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TELLING TALES OUT OF SCHOOL: A RELATIONAL APPROACH TO AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

Can authentic leadership engender ethical communities? If so, in what ways? One way that leading authentically may help engender ethical communities is by attending to relationships. Focusing on relational aspects may have value in promoting the ethical potential of authentic leadership. For that ethical potential to be realized, however, leaders must be mindful of differing viewpoints and diverse ways of leading-in-the-world. In developing my argument I draw upon the work of Hannah Arendt (1958, 1965, 1971, 2005) and Gail Furman (2004, 2012). I also share key findings from a phenomenological study into authentic leadership conducted with ten senior women leaders in higher education. I concentrate on two themes. The first theme concerns how leaders work to develop authentic engagement in the workplace. The second theme relates to the ways in which institutional limitations can hamper a leader's ability to lead in a genuine manner. As such, authentic leadership may be more complex than current research indicates.

Introduction

Can authentic leadership engender ethical communities? If so, in what ways? One way that leading authentically may help engender ethical communities is by attending to relationships. Focusing on relational aspects may have value in promoting the ethical potential of authentic leadership. For that ethical potential to be realized, however, leaders must be mindful of differing viewpoints and diverse ways of leading-in-the-world. As such, I share key findings from a phenomenological study on authentic leadership with ten senior women leaders in higher education. I concentrate on two themes. The first theme concerns how leaders attempt to create authentic engagement in the workplace. The second theme relates to institutional limitations that may hamper a leader's ability to lead in a genuine manner. Each theme reveals ethical complexities and possibilities vis-à-vis leading authentically and building community. They show there is no one way of leading authentically, nor any singular way of engendering ethical community.

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I entitled this article "Telling tales out of school" because I want to both complicate and complement current discussions on authentic leadership through illuminating the different ways that authenticity is perceived. It is a tale in that stories can offer us a new way of thinking about a concept, but it is also an ironic reflection upon how women's ways of leading are sometimes ignored. In an Arendtian (1958) sense, we tell tales not because we like to tittle-tattle, but rather because it is through narrative that we create meaning in the world. Such meaning is always informed by lived experience.

In developing my argument I draw upon the work of Hannah Arendt (1958, 1965, 1971, 2005) and Gail Furman (2004, 2012). First, Arendt (1958) provides us with a richer way of thinking about the merits of authentic leadership that is relational. Through acting and speaking we reveal ourselves to one another. This revealing always brings something new into the world. Every time we lead, we do so in a manner informed by the particular situation, as well as past experience. Thus, leading authentically requires a leader to be cognizant of situational context. Being sensitive to context enables leaders to deal with diverse circumstances thoughtfully. Responding to each situation in a thoughtful way helps leaders to develop a culture of authentic engagement. It is in the context of authentic engagement that Arendt (1958) offers inspiration, providing a richer way of thinking about authentic leadership that emphasizes relationships. Second, Furman's (2004) work on the ethics of community helps us see how authentic leadership needs to be rooted in a relational praxis. She provides us with an ethical road-map from which to navigate some of the complexities of leading educational institutions in the 21st century. Both thinkers give us new approaches to considering authentic leadership that are cognizant of ethics and rooted in community.

I begin by examining some tenets of authentic leadership in leadership and educational leadership scholarship. Following this, I draw on Arendt's work to rethink authentic leadership in a more relational way. Before reviewing the study's methodology and research findings, I consider how Furman's ethic of community adds value to thinking about authentic leadership. In the final section, I examine the ethical implications of these research findings, and offer suggestions for further research.

Authentic Leadership

Recently, authentic leadership has garnered interest in educational and business environs. From best-selling books to a host of conferences on the topic, leading authentically appears to be part of the ethical *zeitgeist* of 21st century perceptions of leadership (Gardiner, 2015.) Initially, authentic leadership was proposed as a way for leaders to deal with ethical issues by encouraging them to act in a genuine manner (George, 2004). Yet given

that ethical scandals continue apace, authentic leadership does not appear to provide the guidance needed. If leaders are being authentic and still acting unethically, what purpose does this theory have? I will return to this point in the conclusion.

