, authentic leadership development is an *interactive* process, involving the dynamic interplay between the leader, follower, context, situation, and challenge (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008). Second, because leaders grow and

mature over time, authentic leadership development is a *developmental* process, which aligns with the bioecological theory (Avolio et al., 2004; Puls, Ludden, & Freemyer, 2014). Third, authentic leadership development is a *complex* process involving a myriad of variables and conditions (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). The hallmark characteristics of the bioecological approach to human development in authentic leadership development are interactivity, development, and complexity. These points of commonality provide church leaders with insight into the challenge of developing authentic leaders.

This article will address the potential usefulness of the bioecological theory for developing authentic leaders in three sections. The first section surveys the components of authentic leadership (self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalized moral perspective). The next section examines four facets of the bioecological theory that can directly influence authentic leadership development (process, person, context, and time). The final section suggests four intentional steps church leaders can implement to enhance authentic leadership development. In the end, viewing authentic leadership development through the lens of bioecological theory offers promising possibilities of decreasing the leadership crisis with a generation of authentic leaders.

An Overview of Authentic Leadership Components

Authenticity in leaders is not a binary quality. Instead, authenticity can develop, evolve, and grow in a leader. This developmental aspect applies not only to current leaders as they seek to improve in relational and effectual areas but also to churches seeking to implement programs focused on identifying and developing future leaders. The first step in developing authentic leaders, though, is to picture how authenticity looks in church leadership.

Authentic leadership consists of four components: (1) self-awareness, (2) relational transparency, (3) balanced processing, and (4) internalized moral perspective (Avolio, Gardner, & Walumbwa, 2007; Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Braun & Peus, 2018; Datta, 2015; Duncan, Green, Gergen, & Ecung, 2017; Gardner, Cogliser, Davis, & Dickens, 2011; Puls et al., 2014; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Self-awareness refers to "demonstrating an understanding of how one makes meaning of the world and how that meaning-making process impacts the way one views himself or herself over time" (Walumbwa et al., 2008, pp. 95–96). Relational transparency consists of "presenting one's authentic self (as opposed to a fake or distorted self) to others" (Shamir & Eilam, 2005, p. 396). This type of presentation builds trust with others. Balanced processing describes leaders "who show that they objectively analyze all relevant data before coming to a decision" (Walumbwa et al., 2008, p. 95). This also includes allowing others to speak into the decision-making

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process, even if disagreeing. Finally, the internalized moral perspective refers to "self-regulation . . . guided by internal moral standards versus group, organizational, and societal pressures" (Walumbwa et al., 2008, pp. 95–96). This type of decision-making springs from continually reflecting on and consistently acting with internal values.

From the perspective of Christian leadership, specifically in the church, the New Testament examples (Jesus in the Gospels, as well as church leaders in Acts and the Epistles) and the characteristics of church leaders (given by Paul to Timothy and Titus) demonstrate the components of authentic leadership. Regarding self-awareness, the Apostle John understood his own faith journey (1 John 1:1–3), and the Apostle Paul reflected on the relational difficulty of his previous visit with the church in Corinth (2 Cor. 7:2–9). Jesus demonstrated relational transparency as He shared His anguished sorrow with Peter, James, and John in the garden (Matt. 26:36–44). Likewise, Paul also openly shared his perspective on the relationship between both Philemon and Onesimus (Epistle to Philemon). The Apostles practiced balanced processing during the Jerusalem Council by weighing multiple streams of evidence before making a judgment regarding the inclusion of the Gentiles into the faith (Acts 15).

Similarly, Paul demonstrates his commitment to balanced processing as sought in the next stage of his mission (Acts 16:6–10). Finally, Paul instructed both Timothy and Titus to select and train church leaders who utilized an internalized moral compass (1 Tim. 3:13 and Titus 1:5–9). Thus, while Christian leadership encompasses more than the four components of authentic leadership, they serve as a representative summary of the examples and expectations of church leaders in the New Testament.

In summary, while the literature reveals a consensus regarding the definition and components of authentic leadership, methods for developing authentic leaders lag behind. This phenomenon may be, in part, due to the difficulty and complexity of measuring the internal and less obvious traits of authentic leadership, especially in the church. Thus, traditional approaches to leadership development focus on shallow interpersonal formulas and generalized leadership platitudes; these methods will not produce leaders capable of functioning effectively in our current culture. One potential source to bridge the gap between identification and the development of authentic leaders is the field of human development. The following section will briefly overview the bioecology theory of human development.

