



An analysis of the possible effects of discourse on authentic leadership

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I. Abstract

In this paper the notion of authentic leadership is explored through lenses, such as sensemaking and discourse. For this a theoretical framework was built from a selection of papers deemed as important in generating the notion of authentic leadership as it is known from its first mentioning to how it is known to us today, and its effects on followers. Also we look at the concept in relation to short insights in sensemaking, and the effects of discourse in relation to the concept, its proliferation and the resulting effects on leaders and leader development, as well as education. This framework is then used to look at some real world scenarios. In addition we have done interviews with people non-related to leadership discourse, being: a pastor, politician, medical specialist, family conference coordinator and tax consultant, to get their perception on authenticity, authentic leadership its importance and restrictions.

To reflect the feeling of the text: Have we by trying to explain authenticity strayed so far from its actual form, that we now understand and believe a phenomenon and concept that do not exist, in this form, in real life?

Keywords: Authenticity, Authentic Leadership, Discourse, Possible effects, Training authenticity, Faked authenticity, Sensemaking

II. Acknowledgements

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1. Introduction

When confronted with a concept such as ‘authentic leadership’ it is important to keep in mind parts from the texts of Kant (Monod 2004, p. 110) to understand that this concept theoretically exists of two parts, the way we perceive it (phenomena), and the actual concept as a thing in itself (noumena). ‘Phenomena are “being of senses”, appearances, laying in the intuition of the observer’ (Monod 2004, p. 110), whereas the actual concept is something that lies somewhere in the middle of all discourse about the concept and is unrecognizable by the observer. In the words of the renowned Nobel prize winner Niels Bohr: *“It is impossible to make a clear distinction between the behaviour of the objects and the interaction with measurement instruments that are used to define the conditions under which the phenomenon appears”* (Monod 2004, p. 110). In the introducing chapter we will try to make clear what the conditions are that shaped the creation and perception of the phenomenon ‘authentic leadership’, which will later help us in defining the effects of the discourse on authentic leadership. The discourse can be seen as the means to measure the phenomenon, while also proliferating and creating the notion that surrounds it. Although we will go deeper into the topic of discourse, it might work well for the reader to keep the following quote of Seal in mind, ‘The relationship between action and discourse is recursive: action leads to the production of discourse and discourses affect managerial action by making ‘certain ways of thinking and acting possible, and others impossible or costly’ (Seal 2010, p. 98). In other words, discourse leads to discourse, and while we are talking, discussing and writing about the phenomenon and the concept of authentic leadership, aiming to identify the possible effects of discourse, we create discourse ourselves. With this in mind, we want to introduce the topic of authenticity as something most readers non-related to leadership discourse have been confronted with within media.

1.1 Media coverage

Everyone, who has some medium transmitting the news around the world, being a newspaper, magazine, pc or anything alike, has seen the headings that seem to rule the modern, business, and political world. Your beloved burgers seem to contain horsemeat (Meikle & Lawrence 2013, p. 1 of 3), the oldest bank on earth seems to go bankrupt (Davies 2013, p. 1 of 2), and when you think some painkillers might help to kill the rising migraine, you suddenly see the supplying company in the news for off-label promotion (Anon 2012, p. 1-3 of 3).

One by one the previously trustworthy companies and leaders suddenly appear to have a hidden agenda only their direct peers might know about. Regarding these numerous scandals, it is not that surprising that this also rubs off on public trust towards leaders in general. A recent article published in “The Economist” based on the annual ‘trust barometer’ provided by the public relations firm Edelman¹ shows us how much exactly (Hill 2013, para. 1). When looking at the trust the public has in business leaders to ‘tell the truth, regardless of how complex or unpopular it is’ this research shows that business leaders score as low as 18%, topped only by the political leaders who can count on a mere 13% of trustees within the population. While varying between businesses, another research in the US of the same company shows an interesting fact that might support the feeling of distrust even more; only 30% of the employees know where the company is heading, leading to them constantly being in search for a back-up plan in the form of a different job, and other places to live (Patton 2013, para. 2).

Another growing influence that leads to leaders standing more and more in a (often self-supported) spotlight is the new media. Using Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and other forms of social media, such as daily updated blogs, leaders give their followers the possibility to see almost directly in to the day-to-day life and thoughts, leading to a high level of transparency and more observations for followers to determine the authenticity of their leader. As will be discussed later

¹ <http://www.edelman.com/>

in this paper, peers also have the ability to influence the perceived authenticity of a leader. When direct observations do not give sufficient opportunity for this, social media and blogs give people that might not even know each other in real life, the possibility to discuss public leaders, their actions and perceived authenticity on a large scale.

Although sadly no longitudinal study could be found to show the change in public trust over a longer period of time, within the research papers we read it is clearly visible that studies tend to shift their focus more on the positive leadership researches, that could lead to more positive experiences for the follower, which in result lead to a better form of leadership. Commercial firms like Edelman seem to be addressing the point that academic studies, within our current literature review, fail to address this directly: “*We are clearly experiencing a crisis in leadership*” (Bush 2013, para. 2). This leads however to the question what is actually authentic leadership to them, how is the concept affected by different forms of discourse, and in return, is discourse affected by the different formed concepts? How does discourse work in general when it comes to its recursive nature between theory and practice?

1.2 Scientific exposure

As an answer to the decrease in ethical leadership that led to the rising distrust in organizations and leaders around the globe, some researchers within leadership research have decided that more traditional ways of leading, such as charismatic leadership, transformational leadership and other known concepts, simply do not fully meet the requirements any more. This led to the search for a new approach, the ‘complex and multifaceted phenomenon’ (Cooper, Scandura & Schriesheim 2005, p. 476) called leadership. This new type of leadership would be based on three fields of research: ethics, positive organizational scholarship and leadership (Cooper, Scandura & Schriesheim 2005, p. 477). This so called positive organizational scholarship (or in short POS), lies at the heart of the, at that time, new forms of leadership research and is focusing at

the positive phenomena² within organizations and individuals, rather than the more problem focused research normally found within leadership. By trying to understand how positive human processes and dynamics are created, and what enables these creations, they tried to hand researchers the ‘method’ to see the positive effects and what causes them within organizations (Caza, Cameron & Cameron 2008). As such, they tried to distil the roots out of previously known forms of leadership, such as charismatic, transformational and ethical leadership. This combination of research fields led to the development of a new form of leadership focused at the creation of meaning.

According to the scholars of this field, it can be done by being authentic, or in their words quoting Shakespeare’s, Hamlet “To thine own self be true” (Albert & Vadla 2009; Gardner et al. 2005; Algera & Lips-wiersma 2012; Endrissat, Müller & Kaudela-Baum 2007). With this quote they point out an important factor, in contrast to ethical, moral and positive leadership. Within authentic leadership, the leader is purely true to him or herself, not regarding the ethical or moral stance towards society³.

1.3 Authentic leadership

As our own interviews (Jansen 2013, Bergers-Rouhof 2013), several studies (Bush 2013; Endrissat, Müller & Kaudela-Baum 2007) and the previously mentioned studies in the field of Positive Organizational Scholarship pointed out: authenticity is perceived important within leadership. As Endrissat, Müller & Kaudela-Baum (2007, p.208) show, by choosing authenticity above moral values, ethical stance and living up to expectations, the authentic leader chooses a path that leads in a different direction than previously established concepts (Endrissat, Müller & Kaudela-Baum 2007, p. 208). Referring back to the quote of Shakespeare, it seems that authenticity is pointed at handling only according to the values one holds to him or herself, not the ones that are posed

² Virtuosity, trust, charismatic leadership, authentic leadership etc.

³ This is however dependent on which definition is chosen within the research field of authentic leadership.

by the outside world. This distinguishing factor is very important when it comes to the perceived integrity of leaders within their leadership role, but is broadened within adjourning and following studies. More about the current perceptions about authenticity and authentic leadership will be explained in the next chapter: the theoretical framework.

1.4 Research question

When reading into the topic of authentic leadership during our master track the question rose if the leadership concept of authentic leadership and its discourse, would lead to the development of more authentic leaders (Cooper, Scandura & Schriesheim 2005, p. 477). We chose to look in to, if the proliferation of the concept of authentic leadership is doing what it is meant to do, leading to the set of research questions posed later in this chapter. First however, we want to point out the importance of a thorough inquisition into the current state of research on the topic of authentic leadership to form a theoretical framework to base our research on.

Cooper, Scandura & Schriesheim (2005, p. 476) stress the danger that doing further research into a topic, would often be leading to a broadening notion, instead of a more deepening understanding of the topic itself and its effects. In order to truly contribute to the more deepening notion of authentic leadership, four aspects would have to be researched before the scholars could start working towards the more broadening aspects, such as developing authentic leadership training and development programs. Since we ourselves contribute to this broadening notion, we need to make sure these aspects have been properly researched before starting with broadening the notion our self. The aspects were: '(1) defining and measuring the construct, (2) determining the discriminant validity of the construct, (3) identifying relevant construct outcomes (i.e., testing the construct's nomological network), and (4) ascertaining whether authentic leadership can be taught' (Cooper et al., 2005, p. 477). Through careful assessment of the current state of research as discussed in Gardner et al. (2011) we can state that these four points have by

now been studied, offering enough proof that the construct of authentic leadership has deserved its right of existence as a concept of its own, and is ready for more broadening research.

An aspect that has not yet been researched, is the effect discourse of authentic leadership has on authenticity on leadership. It might be that through discourse, proliferation and the coupled development programs, we are steering towards a lesser, rather than more, authentic form of leadership. A type of leadership that is built on a deceiving building of perception of authenticity, rather than actually acting from inner values and beliefs. To find answers to this question we have developed one main question that is divided by three sub questions.

What are the effects of the proliferation of the discourse on authenticity in leadership?

Sub questions:

- 1. What are the “Möglichkeitenbedingungen” (conditions of possibility) that make the phenomenon of authentic leadership so salient to us?*
- 2. What is authentic leadership according to discourse, and what are its direct and indirect effects?*
- 3. What are hidden aspects and/or effects of the increasing discourse about authentic leadership?*

2. Methodology

In this chapter we describe the what, how and why aspects of methodology are used within our research about the possible effects of discourse on authenticity in leadership. We illustrate the application of the view we apply during the work on our thesis, which mainly is the systems view, but includes some elements of the analytical view. Also approaches like the grounded theory, qualitative research, and the approach used for the generation of empirical information, done through a combination of in-depth interviews and conversations and the study of three real life scenarios, will be explained and motivated.

2.1 Methodological view

In their book “Methodology for Creating Business Knowledge” Arbnor and Bjerke (2008, p. 245-309) describe three different methodological views to create knowledge: the analytical view, the systems view and the actors view. In order to approach our research issue, the possible effects of discourse on authenticity in leadership, we decided to apply a combination of the systems view but include some elements of the analytical view. The systems view mainly focuses on explaining the created knowledge, but also partly on how to understand it. Explaining the created knowledge means for the researcher to come up with a model, a simplified version of the reality, what follows is an interpretation in order to understand the created knowledge fully. However, our main focus lies on explaining the created knowledge. We are aware of the fact that we cannot avoid using our own interpretation of the created knowledge, but we aim to keep, as far as possible, an objective approach while studying this topic. We are interested in the individual responses of the interviewees and we want to use this gathered information in its pure form. However, we might add metaphors (e.g. ‘the snake’ in the analysis of discourse) or narratives, which assist in simplifying the understanding of the created knowledge and to depict reality.

In the systems, as well as in the analytical view, reality consists of objective and subjective facts. In the systems view however, the facts are explained and

understood as systems, they are in some kind of interaction with each other. We can relate this to the theory of Kant, as we research the phenomenon of authentic leadership. He speaks about the phenomena (the perception of the object at large) and the noumena (the actual object) (Monod 2004, p. 110). This can be seen as two systems that are not independent, but in kind of an interaction with each other. The systems view tries to get a broader picture, a holistic image that comprises both the objective and subjective understanding of the research object, thus taking more factors into consideration. Since the concept of authenticity and authentic leadership is given meaning to through discourse, we argue that it is very important to approach this concept in its totality of both subjective and objective parts. Normally the aim is to find a pattern, e.g. over a longer period of time, but this was not possible for us due to the limited time frame of our master thesis dissertation. When looking at the systems view it is also important to keep in mind that it consists of open and closed systems. With an 'open system' it is meant that some factors influencing the system change, whereas others stay the same. In our research, we see the possible different effects of discourse on authenticity, such as the effects on followers or the effects on discourse itself, as open systems. Open systems are dynamic and dependent on multiple factors inside and outside of the system that are possibly related to each other, therefore only a limited and not fully objective picture of the factors and changes within the systems is created. The created understanding is also, to a certain extent, dependent on the person who constructs it. He or she remains in interaction with his or her environment and since it is also affecting the perception, the possibility of forecasting the future, based on such a perception, is limited. With this, we acknowledge that our perception of the topic authenticity and authentic leadership is coloured, just as the perception of the authors from the different papers. By combining these different perceptions however, we should be able to get closer to the concept of authentic leadership.

A research based on the systems view often contains primary research, such as interviews, observations and conversations, as well as secondary research, e.g. previous studies and related cases. This is also the case within our research, where we chose to use a combination of primary and secondary research to get a better understanding of the topic and the notion that surrounds it. As researchers applying the systems view, we look for more useful and pragmatic concepts that can be measured in practice. While doing this, the concept of reliability is not often used and validity is tested when the results of the research are applied.

Beginning with the current state of research, we studied available literature covering the broad field of authentic leadership, sensemaking as well as discourse and the concept of authenticity within the field of leadership. This literature study helped us to gain knowledge and an understanding of the phenomenon authentic leadership. When applying the systems view, a certain level of in-depth knowledge is indispensable to be able to understand the changing systems. Next to the literature review, also case studies are commonly used in the systems view to create secondary information. They function as general orientation, to explain a wider context and to understand it through interpretation of practical examples. Case studies however are rather complex and reach further than we intent in our research. Therefore we studied real life scenarios instead, which are rather simple but similar to case studies⁴. Overall, the secondary research builds the foundation on which we can answer the research question of what could be hidden or neglected aspects, and of a possible basis for further research.