Building on earlier scholarship on transformational leadership, some scholars contend authentic leadership has four measurable components: self-awareness, balanced information processing, relational transparency, and internalized moral perspective (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Others argue authentic leadership is measurable through statistical means (Avolio & Mhatra, 2011). But the notion that authenticity is measurable is open to debate (Ford & Harding, 2011). Moreover, within the scholarship on authentic leadership, critics argue there is a tendency to portray leaders in an idealistic manner. This idealistic portrayal confuses description, that is, the way that leaders do act, with prescription, or how scholars think leaders should act (Ciulla, 2014).

What one leader regards as authentic action may not be read as such by others. One university president, for example, described how his attempts at an authentic way of leading, which in his view meant collaboration, was viewed as weakness (Eddy, 2009). The institution was used to a particular kind of leader. When this man did not measure up, despite his authentic intentions, others considered him a failure. His mode of authentic leadership was out of step with the institutional norm. As a result, what he regarded as authentic leadership did not correspond with institutional expectations of the Presidential role. Simply put, it matters less how leaders perceive themselves than how a community perceives a leader's actions to be in keeping with collective ideals (Gardiner, 2015).

Although it might seem that authentic leadership is about honesty, being completely transparent is not always appropriate for leaders. Indeed, Ibarra (2015) maintains leaders who are transparent lack strategic awareness. Goffee and Jones (2005) declare that those who assume "authenticity stems from an uncontrolled expression of their inner selves will never become authentic leaders" (p. 8). Yet maybe it is not showing emotion that is the problem, but showing the appropriate kind of emotion. Bornstein (2014) argues that an effective leader knows when "it is prudent to be circumspect" (p. 192). In her view, good leaders recognize when it is appropriate to display their feelings, and when to show restraint. It would appear that a leader must know when to be genuine and when to be guarded. Thus, displaying genuine emotion may prove counterproductive. But if this is the case, what happens to authenticity?

In this section, I have surveyed authentic leadership through the lens of leadership theorists. Now I want to

consider how educational leadership scholars relate authenticity to ethical issues.

Authenticity through the Lens of Educational Leadership

Scholars in educational leadership often connect authenticity with a leader's deep understanding of self (Branson, 2010, Starratt, 2004). A deeper understanding of self, Branson (2010) maintains, can assist a leader to act ethically. As such, self-understanding is key to leading in an authentic way. For his part, Begley (2006) describes authentic leadership as "hopeful" and "genuine," since it provides leaders with a creative way to respond to diverse circumstances (p. 570). Yet Begley (2006) cautions that leading authentically must connect with ethical intent; otherwise, a leader's stated authenticity may mask unethical intentions (p. 571). Indeed, it may be difficult for anyone to judge, let alone measure, a person's authenticity, or lack thereof. As Arendt (1965) explains, we never know what someone else is thinking. Instead, we observe a person's words and deeds. But whether this action correlates with their inner feelings is something only they can know. As such, a turn inward may not help us understand how leadership works in the social world.

According to Duignan (2014), authentic leadership reveals a "leadership praxis that linked assumptions and concepts of authentic self through significant human values to leadership and management practices" (p. 153). Although a focus on self is important, he argues that authenticity needs to be understood in relation to how we live in the world and our relationships with others. Starratt (2004) concurs with this view. For him, relationships are at "the centre of human life" (p. 219), thus echoing Arendt's (1958) and Furman's (2004) relational perspective.

