Enacting the 'true self': Towards a theory of embodied authentic leadership

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that although authentic leadership may be rooted in the notion of a 'true self', it is through the embodiment of that 'true self' that leaders are perceived as authentic or not. In making this claim, we consider ways in which a somatic sense of self contributes to the felt sense of authenticity, and how through engaging with somatic cues, leadership can be performed in a way which is experienced as authentic, both to the leader and to those he or she seeks to lead. In developing our ideas further, we draw from the acting theory of Stanislavski (1936a, 1936b, 1961) to explore how authentic dramatic performances are created, focusing on the role of emotional memory, the magic 'if' and physical action in performances. We propose three key components of a resulting theory of how embodied authentic leadership is created: self exposure, relating, and making leaderly choices.

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1. Introduction

After Barack Obama's surprising win in the Iowa caucus in the early stages of the Democratic primary election in 2008, polls indicated he held a strong lead going into the next primary in New Hampshire. However, the pollsters' predictions proved inaccurate when Hillary Clinton won in New Hampshire by a margin of three percentage points. The media largely attributed Mrs Clinton's victory to a particular event which occurred during the final stages of the New Hampshire campaign, subsequently known as 'Hillary's Tears'. When asked by a sympathetic woman supporter 'How she kept going' in the face of Obama's upsurge of support, Hillary faltered. As reported on Fox News later that day:

> For the first time in public Hillary Clinton evidenced the strain and stress… You see the emotion, you see the tears beginning to well in Hillary Clinton's face, and the voice cracks just a bit… We spoke with women voters after the interview and many of them were moved by Hillary Clinton's show of emotion. Fox News 8 January 2008

This quote highlights a crucial facet of authenticity as it applies to leadership. Although 'authenticity' may be defined fundamentally in self-referent terms (Sartre, 1943; Maslow, 1968), it is the way in which that 'true self' is enacted which is critical to followers' experience of authentic leadership. In this way, we would suggest that authenticity could be seen as an aspect of the aesthetic dimension of leadership, (Duke, 1986; Hansen et al., 2007; Ladkin, 2008) and as such includes both the embodied, as well as the intentional aspects of a leader's enactment of their role.

To return to the example of Hillary Clinton highlighted above, only Mrs Clinton herself knows the extent to which her tears were an expression of authentic feeling on her part (and furthermore the particular feeling they may have been representative of). However, the amount of media attention this event subsequently received points to the relevance of the physical, embodied way in which leaders express themselves in followers' assessment of a leader's authenticity.

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Our paper begins from the assumption that the way in which the leader's 'self' is embodied is a critical determinant of the experience of authentic leadership. Following from this we address the question of how leadership enactments can be created which express something of that self in a way which can be read and interpreted as 'authentic'.

Within the growing body of 'authentic leadership' literature there is work devoted to defining authentic leadership (Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Chan, Hannah, & Gardner, 2005), to forging its conceptual relationship with other positive forms of leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Iles, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005) and to linking it to authentic followership and authentic leadership development (Gardner, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2005; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005). Although there is some literature which considers how assessments of authenticity are made by followers, (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004) these studies focus on more readily measurable factors, such as the amount of contact that leaders and followers have (Fields, 2007) or the extent to which leaders adhere to organisational codes of conduct (Six, De Bakker, & Huberts, 2007). This paper makes a unique contribution to this emergent field by attending to the aesthetic and expressed aspects of leading with the aim of proposing the beginnings of a theory of how embodied authentic leadership is created.

To develop this theory we start by considering the nature of the 'true self', noticing in particular the way in which somatic and symbolic knowledge interact in developing a sense of 'self'. We explore this interaction further through reference to a parallel human activity in which the creation of authentic performance is key, that of acting. Stanislavski's (1936a,b, 1961) technique of method acting provides the theoretical ground to consider practices which contribute to the enactment of authentic theatrical performances. Implications of these practices for leaders are suggested and a three-component model of embodied authentic leadership proposed. We begin, however, by placing our argument within the larger literature about authentic leadership.

2. Authentic leadership—a critique of current theorising

'Authentic leadership' is a relative newcomer to the leadership literature canon, first appearing in the 1990s in the fields of sociology and education (Chan et al., 2005). Given its emergent status as a concept it has attracted a good deal of attention from the leadership studies community as indicated by three recent special issues devoted to the topic in academic journals, *Leadership Quarterly (2005/1)*, the *Journal of Management Studies (2005/42)*, and *The European Management Journal (2007/2)*, a growing body of work undertaken by the Gallup Leadership Institute (e.g. Gardner, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2005) as well as a burgeoning of more popular writing bringing attention to this concept (Irvine & Reger, 2006; Goffee & Jones, 2005; George, 2003).