Our primary research consists of a combination of two face-to-face methods: interviews and conversation. The main purpose is to collect information of an objective as well as subjective kind and to get a mirror reflection of both, the objective and subjective reality. We aim to collect not only objective information

⁴ We will elaborate on the use of real life scenarios in 'generation of empirical knowledge' which can be read later in this chapter.

from the respondents, but we are especially interested in their personal perceptions, opinions and feelings. By asking open questions we, as researchers, try not to influence the interview in any distorted direction; instead we stimulate the participants to talk freely and about things that they find important and contributing to the conversation.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, we applied the systems view including some elements of the analytical view. These analytical aspects can be found in the interviews we conduct. We structured the interviews in our thesis by themes so that the answers of the five specialists can be compared. We however did not apply a quantitative analysis for our thesis and our respondents were not seen as representative for a whole population instead, we used this structure to get a broader perspective on, and understanding of, what people from complete different fields within society think about authenticity. Another analytical aspect is that the five interviews are seen as independent and have no interaction with each other. Overall, our research aims to come up with a more detailed and exact picture of the reality, consisting of objective and subjective facts. A more detailed description of the interviews we will conduct, who we interview and why we have chosen these interviewees, is given in the part about generating empirical knowledge.

2.2 Grounded Theory

The ‘Grounded Theory’ was defined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and it describes a ‘process that allows theory to emerge out of research material rather than being forced out of it by the use of a predetermined idea or theory. Grounded Theory implies that theory is implicit in the material and can be drawn out by any iterative process of coding and comparison’ (Fisher 2010, p. 137). Grounded theory is a qualitative research approach and we decided to apply this theory where the material, such as articles, is collected without any prejudices. At the beginning of our research the outcome of the discovery was unclear to us and the concept emerged while studying the material where we, as researchers, tried to be as inductive as possible. When applying the

grounded theory, we worked out all our material collected in the literature review, as well as from the empirical research and looked for themes or topics that emerged from this material. This grounded approach might take more time than the 'structured approach' (Fisher 2010, p. 139) but gave us, as the researchers, more freedom to choose within the search for concepts, instead of already being led in one direction. We could therefore be more sensible for new insights and theories while also being more open and flexible to changes in the search if required. The picture we tried to create emerged from the material we studied and information we collected through the interviews and real life scenarios.

The theoretical framework and our gathered knowledge served as an active support in our research of the possible effects of discourse on authenticity in leadership, but should not constitute a bias in the investigation. Moreover, our background should enhance our sensitivity for empirical information. We collected secondary information through the literature, mainly journal articles, to get a general view on the current state of research on the discourse on authenticity in leadership and how authenticity is discussed in the literature.

When at some point the idea of certain research questions and issues came to mind, we wanted to develop an approach on how to obtain primary information to support our research and that moreover offers an addition to the current state of research on the concept of authentic leadership. In this step, we focused on collecting primary information in the form of qualitatively structured interviews. Due to our interest in the perception of authentic leadership, and the effects of discourse on this perception, we chose interviewees, who are not directly associated with leadership discourse and who might bring in an interesting perspective on authenticity in leadership. The interview questions were open and the answers were not restricted in length or dimension with which we aimed to get insight into their respective perspectives on authenticity, and how people from different fields perceive authenticity and its importance within their profession. This primary information served to enhance the broader

picture we wanted to get about the discourse of authenticity and helps to discover possible hidden aspects or issues about the phenomenon that were previously neglected or unknown. Moreover, the primary information offered support or conflict to certain findings within the studied literature review. More empirical research information is collected through studying real life scenarios of leaders, who are perceived as either more or less authentic. While studying these real life scenarios, we did not aim to analyse and judge if the presented leader behaved authentic or not, but these scenarios helped us to draw a line between theory, which we represent in the theoretical framework, and practice. How authenticity is applied in 'the real world' and how is it perceived by others.

2.3 Qualitative approach

The two main approaches to conduct research are the quantitative and the qualitative approach. The quantitative approach focuses on collecting information and transforming it into measurable data and numbers in order to construct statistical models and hypotheses. The researcher applying the quantitative approach has a clear aim what he/she wants to prove or falsify with the research. This approach is limited to approved techniques and strictly regulated by procedures, but offers the possibility to replicate the study. And if found valid and reliable, can be generalized to a larger population.

Considering our research, we chose to apply the qualitative approach. As already mentioned in the grounded theory where a concept emerges from the material itself, we see our research as a discovery and we did not know in advance where this journey would bring us to and what the outcome would be. By using this approach, we aimed for a broader understanding of the research topic and try to discover particular information and a specific reality. The qualitative research involves more active participation of the researcher in interviews and conversations, which are frequently used to gain a deeper understanding of the perceptions and relations of people and situations. The outcome of the qualitative research is often more subjective than the outcome of a quantitative research approach, and can be less often generalized to a

larger population. The reason why we chose the qualitative approach can be summarized as follows. To fully understand the interrelated factors and systems within the discourse of authentic leadership, we need an approach that helps us to understand the concept itself, more than that it helps to generalize its effects and use to a larger population. With a combination of in-depth interviews and conversations, we tried to get a more holistic view on the phenomenon of authentic leadership and the possible effects of the increasing discourse. As the grounded theory illustrates, the outcome of the empirical study is open and with fewer limitations. This means possible preconceptions we gathered through the literature review do not lead the interview in a distorted direction and allow the interviewees to come up with issues that are not planned by the researcher.

2.4 Open and exploratory research methods

There is a great range of research methods that can be carried out in the primary phase of the research. A useful distinction can be made between ‘open, or unstructured, forms of research and pre-coded or structured ones’ (Fisher 2010, p. 174). We see us as ‘explorers’ (Fisher 2010, p. 169) in this research, which basically means that we did not know in advance what we will discover or where it will lead us. We tried to be open, sensitive and with least preconceptions possible, in order to make the unknown known. Moreover, we are interested in the particular perceptions of the interviewees and do not try to categorize the findings. We took an ‘open approach’ (Fisher 2010, p. 170) while adopting open and semi-structured research tools, e.g. asking open and not closed questions. Factors that speak for applying the open approach, instead of the structured one, were that we looked for new ideas and concepts, trying to discover hidden aspects in the research about the discourse of authentic leadership and that the answers of the respondents or sources were unknown.

2.5 Generating empirical knowledge

In order to generate empirical knowledge in our research, we applied two different approaches: empirical real life scenarios (in place of case studies) and

a combination of the two face-to-face methods: interview and conversation. Due to the fact that case studies are rather complex and go deeper in the topic than we intent to do, we decided to study real life scenarios instead of complex case studies.

2.5.1 Interviews

As a primary research method to collect empirical and qualitative information, we decided to conduct interviews with five interviewees from different professions: a medical specialist, a family group conference coordinator, a politician, a pastor and a tax consultant. The reason behind the choice for interviewees from completely different fields, which are not, or less, related to business and management, was that we wanted to explore their perception of authenticity and how this phenomenon plays a role in their (work) life. It gave us the chance to get insight in different perspectives on the subject, which might help us answer our research questions.

We conducted ‘semi-structured interviews’ (Fisher 2010, p. 175) for our research. This implies that the interview has a guideline for orientation, but the interviewees still have full freedom to answer to the questions in a manner that makes sense to them. The interview questions are open, and there are no answer options given the interviewee can choose from. In semi-structured interviews, the interviewees are often asked for a real-life story, an occasion in their work life where the one had to deal with a certain aspect, in our case authenticity. As such, multiple examples were given in the different interviews, of situations and work life experiences that made sense to them while thinking about the topic of authenticity and authentic leadership.

About the selection for the interviewees, we made use of our personal network. This offers several advantages. It is less time consuming during the several stages of field work namely, to get in contact with the selected interviewees, convincing them why they in particular are interesting for the research project and eventually arranging the appointment for an interview. We chose to interview them in a familiar setting, namely their home. Sharing the same

language and the personal connection between the interviewees and the interviewer help the interviewee to feel at ease, leading to a more informal conversation structure, where answers are often broader and longer. The interview is structured as a conversation with open questions, which provides the interviewee with autonomy in their answers. Instead of directly typing down the answers, we chose to record the interviews and write them down later in order to keep the communication with the respondents open and less formal. This also led to the ability to 're-live' the interview, making it possible to take the time at a later moment to revisit certain answers and use them to their, close to, full potential in our thesis. We have chosen to conduct the interview in the native language of the respondents, and asked their permission to translate the findings and answers into English, so it could later be used within our research. The interviewee's are aware of their names being mentioned in the paper, and are given a copy of the thesis once it has been accepted by the university.

2.5.2 Real life scenarios

The real life scenarios that are presented serve to create empirical and qualitative knowledge for our research. Applying the qualitative research approach, we are looking for typical answers rather than finding averages. We use three real life scenarios as a basis for our empirical knowledge and in order to be able to study the relationship between theory and practise. For the selection of the real life scenarios, we looked for leaders and scenarios in general, which could be related to more or less authentic behaviour. The material we built our real life scenarios on, are mainly online newspapers and magazine articles. This is because the cases of Uli Hoeneß (2013) and Tony Hayward (2010) are rather recent providing hardly any other sources. The case of Martha Stewart was encountered in one of our research papers (Ladkin & Taylor 2010), we found it personally interesting and therefore adopted her as one of our real life scenarios, this time using online newspapers and magazine

articles because of their more to-the-point nature, which helped with the limited time available to us.

Through studying these three scenarios, we tried to discover possible hidden or neglected aspects in the perception of their authenticity, which might help to contribute another piece of (personal) truth to our research issue about the possible effects of discourse on authenticity in leadership.

2.6 Coding

In order to analyse the primary information we collected through the interviews and to see what is useful for our research, we needed to apply the formal process of ‘coding’ (Fisher 2010, p. 199). This process identifies themes and divides the research material into parts or units and the researcher can separate the useful material from the information with no value for the research. We decided not to use transcripts for the interviews, because it would be too time consuming to prepare a transcript sample beforehand and filling it in after conducting the interviews. Instead we used audio files and a set of notes for each interview and scanned the notes afterwards for major themes or issues that seemed appealing for our research. With this coding method we summarized and organised our primary research information collected from the interviews.

3. Theoretical framework

Although multiple definitions of authentic leadership exist, we chose to not use them to explain the concept of authentic leadership. To explain this choice we want to refer to some great men, Immanuel Kant and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, although not being on one line when it came to what actions were good, and what was evil, both gentlemen saw truth on an individual level. To give the reader the possibility to form his or her own ‘truth’ about authentic leadership, we will give our perception on authentic leadership based on papers written about the topic we deemed important to form an understanding of the phenomenon⁵.

3.1 History of authenticity and authentic leadership

When looking in to the history of authentic leadership and authenticity, we can go quite far back while finding traces of both concepts. For example ‘Know thyself’ was an inscription on a temple of Apollo in Delphi during the age of the ancient Greeks, and relates directly to the self-awareness currently related to the concept of authentic leadership. Also when looking at the Greek word ‘authento’, which by definition means ‘to have full power’, and was related to ‘the master of his or her own domain’ it becomes clear that authenticity itself and some of the related concepts like self-awareness and self-concept, were already known far before the first notion of the concept authentic leadership appeared in 1983 (Hoy 1983, as cited in Gardner et al. 2011). That the notion of authenticity was known and praised within Greek philosophy can also be seen by the fact that both Socrates and Aristotle express the importance of self-inquiry and self-realization (Gardner et al. 2011, p. 1121), both concepts are closely related to authentic relationship within modern day definitions such as the most recent one that is based Walumbwa et al. in 2005 where they define authentic leadership as follows: *“a pattern of leader behaviour that draws upon*

⁵ We are aware that by giving a selection, we tinker on the perception of authentic leadership to the reader, but when not giving a summarizing view, the reader would have to read for weeks to come to a similar level of understanding.

and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development” (Rego et al. 2013, p. 62). We chose not to go any deeper into the explanation of authenticity, since we think it would lie outside of the scope of this paper. We would like to refer the reader of this paper, who is willing to go deeper into the history of authenticity, to the paper of Gardner et al. (2011).

As has been expressed elsewhere in this paper when referring to a paper by Cooper, Scandura & Schriesheim (2005, p. 476) there is a risk during the prior advances of scholars when researching a relatively new construct. In this text he expresses the risk of heightening the ambiguity of a construct by using multiple differing definitions and measuring methods for the same concept. As can be seen by the large amount of different definitions and descriptions given to authentic leadership, this previously expressed caution has not been taken into account by many of the researchers in this field. As students within the master track of leadership and management in international contexts, we were also confronted by our professor⁶ that we ourselves should not try to define, and thereby limit authentic leadership, or any other type of concept. Since we do not want to limit, nor contribute to the ambiguity of authentic leadership, we will accept all different definitions and descriptions displayed in the literature and will not try to choose the most fitting one, or define one ourselves. Instead, we will group all definitions known to us to offer the possibility to the reader to create his or her own perception of authentic leadership and its effects.

The first time authentic leadership was defined was by Henderson and Hoy. They found that it was based on three components: First, the acceptance of personal and organizational responsibility, outcomes and mistakes. Second, the non-manipulation of subordinates and third, the salience of the self over role requirements (Gardner et al. 2011, p. 1123). The interesting fact is that

⁶ Pr. Dr. Philippe Daudi

although the salience of the self is mentioned, self-awareness seems of lesser importance within this definition, while more important in later definitions and the previously established notion of authenticity in Greek philosophy. Fourteen years later, the topic of authentic leadership was revisited and authentic leadership was determined to consist of four components: Intentionality, authenticity, spirituality and sensibility (Bhindi and Duignan 1997 as cited in Gardner 2011,p. 1123). In addition to these components, Begley (2001 as cited in Gardner et al. 2011,p. 1123) argued that ‘authentic leadership implies a genuine kind of leadership, a hopeful, open-ended, visionary and creative response to circumstances’. With this expression he has most probably contributed to at least some of the definitions known today, since the concept of genuine leadership appears again later on (Hofman 2005, p. 19; Avolio & Gardner 2005, p. 344). When adding the concept of self-knowledge in 2004 (Begley 2004 as cited in Gardner et al. 2011 p. 1123), the concept came even closer to its final definition, agreed on by most authors.

