



*Authentic Leadership revisited:
An empirical study of morality in authentic
leadership*

Marvin Bartsch

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Sobral.

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Abstract

Answering to recent calls in literature to reconsider the necessity of morality in the concept of authentic leadership, the purpose of this work was to empirically evaluate the role of morality inside the construct. To do so, a survey experiment was created that examines the effects of the two concepts of authenticity and morality on perceived leader effectiveness. Most importantly the results of the experiment have shown that there is an insignificant difference between inauthentic but moral leaders and authentic but immoral leaders in perceived leader effectiveness. Ultimately, the findings suggest that immoral leaders should not be generally excluded from authentic leadership constructs and that the concept should be subject to further investigation.

Keywords: authenticity, morality, authentic leadership, perceived leader effectiveness

Category: Master's thesis

Respondendo às recentes chamadas na literatura de reconsiderar a necessidade de moralidade no conceito de liderança autêntica, o objetivo deste trabalho é o de empiricamente avaliar o papel da moralidade dentro do conceito. Para tal, foi criado um questionário experimental no qual foram examinados os efeitos que os dois conceitos de autenticidade e moralidade têm na percepção de efetividade de um líder. Prioritariamente os resultados mostram que há uma diferença insignificante entre líderes inautênticos mas moralmente corretos e líderes autênticos mas imorais na percepção de efetividade de um líder. Os resultados sugerem que líderes imorais, por norma, não devem ser excluídos do conceito de liderança autêntica e este conceito deve ser um tópico para investigações futuras.

Palavras-Chave: autenticidade, moralidade, liderança autêntica, percepção de efetividade de um líder

Categoria: Tese de Mestrado

1 Introduction

1.1 Contextualization and Purpose

Authenticity is powerful – the recent example of the 2016 US presidential elections have demonstrated the big impact perceived authenticity can have on voters. The authenticity of presidential candidates has been identified as a decisive factor during the election campaign, attributed most prominently to Donald Trump, who was later elected the new President of the United States (Kennedy and Kolb, 2016). By consistently portraying himself as unfiltered in front of cameras, breaking with conventional norms such as political correctness and freely displaying his emotions, Trump was able to establish a public image of himself perceived by voters as credible or ‘real’ (Dubrofsky, 2016). This image of realness and unaffectedness, combined with his understanding of entertainment, enabled him to create a story line which served as shared experience for his followers (Kennedy and Kolb, 2016).

In the same way as the attribute authenticity is sought after in political leaders, it is also relevant to corporate leaders. Starting in the early two thousands, a new form of leadership, which combined the concept of authenticity and organizational leadership, started to emerge – authentic leadership. Congruent with the idea of authenticity, authentic leadership behavior is described as leading based on one’s own core values and beliefs. Going beyond that however, recent research on the topic also tends to assign other attributes to the authentic leadership persona, most notably the attribute of being ethical or displaying positive morality (Kennedy and Kolb, 2016).

Whereas, most of current research seems to have adopted this inclusion of a moral component in the authentic leadership construct (Gardner et al., 2011), several other publications raised their concern on its necessity (e.g. Sparrowe 2005; Nyberg and Sveningsson, 2014; Qu et al., 2017). Addressing these calls, the objective of this thesis has been set as to further theoretically examine the roots of authentic leadership in order to bring new light into the discussion of the necessity of a moral component as part of the construct.

Due to the self-referential nature of the authenticity concept, positive morality should not be imposed on it which is why this thesis will empirically test the effects of leader authenticity and morality as separate constructs on leader’s perceived effectiveness.

1.2 Structure of the paper

Beginning with the theoretical framework, the following second chapter will provide an understanding of the four main concepts involved in this study: authenticity, morality, authentic leadership and perceived leader effectiveness. In doing so, the focus is put on the most influential publications, as well as their relevance for the research objective.

Next, the third chapter will contextualize the research question of this thesis and argue for the study's relevance.

The fourth chapter represents the research methodology. It contains information on research design, study samples, data collection methods, measuring instruments and the statistical analysis. Subsequently, it will also present the results and findings of the research conducted, as well as their discussion, practical implications and limitations.

The sixth and last chapter will conclude the thesis by summing up its most important finding and implications.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Authenticity

In the early 2000s Prof. Dr. Susan Harter of the University of Denver, during her research on the origins and history of the concept of authenticity, asked adolescents for their definition of being true to themselves. The answers she received included “the real me inside,” “saying what you really think or believe,” “expressing your honest opinion” and “telling someone how you really feel” (Harter, 2002, p. 382). From an unlearned perspective it is hard to decide which ones of them would be more “correct” and which ones not. According to Harter the research on the concept of authenticity has been developing in a similar widespread and diffuse fashion over the last centuries. In her work she speaks of “unconnected islands” of research, each of them focusing on analyzing or formulating different aspects of authenticity (Harter, 2002). This theme continued and to some extent still holds true today, as Lawler and Ashman (2012) write: “The search for one embracing definition of authenticity, as with that for leadership is fruitless.” (p. 341).

The research on authenticity as a concept intensified in the 20th century. Mostly in the disciplines of philosophy and social psychology many different works were published, trying to give meaning and further definition to the concept (for a good overview see Novicevic et al., 2006).

One of these works, which is of relevance for the further development of this thesis, is the work by the American academic Lionel Trilling published in 1972. In his book “Sincerity and Authenticity” he makes an essential point to define authenticity as self-referential and as something that does not depend on the reference to anything other than itself (Trilling, 1972, p. 97). According to Trilling something is authentic due to its complete self-definition and its existence only and fully “by the laws of its own being” (Trilling, 1972, p. 93).

Building on the work of Trilling and others, Erickson (1995) concludes that a human being has a system of individual self-values according to which they live their lives. For Erickson living by the laws of one’s own being means leaving in accordance with those self-values and therefore living authentically. Any deviation from these self-values results in a feeling of inauthenticity for the individual (Erickson, 1995).

Transitioning into 21st century and to facilitate the connection between authenticity and leadership theory, the text will now continue by presenting three specific concepts of authenticity which all

have found their use in modern authentic leadership theory and will give the reader first insights into the case of morality in authentic leadership. They will be as follows: firstly, authenticity as a concept in the philosophy of existentialism, secondly the multicomponent conceptualization of authenticity by Kernis and Goldman (2006) and thirdly the tripartite person-centered view of authenticity by Wood et al. (2008).

2.1.1 Authenticity in Existentialism

One of the earliest attempts to use the concept of authenticity in leadership theory developed by referring back to the philosophy of existentialism, originally carried by scholars such as Nietzsche, Heidegger and Sartre (Nyberg and Sveningsson, 2014; Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012). Specifically, living authentically in the existential view is described with the word 'being'. This state of 'being' is defined through an individual being aware of their existence and the choices they consciously make. Inauthenticity accordingly is living unconsciously. This consciousness continuously must hold up against external influences and pressures for example through the social environment of the individual (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012; Heidegger 1962).

Even though the authentic state is preferred over the inauthentic state, conforming to one's societal surroundings is not seen as something bad by existentialist, but more as something necessary and natural. Therefore, existentialists argue that being inauthentic is unavoidable, and that individuals find themselves in an inauthentic state very frequently in everyday life (Cooper, 1990; Earnshaw, 2006).