As Cooper, Scandura, and Schriesheim (2005) point out; presently one of the difficulties with the concept from a theoretical perspective is that a unified, agreed definition for authentic leadership does not exist. However, our survey of the extant work in the field reveals that although authors do not completely concur on a shared definition, three themes underpin much of the way in which the term is used. Throughout the literature authenticity is seen to be informed by the 'true' self (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Michie & Gooty, 2005). Following from this, most authors see self awareness as a key component of authenticity (Lord & Hall, 2005; Avolio et al., 2004; Silvia & Duval, 2001). Finally, the literature strongly connects authentic leadership with moral leadership (Hannah, Lester, & Vogelgesang, 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; May, Chan, Hodges, & Avolio, 2003), and through this connection resembles notions of socialized charismatic leadership (Howell, 1988). This may reflect the association of much of the authentic leadership literature with the positive organisational studies movement (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2004). In fact, Avolio and Gardner (2005) make the case for 'authentic leadership' being the 'root' informing construct of all new positive forms of leadership, including 'transformational, charismatic, servant and spiritual leadership' (p. 328). These three themes therefore, that authentic leadership is the expression of the 'true self', that the leader must be relatively aware of the nature of that self in order to express it authentically, and that the self is normatively inclined towards moral virtue form a core of ideas which inform current theorising of authentic leadership.[2]

There seems to be an underlying assumption informing much of the authentic leadership literature that knowing one's 'true self' and behaving from that self-referential place will automatically be communicated to followers who will experience the leader as authentic. However, as Fields (2007) writes 'it is not clear from authentic leadership theory how deeply self-referent aspects of a leader's self (authenticity) and the leader's underlying moral values (integrity) become apparent to followers' (p. 196). Pittinsky and Tyson (2005) echo this, suggesting that interior states are not always readily apparent to observers, yet, 'on a practical level, followers' perceptions of the authenticity of a leader are as important to consider as are the actual thoughts and actions of the leader being perceived' (p. 254).

Although it may be obvious, for the purposes of our argument it is important to point out that it is the leader's body, and the way he or she uses it to express their 'true self', which is the seemingly invisible mechanism through which authenticity is conveyed to others. Notions of embodiment and how the body functions within organisations have received increasing attention within the field of organisational studies (Hassard, Holliday, & Willmott, 2000), however the embodied aspect of leadership receives relatively little attention within the leadership canon. Writers such as Sinclair (2005a,b) and Ropo and Parviainen (1999) are making initial forays into this territory. Their work points to the paradoxical nature of leadership as an embodied phenomenon in that it is an omnipresent, and often definitional aspect of leadership, yet it is almost taboo to speak of leaders' physical forms. We

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[2] We note that Chan et al. (2005) point out the inherently problematic nature of definitions of authentic leadership which also include attributes such as 'developmental focus and positive psychological capacities' and that finding a person who would embody all of these would be difficult!

believe that the recognition of the bodily aspect of leadership is critical to understanding how authentic leadership is perceived. Before exploring the implications of this idea more fully, we examine another crucial aspect of authentic leadership, the way the notion of the 'self' itself is constructed.

2.1. Constructions of 'the self' within authentic leadership

The notion that authenticity is essentially a self-referent concept follows from Erickson's definition of the authentic self as existing 'wholly by the laws of its own being' (1995, p. 125). The authentic leadership literature is littered with references to authentic leadership being an expression of the 'true self' (Avolio et al., 2004; George, 2003; Avolio & Gardner, 2005). But what is the nature of that 'true self'?

Certainly, this question has been debated by human beings probably as long as they have had reflexive capacity to pose it. Here, we draw primarily from Western-based psychological literature in considering how the self is constituted. Wilson (1988) provides a helpful framing of the distinction between psychological theories he labels 'humanistic' or 'essentialist' in their treatment of the 'self' such as those developed by Maslow (1968, 1976) and Rogers (1961), and more 'interactionist' perspectives such as those developed by Mead (1934), Gergen (1977) and Lewis (1979) among others.

On first glance, the authentic leadership literature seems to follow the essentialist perspective, with the existence of a 'true self' which can readily be accessed taken for granted. However, more interactionist perspectives are apparent in the work of theorists such as Lord and Brown (2004) who base their notion of the self on ideas of 'working selves' and 'possible selves' as advanced by Markus and Nurius (1986) and Markus and Wurf (1987). In a similar vein, Sparrowe (2005) calls for the importance of understanding the construction of the self as an ongoing process which emerges through self narrative processes. Shamir and Eilam (2005) support this view, arguing that the self is a 'subjective phenomenon' which develops through articulation of 'life stories' conveyed to others as well as to oneself.