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory

Brofenbrenner's bioecological theory states that:

Behavior and development as a shared function of the characteristics of

the individual and the environment, along with the larger contemporary and historical contexts of which these are an integral part, including society and period of time in which one is born and lives his or her life. (Gardiner, 2018, p. 13)

Uri Bronfenbrenner proposed his theory of human development in the late 1970s, fully developing the initial construction in his book *The Ecology of Human Development* (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979). His work shaped the landscape of research as scholars began to view human development in a broader context rather than as individual characteristics occurring in a vacuum (Tudge, 2016; Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009; Vélez-Agosto, Soto-Crespo, Vizcarrondo-Oppenheimer, Vega-Molina, & Coll, 2017). Bronfenbrenner described the theory as " . . . an evolving theoretical system for the scientific study of human development over time" (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 3; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007, p. 793).

The theory comprises "four principal components and the dynamic, interactive relationships among them," namely process, person, contexts, and time (known as The Process-Person-Context-Time, or PPCT, Model) (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007, p. 795). The first component, the process or proximal processes, "encompasses particular forms of interaction between organisms and environment . . . that operate over time and posited as the primary mechanisms producing human development" (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007, p. 795).

The second component is the person, which can vary substantially. Three characteristics of the person shape the course of development: dispositions, biological resources (i.e., ability, knowledge, skill, etc.), and demand.

The third component of the PPCT Model is context, for which the entire theory may be best known. Bronfenbrenner originally described the ecological environments as "conceived topologically as a nested arrangement of structures, each contained within the next" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 514). The smallest context is the microsystem, comprised of "parents, relatives, close friends, teachers, mentors, coworkers, spouses, or others who participate in the life of the developing person on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time" (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007, p. 796). Next, the mesosystem displays the interrelation between two or more microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979); that is, microsystems overlap and interact with one another in the mesosystem. Moving further topologically from the individual lies the exosystem. This context includes "one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by what happens in that setting" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 237). As an example, the exosystem for a family might be the wife's work environment. While only the wife actively participates, the events at her job certainly

affect the entire family. The final context, the macrosystem, "refers to the consistency observed within a given culture or subculture in the form and content of its constituent micro-, meso-, and exosystems, as well as any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 258). Macrosystem items might include community initiatives, government policies, cultural norms and expectations, etc.

The final component of the PPCT Model is time or the chronosystem. Absent in the initial version of the theory, the latter version includes specific descriptions of how time contributes to human development. In the microsystem, time draws attention to how often and frequently proximal processes occur. Time in the mesosystem describes these processes in longer and broader intervals across days and weeks. In the macrosystem, time focuses on the changes across generations and the life course of the individual (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007).

Taken conceptually and accurately as the PPCT Model, the bioecological theory offers a powerful framework for understanding human development in many different areas, as well as how authentic leaders develop. This framework consists of a process of interaction, the unique characteristics of each person, embedded contexts that develop with interactions between people, and the element of time. Given the potential for using the bioecological theory to develop authentic leaders, the final section proposes steps for integrating the two specifically in the context of the local church.

Steps for Integration

Leadership development in the church can be defined as "the intentional process of helping established and emerging leaders at every level of ministry to assess and develop their Christian character and to acquire, reinforce, and refine their ministry knowledge and skills" (Malphurs & Mancini, 2004, p. 23). Every church can create a plan, or curriculum, to develop leaders. This comprehensive plan should include an explicit curriculum (what is openly espoused and intentional), an implicit curriculum (what is learned through experience), and a null curriculum (an acknowledgment of what is omitted) (Estep, Estep, & White, 2012). This definition of leadership development and a curriculum schema creates many potential points of integration with Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory. Specifically, four possible action steps for integration are suggested: (1) require leaders to deal with their past, (2) conduct a system-wide leadership development audit, (3) learn to view emerging and current leaders with future eyes, and (4) exchange isolation for community as the primary leadership development commodity.

Require All Leaders to Deal with Their Past

The root concept of authenticity involves the leader knowing his or her true self and acting consistently with the true self. The first step to authentic leadership, then, is discovering the true self. This self-discovery involves a review of the leader's personal history, trigger events, and leadership story (Gardner et al., 2005). Being authentic necessarily requires a genuine examination of the road the leader followed to arrive at a particular position, in a specific context, at a particular time. The leader's life story is a personal self-narrative that includes experiences, difficulties, victories, relationships with mentors, key turning points, and learning events all in the context of God's providential working in his or her life. However, these life-stories are not merely an objective retelling of events. Instead, they comprise the personal interpretations and narratives that relate the unique shaping of the leader's past development (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Thus, a life-story forms the foundational identity for the leader and provides the lens through which he or she views the path ahead.