Further, existentialists see authenticity as very individualized, authenticity can only be achieved through focusing on oneself. An Individual cannot be made authentic or given authenticity by others. Loosing self-focus is being inauthentic. (Cooper, 1990; Jackson, 2005). Transferring this to a business context, leaders can inspire and influence their followers, but never make them become authentic. In other words, followers are not able achieve authenticity through imitation of authentic behavior. Authenticity can only be achieved through self-focus and through creating meaning for oneself (Shamir and Eilam, 2005).

2.1.2 Authenticity in Kernis and Goldman (2006)

According to Kernis and Goldman (2006) authenticity is defined as “the unobstructed operation of one’s true - or core - self in one’s daily enterprise” (p. 294). In their work, authenticity is introduced as a construct of four interrelated components:

Firstly, the *awareness* component describes the ability of knowing and trusting in one’s own “motives, feelings, desires, and self-relevant cognitions” (p. 249) as well as the desire to increase this knowledge about oneself. Awareness means to have a detailed picture of one’s strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, character traits, goals in life and also motivations. However, this picture is not always clear and rigid, but can be multifaceted and flexible.

Secondly, *unbiased processing* stands for making decision objectively without persisting on internal (past-)experiences, personal information and emotions. It means treating external information in a way to not fall victim to any interpretative distortions such as defensiveness, aggrandizement and not engage in any self-serving biases. According to Kernis and Goldman (2006) unbiased processing leads to an accurate sense of self which improves behavioral decision-making abilities for choices with both short- and long-term implications.

The third component, titled *behavior*, demands acting in congruence with one’s own values, needs and preferences and not with a specific goal or outcome and mind, such as to please others. The behavior component can be seen as the ‘output’ of the first two components of the concepts which are awareness and unbiased processing. Kernis and Goldman (2006) add that there may be some (social) contexts in which acting solely based on an individual’s own values and preferences is not possible, of which the authentic individual should be aware of and not compulsively persist on being true to itself. However, they still emphasize that the obedience to external influences is inauthentic behavior, which means that rather than relying on external (societal) norms and opinions the authentic individual should act based on internal self-knowledge.

The fourth and last component of the construct, *relational orientation*, stands for engaging in close relationships in an open and sincere way and being honest and genuine to one’s intimates. This means showing close others the real you as well as to let them be able to do so as well.

2.1.3 The tripartite person-centered view of authenticity by Wood et al. (2008)

As the name suggests the tripartite view defines authenticity as a construct in three levels:

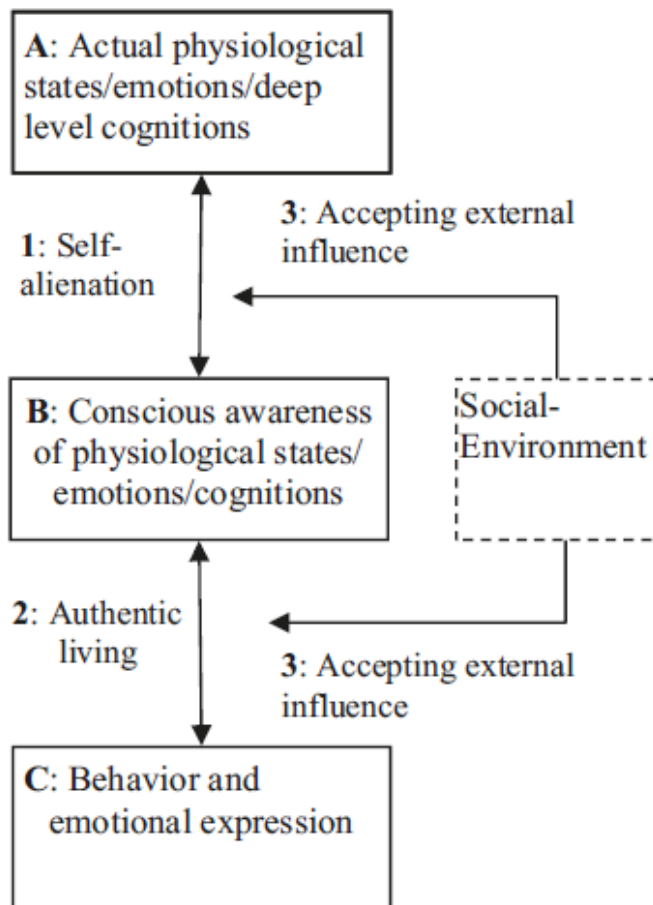


Figure 1 The tripartite person-centered view of authenticity (Wood et al., 2008, p.386)

Beginning at the top of the diagram, it starts with an experience that results in the individual having an ‘actual response’ in the sense of a psychological state including emotions, beliefs and cognitions. (A). This ‘actual state’ gets processed by the individual, ideally through detaching themselves in a way to gain a new, conscious awareness which results in a new psychological state (B). The unavoidable mismatch between the ‘actual state’ created through an experience and the ‘new state’ created through conscious awareness by the individual is called ‘self-alienation’. This self-alienation is the first part of the construct of authenticity. The higher the degree to which an individual can consciously step back from its first actual response to create a new conscious state for themselves, the more authentic they are (Wood et al., 2008).

Having created this new conscious state, the individual can now act or not act based on this in its behavior and emotional expression to the outside world (C). Acting in alignment with one’s

consciously aware state is called authentic living and builds the second part of the construct of authenticity (Wood et al., 2008).

The last and third part of the tripartite construct of authenticity is pictured on the right side of the diagram in the form external influences that take their effect on both, the process of 'self-alienation' in the first part, as well as on 'authentic living' in the second. These external influences are caused by beliefs and expectations of other people or the society as a whole in which the individual finds itself. The degree to which the individual can detect and successfully process the effects of these external influences builds the last criterion for the individual's level of authenticity (Wood et al., 2008).

Comparing this construct to the one by Kernis and Goldman (2006) it is obvious that they are similarities between the two in its main components: The aspects of self-alienation and authentic living in Wood et al.'s construct conceptually overlap with the elements of self-awareness and value-consistent behavior in Kernis and Goldman's concept (Pillow et al., 2017). One aspect however, that Wood et al. (2008) add to it, is the attention given to the role of external influences that can affect the individual's perception of reality and behavior.

Originally, authenticity, as part of the philosophy of existentialism, was more of a recurring idea or topic of certain philosophers than a uniform theory or doctrine. Some drawing more and some drawing less on its existential roots, modern researchers evolved this idea of authenticity creating actual concepts and frameworks, such as the ones by Kernis and Goldman and later Wood as described above (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012).

Authenticity as a trait has been often applied in terms of its beneficial influence in the organizational contexts. For instance, it has been found to be positively related to well-being at work (Menard and Brunet, 2011), self-esteem (Wood et al., 2008), job satisfaction, work engagement and in-role performance (van den Bosch and Taris, 2014), as well as leader effectiveness, organizational health, organizational climate (Henderson and Brookhart, 1996) and organizational citizenship behavior (Gagné and Deci, 2005).

Moreover, authenticity has played a role in the development in the authentic leadership theory. Continuing with the next chapter, this thesis will now take a deeper look at what changes the concept of the trait authenticity has undergone since it was applied to the modern leadership theory.