A number of theorists highlight the inherent dilemma between acting 'authentically' if that authenticity is grounded in a uni-dimensional view of the self and the role requirements of leadership. For instance, although Solsik, Avolio, and Jung (2002) are specifically referring to charismatic leadership, it is interesting to note that their idea of a 'variety of identity images' allows for the reading of more 'authentic' enactment within different contexts. A concept which might further elucidate how a variety of identity images may contribute to authentic enactment is that of 'situated identity'. Schlenker (1985) defines identity as being 'one's true self, which is socially constructed and refined through years of social relations and becomes a relatively stable part of the 'self system'. One's 'situated identity', on the other hand, is how the identity becomes operationalised within particular situations and contexts.

Underpinning much of this literature, whether from the psychological or leadership domains, is the often ghostly and unacknowledged 'choosing' self, which mediates a relationship between an internal personal realm and the external world in which any possibility of a 'true self' operates. Wilson (1988) engages with this paradox head-on and it is worth introducing his argument in more depth because of its relevance for our own work. Drawing from Ginsberg's writings (1984) Wilson proposes that a more inner-oriented experience of self, i.e. a more 'essentialist' sense of self, is grounded in 'somatic self processes'. This is the realm of emotional bodily reactions, such as butterflies in the tummy, the headiness of elation, or the queasiness associated with uncertainty. He suggests that being attentive to these somatic events provides the possibility for 'self actualisation' (Maslow, 1976) and is crucial for the development of the true self.

However, the true self also develops within an external context, and Wilson goes on to suggest that this 'interactionist' self results from symbolic interactions occurring outside of the internal world. These symbols include the language people use to tell us about ourselves, our location in family and organisational structures, the gestures and facial expressions with which our behaviour is received and responded to, all of the many ways in which the world tells us 'who we are'. The key point about both ways of knowing the self Wilson offers, is that, 'although it is useful to distinguish between the symbolic and somatic self processes, the two are clearly interlinked.' (1988, p. 45) Wilson quotes Shibutani (1961) to explicate this point more fully:

> All somatic experiences are somehow related to one's conception of himself (sic) and there is continuity in his life to the extent that he can organise them into some kind of unit. Thus, one's body becomes the nexus of the various experiences that enable him to identify himself as a person of a particular sort. (p. 222)

This suggests that the ground for a person's awareness of self, both in terms of the somatic sense but also in terms of the symbolic sense, is negotiated, made sense of, and then expressed through the body. Enacting that self is dependent, in the first instance on awareness of the somatic clues the body gives us about how we are experiencing a given situation. Ginsberg (1984) and Sarbin (1968) conclude that our kinaesthetic sense of ourselves is our most primordial, and emerges from a level of the self not yet mediated by symbolic interactions. This would suggest that the body is a more trustworthy ground for revealing individuals' deeper, perhaps 'truer' motives and emotions.

Such an interpretation could account for the raft of leadership studies which indicate that charisma is attributed on the basis of the way in which messages are delivered, rather than the actual content of them in followers' assessment of leaders' charisma (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; Howell & Frost, 1989; Holladay & Coombs, 1993; Holladay & Coombs, 1994). Similarly, we would suggest, in assessing a leader's level of authenticity, in the first instance followers will scrutinise their bodily signals. This analysis

could explain the high degree of interest in 'Hillary's Tears'—their potential for revealing emotions and motives below the polished performance the public had come to expect from her.

We now turn to a critical question this paper raises. If we are proposing that embodiment of the 'true self' demands the interaction of an inner-informed somatic sense of the body with symbolically mediated sense-making processes informed by the external context, how might that be accomplished in a way that is consistent with the expression of authentic leadership? We propose the possibility of a conscious process being brought to this mediation, and examine the way actors create authentic performances as a way of illuminating how that might be accomplished.

3. Acting authentically

> 'Don't take a part if it isn't in you—a part has to be real to you before it can be real to an audience…' Dustin Hoffman playing Michael Dorsey in the film 'Tootsie'

Turning to the literature on acting in order to develop a theory of embodied authentic leadership may at first glance appear to be a contradictory pursuit. Surely the whole point of authentic leadership is that it eschews 'acting', as Solsik et al. (2002) assert, authentic leaders in fact do not 'act', they score low in terms of self monitoring (Snyder, 1987; Snyder & Gangestad, 1986) and they are not focused on impression management (Goffman, 1959). However, we would argue that the ability to convey a leadership performance which is read as authentic is not necessarily accomplished through sheer naivety. If that were the case, authenticity would be inept as often as it is masterful. The real question is, how does one create a leadership enactment, which in some way expresses something authentic about the self in a given situation, which can consequently be read and interpreted as authentic?