Before this happening however, Medtronic CEO Bill George came up with a new composition of authentic leadership, holding five components that led to authentic leadership, to become a more popular field for scholars to study. The components are more of a description on how an authentic leader should behave, according to George an authentic leader should: ‘Pursue purpose with passion, practice solid values, lead with his heart, establish enduring relationships and demonstrate self-discipline’ (2003; George & Sims 2007 as cited in Gardner et al. 2011, p.1123). Followed by this, many other slightly differing definitions appeared within the field (Gardner et al. 2005; Avolio et al. 2004; Luthans & Avolio 2003) until the previously mentioned ambiguity reached the point where scholars of the Gallup Leadership Institute within the field of authentic leadership came together and agreed upon the following definition now used within the field of authentic leadership research: “*We define authentic leadership as a pattern of leader behaviour that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical*

climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development” (Walumbwa et al. 2008, p. 94). Although at least one definition was added in the meantime, in the last paper on the concept of authentic leadership, the agreed on definition was used (Rego et al. 2013, p. 62).

3.2 From the perspective of sensemaking

During this master’s program we were confronted with the concept of ‘frames of reference’ as used by Weick (1995, 2001), which refers back to the way people try to understand their environment and the constant flow of information or ‘raw data’ (Weick, 2001) that surrounds them, to be able to ‘comprehend, understand, explain, attribute, extrapolate and predict’ (Starbuck & Milliken, 1988 as cited in Weick, 1995, p. 4) in their current situation. As such, we divide the raw data into cues that enable us to create an explanation of what is happening around us, and hold sense to the individual. This process is called bracketing. The bracketed information and given cues are then made sense of through our established ‘frames of reference’. To understand what a frame of reference is, one can think of everything that could be used to create sense out of a certain phenomenon. This does not mean that the frame resembles a true explanation for what is in fact happening. An example is displayed in the ‘hypocrisy attribution’ which will later be explained in the sensemaking by followers. A leader might hold certain internal values, which are displayed through actions and maybe even a narration of himself, by either him, or someone else. If this internal value would be for example the equality of women and men within the organization, this could lead to different perceptions by different people. The more emancipated employees might use their frames of reference that tell them that someone, who is in favour of gender equality is a ‘good’ person, whereas the employee that holds a more neutral feeling towards gender equality will focus more on different values that were expressed, more appealing to his frames of reference. In both cases the incoming stream of raw

data will be the same and bracketing will lead to the idea that the leader is in favour of equality of both men and women. The described meaning to this however, based on previously established frames of reference, will lead to different ways of evaluation when it comes to this leader. If the leader would then act inconsistent with the value of gender equality, the more emancipated employees will hold this as hypocrisy, therefore tainting the image of the leader. Whereas the follower that might not see this value as that important based on his frames of reference does not feel disenchant⁷, his perception of the leader remains intact.

Since values affect both the leader-follower as well as follower-leader relation, we chose to explain the possible changing of values before differentiating between the follower and leader on a sensemaking basis. Holding internal values and the perception of leaders being true to these internal values is the basis of authentic leadership. It is however quite normal that over time, a value expansion, or mission drift occurs based on creating a different meaning over time. This may cause the leader or follower to focus more or less on certain values, possibly leading to a perceived feeling of hypocrisy between leader and follower; they now have a more different understanding of previously held values or motivations. The process in which this may occur will also be explained in the sensemaking for the leader.

3.2.1 Sensemaking by followers

‘Perceptions of leadership are primarily the result of sense-making by followers in an organization’ (Meindl, 1993; Weick, 1993 as cited in Fields 2007, p. 196). With this quote we start off with the process of determining how followers perceive, and come to perceive, their leader as either authentic or not. As Gardner & Avolio (2005, p. 357) show us, followers base their interpretation of a leader mainly on direct observations. If there are however not enough direct observations available, a follower might resort to direct peers to create sense

⁷ Will be explained later in the text.

out of the actions of the leader, possibly resorting in a lower perceived authenticity (Fields 2007, p. 197).

While fields in this assessment about the determinants of follower perceptions of a leader's authenticity and integrity are focused mostly towards followers in general, instead of the sensemaking of individual followers, it does offer findings that are based on the sensemaking of the individual follower. For example the confusion created when a leader acts inconsistent or even in conflict with previously thought shared values, and the increased communication about the leader due to this, do also affect the sensemaking of the individual as a member of a larger group. This confusion is also called 'disenchantment' within the paper of Cha & Edmondson (2006, p. 60) and is based on the 'hypocrisy attribution dynamic' where the individual is perceived as pretending to have feelings or beliefs that are of a higher order than the actual ones existent within the individual. While the paper of Cha & Edmondson is being primarily focused on the effects of expressing strong values within charismatic leadership, its relatedness to the theory of authentic leadership was acknowledged to better determine the effects of perceived hypocrisy when a charismatic leader acts inconsistent with perceived values. As such, it has been very useful for us to understand the sensemaking process and the resulting feelings, that take place when a leader is deemed to be or act inauthentic.

For it to be possible to determine if the actions of a leader make sense in relation to previously built frames of reference, these frames have to be existent. Eagley however shows that even though leaders might act according to internal values, and are thus authentic by previously mentioned definitions. They may have failed to express these values on previous occasions making it hard for followers to create a frame of reference to which later actions can be related in a way that would contribute to a more positive perception of the leader (2005, as cited in Cha & Edmondson 2006, p. 59). A more problematic issue for leaders than not being able to make clear what values are internalized, is acting inconsistently to the values the followers think are internalized by the

leader. This might lead to the previously mentioned state of disenchantment, in which the follower feels a violation, a combination of both disappointment and anger. This is often accompanied by a loss of trust in the leader that has just undermined the earlier generated enthusiasm when diffusing the strong internal values from the leader to the follower. This disenchantment may result in many different feelings: ‘anger, resentment, bitterness, indignation and even outrage from the feeling that one has been betrayed or mistreated’ (Morrison & Robinso 1997, as cited in Cha & Edmondson 2006, p. 60). This blame centred way of dealing with something that is used to make sense out of something that is hard to make sense of. By blaming a certain individual for the feelings experienced, one ‘remains in control’ over the situation and stays free from being responsible for the cause or results that led to this feeling. Often this sense of control will lead to the follower not feeling the need for clarification, fuelled also by the often accompanied fear for the hierarchical control the leader has over the follower (Cha & Edmondson 2006, p. 72). This makes it hard for a leader to recover to his or her state of being authentic, because the perception is most probably permanently stained by the perceived hypocrisy.

3.2.2 Sensemaking for the leader

As could be read in the introduction, the quote ‘to thine own self be true’ from Shakespeare is sometimes used within some studies on authentic leadership, to describe this aspect of the concept. The road to finding the own self however may be just as important, as this self-awareness is not based on a fixed self-concept, but may change over time. This process of how self-awareness is formed, and thus sense is made of the self and ones actions, is something we will try to explain within this part of the paper.

To be authentic, a leader has to be, according to many studies within our paper, self-aware (Albert & Vadla, 2009; Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Sparrowe, 2005). ‘Character thus is a response to the question, asked by the subject about himself or herself: what am I? But self-constancy is a response to the question asked by others, where are you? Authenticity cannot be meaningful if

the self is empty of character, but it cannot be real if it ignores the dynamics of lived experience' (Sparrowe 2005, p. 430). As such, it shows that the concept of character must be 'filled' with past experiences that contribute to the development of the values and motivations found for an individual to find purpose and goals in his or her life that created the character.

Bill George, CEO and important scholar within the field of authentic leadership describes the step one must take to be able to act from internal values: 'To find your purpose, you must first understand yourself, your passions, and your underlying motivations' (Sparrowe 2005, p. 420). To do this, we will fall back on the narrative approach, regularly used by other authors within the field of authentic leadership (Albert & Vadla 2009; Avolio & Gardner 2005; Sparrowe 2005; Shamir & Eilam 2005), and the general development of leaders (Bennis & Thomas 2002). Ricoeur defines the self as a 'narrative project' (Ricoeur 1992 as cited in Sparrowe 2005, p. 430) in which people make sense out of single events, experiences and actions through something that comes close to telling a story about oneself. This is also referred to as *emplotment*, since it offers the leader the possibility to come up with more than one storyline based on other, or even the same events, using experiences and interpreting them in a different way to motivate a different self-concept (Sparrowe 2005, p. 426). Using this interpretation to fuel and understand motivations found in the current moment is very similar to the way novelists use experiences and history to make sense to the reader of a book about its characters. Through the history and passed events described in that novel, the motivations of a persona can be traced back to that motivate current actions. As such the discovery of 'the self' can explain passed, current, and future actions based on values and motivations found through assessment of the self, using this approach.

What Sparrowe (2005, p. 431) notes carefully within his paper about the narrative self is that self-awareness through a narrative approach seems to draw mostly inward on the leader. Finding one's own motivation purely in the development of the self through *emplotment*, and then using this to stay true to

one's own values or, 'speaking in one's own voice rather than echoing the voices of others' (Kouzes & Posner, 2002 as cited in Sparrowe 2005, p. 421). This core of self is important to retain the possibility to self-regulate, and remain transparent to the follower, therefore lowering the risk of the disenchantment previously mentioned in the sensemaking part of the follower. Yet this does not mean that the leaders' values do not change at all under the influence of others. As seen previously sensemaking is based on frames of reference provided previously to the occasion where sense has to be made. As such, the exposure to different cultures, people and contexts may force the leader to adjust, change, expand or refine his or her core values. This idea is supported by other scholars within the field of authentic leadership (Shamir & Eilam 2005; Avolio et al. 2004).

If the need is felt to change, refine, expand or adjust values, the individual can draw on the narrative stories around him or her. This can be another living human being, an autobiography, or even a fictional character. Drawing on the experiences of this character and the according actions, an individual might see it fit to revisit their own plot and change certain episodes in a way that make more sense in the current situation. Through these characters the person can create counterfactual and hypothetical plots that might support the development of different values and or motivations. By using their own experiences to come to explanation why they could come to these changed values and adapted concept of self, the initial requirements for leaders to be or remain authentic is not harmed: 'They hold their values to be true not because these values are socially or politically appropriate, but because they have experienced them to be true' (Shamir & Eilam 2005, p. 397). Through emplotment of their own life stories, using alternative plot lines from different narratives, the individual reinterprets passed, current and future events into a story that makes more sense to them in regard to their self-concept in the changing environment. 'Narrative recounts how the values and purposes of a person change through time and events, yet they remain the values and

purposes of the same individual. Equating authenticity with a particular configuration of values, or a single distinctive purpose, or even a selection of positive psychological states, fails to capture what is distinctive about an individual simply because his or her identity is a narrative' (Sparrowe 2005, p. 430). This quotation not only summarizes the use of a narrative approach to come to changing values, and necessity of a narrative self for an authentic leader, but also shows why the 'faking' of authenticity, discussed elsewhere in this paper can ultimately not be done. It misses the self-consistency that is needed to 'fill' the character of the leader. This expressed itself as a feeling of missing experience in the conversation we had with the politician on the island of Wangerooge, Germany, when speaking about the question if authenticity could be faked (Kuchenbuch 2013).

3.3 Effects on followers

A key element of authentic leadership is followership. An authentic leader influences and models his or her followers in a way whereby they 'impart positive values, emotions, motives, goals and behaviours for followers to emulate' (Gardner et al. 2005, p. 358). The authentic leader aims to create authentic followership which implies the enhancement of the follower's self-awareness, self-regulation and internalized authentic behaviour. The positive interactions between the leader and the followers create an authentic relationship. This relationship is a reciprocal process and facilitates the awareness of the leader and the followers of who they are and how they influence each other. There are difficulties in developing this authentic relationship, because it consists not only on the leader's actions itself, but to a major extent relies on what followers attribute to the leader. This relationship impacts the followers level of trust towards the leader, and also their engagement and workplace well-being.

The results of the study of Ehrhart and Klein show that the characteristics and especially the values of followers make it to some extent possible to predict their preference for a certain leadership style, e.g. charismatic leadership or task-

oriented leadership (Ehrhart & Klein 2001, p. 153). If the followers can identify with the leader's characteristics, such as high self-esteem and risk-taking, they are therefore more motivated and ambitious to put extra effort in their work. In their perception, the leader helps them to meet their needs and to achieve fulfilment. Moreover, the leader creates an environment which allows and stimulates creativity and experiences. Followers get the chance to discover their personal strengths and learn to manage their weaknesses, which results in the creation of an inner compass. The followers' perception and attraction to different leadership styles differs and cannot be generalized. Several factors, such as values, beliefs and personal experience play a role to what extent the follower feels attracted to a leader and the leadership style. There is also a different interpretation of the leader's attributes and behaviour; for one, certain behaviour seems arrogant, for the other this behaviour is motivating and stimulating.

Today's fast-changing world puts a high amount of pressure on people and offers a high level of uncertainty. Therefore people long for direction and guidance and offer trust and commitment in return (Gardner et al. 2005, p.368). The article of Lipman-Blumen states that people live in an 'unfinished and unfinishable world' (Lipman-Blumen 2005, p. 4) with endless challenges confronting people in each stage of life. This demand for certainty and belonging opens up space for authentic as well as toxic leaders to arise.

'Personal history and trigger events' (Gardner et al. 2005, p. 343) have an immense impact of the development of authentic leaders, but also play a major role for authentic followership. They shape people, impact the creation of an individual value and belief system and form self-awareness, which are all important elements of authenticity.

Authentic leaders serve as role models for authentic behaviour. Followers observe authentic leaders in their behaviours and actions regarding self-awareness, transparency in their decisions, and commitment to their core values and ethics. If they believe in what the leader conveys, the followers build

up trust and engagement, which also leads to increased follower performance. It is essential to be aware of one's core values and beliefs in order to be authentic. It is important to notice that followers, who are not aware of their own values and beliefs and simply identify and take over the values of the leader, are not authentic due to a lack of self-awareness and the reliance on external sources (Gardner et al. 2005, p.350).

Zhu et al. introduced the theoretical framework of authentic transformational leadership and its effects on followers and group ethics. Authentic transformational leadership contains elements of both concepts, ethical and authentic leadership, with the defining characteristic of 'morally uplifting' (Burns 1978 cited in Zhu et al. 2011, p. 812, 815) its followers. The concept can be defined as a 'social influence process whereby leaders and followers engage in a mutual process of raising one another to higher levels of morality and motivation' (Burns 1978 cited in Zhu et al. 2011, p. 805). Authentic transformational leaders also have a positive influence on the moral identity and moral emotions of their followers (Zhu et al. 2011, p. 806). A high level of moral identity means 'they are able to know and realize where their moral boundaries are' (Zhu et al. 2011, p. 806). The result is that followers are more committed to take moral decisions and act according to them. In general, the positive impact of authentic leaders direct followers to be more committed to moral ideas and principles. Moreover, followers are more empathetic and their level of feeling guilty of unethical behaviour is higher. While observing others, such as colleagues' moral actions and moral emotions, followers are motivated to act morally as well, and feel pressure not to act unethically (Zhu et al. 2011, p. 813).