Starratt's (2004) tripartite approach to ethics helps us better understand some of the complexities regarding leading authentically. First, his ethic of justice focuses on fairness. The ethic of justice is complicated by his second ethic, that of critique. The ethic of critique looks at barriers to equity, forcing leaders to confront social inequities. Starratt's third ethical dimension is care. Caring is a fundamental human value, he argues, requiring us to treat everyone with dignity, respect and love. Building upon Starratt's ethical framework, Shapiro and Stefkovich (2013) add a fourth ethic, the ethic of profession. They state a person's professional ethics, and code of conduct, influence their ethical perspective. These different perspectives help us see how authentic action may be related to diverse ethical perspectives.

Yet Furman (2004) argues these ethical perspectives, while helpful, place too much emphasis on the individual as the moral agent. This is why she adds a new ethic, that of community. Her ethic of community centers on the

task of building relationships. Community, for Furman (2012), is about "ongoing processes of communication, dialogue and collaboration" (p. 221). Within an ethical community, she argues, each person can play a role in developing processes that enable moral action. These processes include a willingness to listen to others, effective communication, team-work, and encouraging dialogue and debate. Additionally, Furman (2012) regards social justice as vital to creating an ethical community.

Furman (2012) notes that the term "social justice" is often used in a vague manner. She provides a comprehensive framework to assist communities in developing their ethical praxis and social justice initiatives. (Furman's primary focus is schools but her framework, I suggest, works well in other instances, such as higher education.) The framework, according to Furman, is informed by Freire's notion of praxis as reflection and action. For Furman (2012), there are five critical components to envisaging social justice. These components are "personal, interpersonal, communal, systemic and ecological" (p. 193). On a personal level, praxis requires deep self-reflection. From a social justice perspective, it is not enough to comprehend one's biases. Instead, one must act upon this knowledge. On an interpersonal level, leaders need to communicate effectively. Effective communication builds trust across different stakeholder groups. Communally, leaders must develop inclusive practices by creating opportunities for dialogue and debate. Leaders must also work to transform systems that negate social justice. Developing critical consciousness helps leaders understand how to dismantle or mitigate obstacles. Finally, from an ecological standpoint, leaders must understand how their institution fits within a wider socio-political and economic perspective. Leaders and communities can enhance their ethical awareness of social justice by considering these different components.

Additionally, leaders who espouse social justice must be transformative, processual, and action-oriented (Furman, 2012). To be successful change agents, leaders need persistence, courage and commitment. According to Furman (2012), social justice leaders "develop caring relations based in authentic communication" (p. 197). A leader's authentic communication focuses on critical self-reflection. This type of reflective practice helps leaders develop the appropriate mindset to work to build strong relationships and ethical communities.

In this section, I have surveyed how authentic leadership is taken up by educational leadership scholars. Rather than focusing on specific ways of measuring authentic leadership, these scholars consider authentic leadership from a broader ethical perspective. Some focus on the self/other relationship; others are interested in wider ethical issues. What these differing viewpoints illustrate

are some of the complexities of understanding authenticity within a social context.

Authentic Leadership and the Diversity of Lived Experience

To better understand how authentic leadership manifests itself, we need to explore lived experience from different viewpoints. I suggest that phenomenological inquiry is well-suited for this task. When we examine leadership phenomenologically, we discover that every appearance is also concealment. Although it may appear that a leader is acting in a genuine manner, the leader may be acting duplicitously. Thus, our initial perception may be mistaken. It is important to recognize, therefore, that every perception is also an interpretation. Moreover, what is perceived authentic to one person may not be seen as such to another. Hence, authentic leadership will appear to people in diverse ways because each of us perceives the world from a particular situated and embodied standpoint. Our leadership perspective is affected by intersectional issues such as gender, race and class, as well as cultural norms (Acker, 2006; Blackmore, 2013). But rarely does the scholarly literature mention the manner in which our particular standpoint will influence our perception of authenticity.

The argument here is that authentic leadership will show itself in different ways based on our diverse experiences in the world. This is why it is important to consider this concept from a multiplicity of perspectives. As Arendt (2005) tells us "no one can adequately grasp the objective world in its full reality all on his own, because the world always shows and reveals itself to him from only one perspective, which corresponds to his standpoint in the world" (p. 128). The world consists of a plurality of individuals, each with their own tastes and opinions. To understand authentic leadership, it is necessary to attend to diverse perspectives. In the next section, I want to look more closely at gender socialization and authentic leadership.