To further illustrate the seemingly contradictory nature of the terrain, we offer another example from the Democratic primary election; commentary from *The London Times* newspaper on 20 March 2008 in response to Barack Obama's 'A More Perfect Union' speech. Benedict Nightingale writes:

> There's astonishingly little of the actor about Barack Obama, and that's meant as a compliment. He doesn't soar or reach for rhetorical climaxes. He doesn't twist his audiences' heartstrings even when he's talking of matters close to his heart. When he speaks of his wife or his 'precious daughters' there's no throb in his voice. And does this make him bland or dull? Quite the opposite.

> Somehow he has mastered the art of conveying feeling, strong feeling, without seeming emotionally manipulative. He stands there in his sober suit. His voice is firm, his body-language surprisingly still. He makes few, if any, movements with his hands or arms. In terms of delivery, he's as far from the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, the old preacher he manages to berate without disowning, as it is possible to be. And all this combines to reinforce his basic message: I have a black face, but I am capable of representing the nation in all its diversity.

> Indeed, you might almost say that he's leadership incarnate.

In this interpretation the Senator's delivery is noted for its absence of large arm movements, moderate voice modulation, and lack of animation associated with more 'actorly' performances. Yet, Obama is seen, by this commentator anyway, as 'authentic', as 'leadership incarnate'. In fact, Nightingale locates the power of the speech in its moderate tones, Obama's self presentation in his 'sober suit'. How is it that Obama has mastered the capacity to express 'strong emotion', without being 'emotionally manipulative'—and probably more importantly, without being 'dull' or 'boring'? We turn to the acting literature for clues as to how such a performance might be generated.

3.1. 'Acting towards authenticity'

Modern acting in the West is generally based in Constantin Stanislavski's (1936a,b, 1961) system of acting (often called method acting). In the words of the influential American director Harold Clurman, "It is the only thoroughgoing formulation of the actor's craft" (1972 p. 145). Acting in the East follows much older traditions such as Kabuki and Noh. However, there is a similarity: "When one reads the tracts of the actor Zeami (1363–1444), the Noh theatre 'Shakespeare,' one imagines one is reading Stanislavsky in poetic apothegms" (Clurman, 1972 p. 147). What is the Stanislavski system? Again, we turn to Clurman:

> The system *is* a technique, it is not an end in itself. Nor is it a *theory*… it is a means whereby a particular artist or group of artists may most authentically and completely manifest whatever they wish in the theatre." (italics in original, Clurman, 1972 p. 147)

The key phrase is "authentically and completely manifest". This is not acting as pretending to be something or someone you're not, it is not acting as faking it — it is acting as producing real, authentic behaviour on stage.

This difference between enacting the external manifestations and having the interior experiences that result in those external manifestations is central to the system and producing authenticity. It is a difference that we have been aware of since long before Stanislavski's work. Shakespeare has Hamlet speak of this difference when his mother suggests that he seems to be overly taken with his father's death. To which Hamlet replies:

> Seems, madam! nay it is; I know not 'seems.'
> 'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
> Nor customary suits of solemn black,
> Nor windy suspiration of forc'd breath,
> No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
> Nor the dejected haviour of the visage,
> Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,
> That can denote me truly. These indeed seem,
> For they are actions that a man might play:But I have that within which passeth show—
> These but the trappings and the suits of woe.
>   (Shakespeare, 1936 p. 1150)

As Clurman describes it, "When an actor exhibits sorrow or rage, nobility or exaltation, without our feeling something of their reality within him, we who employ the vocabulary of the system say he is playing the result: he is demonstrating what he wants to believe he is expressing. But unless we are guileless we fail to believe him though his demonstration may be executed with remarkable expertise" (1972 p. 148).

The difference between playing the result and actually feeling the experience is explained by physiology. Neurophysiology indicates that when we are happy, hundreds of different muscles in our face move in various ways resulting in a smile. Some of those muscles are voluntary and under our conscious control, and others are involuntary and we cannot consciously control them. If we smile when we do not actually feel happy, only the voluntary muscles respond and the resulting expression differs from that created when both voluntary and involuntary muscles are involved.

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 (Ekman, 2003). Thus to be perceived as authentic, an actor needs to express the feelings and emotional state he *really* feels, i.e. those congruent with his somatic clues. Doing so activates the involuntary muscles as well as those consciously activated when one knows one 'should' be expressing a certain emotion. The Stanislavski system provides further ideas as to how such an effect can be consciously produced.

