

DEGREES OF AUTHENTICITY AT WORK:
REFUTING THE EITHER/OR PARADIGM

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By
James A. Smith, Jr.
Temple University, Fox School of Business
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Examining Committee Members:

Deanna Geddes, Professor, Human Resources Management

Lynne Andersson, Associate Professor, Human Resources Management

Matt Wray, Associate Professor, Sociology

Daniel Isaacs, Assistant Professor, Legal Studies

ABSTRACT

Some would argue that authenticity is a characteristic that is encouraged by managers and leaders in the workplace. But what does it mean to be “authentic” at work today? Does it mean bringing your “whole self” to work every day? And do people want to do that? Should they? And are there limits to their authentic expression? To better understand the concept of authenticity in the workplace, two studies (one qualitative – semi-structured interviews and one quantitative – an online survey) were conducted with managers and non-managers from diverse industries (e.g., financial services, pharmaceutical, residential/corporate moving, energy, utilities, and telecommunications/mass media). Preliminary analysis revealed diverse definitions of workplace authenticity, shedding light on a complex, conceptual landscape. In addition, results indicated a limited range in which employees feel they can express authenticity (demarcated by self and other-imposed “thresholds”), suggesting both individual and organizational factors contribute to one’s ability and willingness to express oneself authentically at work. The goal of this research is to examine existing beliefs regarding authentic expression at work and provide insights to assist future “authenticity at work” research. Specifically, this research seeks to: (1) define a meaning for authenticity at work today; (2) determine what hinders and what helps authentic expression; (3) determine the range for authentic expression at work; (4) explore why authenticity is viewed as an either/or experience, rather than as more or less; and examine how authentic expression affects certain workplace outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job performance). I conclude this research with a post hoc event analysis/deconstruction to illustrate what can happen when a person’s authentic expression crosses an impropriety threshold.

Keywords **authenticity, support, expression, management, culture, threshold, privilege**

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my parents, James A. Smith, Sr. (R.I.P dad)
and Rebecca N. Smith, who first gave me my wings to soar and to
Gina M. Smith, my wife who offered unfaltering
support to her husband throughout
this process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
LIST OF TABLES.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. ESSAY ONE.....	5
Literature Review.....	5
Methods and Data Collection.....	11
Findings.....	19
Discussion.....	31
Limitations	38
Conclusion and Propositions.....	39
3. ESSAY 2.....	41
Introduction.....	41
Literature Review and Hypotheses	43
Methodology and Data Collection.....	54
Results.....	59
General Discussion	63
Limitations and Future Research	67
A Post Hoc Analysis	69
Final Thoughts	87
Conclusion	89
REFERENCES	97
APPENDIX	
A. AUTHENTICITY SURVEY.....	106

LIST OF TABLES

1. Description of Study Participants' organizations.....	13
2. Description of Study participants.....	14
3. Data analysis theme, descriptive behaviors and representative quotes from Study 1 (Theme: Authenticity States and Traits).....	21
4. Data analysis theme, descriptive behaviors and representative quotes from Study 1 (Theme: Communication).....	24
5. Data analysis theme, descriptive behaviors and representatives quotes from Study 1 (Theme: Organizational Culture).....	26
6. What helps and what hinders authentic expression and behavior..... (Study1)	28
7. Correlations and Descriptive Statistics (Study 2).....	91
8. T-test # 1 and T-test #2 (Study 2).....	92
9. Regressions for Variables (Study 2).....	93
10. Survey Responses Question 1 (Study 2).....	94
11. Survey Responses Question 2 (Study 2).....	95

LIST OF FIGURES

1. Dual Threshold Model of Authenticity in Organizations.....	33
2. The person-centered conception of authenticity.....	35