Gender Socialization

The discourse of authentic leadership is complicated by gender socialization (Eagly, 2005; Sinclair, 2013; Gardiner, 2015). Within our dominant cultural framework, for example, some people believe that it is more "natural" for a woman to lead caringly than it is for a man. Rather than dismissing this form of thinking as essentialist, perhaps there is an underlying reason why some people hold this commonplace belief. It could be argued that, due to gender socialization, women are more mindful of care (Gilligan, 1982). Conversely, gender socialization might be the reason why many male scholars focus on authenticity as self-knowledge and self-reliance (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). In any event, our

comprehension of authentic leadership is influenced by gender.

But few scholars who write about authentic leadership concentrate on how a leader's performance is filtered through the lens of gender. Instead, what we have are scholarly accounts of authenticity that arise from supposedly gender-neutral acts (see Gardiner, 2015; Shaw, 2010; Sinclair, 2013). Yet although scholars perceive authentic leaders in disembodied ways, women leaders are often assessed on their appearance (Sinclair, 2013). Issues irrelevant to a leader's effectiveness, such as being overweight, having grey hair, or demonstrating poor dress sense may have an adverse effect on their leadership. To understand authenticity, we must recognize how gender norms affect the perception of leaders.

Furthermore, Shaw (2010) maintains that much leadership scholarship reproduces the "Cartesian mind/body dualism" (p. 90). As a consequence, the effect of materiality on leaders' bodies is often disregarded. Such disregard serves to ignore how leaders are assessed on their physical appearance. Shaw (2010) further argues that we internalize and reproduce power imbalances in society through our material practices. Hence, discourses like authentic leadership serve to reproduce dominant paradigms about leaders. As a result, gender norms will influence our ideas about a leader's authenticity, either implicitly or explicitly.

Authenticity, as a phenomenon, is socially constructed. We must acknowledge how structural issues and gender socialization influence our understanding of authentic leadership. In the following sections, I turn to the research study and methodology before exploring some key findings.

Research Study

The purpose of the qualitative component of this investigation was to consider how senior women leaders described their experiences of authenticity, or lack thereof, within higher education. I chose to interview women leaders because there is a paucity of data that relates to gendered experiences of leading authentically (Sinclair, 2013; Eagly, 2005). The reason I chose to interview women in higher education was because of my own leadership background in university administration. What interests me is how these women leaders describe what facilitates authenticity in leadership, and what works to limit it. Before turning to a discussion of two themes arising from the research findings, information is provided on the study participants and research methodology.

Ten senior leaders in universities or women's colleges in Canada, the Philippines, and the United States were interviewed for this research study. Five participants

were current or recently retired presidents of higher education institutions. The other interviewees were vice-presidents or officers responsible for research institutes. Three participants self-identified as women of color and two other interviewees identified as coming from working-class, immigrant backgrounds. The diversity of race, class and ethnic backgrounds added a conceptual richness to the study.

Due to financial exigency, interviews were conducted by telephone, with each interview lasting between 45 and 90 minutes. Each participant was sent a copy of the interview transcript to ensure that our conversation was represented accurately. Any further conversations were conducted via email.

Table 1 contains brief information about each participant. In the interest of participant confidentiality, participants were assigned pseudonyms.

Table 1. Study Participants

<i>Name</i>	<i>Role</i>	<i>Country of Origin</i>
Kate	President	Canada
Dianne	Vice-President	U. S. A.
Jane	Associate Vice-Provost	U. S. A.
Laura	International Project Leader/Vice-President	Jamaica
Alison	Director, Leadership Institute	U. S. A.
Jennifer	Former Director, Diaspora Centre, and Dept Chair	Trinidad
Olive	Former President	U. S. A.
Claire	President(recently retired)	U. S. A.
Teresa	President	The Philippines
Jill	President	U. S. A.