3.2. The Stanislavski system

Stanislavski wrote about the technique by telling the story of an actor as he learns to act (1936a,b) and also offering several specific examples of the system being used (1961). "Through the System, actors learn natural laws and how to use them consciously in re-creating human behaviour on stage" (Moore, 1984 p. 9). However, as Moore (1991) writes, "He did not formulate his final technique in any written treatise. He did not, by any means, record all of his thoughts on paper; and what he did write did not satisfy him" (p. 8). Here then, we are at least two steps removed from Stanislavski's original intent. Firstly, these techniques were to be passed from teacher to student in an embodied fashion, rather than through written communication as we are attempting here. Secondly, there are obvious limitations to applying Stanislavski's ideas holistically to the leadership domain as they were developed for theatre. However, we believe there are sufficient parallels between the performative aspects of leadership (Grint, 2001; Vaill, 1989) and theatre to make the comparison valid.

Stanislavski started with the observation that some actors occasionally became inspired and produced great performance in which they seemed to actually live the experiences and emotions of the character they were playing. How might this phenomenon of inspiration come under conscious control? He discovered that "Emotions cannot be stirred directly" (Moore, 1984 p. 12), that is, you cannot simply try to be angry or feel love and produce a believable performance. His key insight was that:

> Internal experiences and their physical expression are unbreakably united. "The first fact," said Stanislavski, "is that the elements of the human soul and the particles of a human body are indivisible." The thesis of Stanislavski, that human psychological life—moods, desires, feelings, intentions, ambitions—is expressed through simple physical actions, has been confirmed by such scientists as Ivan Pavlov and I. M. Sechenov. (Moore, 1984 p. 17)

In this way, Stanislavski focuses on physical actions. It is important to stress the meaning Stanislavski brings to his understanding of what constitutes physical action. For him, rather than being limited to isolated movement, physical actions incorporate the intention by which they are fuelled, their purposes, as well as the surrounding circumstances of their manifestation. In short, physical actions encompass all of the emotional and intellectual materials associated with them. In this way, Stanislavski works to overcome the tendency we have in the West to sever the externally active physical body from its interior life of thinking and feeling. His system highlights the inseparability of inner and outer bodily being, and the critical

nature of that relationship in authentic enactment. In her text on auditioning, Joanna Merlin elaborates this point when she writes:

> What is an actable choice? It is a choice, rooted in the text, that incites you to act, a choice that marshals your intuition, imagination, senses, and reason to help bring the text and the character to life. An unactable choice maybe based on a correct idea or a reasonable interpretation of the text, but it is acting from the neck up; talking—yada, yada, yada—based on a rational analysis and knowledge of the text. It might get you an "A" in a college essay but it won't get you the part. (Merlin, 2001 p. 42)

The importance of the intermingling of internal and external aspects of a given moment illustrates Wilson's (1988) point about the body's role in mediating somatic, internally generated 'body knowledge' and more externally generated symbolic knowledge of the self in context. In order to be read as authentic, enactments, whether by actors or by leaders, must convey congruence between the two as expressed through the topography of the body. Stanislavski's approach to enabling actors to bring that mediation into more conscious awareness evolved through three stages; memory of emotions, the 'magic if' and physical problems (Clurman, 1972). We introduce each here, briefly considering their implications for leaders as well as actors.

3.3. Memory of emotions

The primary source from which an actor can draw to create the emotional world of their character is their own life. As Shurtleff tells us:

> And what does acting turn out to be? Using your own self. Working from what's inside you. Not being someone else, but being you in different situations and contexts. Not escaping you, but using yourself naked and exposed up there on the stage or on the silver screen. (1978 p. 3)

In an analogous way, the authentic a leader must draw from the material of his or her own life. In the first instance, this involves 'connecting with themselves' (Linver & Mengert, 1994), which means drawing from the emotional memories and their related somatic clues intertwined with key events of one's life. Working from the authentic leadership perspective, Sparrowe (2005) similarly points to the power of recalling and articulating the narrative of one's life and particular key incidents in the generation of one's leadership identity. This memory must be specific and detailed enough to bring back the physical feelings of the emotion. When the memories restimulate the feelings of the emotion, others can see that we are experiencing emotions (unless we do a great deal of work to conceal them, which is seldom completely successful) (Stone et al., 2000).

The demonstration of emotion can be subtly expressed, as long as it connects with a resonating truth of one's own experience. Returning to the example of Obama's 'A More Perfect Union' speech, perhaps the power of its delivery is in the way it quietly connects with truths that are central to what the Senator knows of himself and his experience. He doesn't have to 'act into' what he is saying, the congruence of his message and its delivery connects with listeners at that kinaesthetic level of shared human experience of how the kinds of things he is talking about can be embodied.