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Great value appears to be associated with employee authenticity at work. There are leaders who express that authenticity is both wanted and welcomed at work, using phrases like, “Be yourself because everyone else is taken”; “We want your truth”; and “Be the best possible you, you can be”. In some organizations employees are encouraged to bring their full selves to the office, to engage in direct and unreserved conversations, and to share personal stories as a way of gaining their colleagues’ trust and improving team synergy (Rosh & Offermann, 2013). The rise in open work spaces and high performance work teams over recent years has only heightened the demand for immediate trust, collaboration and vulnerability—and managers are supposed to set the example (Rosh & Offermann, 2013). Scholarship examining the impact of authenticity in the workplace has found, for instance, that with greater employee feelings of authenticity come greater job satisfaction, engagement, and self-reported performance (Boute, 2016). However, in 2013, a Deloitte study found that more than half of employees in today’s workforce cover up some part of their identity at work to try to fit in, with underrepresented groups (e.g., LGBTQ individuals, Blacks, women of color, women, and Hispanics) feeling the most pressure to “cover” aspects of who they are (Read, 2016). Considering that authenticity is positively discussed and championed in today’s workplace, how can this be?

Historical and current research on the concept of authenticity suggests that it is complex, complicated and compelling. Philosophical meanings of authenticity have been historically articulated in terms of individual virtue and ethical choice, while psychological meanings of authenticity have been articulated in terms of individual traits/states (Adorno, 1953; Baumaster,

1987; Danzinger, 1997; Furtak, 2003; 424; Goldman & Kernis, 2002: 5; Heidegger, 1962, 1927; Hoy et al., 1996; Kernis, 2003a; Kierkegaard, 1996; Novicev, Harvey, Buckley, Brown & Evans, 2006; Pianalato, 2003; Ryan & Deci, 2002; Sartre, 1948). Authenticity—who a person is, how he/she perceives him/herself, and how he/she operates on those perceptions—is an important construct in humanistic psychology as well (Barnett & Deutsch, 2016; Boyraz, Watts & Felix, 2014; Harter, 2002; Maslow, 1962), and has been linked to self-esteem and well-being (Barnett & Deutsch, 2016; Menard & Brunet, 2011; Wood, Linley, Maltby, Balious & Joseph, 2008) as well as lower levels of depression, anxiety, and stress (Barnett & Deutsch, 2016; Gregoire, Baron, Menard & Lachance, 2014; Satici & Kayis, 2013; Wood et al., 2008).

Nonetheless, several scholars dispute that people can even be authentic. Existentialists reject the implication that authenticity relates to an “inner” or “true” self (Lawler & Ashman, 2012). According to this view, people are situated in their world, without a separate and ‘private’ or ‘true’ self—what existentialists refer to as “being-in-the-world” (Lawler & Ashman, 2012, p. 329). Polt (1999) points out that we can never go beyond the world that we occupy (Lawler & Ashman, 2012)—instead, we exist in a context variable over time, and can never be abstracted from this (Lawler & Ashman, 2012, p. 329). We must always interact with people, events, etc., and cannot be dispassionate spectators of our own particular context (Lawler & Ashman, 2012, p.329). Even if we decided and determined not to live this way, we are compelled to do so (Lawler & Ashman, 2012).

Lawler and Ashman (2012, p. 332- 333), drawing on Sartre’s work, provide the following perspective on authenticity:

If asked what is meant by the adjective ‘authentic’, it is likely that most respondents would provide synonyms such as original; genuine; sincere; or truthful. Thus, when we consider something to be authentic we interpret that to mean that we are dealing with the genuine article and that can be important if set within the context of historical

investigation. However, we might question whether it is meaningful to talk of something being ‘authentic’ when that thing is still in the process of becoming. In other words, can we talk of a living human as being ‘authentic’ when that person has the capacity to change and to redefine her/his self constantly? Is it possible to talk of an abstract concept that is subject to constant redefinition as being authentic?

Sartre believed that those who write about authentic leadership think that it is worthwhile to explain the construct of authenticity in both contexts. However, much of the historical and contemporary research on authenticity suggests that peoples’ behavior is distinguishable as either authentic or inauthentic. According to Kernis and Goldman (2006), authentic behavior is distinguished from inauthentic behavior by the conscious, motivated intentions that underlie it. Authentic behavior is guided by an honest assessment of one’s self-aspects by way of the awareness and unbiased processing of its components (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). In essence, authentic behavior is intentional and “choiceful” behavior, oriented toward a “solution” derived from consciously considering our self-relevant “problems” (e.g., potentially competing self-motives, beliefs, etc.) (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). In contrast, inauthentic behavior involves being unaware of, ignoring, oversimplifying, and/or distorting or negatively projecting outcomes (Kernis & Goldman, 2006).