From an ecological perspective, two components of the PPCT Model can assist in the development of self-awareness by reviewing the leader's life-story. First, consider the personal make-up of the leader. Regarding the uniqueness of each person, Bronfenbrenner states, "The differentiation of these three forms (dispositions, resources, and demand characteristics) leads to their combination in patterns of Person structure that can further account for differences in the direction and power of resultant proximal processes and their development effects" (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007, p. 796). Each person comprises a unique combination of biology, personality, experience, and environment. Thus, the understanding of self is paramount for developing into an authentic leader as every leader develops along a unique trajectory.

A second component of the PPCT Model also contributes to the development of the person/leader's self-story: the aspect of time. Bronfenbrenner noted that development "extends over the life course, across successive generations, and through historical time, both past and future" (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007, p. 793). Ultimately, the leader's self-story is one of development over time–the history of how he or she has become the person he or she is. For some, the story traces back in time for generations, as people and events converged. For example, consider how immigration from another country, moving across the country, or the death of a loved one might shape a person. The story could also include seemingly unrelated events that, when put into the context of personal or leadership development, suddenly take on new significance (choice of a college, a job change, or decision to change careers).

One method for investigating the self-story is writing a leadership autobiography (Brookfield, 1995). The individual reflects on both leaders under whom

he or she has served and also situations he or she has led. This exercise explores the people and experiences that shape an individual's assumptions about leadership. Gardner et al. (2005) view "the leader's personal history and key trigger events to be antecedents for authentic leadership development" (p. 348). Critical reflection on one's leadership autobiography guides the leader to learn from past failures or disappointments as well as successes or joys, thus enhancing authenticity.

For the leader in the church, a significant facet of the life-story may be conversion or experience of salvation. The Apostle Paul frequently related his conversion experience (Acts 22 and 26) and viewed his past experiences (Phil. 3:5–7) as a powerful self-story. Thus, leaders in the church benefit greatly from reflecting on their past and how God worked through those events (both successes and failures) to shape them.

Conduct a System-wide Leadership Development Audit

For a church desiring to develop authentic leaders, a survey of the development landscape provides a basic overview of its specific setting. First, the survey can focus on each of the ecological contexts (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). The microsystems focus on individual environments (family, work, etc.). How does each environment work for or against individual leadership development? For example, do family circumstances keep a person from engaging in development processes? Does the work schedule preclude involvement in leadership? The mesosystem comprises the intersection of microsystems. Are leadership skills developed in the church useful at work, or vice versa? Does the leader exhibit consistent behavior at home, work, and church? The exosystem consists of environments where the person/leader is not actively involved but still affects him or her. These contexts may include local or denominational church leadership. Does the church leadership intentionally create opportunities for developing leaders or mentor younger potential leaders? From a historical perspective, have past failures influenced current leadership development attitudes and actions? Finally, the macrosystem includes cultural or societal forces affecting the individual's development. How does the church's particular confessional context impact leadership development in general? Does church polity restrict leadership to only those ordained? Do theological positions restrict leadership (i.e., gender roles in leadership as defined by egalitarianism or complementarianism)? These questions can assist in developing an assessment of a church's leadership development culture.

Second, the leadership development survey can examine both existing and needed processes. In the PPCT Model, the process is the interaction between the person and the environment. Bronfenbrenner held that "the properties of

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the person and of the environment, the structure of environmental settings, and the processes taking place within and between them must be viewed as interdependent and analyzed in system terms" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 41). From a leadership development standpoint, all the interactions between people and the environment in the micro- and mesosystems affect the entire process of leadership development. Do intentional processes identify, enlist, and encourage potential leaders? Do intentional processes exist whereby leaders interact with one another and develop as leaders? How do current leaders improve and grow? Can new leaders participate in leadership in low leverage situations as they make initial strides toward development (Puls et al., 2014)? Do experienced leaders interact with new leaders for mentoring purposes? How do the current leadership processes encourage or discourage the development of authentic leaders? Church leaders should inventory their current interactive environments to discover points of success and identify voids in the development process.