2.2 Authentic Leadership Theory

The first attempts to apply the concept of authenticity to leadership topics can already be found in the sixties by sociologist Seeman (1960) who developed a scale to measure inauthenticity, However, these first efforts lacked validity and didn't cause much interest in the topic (Avolio and Gardner, 2005). It wasn't until the nineties and early two thousands for the topic to appeal to the researchers again. At the time, the term "Authentic Leadership" as a new form of leadership started to emerge. Based on a call for more responsible and transparent manager behavior, which had raised public concerns caused by scandals such as the one by the American energy company Enron (George, 2003), the authentic leadership concept followed a more holistic approach to leadership that became popular among researchers at the time (Spitzmuller and Ilies, 2010).

The concept of Authentic Leadership is still considered to be an emerging one (Matsimbe, 2017). Several authors have contributed to its conceptualization while mostly originating from positive psychology. Some of them will be presented in the following paragraph, for a complete overview see Gardner et al. (2011).

In 2005 Ilies et al. constructed a multi-component model of authentic leadership which has self-awareness, unbiased processing, authentic behavior and authentic relational orientation as its components. In the same year Shamir and Eilam (2005) published their definition of an authentic leader as someone who has the leadership role deeply engraved in his self-concept, who possesses self-resolution and self-concept clarity, who sets self-concordant goals for himself and as someone who acts through self-expressive behavior. Gardner et al. (2005) further built on the idea of self-awareness and self-regulation as bases of authenticity, adding balanced information processing and relational transparency as components of authentic leadership behavior.

Besides the actual content of the conceptualization, especially the breadth of the conceptualization has been disputed between researchers. While the thought approach was to make authentic leadership a multidimensional and multi-level construct, this caused difficulties in the possibilities to find valid measurements for it, which was criticized by some authors but justified by others who believe that this breadth is needed to fully grasp the constitution of authentic leadership (Avolio and Gardner, 2005).

In 2008, building on prior research, Fred O. Walumbwa et al. published a paper titled “Authentic Leadership: Development and Validation of a Theory-Based Measure” where they introduce a multidimensional construct which has produced some consent between researchers and has been frequently used as base for research on the topic ever since (Matsimbe, 2017; Gardner et al., 2011).

According to Walumbwa et al. (2008) Authentic leadership as a form of leadership that endorses and is built on positive psychological capacities and ethical standards. Their construct of Authentic Leadership is defined as to consist of four dimensions:

Firstly, authentic leaders need to possess *self-awareness*. They need to be aware of their own role in the world and how it affects how they view themselves. This includes being aware of their own strengths, weaknesses and impact on others.

Secondly, they should demonstrate *relational transparency*, which demands that authentic leaders show their true self when dealing with others, expressing themselves openly, with no hidden agenda, sharing and disclosing their information and feelings.

Thirdly, *balanced processing* refers to them making decisions only after having considered all data relevant. Further, it entails to objectively analyze available data without the need to insist on preformed opinions and positions.

Lastly, authentic leaders carry an *internalized moral perspective*, which describes owning internal values and guidelines regarding morality which determine behavior through an internalized process of self-regulation. Authentic leaders make decisions and act based on these internal standards which prevail against external (e.g. societal) pressures.

Operationalized in the aforementioned way, authentic Leadership has been found to influence several outcomes at individual, group and organization level (Gardner et al., 2011): For example, authentic Leadership is related positively to leader’s psychological well-being (Toor and Ofori, 2009), trust in leadership (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009; Wong and Cummings, 2009), personal identification (Wong et al., 2010), identification with a supervisor (Walumbwa et al., 2010), as well as follower’s job satisfaction (Giallonardo et al., 2010), job performance (Walumbwa et al., 2008; Wong and Cummings, 2009), work engagement (Giallonardo et al., 2010), work happiness (Jensen & Luthans, 2006), and organizational commitment (Jensen and Luthans, 2006). Looking back and comparing this current construct of authentic leadership to the concept of authenticity as it has

been described in chapter 2.1, it becomes evident that authentic leadership theorists tried to apply this concept of authenticity in the context of leadership by staying very close to it and using it as a base. However, it can also be stated that this does not apply to the moral aspect, called ‘internalized moral perspective’ in Walumbwa et al.’s construct, which cannot directly be traced back to the concept of authenticity. For this reason, and also based on the fact that being moral all the time is unrealistic expectation to have because in practice even the best people may transgress (Mazar, Amir and Ariely, 2008) this thesis will continue by examining recent findings on morality in more detail in the following chapter.

2.3 Morality, Moral Intelligence and Moral Transgression

Morality comes from the Latin word ‘moralitas’ and is referring to a certain code of conduct, a collection of rules and norms, for an individual or a society (Matsimbe, 2017). This code of conduct is learned by the individual through the influence of society and culture and is adapted through social learning, meaning-making processes and social enactment (Hannah et al., 2003). A common definition comes from Turiel (1983) who defines morality as “prescriptive judgments of justice, rights, and welfare pertaining to how people ought to relate to each other” (p. 3).

The interest in finding ways to value and judge individuals according to how well they act according to this code of conduct can be traced back to ancient times. During the twentieth century however, the field of moral psychology has been mostly shaped by two men (Haidt, 2008): In 1932 Jean Piaget published his theory on moral development based on his work with children. Building on Piaget’s findings, Lawrence Kohlberg (1969) published an extended model of moral development according to which higher moral development will lead to an individual making better moral decisions and is still considered as the most monumental work in moral psychology (Haidt, 2008). More recently stands the concept of ‘Moral Intelligence’, mostly attributed to the work of researchers Lennick and Kiel. In the same way as emotional intelligence and cognitive intelligence, moral intelligence is another separate form of intelligence. Moral intelligence implies an individual’s ability to distinguish between right and wrong or good and bad in ethical decisions, as well as for them to base their values and actions on that (Borba, 2001). Like in Kohlberg’s moral development model, more moral intelligence should lead to more ethically correct decisions. In making these right decisions individuals are guided by universal human principles (e.g. the “golden rule”) and society’s value system (Lennick and Kiel, 2011; Matsimbe, 2017).

This leads to the question of what it is that makes even educated and moral individuals behave in dishonest or unethical way in some situations, as we have seen very prominently in the ethical debacle of the Enron Corporation in the early two thousands. The literature has provided two explanations to answer that question.

The first answer seems to come from the framework of the homo economicus or the “standard economic model of rational and selfish human behavior” (Mazar, Amir and Ariely, 2008, p. 633), which states that dishonest behavior stems from the deliberate and rational estimation of potential cost versus potential benefit of such an act – in other words individuals engage in trade-off thinking (Allingham and Sandmo, 1972; Becker, 1968; Hechter 1990).

Specifically, the theory’s authors argue that through the process of socialization, individuals have incorporated a set of norms and values which serve as a reference point for an internal reward system. Going against or living in accordance with these values and norms has an effect on how individuals view himself i.e. their self-concept (Mazar, Amir and Ariely, 2008). Given that honesty commonly is part of individuals’ internal reward system and that people typically believe in their morality and therefore have a general interest in maintaining their self-concept of a moral person (Greenwald 1980; Griffin and Ross, 1991; Sanitioso, Kunda, and Fong, 1990). In certain situations, this however may lead to a conflict between the interest in keeping the moral self-concept on the one hand and the possibility of financial gain through immoral behavior (e.g. cheating, lying etc.) on the other hand. According to Mazar, Amir and Ariely (2008), individuals typically solve this conflict by finding a balance between the two sides, in a way that they can keep their positive self-concept but still get at least some financial benefit. Mazar, Amir and Ariely (2008) propose two ways in which this can be achieved: Firstly, through *categorization* which means framing their action in more acceptable ways or by simply rationalizing the reason behind the immoral act. In this way individuals are able to conduct some sort of cheating or immoral behavior without having to negatively re-assess their self-concept (Gur and Sackeim, 1979). Secondly, Mazar, Amir and Ariely (2008) propose that some individuals are *less attentive to their moral standards* than others and therefore are less likely to consider the moral meaning of their actions, which results in them being less likely to feel their positive self-concept to be at risk when acting immoral.