A controversial aspect within the research on authentic leader- and followership is the aspect to what extent authentic leaders focus on the development of followers until they become leaders themselves. (Gardner et al. 2005, p. 345) assume in their research that the leader has a positive influence on the development of the followers 'until they become leaders themselves'. Also

Luthans & Avolio (2003) describe an authentic leader as true to himself/herself and by acting according to the own values, he/she influences followers in a positive way and transforms them into leaders themselves. 'The authentic leader is confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, moral/ethical, future-oriented, and gives priority to developing associates to be leaders' (Luthans & Avolio 2003 as cited in Gardner et al. 2011, p. 1122). Authentic leaders create an environment where positive emotions are experienced by the followers. They support self-determination of followers by providing opportunities for autonomy and skill development (Ilies, Morgeson & Nahrgang 2005, p. 383). It is a reciprocal process where the positive emotions of satisfied followers also influence the leader's emotions and the well-being of both parties is enhanced. This made it an interesting field of research within positive organizational research focussed on these positive emotions of followers, mentioned in the introduction. Authentic leadership predicts followership performance partially through leaders' influence on the emotions of followers. If the leader manages to have a positive impact, the followers are more likely to be engaged and put extra effort in their work, which results in an increased performance.

Moreover, the authentic leaders positively influence the psychological capital of their followers. The article of (Rego et al. 2012, p. 430) explains that psychological capital consists of four dimensions: self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience. A high level of psychological capital stimulates a high level of creativity. The outcome of this study is that employees with a higher psychological capital are more creative and that these employees with a higher psychological capital and a higher level of creativity are led by authentic leaders.

3.4 Effect on leaders

Although the concept of authentic leadership is relatively young, it has now been around for twenty years with Hoy starting the discourse about the concept of authentic leadership, (1983, as cited in Gardner et al. 2011) and is most probably already affecting leaders more or less via followers, peers education,

development etc. Where previously leaders acting out of order would have led to conflicts in the sensemaking process, possibly leading to a more negative perception of the leader, now the same leader might actually be aware of his acting in accordance to values and will try to maintain the image of an authentic leader. On the other hand however, the possibility arises that a leader is trying so hard to 'be true to his or her own self', that he or she now seems even less authentic than before. For example because his values change over time, or he puts extra effort in expressing certain values that are deemed less important by followers to the perception they have of him.

Next to the leader being aware of the concept of authentic leadership, it could also be that peers or followers are aware of certain studies as well. For instance, a leader that acts authentically might be seen as trying to enact values that do not lie at the core of his being, but are adopted in order to achieve a certain goal. For this we would like to use the example of Hillary Clinton, also discussed within the paper of Ladkin & Taylor (2010, p. 55). In this occasion, Hillary Clinton manages to attain more votes than expected due to her strong outer image cracking, showing a woman that is overwhelmed by the support her competitor gets. This perception of seeing a 'real' woman that is close to breaking down, but keeps on going, led to an increased amount of votes.

While the event was seen as authentic, based on our current knowledge, one could also argue that this was a very smart way of using an extreme form of display of authenticity to regain some support within the campaign of running for president. As such we might perceive authentic actions as possibly staged, and therefore less trustworthy and effective. The goal described by Cooper, Scandura and Schriesheim (2005, p. 477): *"Proponents of this movement ultimately desire to train and develop leaders who will proactively foster positive environments and conduct business in an ethical, socially responsible manner"* might be leading to different effects than they were aiming for at first. The discourse meant to foster the development of leaders that act in a socially

responsible and ethical manner, might be used to mislead the public in order to achieve better results.

Through education and development programs (later described in this paper), the leader may perceive the necessity to be perceived authentic as high. This may lead that same leader to enact certain values that would make him or her be perceived as acting from internal values, while only adopting these values temporarily, to heighten the perceived authenticity and thereby follower performance. According to Gardner, Fischer & Hunt (2009, p. 471) authenticity can be perceived by followers, although the values displayed are not really those of the leader. As such this theory would offer the possibility to 'fake' authenticity. This is in sharp contrast with the primary research information we conducted through interviews and other studies on this topic that believe that authenticity cannot be faked, if the internal values are not actually present within the leader. Ekman (2003, as cited in Ladkin & Taylor 2010, p. 59) uses the example of the smile to show the fact that it is impossible to fake emotions, and thereby motivations: 'As humans adept at reading nuances in each others' expressions, we can readily distinguish between the real, authentic smile involving both the voluntary and involuntary muscles, and the fake smile activated by the voluntary muscles alone'. If however faking authenticity would be possible, there could be possible advantages and risks related to it. In the conclusion of the interviews we conducted, we will elaborate the possibility to fake authenticity.

3.5 Effects on education and leader development

Since we are both students of a leadership master track, and experienced ourselves that the concept of authentic leadership has leaked into our own education, we were interested to find out to which amount authentic leadership has leaked into other programs, as well as, into other forms of leader development or training.

In our literature review we found that at least one university is offering a course pointed at the development of authentic leaders (Albert & Vadla 2009). For this

they use a narrative approach based on the theory previously mentioned in the book of Bennis & Thomas (2002) the paper of Shamir & Eilam (2005) and the paper of Sparrowe (2005). According to this literature, leaders use crucibles (meaningful moments in life) to restructure their past experiences in order to create sense and direction and relate them to values within their current leadership. According to the idea of the paper of Shamir & Eilam (2005), this reconstructed life story could then be used to motivate followers and provide a way for them to determine if actions by the leader are based upon internal values, and thus authentic. This can be related back to the sensemaking process that followers use to determine if leaders act authentic. Through having a direct, instead of indirect, way to determine for themselves if the leader is authentic, the chances of followers using their own perception instead of one of their peers are heightened. In the course provided, students are asked to describe themselves from a narrative angle, covering their motivation and past experiences to provide crucibles and motivation to determine inner values. These inner values can then be used to be seen as authentic when acting from them.

Another type of development we were confronted with, during an interview with the medical specialist (2013), was based on the use of a training focusing on the analysis of internal motivations within the people present that made them want to perform their job. Through asking the people present to analyse these motivations, and by making a planning on how people thought they would be able to keep this motivation and motivate others around them. Although not confronted with the notion of authenticity, the interviewed medical specialist recognized this as a training pointed at developing internal values needed to motivate yourself, and for us more importantly, others around him⁸. The interesting aspect which he mentioned in that same interview, also mentioned

⁸ We are aware that since we were actively participating in the conversation we might have influenced the perception of the respondent in way that led to the association between authentic leadership development and the provided training.

by Hetty Bergers-Rouhof (2013), is the importance of not linking authenticity to a provided training, rather the training should be aiming for the development of internal values and the use of these values in order to lead to more authentic behaviour within the trainees, without linking it to any known management concept. The importance of not mentioning that the training is based on a management concept to maintain the necessary authenticity is shown in the following quotation: *“Currently people are getting tired of all the training, development and new concepts they are confronted with, while with authenticity it may be pointed at going back to the roots, the internal motivation and values, if you present it like another new concept, they will see it as such and partially ignore it because of this”* (Jansen 2013). We have not yet read any similar statements during our literature review, and as such we find this perception from someone not previously confronted with authentic leadership, very interesting. This leads even more to the question we posed at the beginning of this paper, and steer us towards the next topic within the idea about the current state of research: What are the effects of discourse on a concept such as authentic leadership? Our findings on the effects of discourse will be mentioned in the next part of our paper.

3.6 Effects of discourse

Although we are normally not in favour of longer quotes from other authors, the following is an appropriate display of what the aim of most scholars is within the field of authentic leadership. ‘...those interested in moving forward with creating development initiatives for authentic leaders have turned to the larger community of leadership researchers to solicit ideas for developing authentic leadership and, additionally, increase interest in this initiative by publishing those ideas’ (Cooper, Scandura & Schriesheim 2005, p. 477). This quote however does not indicate the actual effects of discourse on authenticity within leadership. We however try to address this topic by using discourse analysis on other topics to determine possible effects of discourse on the notion of authenticity and authentic leadership. As such, we will try to determine the

effects that have to be taken into account when trying to develop authentic leaders, as mentioned in the quote before.

While studying authenticity, authentic leadership and the effects of discourse on the authenticity of leaders, we are aware that we will not be doing this from a fully objective standpoint. This subjective influence is however tolerated, since it is by now accepted within the postmodern thinking that a multitude of perceptions exist on most social phenomenon's, based on both 'scientific' and 'spiritual' discourse and based on several angles of approach, each of these points of view is plausible enough not to be rejected as being wrong (Daudi 1990, p. 289). This postmodern view is applicable with our own point of view in this research, since we aim to bundle the different perspectives and opinions on authentic leadership rather than choose the most fitting one. If we would presume that it is possible to remain objective while studying the topic of authenticity and authentic leadership, we would be falling in what Dodson Gray calls the 'conceptual trap'; even while trying to remain distanced from the available definitions, we are aware of them, and as such our way of thinking is affected (Daudi 1990, p. 297).

There are basically two levels of discourse, the macro and the micro level. One could associate the macro level with larger powerhouses, such as institutions that form scientific discourse about certain topics, while the micro level refers to what is happening around us in daily conversations and in our direct environment. While everyone is able to form written or spoken discourse about a particular object or topic, not all this discourse is accepted within the scientific environment. In order to be accepted in the scientific world, larger institutions come in to play. They decide which discourse is accepted and will be added to the available literature on a phenomenon, therefore contributing yet another perception of the truth about this phenomenon. As such, this discourse can then be used as a source for new discourse, thereby feeding the existence of the phenomenon and proliferating it.

An example of the power of larger institutions when it comes to controlling discourse and thereby controlling through discourse can be found in a rather different topic. As the reader may, or may not be aware of, in Brazil the rainforest is in the hands of smaller local communities that can decide largely on how to use this rainforest, as it serves them as a source of income. These smaller communities however are often influenced by larger lumber organizations that provide discourse about why their company would be able to help the small community in a way that they could not do themselves, based mainly on a cost, environment and sustainability basis. Due to a lack of knowledge and communication skills, these small communities can often not play an active role in setting up a contract that would benefit the community most. Therefore, they often ask other large organizations for help and support in order to defend the communities' right and provide protection against the increasing deforestation of the rainforest. This is where large nature preserving organizations, such as Greenpeace, come in to play; they have both the means and knowledge to provide counter discourse that informs the community about the dangers of dealing with these lumber organizations and thereby protecting the rainforest. What makes this example interesting for our research is that in the end, the small community is now ruled by mainly two forms of discourse about how the rainforest, which is officially owned by the small communities, should be used, therefore rendering any smaller providers of discourse as invisible, often leaving the community powerless and their inhabitants caught between both discourse providers (Medina, Pokorny & Weigelt 2009). Although this is not that obvious in the discourse about leadership concepts, also there are some large players that influence what appears in the scientific discourse, and what is not accepted. Our perception of the phenomenon of authenticity and authentic leadership is therefore reliant on what is accepted by institutions large enough to control the discourse about it.

As such we should also look at another aspect that appears as soon as an object enters the world of discourse. As Daudi mentions in his paper about

conversing in the public place (1990, p. 294) there is always a reason why an object is brought into discourse, and by using language to explain a phenomenon, that person actively enforces his perception of the phenomenon on others, thereby creating a simulation or hyper real phenomenon, that can be quite far from reality. ‘We are confronted with an exaggeration of reality by rational simplification and simulation which leads to an exaltation of its expressions or, if we prefer it, to a hyperreality’ (Daudi 1990, p. 292). When using this hyper real representation of reality to make sense of a phenomenon ourselves, we may thereby make sense of something that does not exist in reality. Or of something that did previously not exist in reality, but is brought into existence through discourse, justifies the existence of this phenomenon through discourse about it. In other words, while we are reading, discussing and writing our research right now about the phenomenon of authenticity, we contribute another little brick to the wall of discourse on authenticity.

An example of this macro level of discourse is cultural hypnotization that makes people perceive their reality from a sensemaking point of view that is usual for that specific culture, they are programmed to perceive reality in a certain way (Daudi 1990). We encountered such programming during our interviews with interviewees from the Netherlands, both respondents expressed confusion when confronted with the notion of authenticity in relation to leadership. *“Authenticity, I never heard of it, I mean I do, but if I think of it, I think more of traditional or original. When I relate it to leadership I think of a natural form of leadership”* (Jansen 2013). After the official interview was over, he expressed the idea that he had expected the interview to be something that was more focused towards promotion or marketing. A similar expression came from the other Dutch respondent, who referred to the use of authenticity within art and the promotional slogans of certain products within the Netherlands (Bergers-Rouhof 2013). Although a sample of two is too small to generalize to a larger population, it became clear the notion of authenticity in relation to leadership was new to them. As such, the possible effects of discourse on a

macro level seem not to have affected the discourse on a micro level enough to change the notion of authenticity for people non-related to leadership discourse.

To show how discourse ‘moves through’ the different levels of society, we will use Thrift’s model as described in Seal’s (2010) analysis on the relation between management practice and management theory.



Figure 1, institutions in the cultural circuit of capitalism (adapted from Thrift).⁹

The reason we use this figure for our own research on discourse is based on the fact that it shows the interaction between theory and practice in a circular motion. Discourse is not innocent, it is brought into existence for a reason, and this reason is to influence the notion on the object of discourse. In the figure shown above, it is visible that the quote used in the introduction of our paper is reinforced; the discourse affects the actions within the stages, while these stages themselves produce discourse based on these actions and previous discourse, thereby proliferating the notion of the object that is the centre of discourse. Daudi (1990, p. 291) explains this with the metaphor of the snake used already in ancient mythology, this image shows a snake that is consuming his own body and as such the snake neither dies nor grows, since it is constantly losing the same amount of body mass, as it is used to grow. We

⁹ (Seal 2010, p. 97)

found this metaphor fitting since discourse is feeding on itself, but want to add something to it. Not only does the discourse feed on itself, it also feeds on actions that stimulate the object of discourse, as such ‘the snake’ does not only support itself, but actually grows in the process. An example of this can be seen in the notion of authentic leadership, while first appearing within scientific discourse in 1983, the amount of papers proliferating the discourse have grown over the years, having its peak in the year 2005¹⁰, and since then a minimum of five papers has been written each year about this object. These papers contribute to the proliferation of the phenomenon of authentic leadership; the question is however if it has a positive effect on authenticity within leadership.