Learn to View Emerging and Current Leaders with Future Eyes

The bioecological theory seeks to understand how time affects leadership development. Time catalogs a leader's development in the past and measures future development. Leadership development requires a significant investment of time and should be viewed as a life-long process. Bronfenbrenner included the idea of time in his definition of development, stating, "We use the term development to refer to stability and change in the biopsychological characteristics of human beings over the life course and across generations" (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007, p. 796). While a degree of competence should be expected at some point in the development process, a leader (and the church developing the leader) must take the view that the development process continues as younger leaders develop into more mature, seasoned leaders.

From a biblical perspective, leaders in the church must take a long view of leadership development. For example, Barnabas took a new believer, Paul, under his wing and mentored him (Acts 9:26–30; 11:19–30). The two eventually served together in the growing ministry in Antioch, where the Spirit sent them into the mission field (Acts 13:1–3). Eventually, Paul even surpassed Barnabas as the leader of the team (Acts 13:13). Paul then followed the example of Barnabas and invested time into young apprentices like Timothy and Titus, who eventually led significant ministries in their own right. Even after an initial failure, John Mark (another one of Paul's young apprentices) later became useful to Paul (Acts 13:3; 15:36–41; 2 Tim. 4:11). Leadership takes time to develop, and frequently leaders experience successes and failures over that time.

Generational mentoring also displays how time influences leadership devel-

opment. Timothy's mother and grandmother played a significant role in his development (2 Tim. 1:5). Inter-generational leadership development also played an important role in Paul's instructions to Timothy as Paul instructed him to entrust the gospel to faithful men who would then teach others (2 Tim. 2:2). Paul wrote to another young leader, Titus, instructing him to encourage older women to teach the younger women (Titus 2:4–5). The early church modeled generational mentoring as a form of leadership development. Church leaders today would do well to emulate this practice.

Exchange Unstructured Isolation for Intentional Community as the Primary Leadership Development Commodity

Two of the four primary dimensions of authentic leadership should be considered in light of the process component of the ecological model: relational transparency and balanced processing. Both aspects require a high degree of personal interaction as leaders develop transparent relationships and inclusive decision-making. Bronfenbrenner used the term "reciprocity" to describe the interplay between persons in a context as they engage in "concomitant mutual feedback" (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007, p. 57; Lowe & Lowe, 2018, p. 16). Reciprocal personal relationships form the foundation of relationship transparency and balanced processing. Without engaging in these meaningful relationships, leaders cannot relate to those they lead.

Church leaders need meaningful relationships with other leaders to continue to develop. While these relationships can occur both in formal and informal contexts, they must be intentional. For example, scheduling time for group leaders or teachers to come together and share successes, failures, and needs produces a formative context for reciprocal relationships. These relationships do not always have to be formal, though. Informal mentoring relationships between experienced, seasoned leaders and emerging leaders also helps develop both types of leaders, just as Priscilla and Aquilla mentored Apollos (Acts 18:24–28).

Therefore, the church must provide both the opportunity and the setting for developing these types of relationships. These settings naturally occur in the context of the mesosystem of the church. Informally, opportunities to connect leaders with followers where relationships can develop apart from the demands of ministry are essential. Formally, providing opportunities for feedback and evaluation are crucial. Allowing leaders to reflect critically on learning situations can bring growth. Arranging for leaders to build a relationship with trusted mentors to provide truthful feedback (both positive and constructive) also allows for growth in leadership.

Along with meaningful relationships, emerging church leaders need mean-

ingful experiences to develop. "To develop someone, you must provide experiences that accelerate learning and development" (Geiger & Peck, 2016, p. 167). These meaningful experiences produce opportunities not just to exercise leadership skills but also topics of conversation and evaluation for mentor relationships. As critical as the lessons are, subsequent reflection and assessment may be even more vital for leaders to develop. For example, suppose an emerging leader steps to the forefront and fails miserably. Experience alone offers limited opportunity for self-reflection, while intentional reflection on the failure with other leaders will provide robust development for emerging leaders. Reciprocal relationships spring from real experiences.

In summary, a church seeking to develop authentic leaders can engage in intentional action designed to allow leaders to grow authentically. First, leaders should process their past to understand themselves and how God has shaped them for leadership. Second, churches can audit their specific leadership development landscape in the various ecological contexts to identify both strengths and deficiencies in the development process. Next, churches can realize how time affects leadership development and builds intentional training systems. Finally, churches can exchange isolation for the community as the primary currency of leadership development. In the final section, specific suggestions for application will be proposed.