Research Methodology

The research methodology adopted for this study was hermeneutic, existential phenomenology. This methodological approach requires the researcher to listen attentively to how research participants describe the phenomenon in question (Van Mannen, 1997). A fundamental characteristic of this methodology is to bring to light hidden dimensions of a phenomenon. This requires a researcher to be open to opinions that differ from her own. Indeed, this kind of inquiry concerns the co-creation of knowledge. Although the scholar will have a working knowledge of a particular topic, it is through dialogue with others that she gains richer insights.

Although it is important for the researcher to find thematic patterns, it is also appropriate that research participants offer contrasting descriptions of the phenomenon (Benner, 1994). Each person's experience of leadership will differ as a result of her unique life

experiences. Hence, thematic patterns, as well as outlying exemplars, offer a fuller dimension of the phenomenon. Thus, I invited interview participants to offer feedback, both during and at the end of the interview, to ensure we had touched on what each considered to be important to authentic leadership.

Each participant was given a copy of her transcript to ensure it was an accurate reflection of our conversation. After receiving feedback from participants as to its validity, I undertook the analysis. Each interview transcript was read first for a global understanding, after which I selected particular topics for a more detailed analysis (Benner, 1994). I identified cross-cutting themes, and narrative exemplars. A theoretical triangulation of narrative data exposed how these leaders' experiences provide us with a nuanced understanding of authenticity and echo emerging literature on the effects of gender socialization and leadership (Sinclair, 2013; Gardiner, 2015).

Three main themes emerged, each shedding light on how women leaders discuss authentic leadership. The first theme relates to ways in which these leaders tried to engender authentic engagement in their respective communities. The second theme concerns the limitations, both personal and institutional, that hamper their ability to lead authentically. The third theme relates to gender socialization; however, given space limitations, in what follows I concentrate on the first two themes.

Research Themes

In this section, I focus on two research themes that illuminate ethical possibilities and challenges in regard to leading authentically and engendering an ethical environment. The first theme concerns how leaders attempt to engender authentic engagement in the workplace. The second theme relates to the ways in which institutional and personal limitations hamper a leader's ability to lead in a genuine manner. Both themes shed light on the phenomenon of authentic leadership from a gendered perspective.

First, leaders spoke of how bureaucratic structures could negate the ability to lead authentically and the development of deeper relationships in the workplace. For example, Alison argued it was incumbent upon a leader to be honest about what she expected of others. Being authentic, for Alison, was essential to building a culture where relationships flourish. In her view, authentic leadership means "being genuine with one another, and creating clear expectations through talking with one another about the relationship." Yet she noted how too much focus on bureaucracy works against the creation of an environment where relationships flourish. Leaders who concentrate on policies and procedures, in Alison's view, ignore the importance of developing meaningful relationships. When leaders do not spend

time building relationships, Alison argued, a workplace will "lack heart, resilience and a feeling of community." In her view, whenever a leader lacks compassion, this may negatively influence a community's ability to weather difficult circumstances.

This aspect of compassion was something that other interviewees discussed. Compassion and care were essential to how many spoke of how they tried to lead in an authentic way. For example, as college president, Jill viewed her primary role as that of facilitator. Being a facilitator, she stated, necessitates not only sharing good news, but also communicating the bad. Such open communication is essential since only then can a community build the trust necessary to cope with adverse situations. Such open communication requires leaders to be candid about the reasons for making unpopular decisions. Candor is necessary because, as Jill explain, when "people do not understand why the leader is making decisions, there's suspicion which can create a toxic culture." From this perspective, acting authentically requires leaders to keep employees informed. This fosters an atmosphere of "collegiality and collaboration in the face of adversity." Building relationships of trust requires leaders to be genuine in their dealings with others. Seen from Jill's perspective, authentic leadership connects with caring and compassion. Leading in this manner is ethical because it places relationships in the foreground.