With this question in mind we want to look at the proliferating discourse of authentic leadership, and specific papers within this discourse, that struck us as rather interesting in comparison with the notion of the basis of authentic leadership, namely authenticity. Authenticity has always existed, even without the mentioning by Greek writers, and the thousands of years of discourse that followed. What has however changed is how we perceive authenticity, partly because of this discourse. Authenticity is socially constructed, it is valued, understood and evaluated within discourse and will have a different meaning to different people. The meaning it has to the person that is confronted with it, is dependent on previous experiences in both life and discourse, as has been previously discussed within the sensemaking part of this paper. By entering into the discourse on authenticity, our perception of authenticity has changed, and because our perception has changed, potential discourse based on this will change the notion of authenticity.

Although our goal lies far from changing the perception of the notion of authenticity and authentic leadership, we can do nothing else than acknowledge that we ourselves are contributing to both the proliferation of the notion and the changing perception. What we are aiming for however is to place a critical note within the proliferation of the discourse.

¹⁰ Table 3 (Gardner et al. 2011a, p. 1125)

What we discovered in our study on the topic is that the notion of authenticity is changing into a direction where we are thinking that a more surreal, or 'hyperreal' (Baudrillard 1979, 1981 as cited in Daudi 1990, p. 291) notion of the phenomenon is created that has not much to do with authenticity itself within leadership. Examples of this can be found throughout the paper of Ladkin & Taylor (2010), where it is expressed that authenticity itself is not as important as being perceived as authentic. One might ask oneself if this is a desired situation, when leaders are taught that authenticity is of lesser importance than perceived authenticity. Moreover, to whom would this then be favourable? An interesting perspective on the possibility of faking authenticity came from one of our respondents: *"I must say I think it is very important to act authentically, so to your own values, for example we just had a training where it was pointed out that when you have to work until you are 67, you will have to act from your own values in life to stay motivated, and to keep motivating the people around you. If you do not do this, and you have to force yourself to be something that you are not, you will not make it until 67"* (Jansen 2013). If this is the case, then what would we 'win' from acting authentic, rather than being it? What becomes clear is that we are working towards turning the notion of authenticity into a tool, rather than trying to understand it. If, as described earlier, the recursive notion would be progressing towards business schools adopting this notion of faked authenticity, soon there will be classes and trainings offered to CEO's and managers in how to be authentic. While maybe not resulting in successfully faking authenticity, it would justify the practice itself, which desirability is even more questionable than a leader, leading from non-internal values. In addition we would like to refer to the definition provided by most scholars within this field: 'Authentic leaders are deeply aware of their values and beliefs, they are self-confident, genuine, reliable and trustworthy, and they focus on building followers' strengths, broadening their thinking and creating a positive and engaging organizational context' (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005 as cited in Ilies, Morgeson & Nahrgang 2005, p. 374). But is it authenticity we want as

described here, or the thought of following a leader that has strong internal values? Even if these values may not be truly internal?

4. Real life scenario's

4.1 Tony Hayward

To start off with, we will take a look at the public display of former BP chief executive Tony Hayward during the oil catastrophe of 2010 in the Gulf of Mexico. By doing this, we will try to assess his actions, and link these to possible outcomes, asking the question if another approach would have led to a 'better' outcome.

The scenario

On April 20th 2010, an explosion on the oil drilling rig "Deepwater Horizon" in the Gulf of Mexico killed eleven people and millions of gallons of oil leaked into the ocean. Two days later, on April 22nd 2010, after another explosion, the oil platform sinks. This catastrophe developed to the worst environmental disaster of the USA. For in total three months, oil was leaking into the Gulf of Mexico. Tony Hayward was downplaying this catastrophe for several days, even denying it, for example in an interview with the magazine "The Guardian" he claimed that the oil spill is relatively tiny compared to the big ocean (Webb 2010). Five days after the second explosion, he reports to the press the profit of \$5.6 billion for BP in the first quarter of the year 2010, an immense increase in profits from the previous year (Pulham, Hilaire & Fenn 2010). BP and the press celebrate Hayward one more (and last) time as the super-manager, who brought so much success to the company and a very promising future. This glory picture of him would change drastically over the coming months. Due to the fact that his crisis management failed over and over again, he became the personification of this catastrophe, America's scapegoat, the face of the Black Death. He entered the league of the most hated managers, on the same level as the Goldman-Sachs boss Lloyd Blankfein and Toyota CEO Akio Toyoda (Schultz 2010). In the further course of the catastrophe, Hayward's public statements and comments towards the press became more bizarre. In a TV-Spot he spread hope and confidence and stated that they have everything under control and

that they will deal with the problem. On the same day when the TV-Spot was supposed to be broadcasted, Hayward admitted in an interview with the “Financial Times” upon questioning that it is true, they do not have the tools to bring the oil catastrophe under control themselves. The comment that followed that struck the public as most hurtful was: *“There’s no one who wants this more over than I do. I would like my life back!”* (BBC News 2010). This statement was particularly criticised because of the eleven people that died after of the explosion of the “Deepwater Horizon” who would never get their lives back, and the immense environmental disaster the oil spill created. Later on he apologized for this statement. During the crisis and its aftermath, not only the image of Tony Hayward was ruined, but also the US president Barak Obama got criticized for his inefficient crisis management. He was publicly accused of not putting enough pressure on Hayward and BP to solve the problems they had caused. In a public offense, Obama forces Hayward to open a \$20 billion fund to support the clean up of the oil spill and to reimburse the victims. In this public offense, Hayward did his kowtow to the US government and admitted he made several significant mistakes, apologized for his behaviour and promised that BP and he will do everything they can that such a catastrophe will not happen again. Since the explosion of the “Deepwater Horizon”, the stocks of BP fell about 40% and the company lost about \$80 billion on stock market value (Schultz 2010). In the mid of June, after almost 30 years at BP, Tony Hayward left the company, receiving a payoff of one million pounds and a pension of approximately half a million pounds a year.

Tony Hayward

Tony Hayward was born in England in 1957 as the eldest of seven children. He finished his A-level and studied Geology at Aston University in Birmingham, England and afterwards he did his PhD in Geology at Edinburgh University. In 1982, just after his graduation, he entered the British oil company BP as a rig geologist. He rose quickly through the ranks and became personal assistant of the CEO of BP Lord Browne, who was impressed by Hayward’s demeanour.

Hayward continued his promising career at BP, e.g. he became the president of BP's operations in Venezuela. In May 2007, Tony Hayward became CEO of BP after Lord Browne was forced to resign from this position (Anon 2013, p. 1-2).

Discussion

One can easily assume that we have chosen the case of Tony Hayward and the catastrophe of the "Deepwater Horizon" oil spill in order to analyse and judge if his behaviour, especially after this disaster occurred, was authentic or not. For now we will assume that it was in fact authentic. But this is not what we are looking for; instead we aim to identify and conclude what misunderstanding and fault presentation might lead to. In the case of Tony Hayward, one can say that he was acting quite authentic; he acted according to his values and expressed his inner feelings, while saying he wants his life back, not considering the losses others had to bear. With his statement to the press "*I'd like my life back!*" (Durando 2010), Hayward was most probably purely authentic, but led to the perception that he was arrogant and narcissistic, thinking only of himself.

The interesting aspect for us in this real life scenario is to imagine what would have happened if Hayward would have received training in being perceived as an authentic leader. Since we assume he acted from internalized values, he was in fact handling according to the existing definitions about authenticity, yet not all values that are internalized contribute to a better relation with followers. If he would have received training based on embodying authentic leadership, he might have been able to predict the reactions of followers, choosing different internalized values to act from. Another possibility would have been using adopted, non-internalized values. As such, he might have been able to maintain a more positive image to the public, giving him the possibility to focus more on the actual crisis. In the first impression, the second alternative seems more appealing than what actually happened, but would it have been better for the public? For BP? Or for Tony Hayward himself?

We start with the first alternative about the actual happening that took place.

Alternative one: One can say that Tony Hayward was authentic in his behaviour and representation regarding the “Deepwater Horizon” catastrophe in 2010. At the beginning of the disaster, when Hayward was downplaying or even denying the fact of this incident, one can assume that he was scared and insecure, worried to lose his face or even his job. Until this catastrophe occurred, he was celebrated as super-manager, bringing profit and a promising future to BP. We do not know if he believed in his own words himself or not, but Hayward decided it was better to stay calm and confident, especially towards the press, the US government and the rest of the world. In the further course of this incident however, one could observe that Hayward became more insecure how to react and what to say; one moment he spread hope and confidence to have control about the oil spill, in the next moment he admitted to be helpless and not having the right tools to bring the catastrophe under control. People perceived this behaviour as bizarre and Hayward lost credibility. Without considering how his words and behaviour might be perceived, how he represented himself to the outside world, Hayward conveyed his inner feelings and the wish that the disaster is finally over so he can go back to his former life, spending time with his son and sailing with his boat. Overall, this can be seen as authentic. Nevertheless, it seemed not appropriate to that situation, people perceived his words as negative, accused him of being arrogant and narcissistic.

In Alternative two however, we want to find out how different words, behaviour and self-presentation of Tony Hayward would have been understood. How would people have perceived and understood him if he would have had coaching before talking to the media, if he would have known better what to say and how to express himself and his feelings. How would the public have reacted if he would have learned to fake authenticity and to be the person they want to see and who seems correct and appropriate? We do not know the answer; we can only assume that with training in rhetoric for example, Hayward would

have expressed himself in a better way, so people would not feel offended. He would have found the ‘right’ words, the words the public wants to hear in an incident like the “Deepwater Horizon” oil catastrophe. These words might not be Hayward’s own words formulated by inner conviction, and they might not speak for the truth, but they would however meet the particular perceived need of the outside world in that moment.

4.2 Uli Hoeneß

The scenario

The scenario of Uli Hoeneß became public in April 2013 and is the most recent scenario we found interesting for our research. Uli Hoeneß was the manager of the German football club “FC Bayern München” for 30 years before he became the president of the club in 2009. He was a successful football player himself before he started his management career. Next to his job as president of the club, he is the co-owner of a sausage factory in Nürnberg, Germany. For over two decades, Hoeneß was Germany’s most successful and powerful football club manager. In April this year however, Hoeneß was accused of tax evasion worth several millions of Euros. For this he kept multiple bank accounts in Switzerland where he was hiding several millions of Euros from the German tax authorities. The newsmagazine “Focus” reported that Hoeneß made a voluntary declaration for committed tax evasion. Due to his self-declaration, his chances for acquittal are rather good.

Uli Hoeneß

Uli Hoeneß is for more than 20 years the most important and powerful man within German football. Many people perceive him as having two faces. On the one hand, he is one of the most successful managers in Germany and the most powerful one in German football, financially successful, not only with the football club “FC Bayern München”, but also as co-owner of the sausage factory “HoWe Wurstwaren” in Nürnberg, Germany. To the public, as a manager and owner of a business, his words and behaviour are often perceived as

provocative and arrogant. On the other hand, there is his social engagement and appeal to humanity and moral courage. Hoeneß cherished conviction and having the backbone to stand up to one's moral beliefs and behaviour. In the end, he wanted to be more than the president of a football club, he even spoke on economic congresses about social responsibilities and duties, discipline and business ethics. Many people would have liked to see Hoeneß as a politician; he embodied credibility and was some kind of consultant to Angela Merkel, the Federal Chancellor of Germany. Some even used his credibility to advertise financial products and services. *"Drinking wine, but preaching water doesn't bring us any further!"* (Fritsch 2013, p. 1) is a famous statement of Hoeneß, which he tried to embody in showing social engagement and also in the way he led the football club, e.g. organizing charity matches to support financially weak football teams. Hoeneß was the "FC Bayern München" and the "FC Bayern München" was Hoeneß. President and private person were embodied in one. Hoeneß stood for solidarity and distinguished himself from the turbo capitalism of the sheiks and the Russians in British and French football clubs; and also from the extravagance of Spanish and Italian clubs. He was a protectionist of conservative values and often criticised misbehaviour of others in public.

Social Engagement

Uli Hoeneß is in the board of directors of the "Dominik Brunner Stiftung" since 2009, a foundation devoted to Dominik Brunner who became victim of a brutal act of violence at the Munich train station in September 2009 while trying to protect three children and became victim himself; he died several days after the attack due to his injuries. The foundation's goal is to help people not to get demoralized by brutality and violence. The aim of the charity is to set a sign that not indifference but humanity, charity, public spirit and moral courage should be strengthened as central values of the society; mobilisation of public awareness against violence and the encouragement of people to show moral courage. The foundation helps and supports people and their family members,

who became a victim of violence and are now in need of e.g. financial or moral support. Hoeneß is socially engaged, amongst others in the “Dominik Brunner Stiftung” since November 2009 and consistently emphasized the importance of humanity and moral courage. He also supported his former teammate Gerd Müller fighting against his alcohol addiction and furthermore, he financially supported the former Danish player of “FC Bayern München” Lars Lunde, who had to stop his professional career as football player after a heavy accident (Wallrodt 2013).

Discussion

The odd aspect within the case of Uli Hoeneß is that the self-declaration of Hoeneß became public, even though the fiscal law in Germany promises and secures anonymity in the case of self-declaration. Under normal circumstances, this self-declaration would have never become public and Hoeneß would not have lost his reputation. Obviously Hoeneß made this self-declaration public himself with the help of his friend Helmut Markwort, the former chief editor of the “Focus”, a well-known newsmagazine in Germany (Fritsch 2013). This bizarre fact opens up room for speculations and discussions. Why did he do it, what is the reason behind the public self-declaration and what will be the consequences. Some argue that it was a wise move to show remorse and honest discernment concerning his misbehaviour of evading tax payments, others say he might have received a secret hint that his name was found on one of the CD’s with the names of tax sinners the German government bought. Because of his self-declaration, he will be acquitted and not sentenced. This regulation let people argue that in Germany, absolution can be bought. Why did someone, who often supported the society even financially, betray his country of millions? As a public figure he is seen as role model. Many perceived him as moralizer and admired him for his values and social engagement; on many events and TV shows where he held a speech, he did not charge money for. He was perceived as ‘the voice of the people’ by many, someone who speaks clear and straight forward (Lübbert 2013).