Given the disparate and sometimes contradictory conceptualizations of authenticity among scholars in various disciplines, authenticity at work was explored in two separate essays and accompanying studies. Study 1 is intended to: (1) address the ambiguity regarding what it means to be authentic at work; (2) determine if there is an “authenticity threshold” marking the range in which an employee can express themselves authentically at work; and (3) determine what helps or hinders authentic expression and behavior. Relatedly, Study 1 helps to provide an understanding of why some people thought it was critical to be authentic at work and others did not and assess the fears associated with authentic expression, setting the stage to explore the

degree to which individual and organizational factors contribute to one's ability and willingness to express authentically at work.

Study 2 expands on results of Study 1, including the notion that employee expressed authenticity is not an either/or (authentic or inauthentic) concept. Thus, Study 2 focuses on better understanding the range of expressed authenticity (i.e., more or less authenticity not either/or) at work as well as a deeper exploration of the factors (individual and organizational) that enhance or impede the expression of authenticity. Also, Study 2 examines how one's authentic expression relates to outcomes such as an employee's job satisfaction, organizational commitment and job performance? Study 1 is a qualitative study, using semi-structured interviews with corporate professionals from various industries. Study 2 is a quantitative study (with corporate professionals from various industries) using an online survey.

CHAPTER 2

ESSAY ONE

Literature Review

Historical Perspectives on Authenticity

The construct of authenticity can be traced back to ancient Greek philosophy as reflected by the Greek aphorism “Know Thyself”, inscribed in the Temple of Apollo at Delphi (Gardner, Coglisier, Davis, & Dickens, 2011; Parke & Wormell, 1956). The etymology of the word *authentic* comes from the Greek word *authento*, which means “to have full power” (Gardner et al., 2011; Trilling, 1972), referring to where an individual is “the master of his or her domain” (Gardner et al., 2011; Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Another early reference to authentic functioning is Socrates’ focus on self-inquiry, following his argument that an “unexamined life is not worth living” (Gardner, et al., 2011).

Following Socrates, Aristotle posited a view of ethics that focused on one’s pursuit of the “higher good” achieved through self-realization by aligning the activity of the soul with virtue to produce a complete life (Gardner, et al., 2011; Hutchinson, 1995). Aristotle also discussed how individual pursuit of the higher good involved different virtues (e.g., continence, pleasure, friendship, and theoretical wisdom) (Kernis & Goldman, 2006, p. 285). As such, the described relationship between the pursuit of the good (i.e., those factors that lead to the highest good) and the highest good (i.e., supreme happiness and well-being) seems to underscore a sense of unity or integration among people’s pursuits, a perspective that contemporary self-theorists suggest reflects either self-organization (e.g., Donahue, Robins, Roberts, & John, 1993; Kernis & Goldman, 2006, p. 285; Showers & Ziegler-Hill, 2003), integrated self-regulation (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 2000; Kernis & Goldman, 2006), or self-concordance (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Sheldon

& Elliot, 1999). In other words, Aristotle's notion of authenticity promotes a connection between people's self-knowledge and behavioral self-regulation (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). In his view, knowledge of the highest good significantly affects individuals because it allows them to organize their lives well—"like an archer with a target to aim at" (Irwin, 2003; Kernis & Goldman, 2006, p. 285). Thus, Aristotelian authentic functioning can be obtained by sustained activity in concert with a deeply informed sense of purpose (Kernis & Goldman, 2006, p.285).

American philosopher and psychologist, William James, was one of the first to write about authenticity in a contemporary sense. James ([1890] 1981) describes the many aspects of the self, including the "*me*," which consists of the physical, social, and spiritual aspects of the self (Vannini & Franzese, 2008). The social component of the *me* is directly relevant to authenticity and concerns the human need for recognition, as well as the idea that we present ourselves differently to different audiences (Vannini & Franzese, 2008).