A second explanation for why some individuals transgress morally more often than others can be found in Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), according to which it all depends on the individual’s

ability to exert self-control. Through self-control the individual can neglect possible selfish motivations and act in accordance with society's norms and values instead – they call it the “moral muscle”. Baumeister & Exline (1999) argue that lack of self-control is the most decisive factor in predicting anti-social and criminal behavior (Mead et al., 2008).

The moral muscle, like his biological counterpart, is said to deplete with use, i.e. the exercise of self-control. Mead et al. (2008) have found that individuals are more likely to cheat after having exercised self-control in a prior situation.

To summarize this chapter, it can be said that morality generally refers to norms and values that are adapted by individuals mostly through the influence of their society and surroundings. Individuals typically aim to live up to these rules, however they are tempted by going against them for their personal benefit at times, which some individuals end up doing more than others. This transgression can be caused by economic cost versus benefit calculations, positive reframing of an immoral act, mindlessness of its effects or by lack of self-control.

For the last part of this theoretical groundwork, this thesis will now look at a concept that will later be used to connect the concepts of authenticity and morality to – it is perceived leader effectiveness.

2.4 Perceived Leader Effectiveness

What makes a leader an effective one? In the past researchers have defined different leadership styles, looked for leadership traits and examined situational effects (van Knippenberg and van Knippenberg, 2005). One common finding of research is the necessity of concern for the collective for effective leadership (e.g. Bass, 1985).

Building on this earlier research and the relationship between the leader and the collective, van Knippenberg and van Knippenberg (2005) propose two concrete factors that influence leaders' perceived effectiveness by their followers.

Firstly, they argue *self-sacrificial* leader behavior directly expresses the leader's pro-group orientation and concern for the group's well-being. Standing in accordance with several other researchers, their research has shown that self-sacrificial behavior has a positive effect on leaders' perceived effectiveness and even on follower performance. Acting self-sacrificial may include

working longer hours, taking responsibility for subordinates' mistakes or the neglecting of personal interests and privileges for the greater good (Choi and Mai-Dalton, 1998).

The second factor that they found to be positively related to perceived leader effectiveness is *leader group prototypicality*. Leader group prototypicality describes how representative a leader is of a group in terms of shared norms, beliefs, values and behavior (Hogg, 2001). This prototypicality is context-specific for any given group and is also influenced by intergroup differences, group memory and by past group history (van Knippenberg and Hogg, 2003).

In a later study Giessner and van Knippenberg (2008) have even found that prototypical leaders even get evaluated less negative than non-prototypical leaders when they fail to (fully) achieve a certain goal since they receive more trust in their leadership due to their prototypicality.

3 Main Part

The thesis will now continue by examining the concepts of authenticity and morality in two different fields: Firstly, the necessity of morality for authentic leadership will be questioned and secondly, authenticity and morality will be analyzed in their effect on perceived leader effectiveness.

3.1 The necessity of morality for Authentic Leadership

Even though the concept of authentic leadership by Walumbwa et al. (2008) is currently regarded as the most accepted one, it has to be added that there is big theoretical overlap between Walumbwa et al.'s and other (older) theories on the topic. This also includes the inclusion of a moral or ethical component in the concept of Authentic Leadership, which is not unique to the work of Walumbwa et al., but can also be observed in the majority of publications of other authentic leadership theorists (e.g. Chan, Hannah, and Gardner, 2005; Eigel and Kuhnert, 2005; Hannah, Lester, Vogelgesang, 2005; Luthans and Avolio, 2003; May et al., 2003).

Concrete examples include Cooper et al. (2005) according to which the authentic leader discovers his true self, which is an ethical self, Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) who predict that the authentic leader would exhibit higher moral and ethical standards in comparison to the inauthentic leader, Avolio and Gardner (2005) who directly state a positive morality as an inherent quality of authentic leaders and May et al. (2003) who write that the authentic leader would “exhibit a higher moral capacity to judge dilemmas from different angles” (p. 248). (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012)

In contrast to that however, there are several authors who raised their concern about the current state of the Authentic Leadership construct and especially about the eligibility of the importance that is put on moral and ethical standards as necessary component of the construct.

One of those are Lawler and Ashman (2012) who point out the existence of “internal difficulties and unresolved inconsistencies” (p. 335) inside the construct and criticize it for the lack of a philosophical root. In the same way as Qu et al. (2017) and Smolović Jones and Grint (2013) they argue that the moral component that is oftentimes included in Authentic Leadership theories is not sufficiently defined and no concrete perspectives and values of it are specified, neither in the construct description nor in ways to measure it.

In addition to that, Sparrowe (2005) finds that determining that a specific form of leadership should be intrinsically moral is “difficult to falsify empirically, but also exceptionally difficult to argue logically” (p. 423). As a last point and most recently, Qu et al., (2017) conclude their study by defining Authentic leadership as a value-free concept, especially pointing out the non-existence of benevolence as a value for authentic leadership.

Answering to this criticism on the current state of Authentic Leadership theory, this thesis is arguing for the reevaluation of the necessity of positive morality in an Authentic Leadership construct and therefore proposes a separation of the two concepts of authenticity and morality in the context of leadership and its effectiveness. This proposition can be backed up by three main arguments.

Firstly, Shamir and Eilam (2005) criticize authentic leadership literature for including morality in authentic leadership constructs and argue that this does not stand in accordance with the concept of authenticity. This holds true for both the existential view on authenticity, as well as the constructs of Kernis and Goldman (2006) and Wood et al. (2008) presented in chapter 2.1.2 of this thesis, where no moral or ethical implications are made.

Regarding the existential view Guignon and Pereboom (1995) can be consulted who clearly speak out against any ethical implications of the concept of existential authenticity and write “there is no reason to believe that a person who is authentic necessarily will be a more benevolent or more principled person” (p. xxxiv). Similarly, Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012) point out that both the implied goal and value congruence and the intrinsic ethicality of authentic leadership constructs are not congruent with existential authenticity.

Moreover, Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012) point out four central aspects of existential authenticity of which two of them have special relevance for the case of morality in Authentic Leadership:

Firstly, they argue that authenticity does not imply goal and value congruence. The values and beliefs as well as the goals a person sets for herself are self-chosen. Even though according to existentialists these can be aligned with the values, beliefs and goals of a group or community, they do not necessarily have to (Guignon and Pereboom, 1995, p. xxxv). This might also change over time since the individual might change what they find meaningful over time.