The case of Uli Hoeneß is very recent, there are many endless discussions and speculations about this case, but hardly any facts are known. In our research, we do not want to go deeper in the discussion that he broke the law or shed extra light on the fact that Hoeneß committed fraud and will be punished for this. We also do not want to further speculate what the reason behind his self-declaration is, but what we do want to show however is his behaviour and the way he tries to re-construct his image and to turn these events around in a way that is most beneficial for him, referring to previously expressed inner values to compare to his current actions. Hoeneß managed until then to keep the two faces he had shown to the public separate and in a healthy balance. He was aware that some perceived him as arrogant businessman, whereas others admired him for his social engagement and appeal for humanity and moral courage. We cannot say if Hoeneß was faking his authenticity to create this image of a moralizer or if he really acted according to his inner values, but what we can observe is that these two different faces he successfully embodied until now have collided. In his role as the manager and success-oriented businessman, having a Swiss bank account might have been tolerated or even accepted and declared as 'business as usual'. In his other role however, where he wanted to be more than a businessman, referring to humanity and moral courage, this was not accepted and even seen as treason. Hoeneß committed fraud, there is no question about it, but now he is trying to combine these two roles as good as possible in order to re-construct his positive image, while possibly even adapting non-internalized values, such as showing remorse and the human side he always referred to, in order to convince the public that he is honestly sorry for what he did and therefore gaining a positive image back. It is too early to say if it works out the way he planned to, but the final result would be most interesting for us to see and would also offer a good opportunity for future research.

4.3 Martha Stewart

The scenario

Being voted the third most powerful woman in America in 2001, and joining the Board of Directors of the New York Stock Exchange in 2002, with her company worth about US \$650 million, the success seemed to be never ending. However four months later, Martha Stewart was accused of insider trading and had to resign on her position. With this also the stock price of her company MSLO¹¹ fell.

This is where the case becomes interesting; Martha Stewart maintained her innocence on all charges. When being confronted by a guest on her show on CBS, she simply answered: “*I want to focus on my salad...*” (Grigoriadis 2012). While being cleared of the insider trading charge, it was ruled that Martha had committed a felony by misleading federal investigators and obstructing the investigation. After paying a relatively small fine of US \$30.000, Martha had to serve a five month prison service and two years of supervised release including a five month period in which she was electronically monitored. While she could have chosen to appeal the judge and thereby lengthen the period before having to serve time, or maybe a better outcome would be settled on. Yet she chose not to appeal the sentence and after serving the five month prison sentence, stock prices rose a fourfold. Within a year after the prison sentence was served, MSLO was profitable again. Proceeding this sentence however it was also decided that Martha could not be in an executive position for the coming five years, making it impossible to hold her position as CEO or other executive functions on the board at MSLO. In 2011 her restriction was lifted and she went back to have a position on the board, which resulted in reoccupation of the position of chairwoman in 2012 and a company market value of US \$ 550 million.

Martha Stewart

¹¹ Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, will be explained later in the text.

Martha Stewart has been voted one of the most influential women in the last century by Times magazine (Sun 2010). This ‘doyenne of domesticity’ (Sun 2010) was the founder of “Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia”, but started off as a simple girl, named Martha Kostyra, of polish heritage in Nutley, New Jersey. Here it was that she was introduced by her mother into the world of sowing, cooking and crafting, after being taught gardening by her father. While having a brief experience as a stockbroker, Martha started a catering business with one of her friends. Through relations established as caterers at several publisher parties, she came in contact with publishing clients and brought out a book in 1982. This book became to be the best-selling cooking book since 20 years, and was followed by many others. In 1990, Martha started her magazine, which was so successful that it led to a regular appearance on CBS, and later to a daily one-hour long broadcast, which was presented under the same name as her magazine: “Martha Stewart Living”.

Through coupling her own name to her organization, her person and the organization became so interwoven that they were hard to separate, even a second magazine was added to the brand, called “Martha Stewart Weddings”. At that point Martha chose to buy all her licensing and brand names back, and thus became the owner of all associated brands, previously owned by Times Warner. The first day her new business went public, called “Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia” (MSLO), a doubling of the stock price was noticed, making Martha a billionaire on paper. Being president, CEO and Chairwoman of MSLO, the organization prospered and a function on the board at the New York Stock Exchange was offered.

Discussion

Even though seen as the ‘doyenne of domesticity’ and widely respected and trusted as both a person and a brand, Martha Stewart has always been seen as a hardworking woman that was distanced when needed, and only gave appreciation when deserved. As such, the people that followed her before the scandal, most probably perceived this more as a deal gone wrong, a public

example, or even picking on the rich and powerful by the state. That her image has not lost much of its value due to the scandal can be seen in the reasonably high market value, even after the prison sentence. An interesting aspect is that she did not try to change the public opinion about herself to her followers and the public in general, instead she made it appear as if 'a salad' was of more importance than the accusations against her. And when asked to present the previous statement of being innocent and having not purposely sold all shares one day before the food and health authority presented a finding that would lower the price per share drastically, she chose not to use her right to remain silent. When going to prison, the only interesting statement made to her followers was: *"I'm a really good camper. I can sleep on the ground. ... There are many, many good people who have gone to prison ... look at Nelson Mandela"* (Crawford 2004). Thereby referring to a man, who spent 27 years in prison for the cause of battling 'apartheid'. A reference that could have turned against her easily, but did not.

So why is it that she, who has broken the law on multiple charges, does not try to defend herself in court, and presents the charges to the public as unimportant as a salad, walk away reasonably unscathed? While others, such as Lance Armstrong, who acted within the law lost whole of their face value (and followers and sponsors alike) due to an incident?

The reason for this is that we perceive someone's actions as based on their core values. In this case Martha was already known as being hard working and having a business acumen, while her core involved itself around her cooking and home styling, in summary, being the uncomplicated housewife, including the mistakes and the daily troubles which are so recognizable. This in combination with her other image, being a hardworking business woman that only shows appreciation to those who deserve it make the scandal did not really 'touch' her face value, and in some effect only made her more real as a person who makes mistakes and has to live with them. Lance Armstrong however built his being about the big comeback after his battle against cancer, without

doping. His whole “Livestrong” brand involved itself around him, and this way of showing that with the right attitude you could not only beat cancer and win at cycling, but you could also stay ‘pure’. When his scandal proved that his core value was in fact a farce, a non-existent pillar on which everything was built, his whole empire collapsed. From the kid in the hospital, to the multimillion companies and charities, they all dropped him like he was carrying the plague.

We perceive her as rather more than less authentic about her being involved in the scandal. Yet we cannot know this for sure, it could also be others that have given her advice on how to respond in certain situations. Like our previous case about Hayward, Stewart, while in our opinion not using a façade, but remaining largely authentic in her actions and expressions, escaped the debacle reasonably unscathed. This could also be due to the fact that she perceives it as if she has done nothing wrong, in her words: *"I didn't cheat the little people. ... We're all little people. I didn't cheat anybody out of anything."* (Crawford 2004), also in relation to the expression ‘small people’ BP stated during the “Deepwater Horizon” oil catastrophe. the use of the words little people is now used in a positive way, she refers to herself as being yet another human being, no more, no less. Either the public thinks something similar, or simply sees her the way she wants to be seen, as someone who did nothing that hurt anyone. Someone who is been picked on by society for being a strong independent individual with ideals in life.

5. Interviews

While going deep in to the discourse of authenticity and the role it plays in leadership in the theoretical framework. In our interviews, as planned, we were confronted with different perceptions on the phenomenon authenticity. In order to get a broader understanding of the different perspectives, we decided to conduct interviews with people from completely different fields than our leadership and management studies. They should have an uncoloured view on authenticity, and through the conversation we would be able to see how far the scientific view on authenticity has affected their profession. We found five specialists: a medical specialist, a family group conference coordinator, a politician, a pastor and a tax consultant, who agreed to give their personal view on the topic authenticity. The aim is to find out what authenticity is for them, how they perceive and define it and the importance it plays in their profession. We want to get insight in their perspective on the aspect of training authenticity and if they think it is possible to enhance or even develop authenticity. Moreover, we are interested in their opinion about the possibility to fake authenticity.

5.1 The medical specialist – Dr. Aaldrik Jansen

Aaldrik Jansen is a medical specialist specialized in anaesthesiology and works at multiple locations with differing teams and organizations to facilitate his work. Due to his specialization he mostly performs a leading role within the teams during surgery. We found this an interesting persona to interview since there has recently been a Dutch surgeon, who has purposely wrongly diagnosed at least a dozen of patients, and even performed brain surgery on some of them. As such the idea of doctors being there to save peoples live and treat them to their best ability got questioned (DutchNews.nl 2012).

I. Role as leader

Aaldrik sees himself as leader in his profession.

II. Personal opinion about authenticity – What is authenticity?

“Authenticity? – I think more of something traditional or original”

Aaldrik was willing to talk with us about his understanding of authenticity and how it affects his daily work and the trainings and workshops he has to follow within his profession. What became clear was that the notion of authenticity was not yet tainted by the definitions we have encountered within our theoretical framework. When confronted with our request, he admitted that when hearing of the topic of authenticity, his first thoughts were that we were going to ask questions about promotion, or marketing, since this is an often used term within Dutch advertising and commercials.

When asked about the relation between leadership and authenticity, in specific the notion of authentic leadership, he expressed the idea of it being a natural, more old fashioned way of leading, which may again resort back to the use of the notion of authenticity within advertising, showing how important this form of discourse is when it comes to the perception of authenticity to Aaldrik.

III. Importance of authenticity as a medical specialist

“Authenticity includes motivation and conviction”

The term authenticity is not commonly used in his profession as medical specialist, however Aaldrik perceives authenticity as very important in his profession. For him, authenticity mainly is about motivation and conviction. He emphasized the motive of conviction; one cannot force someone else or even oneself to stay motivated, it needs to come from the inner values and conviction. He gave an example of a person, who has to work approximately more than 40 years until retirement; Aaldrik perceives it as impossible to force someone to stay motivated in the job the entire time, the motivation needs to come from oneself.

IV. Training authenticity – Is it possible?

“Not yet another training!”

When confronted with our understanding, based on the literature encountered during the literature review. Aaldrik recognized the idea of acting from internal values and self-awareness, he related this to internal motivation, a term he recently encountered within a workshop his colleagues had, and he would soon follow as well. This training was not specifically focused on leaders, as one might think after reading the rest of our paper, but at the motivation of every person in the organization, making it possible for them to keep motivated using internal values during their daily work life.

On the question if authenticity could be trained or developed, the summarizing answer was that it would depend on how this would have to happen. If the person would be aware of the fact that his authenticity was being developed, or enhanced, the trainee would see it as yet another management trick to enhance efficiency, and would discard it as such.

V. Faked authenticity

“Build-in sensitivity for authenticity”

When asked if authenticity could be faked, Aaldrik related this to colleagues that came from other departments and locations temporarily to work together. Although this did not form any problems, according to Aaldrik, no matter how hard that person tried, he would always be seen as different. Every person has a feeling, a scanner, for different behaviour that somehow does not match. Although one might question if this is a form of faking authenticity, and the reaction of the co-workers might be based on more than just the fact that the person was perceived as fake, Aaldrik’s conclusion was simple: one cannot fake his being to others.

5.2 The family group conference coordinator – Hetty Bergers-Rouhof

Hetty Bergers-Rouhof is a family group conference coordinator at “eigen kracht” specialized in using the provided network of family and friends to take care of problematic situations involving children, this program is government sponsored and meant to keep stress to the family and children as low as possible while minimizing the need for foster care. The meetings and conferences do not have a fixed location, and the people involved differ in status and involvement, none of these people are forced to be there and follow the lead of Mrs. Bergers-Rouhof willingly, thereby having a leading role within the conferences and the path leading to the conferences. The reason we chose Mrs. Bergers-Rouhof as being interesting for our study is based on the idea of having a supportive function for people that are confronted with a setback in their own life, or the life of someone that is close to them. Based on this role, we thought, and still think, that for this, one needs to act authentic. This idea seemed to be proven correct when hearing about the recruitment method used to find new coordinators. To be eligible for training and a future position within the organization it is a requirement that no previous training or work experience has been performed within a similar field. This is, according to Hetty, due to the idea that coordinators with training based on a neighbouring field of support might apply those theories in their position within “eigen kracht”, thereby no longer playing a facilitating role, but actively trying to change the people involved, which does not lie within the scope of the organization. Eligible coordinators are mostly found through previous conferences, where the effects of a conference are experienced, and the positive influence it has, are discovered. This was also the reason for Hetty to join; she herself has experienced the beneficial effects of a family conference, in solving the placement of her nephew. When asked if this was a source of motivation, this was acknowledged, and in addition she expressed the use of this motivation when trying to explain the goal of a conference during the initial stages leading to that conference.

I. Role as leader

“Role of coordinator”

Hetty does not see herself as a leader in the first place, because she associates this with a more hierarchical position, but after taking a closer look at what she does and what her tasks are, it became clear that she fulfills a leading role. This is however not a hierarchical position, because nobody is forced to participate in the meetings, but the main focus lies on being a coordinator, as the job title already mentions. Hetty organizes and facilitates conferences where she tries to gather the people, which are involved in the particular case.

II. Personal opinion about authenticity – What is authenticity?

“Something old-fashioned”

Similar to the medical specialist, Hetty expressed a notion of authenticity that could be traced back to the more commercial uses of the word in Dutch advertising. She associates authenticity with something that has been consistent over a longer period of time, something that has not changed and might seem a bit ‘old-fashioned’. The feeling of authenticity was pointed towards the idea of non-fake, no added extra’s and a more traditional and original notion that came with the word something that has not changed over time. When confronted with authenticity in relation to leadership, the idea of a more old fashioned form of leadership came to mind, the ‘old way’ of leading. It seems as if the discourse about authenticity within leadership discourse has not yet affected the notion of authentic leadership within Hetty’s profession.

III. Importance of authenticity as family group conference coordinator

“Term ‘authenticity’ is not commonly used”

The term authenticity is in Hetty’s profession as family group conference coordinator not commonly used, however it is stressed to be oneself, stay

objective and keep a helicopter view instead of becoming too involved in the case. Hetty however emphasized the fact that she perceives it as indispensable to be oneself, stick to the own values and ask oneself ‘Why am I here?’ while treating all involved parties with respect.