The second theme emerging from the research findings concerns limitations that arise from trying to lead in an authentic manner. Participants described ethical dilemmas concerning the need to uphold institutional standards that may contradict personal beliefs. They talked about the pressure to perform in line with institutional expectations. Yet conforming to institutional expectations may result in leaders acting in an inauthentic manner. Kate contended that when leaders become "trapped into feeling they have to lead in a particular way, [it] can be soul-destroying." This contradiction between acting in a genuine way and trying to fulfill institutional expectations complicates what it means to lead authentically, especially in relation to ethical conduct.

Research participants expressed contrary opinions regarding ethical compromises and authentic leadership. Marlene argued it was a mistake for a leader to "compromise on core values." Similarly, Jennifer maintained it was essential for a leader not to go against her principles. But others viewed compromise as a necessary "evil." For instance, Olive contended it is sometimes necessary to uphold institutional policies, even when doing so contradicts a leader's beliefs. Such compromise does not mean that a leader is being unethical; rather, the leader is merely being pragmatic.

Although some leaders saw compromise as unethical, for others it was part of a leader's job.

The desire to lead authentically is also complicated by the different situations a leader encounters. For example, it may not always be easy to present oneself as a strong leader. Jane and Claire spoke of work situations where they felt afraid. In these situations, Claire stated it was essential for a woman leader to present a confident persona, irrespective of her inner fears. Hence, to present oneself as strong, it may be necessary to appear in a manner at odds with one's authentic self. In Arendt's (1958) view, it is the person that manages to overcome fear who is courageous. Overcoming one's fears requires that we act, despite our desire to retreat. It is through action that each person is able to work to assuage her fear. This may require us to behave differently from how we feel, that is, to behave in an inauthentic manner.

Yet sometimes it may be incumbent upon leaders to adopt a different persona. Indeed, it seems that a leader may manifest varying personas to fit a particular context. Claire described how some of her colleagues and friends exhibited new behaviors upon becoming a President. They did so, Claire argued, because they wanted others to perceive them as presidential. The problem with acting in this way, Claire contended, was that at some point the mask will slip. It is difficult to keep up the pretense of being someone you are not. Over time, people will see through this act. In doing so, Claire argued, leaders could lose credibility.

This issue of credibility affects leaders for numerous reasons. For example, other participants told me how leaders could lose credibility with their employees by showing too much emotion. Reflecting on her experience working with a leader who showed his disappointment, Kate told me that his negativity had a disastrous effect on employees. Perhaps in some situations it is wiser for a leader not to reveal how she feels. But if this is the case, it surely puts the idea of authenticity in leadership into question.

A further issue participants discussed was the conflicting demands of personal and private lives. Some leaders argued it was vital to keep one's public role separate from personal life. Unlike Claire, Kate had no qualms in admitting that she played a role as leader. This role-playing did not make Kate feel like a phony; rather, she performed her leadership role as the situation demanded. Hence, the notion of role-playing, although anathema to some, was perceived as an integral part of being a leader by others. For a host of reasons, leaders have to manage their self-presentation. Is such self-management ethical? Arguably, that depends upon each person's definition of what ethical action means. What some leaders regarded as unethical, such as a willingness to compromise, others saw as part of a leader's job.

Kate reasoned that there needed to be a gap between the personal, private self and the public leadership role if one wants some kind of work/life balance. With friends and family, Kate said she was a different person from the leader her work colleagues knew. She described herself as shy; in her Presidential role, however, she presents in a confident way. Like Kate, Arendt (1958) has maintained that the separation between public role and private life is essential to personal well-being (p. 71). The ability to retreat into our private space and share our feelings with loved ones enables us gain strength to perform well in public. A life lived in the spotlight can result in psychic distress, since the public gaze offers no respite. Thus, the ability to withdraw from the public realm is essential if we desire equilibrium in our lives.