Of course, experiencing real emotions and letting others see them as such invites vulnerability. Witness the media commentary which berated Hillary Clinton for her expression of weakness, just as it applauded the authenticity of its expression. 'Hillary's Tears' highlights the paradoxical nature of this territory—in exposing your 'true self' you become vulnerable, even as the possibility for deeper connection with others is born.

3.4. Magic if

The next stage of the development of the system expanded the focus beyond the actor to the surrounding context with the 'magic if'. Although Stanislavski believed that no sane person could actually believe the events on stage were real, they could act 'as if' they were. The 'magic if' also allows for adaptations or substitutions between events which evoke powerful emotional memories. For example, if a character is embarrassed by something that the actor doesn't find embarrassing, the actor can substitute a moment in their own life which did evoke embarrassment, and act 'as if' that were happening instead.

One critical way that actors use the 'magic if' is to be in communion with the other actors on stage. For Stanislavski it is critical that an actor always be in communion — usually with the other actors, but occasionally just with themselves. It is just not believable when an actor has gaps in relating to others (such as when they stop paying attention while others are talking and think about their own next line). Instead, the actor acts 'as if' they don't know what others on stage will say, which enables them to be more present and in communion with the other actors. Moore expresses it this way:

> To be in communion with another person on stage means to be aware of that person's presence, to make sure that he hears and understands what you tell him and that you hear and understand what he tells you. That means mutual influence. (Moore, 1984 p. 35)

Being in communion means being in relationship (Halpern & Lubar, 2003) with others, authentically connecting and being influenced by and influencing others on a moment by moment basis. It is this sense of communion that we take as being critical for

leadership authenticity. To be in communion with others on a moment by moment basis requires being present in the moment. Although not being present in the moment (as we are occupied with thoughts of the past or future) may feel completely natural, it does not come across as authentic. It is only when we are present and in communion that others experience us as being authentic.

3.5. Physical action

Stanislavski's system culminates in the technique of physical action. As Moore describes it:

> … every nuance of emotion is connected with a particular physical action. Therefore that action must be carefully selected on the basis of the play's circumstances. It must be the indispensable physical action connected with the emotion which the actor must bring out (Moore, 1984 p. 19).

The technique involves identifying the action, or speech act (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) that is expressed with the text and circumstances of the play. For example, one character might say to another "I missed you last night." The action associated with the line could express a reprimand, or friendly interest, or any number of other options depending on the situation. Identifying the right action for the part requires analysis, experimentation in the rehearsal process and an actor's sense of artistry and intuition.

In order to discover all of the aspects associated with an action, actors play with different actions during rehearsal and learn about the obstacles inherent in portraying actions in certain ways. For example, if an actor's action is to get away from another character in a scene they could simply walk off the stage, unless there is an obstacle that keeps them there, such as needing something the other character can give them. An actor may want to show the other character that they love them, but also that they are afraid of being rejected. This process is akin to that of finding the competing commitments (Kegan & Lahey, 2001) inherent within the complexity of human motivation. The way in which such 'living contradictions' (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006) are embodied and conveyed actually leads to more authentic enactments. We suggest that similarly, leaders must find ways of expressing the often contradictory aspects of how they are feeling within certain contexts in order to be perceived as acting authentically. We will examine this idea in more detail as part of our theory of embodied authentic leadership.

In addition to unearthing the complexity and living contradictions inherent in the portrayal of believable characters, actors experiment with different actions in order to find those which bring the part, the play, and the entire theatre alive. Some actions are uninteresting or disconnecting for the audience. This is not due to their being good or ethical, but rather to their capacity to resonate with the audience in a powerful way. Shurtleff describes making these powerful choices:

> … finding a reason to express your fullest feelings deeply and importantly, saying yes to the possibilities that are within a relationship. Human beings, fortunately, don't operate out of reason. What motivates human beings are dreams. … This book is about finding the dream in you and learning to put it right up there on the stage, where everybody can see (Shurtleff, 1978 p. 5).

This quote points to an aspect of authentic leadership which we have not touched on before, but which is related to the role of symbolic, interactionist knowing in the enactment of the 'true self'. That is the notion of 'the dream'. Leader-like actions are tied to the motivations and dreams of the group which they lead (Gardner, 1995). Authentic leaders, whose dreams may be authentic to themselves, but which are not shared by those who would follow them, will soon find themselves being authentic individuals, not necessarily authentic leaders. Authenticity is inextricably linked with notions of identity—and in the context of leadership, the salience of that identity must be strong for both the leader as an individual, and importantly for the collective identity of followers as well (Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins, 2005).