IV. Training authenticity – Is it possible?

“Training might kill authenticity”

To the question if authenticity can be trained, Hetty answered that most probably it would not be able to train people to be perceived authentic, according to her own explanation: *“You cannot train people to become authentic, that is something that comes from the inside”* (Bergers-Rouhof 2013) being perceived as authentic cannot be taught, it is something that has to be developed from the inside out. When asked to explain this further she gave the following elaboration: *“You might kill the authenticity that is naturally within people, when trying to train them to become authentic”* (Bergers-Rouhof 2013); most probably referring to the idea of too much training, also previously expressed in the interview with the medical specialist.

V. Faked authenticity

“Creating distance through knowledge”

When asked if authenticity could be faked, Hetty expressed that this would not be possible and she gave the following example: *“I was at a training one day and heard during a role play between some of my colleagues using very difficult and unnatural words that would have caused the involved family members to distance themselves from the coordinator in a real life situation. They will not understand the use of these difficult words that are above their knowledge and this will cause them to feel uncomfortable, also the opposite is very dangerous where you underestimate the intelligence of the conversation partner, thus slightly insulting them by using too simple language, or repeating too often. You will have to change your behaviour slightly in different situations, but I do not*

think that I will be a different person, or act really different in specific situations” (Bergers-Rouhof 2013).

5.3 The politician – Peter Kuchenbuch

Peter Kuchenbuch is the chairman of the political party “Die Grünen” (“The Greens”) on the island Wangerooge, Germany. He is also communal councillor and representative of “Die Grünen” in the local council. He sees himself as representative of ‘the green islanders’. His fulltime job, next to his political engagement, is teaching at the local school subjects, such as physical education, art and crafts, and geography. The reason why we chose to interview the chairman of a political party is that it is a rather obvious leading position, which however can only be reached by election. Much attention is paid to representing oneself and one’s message to the public, to be perceived as trustworthy and credible aiming to get as many votes as possible. We are however interested in the possible conflict between striving for votes on the one hand, and being authentic and embodying the message one communicates to the public on the other hand. Moreover, we want to find out what role faked authenticity plays for a politician, how dominant is the desire to get votes and in fact staying behind the message one tells the public. There might be a thin line between faked authenticity and the attempt to get votes for the coming election, which made it interesting for us to get insight in how a politician perceives authenticity.

I. Role as a leader

“I see myself as the spokesperson of this party”

To the question if he sees himself as a leader he answered with a clear ‘Yes’. As the representative of “Die Grünen” he sees himself as the spokesperson of this political party. He gives out press releases and as the chairman, he is directly involved in the decisions of the local council. One of Peter’s tasks is to prepare and present these topics and issues and also communicate them to the press. He is very active and engaged in involving the press in the parties’ political

work, because he sees it as a very strong tool to spread the message and also get attention to their issues and topics.

II. Personal opinion about authenticity – What is authenticity

“I have a political soul, a conscience”

For Peter Kuchenbuch, authenticity is equal with credibility. The credibility which he, as a politician with his policy, tries to represent to the outside; that he stays behind his decisions backed up by his inner values and beliefs. One can say that he has a political soul or conscience he feels responsible to and which serves him as an inner compass for his decisions. Peter described it as an inner green path he follows. As long as he does that, he sees himself as being authentic. If he however leaves this path, he would not be able to look into the mirror in the morning anymore and he stated that he would give up politics then.

“My heart is green!”

Peter Kuchenbuch mentioned that especially from the members of “Die Grünen”, the expectations with regard to authenticity are high. “Die Grünen” started as a political protest party and many people still have this image in their minds, even though they embody much more nowadays. Peter Kuchenbuch is aware of this ‘pressure’ but he is said he is not trying to be someone else, he is who he is. “My heart is green!” His aim is to show people that the party embodies much more and to stimulate people to look at it from a different perspective. He welcomes opportunities to design and create things, to be actively involved and bring in constructive suggestions, instead of only being ‘against’.

“I try to live what I preach!”

To come back to the point that people expect especially from “Die Grünen” to be and act authentic, Peter responded that people see it as important that the party members not only represent the green policy but that they live it. Peter repeated that this is not a problem for him at all; he has a photovoltaic facility

on the rooftop of his house and a low-energy house with a solar support system for the general heating. Peter tries to live what he preaches. The most recent example he mentioned is that in his fulltime job as a teacher at the local school, in cooperation with students he opened a 'green workshop' where they are going to plant 100 trees that they have received from the "Deutsche Umweltstiftung" (German Environmental Organisation).

III. Importance of authenticity as a politician

"Authenticity is indispensable!"

To the question how important he perceives authenticity in his role as politician and in politics in general, Peter immediately answered that it is indispensable. He is not practising it consciously, by means that he is not on purpose trying to be and act authentic. Peter said he practises and lives according to his values and beliefs what is the right thing to do and by that he hopes to be authentic. It is important for him that people understand his green message and perceive him as 'green' and authentic, but if they do not, he would not change himself and his behaviour in order to fit in the picture or to fulfil people's expectations. Peter emphasized that he will not plant more trees in order to get more votes during the next election, but he will also not plant less.

IV. Training authenticity- Is it possible?

"Politicians are great actors!"

In our research we are interested in finding out if it is possible to train authenticity and/or authentic leadership. The question to Peter Kuchenbuch is if in the field of politics special attention is paid to secure or even train authenticity. He answered that there are definitely seminars and trainings offered on higher political levels, which aim in that direction, but of course they are not labelled like that because then most likely the trustworthiness of these seminars would be less and people would ask themselves if this is actually possible to train how to be authentic. For Peter however this would not be an

option, he would not participate in such a seminar or training, because he believes one cannot train to be authentic.

V. Faked authenticity

“At some point, everybody shows his/her real face”

When confronted with the aspect of faked authenticity, Peter beliefs that people notice rather soon if a person is faking and is not honestly authentic. Also the lack of knowledge or experience can be seen as an indicator for inauthenticity by followers. Nevertheless, the attempt certainly exists. Peter sees many politicians as great actors who are capable of faking authenticity, to some extent. But at some point, everybody shows his or her real face. On the political level he is active on, faked authenticity is rather uncommon, or at least it is quickly noticed as fake. For politicians on higher levels, such as the federal level, authenticity plays an important role as well, but it is much more difficult for them to convey. This is because the public assumes that everything the politicians do aims to be perceived as authentic and eventually winning votes for the next election. Also members of “Die Grünen” on higher political levels face these difficulties.

5.4 The pastor – Günther Raschen

Günther Raschen is 55 years old and is since 14 years the pastor of the protest commune on Wangerooge, Germany. Normally, this position would only be a part-time job due to the minor number of 600 protestant commune members, but with also having the pastoral care of tourists spending their holidays on the island, the job can be seen as a fulltime obligation.

“I accompany people in all stages of life”

Overall, his function as pastor is very multifaceted. He accompanies people from all age groups and in all kinds of different stages in life, such as weddings, visiting elderly people on their birthdays, christening and funerals. We chose to interview a pastor, because we deem it interesting to see how authenticity is valued and affecting the life of a pastor. Through several scandals, e.g. the

accusation of child abuse, the authenticity of church members, especially leaders, is doubted and the 'holy image' is criticised.

I. Role as a leader

"I am a 'normal' community member, not a superior"

Through Reformation in the Protestant theology, unlike the Catholic Church, the pastor has no exceptional hierarchical position anymore; it has more practical purpose that somebody is responsible for the different activities and institutions within the protestant commune. Even though times are changing and the tasks of a pastor become more multifaceted, the position of a pastor itself still has the image of a superior leader and many people perceive this position as a leading role and, especially elderly people, look up to the person holding this position.

II. Personal opinion about authenticity – What is authenticity?

"How far am I allowed to show all facets of my personality?"

According to Pastor Raschen, authenticity is a sort of role play. If a person gets a task or a position in a particular field, e.g. economy or the church, this person is surrounded and part of a specific cultural milieu. As soon as one is part of this environment, one is exposed to particular forces that have an impact. This means that projections on this person start, which are influenced for example by culture.

50 years ago, pastors had a projected halo around them, which was promoted and encouraged by the people. People directly associated a pastor with authentic behaviour; he was holy so therefore also his behaviour must have been authentic and according to his values and beliefs. But for pastor Raschen this has nothing to do with authenticity. For him personally authenticity is a matter of how far an individual is allowed to show all facets of the own personality, all strengths and weaknesses, to what extent one is allowed to show and live one's personal attributes and characterises, which make one

individual. Or is one so limited and kept in the boundaries of the assigned role that one has no other choice than act within these boundaries.

III. Importance of authenticity as a pastor

“I need to be a ‘human human being’”

As a human being, one needs to have a very sensitive scanner for authenticity in order to identify if others are authentic. It is possible that one is not aware of this scanner and does it unconsciously, but pastor Raschen is convinced that every human being has this particular feeling or scanner if someone is authentic or not.

Pastor Raschen thinks that nowadays, humanity, especially in leadership, becomes more and more important. People want to see the human side of the leader, his personality and characteristics. One cannot ‘rest’ anymore on the privileged social status attributed to the leading position; one has to define oneself over the person and not over the role the person is holding. Pastor Raschen experienced that people look at him and examine him as a person, not only as a pastor. This was different in the past when the pastor was mainly judged and defined by his position he hold in, not his personality and his ‘human’ side. Nowadays, people scan the person behind the role, if there is a hidden side, a second face trying to aim for personal profit rather than collective benefit. “Practise what you preach” is a very applicable statement, particularly for him as a pastor. People want to feel if the person is honest and also embodies the words and the behaviour that is shown, and not only act like it in order to gain personal benefit, especially as a pastor one needs to be transparent, a ‘human human being’ Raschen called it. Time has changed and one is not seen as the powerful hand of God on earth anymore, instead the pastor is a human being, accompanying and supporting people in all different stages of life, and in all their emotional states.

Pastor Raschen said that he lives *with* the people and does not stay *above* them, such as the more traditional image of a pastor is described. He cannot

separate private and business life like other leaders e.g. in business can. Concluding pastor Raschen emphasized the fact that he, as a pastor, is almost constantly confronted with the aspect of authenticity and personally feels very close to it.

IV. Training authenticity – Is it possible?

“Why am I actually here?”

Pastor Raschen observed changes occurring in the Protestant Church since 1977 when he was still a theology student. More and more often courses in communication were offered in order to assist students to find out why am I actually here? There were many different motives why people decided to study theology, not only because of good grades in school or affection to religion, but also because of e.g. first practical experiences in the church or an interest in psychology. He mentioned that there were definitely some ‘strange guys’ among the students. As one of the reasons why more courses focusing e.g. on communication skills were offered, pastor Raschen mentioned that in the practical part of the theological studies, it became clear that many students scored high in the theoretical part, but their practical skills were insufficient; they had a for a lack of communications skills, not the right feeling of how to present themselves and could not express their message in the right words. Moreover, there are courses in the field of liturgy and training with actors in order to stimulate and teach pastors how to design a mass that has character, that is influenced by the own personality of the pastor and therefore has a personal touch. In the past, a pastor was mainly a ‘guard of virtue’, an unquestionable role that is dedicated to the person, but he emphasized that this traditional system does not work anymore. A pastor is not only defined through his position anymore, but also through his personality, how authentic he is and the way he speaks and communicates with people. The importance of the ‘human’ side increases. But nevertheless, there is also the question of how much authenticity is wanted and allowed. Pastor Raschen mentioned the very

narrow line between authenticity and professionalism, which certainly still exists.

To the question if one can train authenticity in order to be more authentic, pastor Raschen answered that this is not possible, one cannot train authenticity. Particular skills however can be trained, such as rhetoric, but only to a certain extent. There is a limit for every individual, simply because of the own personality. Pastor Raschen emphasized that training should not go that far that it bends or even changes the personality of a person in order to meet the expectations for a particular job for example.

V. Faked authenticity

“One has no choice, other than being authentic!”

Pastor Raschen believes that basically everybody is authentic. One has not even the chance of not being authentic, because it is part of one’s personality structure. Every individual has a trained perception to see through if somebody is authentic or not. He went even that far that one has no other choice than being authentic, because people verify what intentions are behind the words and the behaviour, they check intentionally if it is authentic or not. Pastor Raschen suggested that there should be a kind of catalogue for future leadership, which defines what is really needed, what kind of people we in fact want in particular positions and how authentic they have to be.

5.5 The tax consultant – Joachim Oehlmann

Joachim is one of three associates in the partnership “Oehlmann-Engelke-Aspeir Steuerberatungssozietät” (tax consultancy partnership) and is responsible for the location Uelzen in Lower Saxony, Germany. The reason why we chose to interview a tax consultant is that taxation is very complex field dominated by facts and regulations. One can assume that there is not much space for authenticity in such a ‘dry’ and regulated field. However, we were interested to find out how authenticity is perceived by a tax consultant and if it even plays a role in this business.

I. Role as leader

“I’m wearing the hat!”

When confronted with the question if he sees himself as a leader, Joachim answered that even in a civil-law corporation (partnership agreement without legal capacity in order to support a purpose jointly pursued by the partners) there needs to be a leader if discrepancies in the alignment and orientation, or in personnel affairs between the partners occur. Due to the necessity of having a leader, the partnership came to an agreement that Joachim is taking over the leading role and therefore he is responsible and has also the final decision-making power.

II. Personal opinion about authenticity – What is authenticity?

“What is authentic for me, might not be authentic for you”

For Joachim authenticity means being oneself without using many words or explanations for justification. He emphasized that on the one hand, one should be true to oneself instead of copying from others or constantly trying to adapt in order to meet the expectations from others. But on the other hand, there is no generalization of what is authentic and what is not. There are different perceptions of authenticity, but no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, and one has to accept and tolerate that different understandings exist.

III. Importance of authenticity as tax consultant

“Credible, proved, reliable, true and trustworthy facts”

Authenticity, in Joachim’s job, comes into play in different forms: in law, in information technology (IT) or in the interaction with people. In the interview it became clear that the aspect of being ‘real’, trustworthy and reliable plays a major role in the job of a tax consultant. Without credible, proven, reliable, true and trustworthy facts it is impossible for a tax consultant to execute the job correctly and successfully. Joachim emphasized the fact that confidence and conviction for him are indispensable, he needs to feel ‘true’ to himself otherwise

it does not feel authentic and he loses trust in himself. This results in the fact that if he is not convinced about the credibility and authenticity of the case, he does not subscribe and hands it back.