Concurrent with the psychological attention to authenticity, sociologist Erving Goffman zeroed in on the way in which the actor (i.e., the individual) creates a face (i.e., a persona) and performs his or her role to an audience which works to create a façade that is both believable and evokes the approval of others (Vannini & Franzese, 2008). Goffman's theoretical contributions to authenticity research were significant (Vannini & Franzese, 2008). Sociological research on authenticity largely addresses authenticity as self-reflective and emotional (Vannini & Franzese, 2008). Such an approach addresses both the individual's subjective sense of what the true self is, as well as the individual's subjective emotional experience of being true or untrue to that self (Vannini & Franzese, 2008).

When moving from varying views authenticity, we see that philosophical meanings of authenticity are historically articulated in terms of individual virtues and ethical choices, while

psychological meanings of authenticity are historically articulated in terms of individual traits/states (Adorno, 1953; Baumaster, 1987; Danzinger, 1997; Furtak, 2003; p. 424; Goldman & Kernis, 2002: 5; Heidegger, 1962, 1927; Hoy et al., 1996; Kernis, 2003a; Kierkegaard, 1996; Novicev, Harvey, Buckley, Brown & Evans, 2006; Pianalato, 2003; Ryan & Deci, 2002; Sartre, 1948). Authenticity – who people are, how they perceive themselves, and how they operate on those perceptions – is an important construct in humanistic psychology (Barnett & Deutsch, 2016; Boyraz, Watts & Felix, 2014; Harter, 2002; Maslow, 1962). Authenticity is linked to our self-esteem and well-being (Barnett & Deutsch, 2016; Menard & Brunet, 2011; Wood, Linley, Maltby, Balious & Joseph, 2008) as well as lower levels of depression, anxiety, and stress (Barnett & Deutsch, 2016; Gregoire, Baron, Menard & Lachance, 2014; Satici & Kayis, 2013; Wood et al., 2008).

German philosopher, economist, historian, political theorist, sociologist, journalist and revolutionary socialist Karl Marx also provided unique views on authenticity. Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (seen as the original exposition of Marxist humanism) and his notion of alienation were much more self-motivated or self-centric than Sartre's notion of authentic expression (Jakapovich, 2010). For Marx, human nature must be understood as a dynamic concept created through social relations and their alterations (Jakopovich, 2010). According to Marx, we transform our relation to the world and transcend our alienation from it—creating our own distinctly human-natural relations—by acting, that is, through our material-needs mindset (Knudsen, Rickly & Vidon, 2016). Critical theorist Walter Benjamin continued the discussion by connecting these ideas into theories of authenticity, arguing that authenticity is a premodern ideal that evolved out of the theory of originality after the rise of mechanical reproduction and capitalism (Knudsen et al., 2016). Marx argued that under capitalism, there

cannot be authenticity – except among “owners” who experience full rewards with authenticity (Knudsen et al., 2016).

Marx’ theory of authenticity did not stop with originality but, also, considered the mechanisms that establish it, namely aura, ritual and tradition (Knudsen et al., 2016; Rickly-Boyd, 2012). Benjamin believed that it wasn’t mechanical reproduction that leads to inauthenticity, but separation from the rituals and traditions of production and meaning (i.e., aura) that result in alienation (Knudsen et al., 2016). He argued that while we are alienated from our true selves in all societies, we are only alienated from what we produce, from society generally, and from our others through capitalism, in both its modern and post-modern forms (Knudsen et al., 2016).

Recent Perspectives on Authenticity

The word “authentic” is traditionally applied to any work of art that is an original, not a copy (Ibarra, 2015). When used to describe leadership, of course, it has other meanings—and they can be problematic (Ibarra, 2015). For example, the notion of adhering to one’s “true self” flies in the face of much research on how people evolve with experience, discovering facets of themselves they would never have unearthed through introspection and examination alone (Ibarra, 2015). Further, being utterly transparent—disclosing every single thought and feeling—is unrealistic and risky in our quest to be authentic (Ibarra, 2015).