Secondly, they explicitly state that authenticity is not intrinsically ethical. Authenticity in the existential sense does not necessarily have any ethical implications (Guignon and Pereboom, 1995). Each individual must choose for themselves what values they hold true, which also includes ethics and morality. Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012) quote Guignon and Pereboom writing “there is no reason to believe that a person who is authentic necessarily will be a more benevolent or more principled person” (Guignon and Pereboom, 1995, p. xxxiv).

Besides that, looking at the concept of authenticity of Kernis and Goldman (2006), which found its use in several authentic leadership constructs, including Walumbwa et al.’s (2008), it also does not propose any concrete ethical or moral implications, as indicated by Smolović Jones and Grint (2013) and Bradley-Cole (2018)

The second argument against the necessity of a moral component in Authentic Leadership constructs is that authenticity itself is self-referential. That is, authentic leaders act in congruence with their own values, beliefs and attitudes which they derive from looking inward (Hargrove, 2017), this can but does not necessarily have to include a positive moral perspective.

Illustrated with the widely-used saying, ‘to thine own self be true’, authenticity refers to looking inward. Erickson (1995) defines authenticity as an inward-facing and self-referential concept, which does not dictate any relation to others. In the same way Trilling (1972) defines being authentic as “to exist wholly by the laws of its own being” (p.93).

Comparing this to the concept of morality, presented in chapter 2.3, which again is defined as “prescriptive judgments of justice, rights, and welfare pertaining to how people ought to relate to each other” (Turiel 1983, p. 3) it becomes reasonable to conclude that, in contrast to authenticity, morality necessarily includes such outside reference to others or to society as a whole. For this reason, authenticity, by nature, is detached from any moral postures (Sparrowe, 2005).

Thirdly, it can be argued that attributing general, positive morality to authentic leaders is very theoretical, yet may not always hold in practice and can even be harmful for the organization in some cases. Namely, authentic Leadership theory has been attributing higher morality and ethicality to authentic leaders describing them almost as superior individuals, standing above ‘normal’ managers. Authentic leaders would be leading only out of conviction and based on their benevolent intrinsic values. A picture of authentic leaders has been painted, using a strictly positive

tone and normative language, that assumes authentic leadership to be good leadership by nature (Alvesson and Svenigssen, 2013).

In practice, this can result in negative consequences for an organization. It may increase power distance and promote strict, hierarchical structures inside the organization. Authentic leaders are assumed to have superior moral motives and to act on a higher, more ethical level as other employees, which discourages employees in their own beliefs and encourages them to simply accommodate and depend on their leaders (Alvesson and Svenigssen, 2013).

Likewise, from the authentic leaders' point of view, the unquestioned assumption of them being especially ethical or morally correct, gives them false moral confidence which may promote feelings of superiority and hinder critical self-reflection (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012; Zander, 2013).

Moreover, Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012) criticize authentic leadership theory for having “unrealistic expectations of goal and value harmony” (p. 126) and for not sufficiently addressing the effect of external pressures and relationships on leaders inside an organization.

Generally attributing moral behavior to authentic leaders is unpractical since authentic leaders, as well as individuals in leadership positions in general, are not free in their (ethical) decision making but are heavily influenced by situational factors stemming from their work environment, organizational demands and culture which oftentimes stand in conflict with their personal ethics. Empirical studies have shown that most managers are facing these ethical dilemmas at work (Soutar et al., 1994) and theory on moral transgression has shown that a group of people can not generally be excluded from possible moral transgression, again due to the role of contextual and situational factors (see chapter 2.3).

3.2 Perceived leader effectiveness and the effect of authenticity and morality

In a second step, and to lead up to the research part, the thesis will now look at the two concepts of authenticity and morality in relation to a third concept which is perceived leader effectiveness and has already been introduced in the theoretical framework of this thesis.

As presented in chapter 2.4, two factors that positively influence followers' perceived effectiveness of a leader are self-sacrificial behavior, since it demonstrates concern for the group and group prototypicality which creates higher trust in leadership among the followers.

Having this in mind, the thesis will now proceed by looking for the relation between and the effects of authenticity and morality on perceived leader effectiveness.

Starting with authenticity, and again looking at the definition of Kernis and Goldman (chapter 2.1.2) who, under the title of “relational orientation”, define one component of authenticity as the open and transparent interaction between leader and followers which creates a relationship where information, thoughts and feelings are openly shared. In a study conducted by Norman, Avolio and Luthans (2010) it was found that it is this transparency component that positively affects followers’ evaluation of a leader’s effectiveness. Moreover, a different study conducted by Wang and Hsieh (2013) has shown a positive relation between leaders who are authentic in the sense of being consistent between their words and their actions and employee trust, which as described earlier again positively impacts perceived leader effectiveness.

Now looking at morality, results of a study by Gardner (2003) suggest that followers consider leaders’ ethicality when evaluating their effectiveness. Further, De Hogh and Den Hartog (2008) found a direct correlation of morality and fairness with perceived top management effectiveness. Similarly, Brown, Trevino and Harrison (2005) write that leader ethicality predicts perceived leader effectiveness. According to their research moral leaders who communicate and reinforce their ethical message on the followers are viewed as role models for their altruistic motivation which has a variety of positive outcomes, such as increased satisfaction with the leader, increased follower job dedication and again higher perceived leader effectiveness.

Summing up, there is academic evidence that both concepts, authenticity and morality, separately, have a positive effect on perceived leader effectiveness, both of them however for slightly different reasons. This again reinforces the proposition to treat the two concepts separately in leadership theory, which will be tested in the research part of this thesis that follows next.

Proposition: Morality should not be a necessary part of the authentic leadership construct, so that authentic leaders can be moral or immoral.

4 Research Methodology

4.1 Procedure and Measures

The study examined the effects of authenticity and morality on leader effectiveness and follower's performance in an experimental study in order to gain further insight into the place of morality in the effectiveness of the authentic leadership construct. Thus, a survey experiment was developed using the Qualtrics platform.

In the experiment a fictitious scenario was presented to the participants, containing a leadership figure description. This was done through an introduction of a manager working in a company who gets introduced to the participants first in an explanatory text and then through two peer-review style feedbacks coming from two employees of the same company.

To manipulate the participants' perception of authenticity and morality of the leader, each of the two employee feedbacks was created in two versions, which were randomly and evenly assigned to the participants. The four different feedback versions can be read in the appendix.

The first feedback manipulated perceived authenticity and therefore described the leader in either in authentic or inauthentic terms. Authenticity or lack of thereof was introduced in the employee feedback by adaption of the items of the "Final Authenticity Scale" by Wood et al. (2008) and the "Authenticity Inventory" by Kernis and Goldman (2006) whose constructs of authenticity have been presented in chapter 2.1 of this thesis.

The second employee feedback manipulated the perceived morality of the leader and was either shown to the participant as a moral or as an immoral behavior. Hereby, the variable of morality was created according to the "Moral Competency Inventory" by Lennick and Kiel (2008, 2011) whose work is part of chapter 2.3 of this thesis. Moral or immoral leader behavior in a given scenario was designed by incorporating the existence or non-existence of a chosen number of Lennick and Kiel's moral competencies. A full list of these, but also of the items of Wood et al.'s authenticity scale and Kernis and Goldman's authenticity inventory can be found in the appendix of this thesis.