But other participants vehemently disagreed with this separation between public personae and private self. Laura claimed she was the same person, irrespective of context. Being an authentic leader, she contended, was a result of her earlier politicization. Laura was part of the Civil Rights' Movement in the late 1960s. Her political activity influenced her thinking about racial and systemic oppression. Laura saw it as her moral responsibility to speak out against injustice in the late 1960s and this moral commitment had a lasting effect on her person. In her view, being an authentic leader meant challenging discrimination wherever it appeared.

Although the majority of the women leaders connected their desire to lead authentically with social justice, other participants expressed different viewpoints. Dianne told me she was always thinking about "social capital." That is, Dianne was constantly weighing up the potential outcome of her action. Sometimes, she spoke out; on others occasions, she kept her own counsel. In doing so, Dianne told me she struggled with questions of personal authenticity. For some, leading authentically meant being willing to address social injustice at all times. For others it meant judging the most appropriate course of action in the moment.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our situated, embodied experiences influence our understanding of authentic leadership. When we take account of lived experience, we see how these women leaders have different ideas as to what constitutes leading authentically. Despite these different viewpoints, one commonality was the desire to build strong relationships and ethical communities. They told me that engendering authentic engagement in the workplace emerged through dialogue and openness. Yet these women were no "Pollyannas." They acknowledged difficulties in building relationships and trying to lead in an authentic way. Sometimes, these difficulties relate to institutional pressures to perform leadership in a particular manner. At other moments, it concerns our own human foibles. It seems that no leader always does the right thing, no

matter how authentic they may be or how honorable their intentions. What I took from this is that many women struggled with the idea of authenticity and leadership, not because they did not want to be the best they could, but because they were cognizant of complexity.

These different perspectives illustrate how, phenomenologically, distinctive understandings come to the fore depending on lived experience. For example, issues of race and class were mentioned by participants who identified either as a visible minority or as someone from a working-class background. For these women, authenticity in leadership was intertwined with personal experiences of prejudice. Conversely, none of the middle-class white women I interviewed made reference to race or class. Instead, gender discrimination was a prominent factor. Thus, it seems that prejudice leaves diverse imprints on the psyche that, in turn, influence our understanding of authentic leadership.

Authentic leadership may be facilitated when leaders work with others to engender meaningful engagement in their communities. Building relationships requires leaders to spend more time caring for individuals than on policies and procedures. These findings reaffirm Begley's (2006) and Starratt's (2004) assertion that caring is at the heart of authentic leadership, but they also highlight the importance of creating ethical communities (Furman, 2004). In addition, these accounts suggest that an ethical environment requires leadership praxis based on action as well as reflection. Although these women recognized the importance of reflective thinking, creating ethical community through action seemed paramount. Taking time to build strong relationships was key to this endeavor.

Theoretically, Arendt (1958, 2005) and Furman (2004, 2012) offer alternative approaches that enrich our understanding of authentic leadership. Both thinkers have provided us with complementary ways of thinking that highlight how leadership is a relational praxis. They have also encouraged us to pay attention to context. Being sensitive to context and individual differences enables leaders to work with others to build a culture of authentic engagement. In drawing on these thinkers, we become mindful of the intricacies among authentic leadership, social justice, and engendering ethical communities.

Earlier, I posed a question: if leaders are authentic and act unethically, what purpose does this theory serve? At this stage, I am unsure whether authentic leadership offers a robust framework for encouraging ethical behavior in leaders; however, authentic leadership may have greater ethical promise if we pay more attention to lived experience. As such, future researchers might explore different avenues that show how leaders attempt to create authentic engagement within their communities.

We also need more scholarship that discusses how the intersections of identity, as well as cultural differences, influence our notions of authentic leadership.

In the end, telling tales out of school is but one exploration of a relational approach to authentic leadership. Hopefully, it provides a starting point from which others may consider the interconnections among lived experience, ethics, and questions of authenticity. Perhaps then we will be better able to assess the merits of authentic leadership.

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