IV. Training authenticity – Is it possible?

“Training in order to impress”

When asked if in the field of tax consultancy special attention is paid to enhance or even train authenticity, Joachim made clear that he does not see that any importance is laid on increasing the level of authenticity in the tax consultancy. Tax consultancy is a very complex business and therefore the majority of trainings and seminars is focused on knowledge increase and the introduction of new laws and regulations. If there are trainings offered for tax consultants that aim to broaden communication or rhetoric skills, Joachim sees the purpose more in showing off that one participated in such a training in order to attract or impress clients.

V. Faked authenticity

“Not in a long-term relationship”

In Joachim’s opinion, one can possibly fake authenticity in the first place, but in a long-term relationship, the truth comes out and the ‘real face’ is shown.

6. Conclusion

Although the main findings of the theoretical framework, real life scenario's and interviews are represented in the chapters above, we want to make sure that the understanding we got from the different conversation partners, leaders and literature as a whole, is not lost. We will therefore report our findings in this concluding part.

To start with, in our theoretical framework we have shed light on the concept of authentic leadership from six different angles to provide a more holistic image of the concept as a whole. By looking at the concept of authentic leadership, its effects and aspects that change our understanding of the concept, we think we were able to find some of the hidden or less lit sides from the concept. Through history we saw that the notion of authenticity is not something new, it existed already before the documentations presented in this part of the thesis, and consists of more than the different aspects described there. Rising above the written words that could be read in the chapters preceding the conclusion, we will now show how all parts lead to our understanding of the concept.

The theoretical concept contributed severely to our understanding of the way authentic leadership is understood within the scientific world, and our perception that certain leaders are authentic or not. Also the internalization of values through the narrative self was described in relation to different contexts. After having looked at the concept from these differing angles, we build a theoretical framework around it that could be used to look at some more practice based real life scenarios.

In this chapter we have looked at three different leaders who were all involved in some sort of scandal, but with differing results influencing the image of the leader. In our theoretical framework we encountered the importance of perceived internalized values. This aspect is also represented in the cases, which show clearly the effects on the disenchantment of the followers caused by a differing perception of internalized values.

Another aspect we discovered while assessing the real life scenarios is the question if we actually want someone who is fully true to his or her inner self. This would give the opportunity to express weaknesses or opinions that could harm not only the image of the leader, but also the organization and followers linked to this leader. As such, we come back to the same positive effect that could turn out negative, the disenchantment based on the perceived values of the leader. So what is it then what we actually want? We do not know. What we do know is that we, as individuals, have certain expectations of the people around us, being a simple friend or the leader we follow directly or indirectly. And if these expectations turn out to be conflicting with reality, we enter a more or lesser form of disenchantment. It seems that the expectations we have are the source of perceived authenticity and inauthenticity. As such, controlling the expectations others have about oneself would mean to control the possibilities of disenchantment by the people that have these expectations. And maybe also the way to help perceived inauthentic leaders to repair their broken image.

One way to do this is by being extremely transparent, and what better way could there be than to make use of the new media posed in the beginning of this thesis? By blogging, tweeting, presenting and creating a context in which the internalized values become clear, and the expectations fit the actual values of the leader, which in return fit the context created.

But how does our own conclusion based on the scientific (through the theoretical framework) and business world (through the real life scenarios) fit with the image people non-related to leadership discourse have about it. What was noticed throughout all interviews we conducted is that different perceptions of what makes someone more or less authentic exist. Also what authentic leadership is to the different interviewees varies from 'role play' (Raschen 2013) to more traditional ways of leading (Bergers-Rouhof 2013). Yet the importance of authenticity, as they know it, is deemed high. Another interesting aspect was the reference to the world of advertising (Jansen 2013; Bergers-Rouhof 2013) in which the word 'authentic' is used to convey a more

traditional feeling to the products. It seems as this form of discourse, the association with advertising, might play quite a crucial role in the understanding of the word authenticity, and was sometimes used to make sense of the term in relations to leaders. After an explanation¹² from our side of the term as it is used within most studies, another aspect came to order. The possibility to train authenticity was not deemed possible (Kuchenbuch 2013; Oehlmann 2013), or was even seen as counterproductive (Bergers-Rouhof 2013), but according to some, it would however be possible to help people find and understand their inner motivation¹³ (Jansen 2013) or strengthen rhetorical and communication skills required to express internal values (Raschen 2013). Another idea we brought to the table during the conversations was the idea of faking authenticity in leadership. The answer if this would be possible was given a clear no by all the interviewees, only the timespan in which it becomes visible that the displayed values were not internalized ones, differed a bit. However it was questioned by the pastor (Raschen 2013) how far we actually give leaders the possibility to be authentic, by means to allow them to show all facets of their personality, not only the strengths, but also the weaknesses in their public display. In the following discussion we will come back to these findings and relate them to the real life scenarios we studied and the theoretical framework we developed.

¹² Deemed necessary to make it possible for interviewees to recognize possibly covert training pointed at the development of authenticity

¹³ The term motivation is used by the interviewee in relation to his perception of authenticity

7. Discussion

In this chapter we will answer the research questions posed in the introducing part of our thesis. For this we will revisit the most important findings within our research in order to be able to show what contribution we offer to the existing literature, what limitations we encountered, and what possible future research would, according to us, contribute to a better understanding of the topic.

7.1 Theoretical contribution

Although looking at the concept of authentic leadership through lenses, such as sensemaking and discourse itself would make this paper already worth reading for many, this is not where we think our contribution lies. What we hoped to uncover through for example our interviews with people non-related to leadership discourse, is how far the concept of authentic leadership has penetrated the perception of authenticity in our environment. What we discovered however is that the people we interviewed were little, maybe even not at all, aware of authenticity the way it is described in the leadership literature we read. As such, the effects of the discourse on authenticity within leadership and on the authenticity of leaders could be lower than we at first expected.

What was shown clearly from the interviews was the perceived importance of authenticity in all its different definitions within not only leadership, but also life in general. Only one of our interviewees pointed out the importance of the environment when it comes to acting authentic, this environment is perceived as limiting to ones expressions of authenticity, and sometimes asks for less, rather than more authentic behaviour. This thought is also displayed when looking at the different real life scenarios. As long as the leaders act according to their perceived internalized values, everything works out splendidly, and the leader seems authentic to his or her followers. However the tricky part lies in the ‘perceived internalized values’, if a leader acts upon internalized values that do not fit to the perception followers have of him or her, ‘disenchantment’ will take place, leading to a negative perception of the leaders authenticity, even

though the leader was being true to his ‘true self’. As such the question is valid: *How much authenticity do we actually want?*

When looking at the possible effects that discourse could have on authenticity within leadership, many thoughts (mostly negative) crossed our minds at the beginning of our research. After taking a short dive in a small part of the literature about discourse, we however came to the conclusion that it is not as negative as we thought. Yes, the notion of authenticity has (according to some of the studies we read) been turned into something that can be defined, measured and even somewhat used as a tool; making a hyper real concept out of something that lies within people, as does their ability to recognize ‘inauthentic’ behaviour within leaders, if only given time. Therefore, part of the mistake lies in us, the followers. We contribute values to leaders (even if they might not be internalized by the leader himself) because we want to see them, it helps us to make sense out of our own position, why we follow them, and why they aim for the same goals we do ourselves. As such, part of the problem of ‘inauthentic leaders’¹⁴ is based on our own perception, and the discourse around us that creates this perception. Where a leader would previously exist only in ‘real life’, and our perception about them was based on news statements and company reports, now the power of social media, in the form of blogs, forums, YouTube clips, tweets, podcasts comes into play. Together with the official sources, which traditionally created a (maybe also hyper real) perception of our own, makes this nowadays possible to share and discuss this perception with others. Thereby possibly affecting their perception of the leader as well, leading to some kind of celebrity status and the attributed values that might not even be theirs.

We do not try to say authenticity within leadership is not important, quite the opposite, but we want to emphasize the fact that the reason we perceive people

¹⁴As a matter of speech, authenticity can only exist in more or lesser forms, and is never non-existent within a person.

as 'inauthentic' lies largely in our own expectations. The question might thus also be focussed more towards:

- How do we create a perception that is based on values found and internalized in our 'true-self', rather than how do I adopt and embody the values most required by the followers.

As such, we differ in our question from Taylor and Ladkin (2010), who try solve a quite similar question pointed at enacting the true-self to enhance perceived authenticity, while we take a more careful regard when it comes to possible disenchantment by followers. The difference can be mainly found in the idea that our question is focussed more at how the leader is perceived using internalized values, rather than expressing his or her true self, unaffected by the reality around her or him. In our understanding, using the previously described narrative approach, a leader should be aware of what the environment expects, making it possible to choose values that are internalized, but can be adjusted via experiences and alternative plots, using the previously described narrative approach, into an appearance that is more fitting to the current situation. Using the example of Tony Hayward: If in the beginning he would have expressed the inability of BP to solve the situation themselves and admitting that they made a mistake, but trying everything within their power to end this nightmare. His expression and behaviour would still be authentic, and based on internal values, but would probably help the way people perceive him, rather than make him look like a selfish, arrogant and careless person.

As such, we think that it is not possible to train or develop authenticity and authentic leaders. It is however possible to help people find their internal values, and the way they express them to their environment in order to create and maintain an image that reflects the truth, while taking care of the requirements of different circumstances and environments the person is facing. As such, the narrative approach used in the papers of Sparrowe (2005) and Vadla (2009) can be of much help in developing a course or development program pointed at the development of internal values in relation to the

narrative self. We would advise to include training in rhetoric and presentation skills, since these hold an important part in embodying and expressing the true self towards followers.

7.2 Limitations

In our research paper we chose to use certain approaches to create a paper that is based on facts and proven models, while also contributing a new perspective to the scientific world. While looking at the possible effects of discourse on authenticity in leadership, we came to the conclusion that we ourselves create discourse while discussing and writing about it and contribute to the broadening notion of authenticity, since we are now aware of the possible effects of this: Our well-meant apologies. We chose a qualitative approach for our topic in order to create a better understanding about the phenomenon of authenticity within leadership, and authentic leadership as a concept. While our findings in the empirical research are an addition to this understanding, they cannot be seen as representatives for their profession, industry, culture or other demographic classification. As such, our findings cannot be generalized in to the opinion or behaviour of a larger sample, or population. In addition, we are aware that due to the conversational nature of our interviews, we might have played an interactive role in the development of the perception of our interviewees, we tried to keep our influence on their answers as low as possible, but could not be totally excluded. The same counts for the translation from spoken Dutch and German into written English, in order to be used within our thesis. We are aware of possible effects of culture on the answers given by our interviewees but could not rule this out, nor try to account for the effects due to the limited time and scope of our research.

7.3 Future research

As we already mentioned within the theoretical contribution, earlier in this chapter, there is one specific question we kept encountering during the development of our thesis, which was also mentioned by one of our interviewees (Raschen 2013): How much authenticity do we actually want as followers?

While we do not expect, nor want, a quantitative amount which is measurable, or even predictable, we do think that looking into the effects of displayed authenticity within certain environments would be interesting, and could contribute to the understanding when authenticity is more or less important. Another interesting aspect that came to light during the building of our thesis, and a conversation with Pr. Björn Bjerke is the effect of 'new media' on not only the perceived importance of authenticity, but also in the construction of the perceived internalized values of that leader and possible disenchantment of the followers that might be caused by this.

Based on this, we would like to pose two questions, which also offer future research possibilities that might foster the understanding, as well as preventing, disenchantment of followers:

- *How much authenticity do we actually want? An inquiry in the balance between expressed internal values and possible disenchantment.*
- *How do the 'new media' contribute to how leaders are perceived? An inquiry in the effects of leader perception and possible disenchantment.*

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9. Appendix

9.1 *Self-reflection Tim Bergers*

When first confronted with the concept of authentic leadership during a take home exam within our master track, we had the feeling that this actually would be the core of how we would like to lead ourselves. This idea has changed however, no longer do we think that authentic leadership is the holy grail or root of successful leading for both the follower and the leader. We have come to an understanding of the concept that has taken away its mystery, looking at it through different lenses, deducting it into its separate parts. As such we can now say that the theory of authentic leadership also has its flaws, and might not actually be ‘the’ way to lead, just something to keep in mind when assessing oneself and leaders around us.

When looking at the approaches we took within our thesis, we actually think that the combination of real life scenario’s, interviews and the theoretical framework has led to a good balance between both a deepening understanding and a realistic view on authenticity, and its uses within leadership. As such we actually do not feel like we would want to take another approach when given more time, or even financial funding. Our part has been done, to our understanding successfully, and now it is time for others to build upon our research in order to understand the way we come to a perception of our leaders on our current society, leading to disenchantment and mistrust. We first thought authentic behavior would be the core of successful leadership, but the role of ‘new media’ and the environment play in building the perception of a leader, make it possible to be perceived as being ‘inauthentic’ while actually acting from internalized values. As such even the most authentic leader, fighting for his ideals, might be seen as an imposter, which gives kind of a saddening feeling towards the notion of authentic leadership.

Kind regards,

Tim Bergers

9.2 Self-reflection Sina Albers

When asked what we would do different if having the chance of writing this master thesis again about the concept of authentic leadership, many different thoughts and ideas came to our mind, such as talking to more people and therefore covering even more fields, a psychologist or a broker from the stock market for example. But after taking some of these ideas into consideration, we asked ourselves if this really would have contributed to a better understanding and ‘feeling’ for the phenomenon of authenticity and the concept of authentic leadership. We came to the conclusion that we would not structure our research differently or do it in any other way than we did. The very enthusiastic feeling when we first encountered the concept of authentic leadership during this master track by reading the paper of Shamir & Eilam about the life story approach to develop authentic leadership, faded occasionally and is a bit more ‘down to earth’. We do not see this concept as the ‘Holy Grail’ within leadership, and even above, anymore, and we perceive our findings not as ground breaking as we might first have expected when getting in touch with this topic. Nevertheless, I am satisfied and honestly proud (as far as I can say that) how we managed to create knowledge and make sense of the sometimes very complex literature, and the level of understanding we have reached that I believe we contributed a little piece to the truth and to a better understanding of the power of discourse and the varying effects it has on authenticity within leadership.

Concluding I can say that even though the real ‘Wow’ effect is not settling in yet, I am confident with the contribution we brought to the scientific world.

With respect,

Sina Albers



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