Real-World Application

From a church leadership perspective, integrating the bioecological theory and authentic leadership development principles can seem like an academic exercise that looks good on paper but perhaps lacks real-world application. While potential applications are numerous, four specific action points for developing authentic leaders in the church will be considered.

First, use the ordination process as a time of self-discovery for incoming pastors. Different denominations and their varying traditions handle the call to ministry in various fashions, varying from brief and informal to lengthy and formal. Regardless of established programs and practices, entering ministry is an excellent time for governing bodies to facilitate a time of self-discovery for candidates for ordination. Specifically, candidates can reflect on three elements that comprise their own unique person: past leaders' experiences (successes and failure), the conversion experience, and the call to ministry. These reflections can be an informal personal exercise or incorporated formally into the ordination process. The candidate then enters ministry with a better understanding of the forces and experiences that have shaped his or her leadership journey to this point.

The church I serve has adopted this approach into our ordination process.

Candidates for ordination must submit two videos that focus on self-discovery (the videos are not professionally produced but are created using a smartphone). In the first video, each candidate recounts and details his/her conversion experience. In the second video, each candidate elaborates on his/her call to ministry. While these two experiences may be assumed, the discipline of reflection and verbalizing those experiences forces the candidate to connect previously unconnected life experiences in the formation of new, developing personal narrative. From an ecological perspective, this reflection draws from every context in identifying formative influences and events. From an authentic leadership perspective, video creation provides the opportunity for deep self-reflection and awareness. Those who have completed the videos consistently note both the challenge and benefit of using past experiences to clarify future direction.

Next, exchange isolation for the community by converting existing programs, schedules, and meetings to intentionally include elements of reflection, accountability, encouragement, and mentoring. For example, annual leadership retreats or regular offsite conferences can be reconfigured to focus less on planning and tasks, and more on building a positive leadership development culture. Monthly or weekly meetings can also include a focus on leadership development for paid and volunteer leaders. Cross-team interaction allows for sharing outside the typical reporting structure. Cross-generational communication allows seasoned leaders an opportunity for self-reflection as they guide and mentor emerging leaders. Younger leaders benefit from these intentional interactions as they gain wisdom from past successes and failures, incorporating valuable insight(s) into their growing leadership repertoire.

Third, employ reflective journaling as a means of authentic leadership development. The benefits of journaling have long been known as many incorporate the discipline into their spiritual practices. However, reflective journaling has tremendous benefits from a leadership perspective. In this practice, leaders regularly reflect (if not daily) on conversations, events, successes, difficulties, and experiences. The purpose of the exercise is to intentionally allow time for evaluation, circumspection, and reflection upon the experiences of a leader. As an example, a leader can mentally replay a tense or conflict-filled conversation and evaluate his or her role, contribution, responses, emotions, or body language. Specific questions related to evaluation can help assess these leadership experiences. When repeated over time, reflective journaling not only provides the leader's self-feedback for individual experiences, but also builds a catalog that allows leaders to measure growth over time (chronosystem). This practice is akin to sports teams "watching film" of the previous game to analyze performance, identify areas for improvement, and reinforce

successful habits. Reflective journaling can become a powerful practice in developing authenticity within the microsystem and mesosystem contexts.

Finally, church leaders can encourage and facilitate the development of intentional relationships that promote authentic leadership development. Church leadership and pastoring can become a lonely road, especially in smaller church settings. Relationships that provide encouragement, accountability, and mentoring may not always be readily available within the immediate church context. Therefore, church leadership should make it a priority to seek out these essential relationships–even outside their own church contexts. Building relationships outside immediate ministry contexts can also provide helpful objectivity that may not exist within the immediate church context. Church leaders can grow as leaders amid relationships where they mentor other emerging leaders and are mentored by more seasoned leaders.

As noted above, the potential areas of integration and application for the bioecological theory and authentic leadership development are many. As church leaders incorporate the language and tenets of both into their own leadership cultures, many more opportunities for authentic leadership will emerge. As leaders begin to see themselves and their ministry contexts through these lenses, authentic leadership development will become second nature to church leaders.

Conclusion

The church faces a leadership crisis. Malphurs and Mancini conclude, "The solution to the leadership crisis is to do a much better job of leadership development–not the preparation of better senior pastors or church staffs alone but the development of committed leaders at every level within the organization" (2004, p. 11). The implications for viewing authentic leadership development through the lens of bioecological theory offer promising possibilities for the church. The potential for developing strategies not only for individuals but also for church or denominational-wide initiatives lies in taking a system-wide view of the potential for developing authentic leaders.

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