We suggest that these three stages of Stanislavski's system provide analogous insight into how embodied authentic leadership might be created. We now turn to consider how they might contribute to a theory of how embodied authentic leadership is created.

4. Theory of embodied authentic leadership

Drawing upon the issues discussed in the first part of the paper on authentic leadership and in the second part on method acting, we suggest that creating embodied authentic leadership incorporates three key aspects: 1) self-exposure, 2) relating, and 3) leaderly choices. We introduce and discuss each in turn.

4.1. Self exposure

Just as an actor must feel real emotions in order to express them in a way that will be perceived as authentic, similarly a leader must be attentive to the somatic clues of their body as they experience situations, and then choose how to express them. We highlight the role of choicefulness in this process, because authentic leadership is based not only on those inner feelings and emotions, but on the requirements of the context within which one is enacting leadership. For example, when a military officer leads troops into battle he is almost certainly feeling a complex set of emotions, which could include fear, resolve, a sense of duty, courage, connection to the soldiers, and so on. As a leader he can choose to express the resolve and courage, while also recognizing his feelings of fear and anxiety.

Without self knowledge he may be unaware of just how afraid he really is and even though he tries to present himself as being courageous, the fear will likely be very clear to the men. As Merleau Ponty (1962) tells us, there is 'no hidden self, entirely hidden and separated from other people; we are 'primordially expressive'. Furthermore, although someone with very little self knowledge may appear authentic as they involuntarily express their feelings, they are like Stanislavksi's inspired actors who cannot control and reproduce their performance. Finding ways of expressing something of the cocktail of emotions present will add depth and authenticity to how leadership is embodied.

Although the potential drawbacks of expressing the 'true self' have been noted earlier in this paper, a growing number of studies point to the importance of leaders expressing their vulnerabilities in order to more fully engage with and establish trust from followers (Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Quinn, Spreitzer, & Brown, 2000; Avolio et al., 2004). In particular, through revealing vulnerability, it is suggested that followers can more readily identify with such leaders, resulting in more positive and influential relationships between leaders and followers (Kark & Shamir, 2002; Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003). This observation leads to the next aspect of embodied authentic leadership, relating.

4.2. Relating

Relating starts with the capacity to be present in the here and now, but extends beyond that. It includes Stanislaviski's communion with self, others, and with the particular context and situation as it presents itself in a given moment. Like the 'vulnerability' terrain highlighted earlier, this requirement to relate to the specific context raises contradictions for the enactment of leadership. By its nature, leadership often requires movement into situations beyond the status quo (Bass, 1985). How does a leader relate in an authentic way to a situation that they have never been in before? How is it possible to enact a desired leadership self (perhaps modelled on significant others), in never-before-encountered circumstances?

This is the issue Ibarra (1999) presents in her study of young consultants and bankers moving beyond technical roles to more corporate, leadership positions. In the population studied, three strategies for enacting 'provisional' selves were employed, two of which were based on role modelling more senior managers' ways of being. However, Stanislavski's system offers another strategy, that of working with the 'magic if' in such situations.

For example, imagine a faculty member who has decided they want to be a leader and one of their primary leadership values is creating mutuality with their colleagues. Then imagine a colleague making a remark in a Departmental meeting that invokes a strong negative reaction in our would-be leader. Intervening in such an incident is uncharted ground, but the faculty member has rehearsed for such an event and has a generic script, based on the advice of a colleague that says, "narrate what is happening for you and inquire what is happening for others."

The faculty member attempts to do so, stumbling along, feeling awkward and inauthentic as she attempts to be open about how she is feeling (without blaming the other faculty member) and inquires into how her colleague is feeling. In enacting this intervention, our would-be leader keeps in mind the 'magic if' — 'what would I do if I believed the other person truly had the best interests of the department in mind?' By narrating her own feelings, our leader stays present in the moment and connected to the context. By inquiring she attempts to deepen the relationship with the colleague that has evoked the negative reaction. Although she feels awkward, many of the other faculty perceive her as embodying an authentic reaction to the situation, which also connects to the would-be leader's deeply held values about creating mutuality amongst colleagues.

This example points to another paradoxical quality of embodied authentic leadership—that it does not always *feel* comfortable. In Ibarra's (1999) study cited earlier, the third, and least successful strategy employed by young consultants and bankers moving to managerial positions was that of 'being true to oneself'. In essence, this meant that rather than mimicking more senior managers, they only relied on behaviours which they recognised as being part of their existing repertoire. Ibarra attributes the relative lack of advancement on the part of these people to their acting in accordance with their feelings of immaturity and inexperience, rather than in accordance with their current situation and possible selves which could ideally operate within the changed situation. The problem was further exacerbated by the ensuing limited growth of their behavioural repertoires.