Most people associate authenticity with being true to oneself — or “walking the talk” (Su & Wilkins, 2013). One issue with that association is that it focuses on how *you* feel about yourself (Su & Wilkins, 2013). The idea of simply “acting on one’s values” or “being true to oneself” is at best just the beginning for thinking about what authenticity means (Freeman &

Auster, 2011). Authenticity is increasingly considered a relational behavior, not a self-centered one (Su & Wilkins, 2013), meaning that you must not only be comfortable with yourself, but also comfortably connect with others in order to be truly authentic (Su & Wilkins, 2013). In this way, authenticity involves both owning one's personal experiences (i.e., thoughts, emotions, needs, and wants) and acting in accordance with those experiences (Gino, Kouchaki, & Galinsky, 2015). A commitment to one's identity and values (Erickson, 1995) is important for effective self-regulation (Gino et al., 2015); when this commitment is violated, people feel less authentic (Gino et al., 2015).

Being authentic also reflects an ongoing process of conversation that not only starts with perceived values but also involves one's past, relationships and experiences with others, and goals for the future (Freeman & Auster, 2011). Authenticity entails acting on these values personally and professionally and thus also becomes a necessary starting point for ethics (Freeman & Auster, 2011). After all, if there is no motivation to justify one's actions either to oneself or to others, then—as Sartre has suggested—morality simply does not come into play (Freeman & Auster, 2015).

In considering these more current perspectives on authenticity raised by Su & Wilkins (2013) and Freeman & Auster (2011), one may raise the question of whether considering one's perceived values, history, relationships with others, and aspirations is a common employee practice at work. Does it ensure individual workplace satisfaction or effectiveness? Further, even though organizations ask for authenticity, do they truly want employees to bring their full selves to work and to communicate with complete transparency?

There are several factors that contribute to how much of oneself a person brings to work with him/herself. On the one hand, we live in a tell-all society where people are so apt to share

their personal and professional experiences and achievements. Social media is largely responsible for people wanting to get a closer look into who someone *really* is or who they want you to believe they are. However, despite this 21st century landscape, there are those who believe they cannot be truly authentic at work. Sometimes, it is employees' personal preferences to simply not "open up" themselves to their boss or to fellow organizational members. This could also be precipitated in part by fear, a lack of trust, cultural norms and employees' belief that the cost of truly being themselves outweighs the benefits.

In truth, honestly sharing one's thoughts, feelings, and experiences within the work environment can be a double-edged sword. Despite its potential benefits, self-disclosure can create more distance than closeness. It can backfire if it's hastily conceived, poorly timed, or inconsistent with cultural or organizational norms—damaging your reputation and your relationships, fostering distrust, and hindering teamwork (Rosh & Offerman, 2013). So, is the call for authenticity at work merely "lip service" by corporations? Are leaders willing or even ready to model the message of "being yourself" and create an environment where the benefits of being authentic are greater than the costs? As a recent Harvard Business Review article declared, "Authenticity has emerged as the gold standard for leadership" (George, 2015) with significant research pursued today focusing on authentic leadership. Nevertheless, the empirical research that exists on authentic leadership does not tell the entire "authenticity at work story" nor provide sufficient answers to these questions. Much of the focus is on workplace outcomes and the role that the leader plays in providing support for those outcomes; information pertaining to degrees of authenticity and authenticity at your own risk is limited.

Thus, authenticity and its potential benefits at work remain ambiguous. Gaps exist in the literature that requires more exploration, including the perceived benefits and challenges

employees face in being authentic. Researchers, coming to divergent results, have weighed in on the topic of authenticity for years. However, few empirical studies investigate the deep-lying challenges of authenticity at work (Metin, Taris, Peters, van Beek & Van den Bosch, 2016; Sheldon, 2004). One important reason for this dearth of relevant empirical research is that at present most measures of authenticity assess it generally and as a stable, personal trait, rather than examining its manifestation within a specific context (e.g., at work) and as a social state (Metin et al., 2016). This indicates a significant opportunity to advance the research in this area and provide insight into how organizations and individuals can benefit from allowing space (without fear of reprisal) for significant authenticity at work. In addition, there are few studies that explore over-arching reasons why people believe that they cannot be authentic at work.