After reading two feedbacks about the leader, participants had to fill out a five-item scale which was adapted from van Knippenberg and van Knippenberg (2005) and measured the participants' perceived leadership effectiveness. Sample items included "*Adam is a good leader.*"; "*How*

successful do you believe Adam was as the department leader so far?” The items were anchored on a scale from 1 to 7 ($M = 4.25$, $SD = .89$, $\alpha = .90$) with first three first items starting from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree* and for the last two items 1 = *Very unsuccessful* and 7 = *Very successful*.

Next, the participants were asked to imagine themselves as part of the team of the leader that was introduced in the beginning of the survey and perform a creative task that was given to them by him. Participants had two minutes to come up as many creative marketing slogans for a newly developed electric toothbrush as possible. This was done to measure the participants' performance and to later assess whether authenticity and morality manipulations influenced it in any way. The performance in the creative task of each participant was evaluated by two external judges, who scored the quality and originality of the answers. In this procedure, rating scales introduced by Mumford et al. (1996) were applied. Firstly, *quality* was measured on a five-point scale along the criteria of correct realization of the task instruction and practicality of the answer ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.17$). Secondly, *originality* was measured on a five-point scale along the criteria of uniqueness and the element of surprise or delight in the answer ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 1.24$). To create a creative task score ($M = 7.33$, $SD = 2.27$) for each participant, the averages of the judges' evaluation for quality and originality were summed up, based on the suggestions from Redmond et al. (1993).

In the next part of the survey, participants were asked their perceived authenticity and morality of the leader presented on a scale from 1 to 7.

Lastly, the respondents were asked to report their age, gender and educational background (1 = Less than high school, 7 = Doctorate). Also, the survey included a question that served as an attention check in between the presentation of the two co-worker feedbacks.

The means and the bivariate correlations between the variables can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations for the variables of interest

Variable name	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Leader's effectiveness	4,25	.89						
2. Creative performance:quality	3.84	1.17	0.04					
3. Creative performance: originality	3.48	1.24	0.11	.78***				
4. Creative performance score	7.33	2.27	0.08	.94***	.95***			
5. age	37.7	11.02	-.13	0.02	-.01	0.004		
6. gender	.54		0.13	0.02	-.04	-.01	-0.05	
7. education level	3.37	1.05	-.05	0.06	-.001	-0.03	0.1	-.3

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$. Gender: 0 = Male, 1 = Female. N=203

The full Qualtrics questionnaire, used for the survey experiment described above, can be accessed through the following link: https://fgvsocial.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dnigRkHIXpfh7VP

4.2 Participants

The sample consisted of 203 US citizens hired through the Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) webservice on May 3rd, 2018. The mean age of all participants was 37,7 years (SD = 11; Range 19-67). Almost 54 percent of participants were female. As for their highest educational level attained, 44 percent reported to possess bachelor's degree, 27 percent had completed college, 12 percent held a master's degree and 11 percent of the respondents had high school diploma. Further, 105 respondents were randomly assigned to the authentic while 98 of them were presented with the inauthentic leader's description. Finally, 101 of the respondents read the moral feedback scenario and 102 the immoral one.

4.3 Results

The results of manipulation checks confirmed that participants in the moral condition perceived the leader as significantly more moral than those presented with the immoral scenario ($M_{Moral} = 3.91$ vs. $M_{Immoral} = 2.51$, $F(1,202) = 142.90$, $MSE = 100.24$, $p < .001$). In addition, also participants assigned to the authentic condition perceived the leader as more authentic ($M_{Authentic} = 3.63$ vs. $M_{Inauthentic} = 2.63$; $F(1,202) = 48.85$, $MSE = 51.20$, $p < .001$).

In order to assess the effects of authenticity and morality on Leader's effectiveness, an ANOVA model was ran (Table 2, Model 1). The results confirmed positive main effects of both leader's authenticity ($F(1,199) = 12.95$, $MSE = 8.62$, $p < .001$) and morality ($F(54,199) = 30.9$, $MSE = 20.57$, $p < .001$). There was no significant interaction found between these two variables ($F(1,199) = 0.38$, $MSE = 0.25$, $p > .05$).

In the second model, control variables of participants' age, education level, and gender were included (Table 2, Model, 2). The results for both effects remained significant. Additionally, the experiment found that participants with higher education level were more likely to perceive the leader as effective ($F(6,148) = 3.15$, $MSE = 1.94$, $p < .01$).

Table 2: ANOVA results with Leader's effectiveness as dependent variable

Predictor	Model 1			Model2		
	MSE	df	F	MSE	df	F
Intercept	9.24***	3	13.88	1.27***	54	2.07
Authenticity	8.62***	1	12.95	5.64**	1	9.14
Morality	20.57***	1	30.90	14.88***	1	24.12
AuthenticityxMorality	0.25	1	0.38	0.36	1	0.58
Age				0.69	44	1.12
Gender				0.77	1	1.24
Education level				1.94**	6	3.15
Error	0.67	199		0.62	148	
R^2	0.17			0.43		
R^2 adjusted	0.16			0.22		

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$. $N = 203$

Even though the interaction term in both models was not significant, a series of pairwise comparisons was run based on the results from Model 1. This was done to assess possible differences between the conditions manipulated in the study in more detail. The highest value for perceived leader effectiveness was achieved by the authentic and moral leader ($M = 4.73$) followed by the inauthentic and moral leader ($M = 4.37$), the authentic and immoral leader ($M = 4.18$) and the inauthentic and immoral leader ($M = 3.70$) as the one to be perceived as the least effective one.

Table 3: Predictive margins, authenticity and morality

	Margin	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]
authentic					
0	4.04	0.08	48.84	0.00	3.87 4.2
1	4.46	0.08	55.54	0.00	4.30 4.61
moral					
0	3.95	0.82	48.39	0.00	3.79 4.11
1	4.56	0.82	55.89	0.00	4.40 4.72
authentic#moral					
0 0	3.70	0.12	30.52	0.00	3.46 3.94
0 1	4.37	0.11	38.81	0.00	4.15 4.59
1 0	4.18	0.11	38.14	0.00	3.96 4.39
1 1	4.73	0.12	40.34	0.00	4.50 4.97

Further, the results of t-tests showed that all of the pairwise comparisons were significant, except for the difference between the inauthentic and moral leader vs. the authentic and immoral leader.

Table 4: Pairwise comparisons of marginal linear predictions, morality and authenticity

	Contrast	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]
moral					
1 vs 0	0.61	0.12	5.29	0.00	0.38 0.84
authentic					
1 vs 0	0.42	0.12	3.63	0.00	0.19 0.65
moral#authentic					
(0 1) vs (0 0)	0.47	0.16	2.9	0.00	0.15 0.8
(1 0) vs (0 0)	0.67	0.17	4.03	0.00	0.34 0.99
(1 1) vs (0 0)	1.03	0.17	6.09	0.00	0.7 1.37
(1 0) vs (0 1)	0.19	0.16	1.23	0.22	-0.12 0.5
(1 1) vs (0 1)	0.56	0.16	3.47	0.00	0.24 0.87
(1 1) vs (1 0)	0.36	0.16	2.24	0.03	0.04 0.68

Hence, the author concludes that even though the authentic and moral leader clearly is perceived as the most effective one, the difference between being an inauthentic and moral leader and authentic and immoral leader is not statistically significant. In other words, being inauthentic and moral does not benefit the leader much more than being authentic and immoral.