Those who 'tried out' other ways of behaving were in the long run more successful at finding ways of being which were not experienced as 'fake', but which also incorporated new ways of being. She writes;

> By rehearsing these clumsy, often ineffective, sometimes inauthentic selves they learned more about the limitations and potential of their repertoires and thus began to make decisions about what element to keep, refine, reject or continue to search for (779).

Similarly, we would argue that equating authenticity with a felt sense of comfort or familiarity limits the potential for developing a dynamic and robust enactment of the 'true self', which necessarily needs to grow in response to changing circumstances and situational demands. This leads to the third aspect of our theory of embodied leadership, which incorporates a fuller appreciation of the 'leaderly' aspects of authentic leadership.

4.3. Leaderly choices

Here we suggest that an individual can reveal their 'true self' and relate well to others and the particular moment, but still not be perceived as an authentic leader because they are not experienced as embodying leadership in a way perceived by the group to be 'leaderly'. This dynamic was alluded to in the discussion of 'dreams', when the importance of individual and group 'identity' was

highlighted. Fundamentally, a leader embodies the identity story of the group (Gardner, 1995) and acts in ways that excite others to connect to the leader and follow him or her. According to Grint (2001) leadership involves the art of articulating a group's identity, framing a narrative of who they are and how they have come to be, as well as where they are going. This identification in some way also prescribes the actions which a leader can embody and still be accepted as leader of a group.

For example, in her study of the Australian woman police commissioner, Chris Nixon, Sinclair (2005b) points to the public outcry that occurred as a result of Nixon marching in a Gay Rights March. Although her affiliation to Gay Rights was a deeply held, authentic connection on Nixon's part, in subsequent years she refrained from marching. For the particular constituency of which she was a leader, supporting the march through her physical presence was not seen to be 'leaderly'. Therefore, she chose, in that instance, to find other ways of supporting the movement which still enabled her to express her authentic connection, but also enabled her to retain her leadership role within her particular constituency.

5. Conclusions and areas for further research

In this paper we have discussed the centrality of embodiment to the creation of authentic leadership on the part of leaders, as well as the experience of authentic leadership on the part of followers. Producing embodied authentic leadership, we've suggested, is not a straightforward process of merely 'expressing one's true self'. Instead, it involves the balancing and resolution of paradoxes and tensions, many of which have their origin in bodily and unconscious processes. For instance, a leader may authentically be experiencing fear and uncertainty, as well as excitement and hope in the face of organisational catastrophe. Enacting one's 'true self' in such situations calls for leaders to balance how they might express something of the complexity of their competing emotional and bodily reactions in a way which is experienced as 'leaderly' for those looking for guidance in those situations.

Similarly, enacting one's 'true self' necessarily places the leader in a vulnerable arena, with the corresponding benefits and difficulties associated with such potential insecurity. How does a leader maintain such a position, while acknowledging that in doing so, they may leave themselves open to attack? Perhaps the greatest challenge to embodying authentic leadership is faced as leaders resolve the tensions that will occur between their individual, truly felt commitments and the identity needs of the group which they lead.

Our account presents a myriad of opportunities for empirical research to test its applicability to the experience of lived leadership as well as to investigate and develop its theoretical claims. As a starting point, we would be keen to understand more about the ways in which leaders who are perceived to be 'authentic' actually experience themselves at a somatic level of awareness. What are the strategies they employ for resolving and expressing conflicting emotions? What do they attend to in the external environment which allows them to embody their commitments in a way that is not experienced by others as 'impression management'?

From the perceivers' orientation, it would be interesting to assess how followers make aesthetically based assessments of their experiences of leaders. How do they differentiate between authentic and inauthentic leadership performances on an aesthetic basis? And perhaps most importantly, what affect does embodied authentic performance have on them?

We also suggest that there are implications for leadership development. There is a growing industry in using theatre for leadership development (e.g. Halpern & Lubar, 2003) which, although often very successful, generally lacks a well developed theoretical basis. This work could be the start of a theoretical understanding that could be used to assess and develop theatre-based leadership development. As such, it perhaps offers us another small step in understanding the arts of leadership (Grint, 2001).

Fundamentally, we hope the ideas within this paper stimulate further research and discussion in this potentially rich, but inherently paradoxical aspect of leadership. Our intention is certainly not to produce a 'step-by-step guide' to creating authentic leaders. Rather we wish to describe and attend to a way of being in the world which holds the power to inspire, encourage and motivate others through its true, yet elusive quality.

Acknowledgement

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