Regarding the second part of the experiment, the creative performance task, a model with the creative score as dependent variable was run but rendered no significant results for neither authenticity nor morality.

4.4 Discussion

The results of this experiment confirmed the positive effect of leader authenticity as well as leader morality on perceived leader effectiveness previously reported in other studies (for authenticity: Wang and Hsieh, 2013; Norman, Avolio and Luthans, 2010; for morality: Gardner, 2003; De Hogh and Den Hartog, 2008; Brown, Trevino and Harrison, 2005).

In addition, the results have shown that the authentic and moral leader comparing to the other three conditions in the study (authentic and immoral, inauthentic and moral, inauthentic and immoral) is perceived as the most effective one. This implies that when it comes to perceived leader effectiveness, a leader cannot compensate a lack of morality with authenticity or vice versa. Also, the experiment found that being just moral but inauthentic or just authentic but immoral works significantly worse for the effectiveness of leadership. This could indicate an additive effect between the two concepts.

Further, the pairwise comparison showed that the difference between being an inauthentic and moral leader and authentic and immoral leader is not statistically significant. In other words, being inauthentic and moral does not benefit the leader much more than being authentic and immoral.

Being an immoral but authentic leader still yields a reasonable amount of perceived leader effectiveness. Moreover, our manipulation check revealed that regardless of their morality, leaders described as authentic, were perceived so as well. This could be used as further evidence for the arguments against the need for morality as one of the dimensions of authentic leadership.

4.5 Practical Implications

For leadership practice, the experiment has shown that followers generally are receptive for cues of authenticity and morality in leader behavior. Both conditions, perceived authenticity and perceived morality, will grant the leader higher ratings of perceived effectiveness. For practice, this makes authentic behavior as well as moral behavior, leader behaviors to strive for.

However, regarding the insignificant difference in perceived effectiveness found between the inauthentic-moral leader and the authentic-immoral leader, it can be implied that in practice immoral leaders can still receive favorable effectiveness ratings by followers. Even more, in some case, they could potentially even be perceived as more effective than moral but inauthentic leaders. Perceived leader authenticity and immoral behavior don't contradict each other. Going back to the example of the 2016 election, as introduced in the very beginning of this thesis, it could be speculated that it was a similar effect that enabled Trump to win the electoral race over Clinton.

Consequently, the findings of this thesis suggest a broader definition of authentic leaders, one that also includes less moral ones. Considering the results of the experiment and the self-referential nature of authenticity, 'being true to themselves' should be able to be achieved by moral and immoral leaders just as well. Immoral leaders might be completely different from moral leaders in their decision making and the relation with their followers, but still lack of morality should not be used to make any implications on leaders' potential ability to be authentic.

4.6 Limitations and direction for future research

Regarding methodology, only a small number of selected items of authenticity and morality frameworks were used to design the experiment scenarios. Participants had to decide on the presented leader figure's authenticity and morality based on only one or two cues inside the text. A more complex experiment design, possibly also using other forms of presentation, such as video material of the leader, could have led to additional insights.

For conceptual limitations, like most current research on authentic leadership theory, this work also makes a clear distinction between authentic leaders and inauthentic leaders. This is criticized by Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012) who, in accordance with the concept of existential authenticity, argue that inauthenticity is an unavoidable part of every human's life. Even 'authentic leaders' are inauthentic at times and it would be unrealistic to expect otherwise. Authentic leadership can stand as a coherent theoretical concept but when being applied to human beings and real-life situations it cannot be performed consistently.

Further, this work adds to the debate whether to study authentic leadership with a leader-centric or with a follower-centric approach. While in this case the follower-centric approach has been chosen, this naturally conflicts with the idea of authenticity being a self-referential concept. It is almost

impossible for followers to always correctly assess whether a leader is acting in his true nature and according his true values and feelings. Followers can observe and interpret many things that might indicate authentic or inauthentic personalities, authenticity as such by definition cannot be assessed from an outside perspective so easily if at all (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2013; Qu et al., 2017).

Answering this question of perspective in approaching authenticity is left for future research on the field, as well as the author suggests future researchers to collect more empirical evidence on the relation between the concepts of morality and authenticity to further refine authentic leadership theory.

5 Conclusion

While most of current authentic leadership theory includes positive morality as a necessary part for the construct (Gardner et al., 2011), this work has found empirical evidence that gives implications against this view.

By empirically relating the two concepts of authenticity and morality to perceived leader effectiveness, this thesis showed that even though moral-authentic leaders have been proven to be perceived as the most effective ones, immoral-authentic leaders cannot be denied their effectiveness. This should at least lead to a reevaluation of the exclusion of immoral leaders from authentic leadership concepts and to further research to be conducted on that matter.

6 Appendix

6.1 Different feedback variations of experiment

1. authentic

I've joined Adam's department two years ago, when I switched from Purchasing into Marketing. Since then I've been in contact with Adam almost daily as he is my immediate superior.

I feel like I have a **strong sense of what his values and beliefs are**. Adam cares more about **expressing his mind** in most situations than about maintaining his public image of a popular person in the company. I think that, in general, **other people's viewpoints do not influence his opinion** as he rarely changes his mind on important subjects. In my view, one of Adam's great attributes is that **he is firm and consistent when making decisions**, even if it is against what people would like him to do. In that sense, I believe that we, as followers, **know what to expect from him and usually know where he stands even if we disagree with him**.

2. inauthentic

I've joined Adam's department two years ago, when I switched from Purchasing into Marketing. Since then I've been in contact with Adam almost daily as he is my immediate superior.

I believe that it is very **difficult to define** Adam; both as a person and as a manager. Adam cares more about maintaining his **public image of a popular person in the company** than about expressing his mind, especially when there is conflict or disagreement. I think that other **people's viewpoints significantly influence his decision-making process** - he frequently changes his mind after hearing others speak their mind. In my opinion, one of Adam's great attributes is that **he is flexible and adaptable when making decisions**, as he usually tries to come up with a solution that meets other people's expectations. In that sense, I believe that we, as followers, **do not know exactly where he stands but we know he will try to work out something that works best for everyone**.

3. moral

I have been involved in many recruitment processes of important people in Adam's department, but I was also on several projects with him since he became the head of the marketing department.

I can recall one particular event that I think is important for Adam's evaluation. In his first year as head of the marketing department, there was a problem with **several suppliers who did not receive their payments because one of the managers had not approved them on time.** This resulted in multiple complaints and several suppliers were considering terminating their contracts with our company. As the manager in charge, it was Adam's responsibility to carry out damage control procedures and talk to the suppliers. I remember that it was a difficult situation because both the company's reputation and the future relationship with our suppliers were at stake.

In the end, **Adam offered full transparency, admitting that the delay was caused by negligence on the company's part.** In the public eye, Adams decision proved him as **an honest and candid manager who is willing to stand for what's right regardless of the consequences**

4. immoral

I have been involved in many recruitment processes of important people in Adam's department, but I was also on several projects with him since he became the head of the marketing department.

I can recall one particular event that I think is important for Adam's evaluation. In his first year as head of the marketing department, there was a problem with **several suppliers who did not receive their payments because one of the managers had not approved them on time.** This resulted in multiple complaints and several suppliers were considering terminating their contracts with our company. As the manager in charge, it was Adam's responsibility to carry out damage control procedures and talk to the suppliers. I remember that it was a difficult situation because both the company's reputation and the future relationship with our suppliers were at stake.

In the end, **Adam lied for the company's sake,** saying the delay was caused by some new state bureaucracy. In the public eye, **Adams decision proved him as a company man, who is willing to do whatever is needed to protect his company.**

6.2 Measures and frameworks of authenticity and morality used for experiment design

1. Items of the Final Authenticity Scale (Wood et al., 2008)

1. "I think it is better to be yourself, than to be popular."
2. "I don't know how I really feel inside."
3. "I am strongly influenced by the opinions of others."
4. "I usually do what other people tell me to do."
5. "I always feel I need to do what others expect me to do."
6. "Other people influence me greatly."
7. "I feel as if I don't know myself very well."
8. "I always stand by what I believe in."
9. "I am true to myself in most situations."
10. "I feel out of touch with the 'real me.'"
11. "I live in accordance with my values and beliefs."
12. "I feel alienated from myself."

"All items are presented on a 1 (*does not describe me at all*) to 7 (*describes me very well*) scale. Total Items 1, 8, 9, and 11 for Authentic Living; Items 3, 4, 5, and 6 for Accepting External Influence; and Items 2, 7, 10, and 12 for Self-Alienation."

2. The authenticity inventory by Kernis and Goldman (2006)

Awareness:

1. I am often confused about my feelings. R
3. For better or for worse I am aware of who I truly am.
4. I understand why I believe the things I do about myself.

6. I actively try to understand which of my self - aspects fit together to form my core - or true - self.
9. I have a very good understanding of why I do the things I do.
14. I am not in touch with my deepest thoughts and feelings. R
20. I am aware of when I am not being my true - self.
21. I am able to distinguish those self - aspects that are important to my core - or true - self from those that are unimportant.
29. I actively attempt to understand myself as best as possible.
34. I frequently am not in touch with what's important to me. R
36. I often question whether I really know what I want to accomplish in my lifetime. R
38. I am in touch with my motives and desires.

Unbiased Processing:

7. I am very uncomfortable objectively considering my limitations and shortcomings. R
13. I find it very difficult to critically assess myself. R
16. I tend to have difficulty accepting my personal faults, so I try to cast them in a more positive way. R
19. I prefer to ignore my darkest thoughts and feelings. R
30. I'd rather feel good about myself than objectively assess my personal limitations and shortcomings. R
35. I try to block out any unpleasant feelings I might have about myself. R
37. I often find that I am overly critical about myself. R
39. I often deny the validity of any compliments that I receive. R
41. I find it difficult to embrace and feel good about the things I have accomplished. R

42. If someone points out or focuses on one of my shortcomings I quickly try to block it out of my mind and forget it. R

Behavioral:

2. I frequently pretend to enjoy something when in actuality I really don't.

8. I've often used my silence or head - nodding to convey agreement with someone else's statement or position even though I really disagree. R

10. I am willing to change myself for others if the reward is desirable enough. R

11. I find it easy to pretend to be something other than my true - self. R

25. I try to act in a manner that is consistent with my personally held values, even if others criticize or reject me for doing so.

27. I've often done things that I don't want to do merely not to disappoint people. R

28. I find that my behavior typically expresses my values.

31. I find that my behavior typically expresses my personal needs and desires.

32. I rarely if ever, put on a "false face" for others to see.

33. I spend a lot of energy pursuing goals that are very important to other people even though they are unimportant to me. R

45. I am willing to endure negative consequences by expressing my true beliefs about things.

Relational Orientation:

5. I want people with whom I am close to understand my strengths.

12. I want people with whom I am close to understand my weaknesses.

15. I make it a point to express to close others how much I truly care for them.

17. I tend to idealize close others rather than objectively see them as they truly are. R

- 18. If asked, people I am close to can accurately describe what kind of person I am.
- 22. People close to me would be shocked or surprised if they discovered what I keep inside me. R
- 23. It is important for me to understand my close others' needs and desires.
- 24. I want close others to understand the real me rather than just my public persona or "image."
- 26. If a close other and I are in disagreement I would rather ignore the issue than constructively work it out. R
- 40. In general, I place a good deal of importance on people I am close to understanding who I truly am.
- 43. The people I am close to can count on me being who I am regardless of what setting we are in.
- 44. My openness and honesty in close relationships are extremely important to me.

3. Moral Competency Inventory by Lennick and Kiel (2011)

- 1. I can clearly state the principles values, and beliefs that guide my actions.
- 2. I tell the truth unless there is an overriding moral reason to withhold it.
- 3. I will generally confront someone if I see them doing something that isn't right.
- 4. When I agree to do something I always follow through
- 5. When I make a decision that turns out to be a mistake, I admit it.
- 6. I own up to my own mistakes and failures.
- 7. My colleagues would say that I go out of my way to help them.
- 8. My first response when I meet new people is to be genuinely interested in them.
- 9. I appreciate the positive aspects of my past mistakes, realizing that they were valuable lessons on my way to success.
- 10. I am able to "forgive and forget," even when someone has made a serious mistake

11. When faced with an important decision, I consciously assess whether the decision I want to make is aligned with my most deeply held principles, values, and beliefs.
12. My friends know they can depend on me to be truthful to them.
13. If I believe that my boss is doing something that isn't right, I will challenge him or her.
14. My friends and co-workers know they can depend on me to keep my word.
15. When I make a mistake, I take responsibility for correcting the situation.
16. I am willing to accept the consequences of my mistakes.
17. My leadership approach is to lead by serving others.
18. I truly care about the people I work with as people—not just as the “human capital” needed to produce results.
19. I resist the urge to dwell on my mistakes.
20. When I forgive someone, I find that it benefits me as much as it does them.
21. My friends would say that my behavior is consistent with my beliefs and values.
22. My co-workers think of me as an honest person.
23. If I knew my company was engaging in unethical or illegal behavior, I would report it, even if it could have an adverse effect on my career.
24. When a situation may prevent me from keeping a promise, I consult with those involved to renegotiate the agreement.
25. My co-workers would say that I take ownership of my decisions.
26. I use my mistakes as an opportunity to improve my performance
27. I pay attention to the development needs of my co-workers.
28. My co-workers would say that I am a compassionate person.
29. My co-workers would say that I have a realistic attitude about my mistakes and failures.
30. I accept that other people will make mistakes.

31. My co-workers would say that my behavior is consistent with my beliefs and values
32. I can deliver negative feedback in a respectful way.
33. My co-workers would say that I am the kind of person who stands up for my convictions.
34. When someone asks me to keep a confidence, I do so.
35. When things go wrong, I do not blame others or circumstances
36. I discuss my mistakes with co-workers to encourage tolerance for risk.
37. I spend a significant amount of my time providing resources and removing obstacles for my co-workers.
38. Because I care about my co-workers, I actively support their efforts to accomplish important personal goals.
39. Even when I have made a serious mistake in my life, I can forgive myself and move ahead
40. Even when people make mistakes, I continue to trust them.

7 Glossary

Existentialism – Philosophy carried by scholars such as Nietzsche, Heidegger and Sartre and focuses on the individual ‘existing’ first and then finding itself through its free will and decision.

Homo economicus – Idea of portraying the human being as rational thinker and guided by self-interest

Moral transgression – disregarding moral values, i.e. acting immorally

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