The qualitative study reported here facilitates development of a more robust and inclusive model of workplace authenticity with propositions to better explain this phenomenon. The goals of this research are to: (1) address the ambiguity regarding what it means to be authentic at work; (2) determine if there is an “authenticity threshold” marking the range in which an employee can express authenticity at work; and (3) determine what helps or hinders authentic expression and behavior.

Methods and Data Collection

Parents, teachers, and friends tell their children and others about the importance of “being yourself” (Mengers, 2014). The message imparted is that “being yourself” will lead to better outcomes than attempting to be someone or something else (Mengers, 2014). However, does research supports this notion (as it relates to the workplace)? Moreover, what happens when “being yourself” causes retribution, scorn or distance from others?

Previous studies and essays don't tell the complete story. Although descriptions of authentic functioning are found among a variety of works and disciplines across the arts and sciences (Kernis & Goldman, 2006), these descriptions are often vague, relegated to peripheral segments of larger works, and lack continuity in their lineage or origin (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). At times, descriptions of authenticity seem to be at the "limits of language," loosely described in such diverse topics as ethics, values, well-being, consciousness, subjectivity, self-processes, and social or relational contexts, or characterized in terms of its opposite, (i.e., inauthenticity), with references to inauthentic living, false-self behaviors, or self-deception (Kernis & Goldman, 2006, p.284).

The qualitative study reported here probed deeper into this complex subject. Qualitative methods are especially useful in studies exploring questions about how experience is given meaning (Bateman & Barry, 2012). Following the method described in Grant, Dutton, and Rosso (2008), inductive research was conducted through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with managers and non-managers. These interviews attempted to understand organizational members' views on authenticity and why or why not they chose to fully express themselves at work. The desired outcome of this paper is an elucidation of the most critical elements of authenticity, determining whether striving for this at work is truly valued (by members and organizations alike), and exploring potential barriers and supports can be used to build a testable model of authenticity at work. The following research questions were posed:

1. What does it mean to be authentic at work?
2. Do leaders and employees perceive that being authentic at work is important?
3. What helps and hinders employees from being authentic at work?
4. Specifically, what fears limit employee authenticity at work?

5. Are there thresholds delineating valued authentic expression and behavior at work?

Organizational Context

The Companies. This research was conducted in four organizations and four different industries: financial services, pharmaceutical, residential/corporate moving and storage, and energy. The organizations were located in Charlotte (North Carolina), Horsham, (Pennsylvania), Coppell (Texas) and Charleston (South Carolina). Company A is a Fortune 100 financial services organization that is the leading provider of financial services in the academic, research, medical, cultural and governmental fields. It has 16,500 employees. Company B is a major pharmaceutical firm that has been around for over 130 years. It has over 125,000 employees in 60 countries. Company C is a residential and corporate moving and storage company that was established in 1982; it has customers around the world and over 500 employees. Company D is an energy company established in 1937. It has over half a million electric customers in 25 counties throughout South Carolina and employs nearly 6,000 full- and part-time employees.

Table 1. <i>Description of study participants' organizations</i>				
Company	Industries	Location	Years of Operation	Number of Employees
A	Financial	Charlotte, NC/Philadelphia, PA	100 years	16,500
B	Pharmaceutical	Horsham, PA	>130 years	>125,000
C	Residential Moving	Frisco, TX	36 years	<500
D	Energy	Charleston, SC	81 years	<6,000

The Participants (i.e., the employees). All eleven participants interviewed were full-time employees who worked in either a management (seven) or non-management (four) capacity.

From a demographic perspective, seven were women and four men who collectively averaged 24.2 years of professional work experience. Six were White, four African-American, and one was Hispanic.

Table 2. <i>Description of study participants</i>						
Employees						
	Management			Non-Management		
	Black	White	Latino	Black	White	Latino
Men	1	3	0	0	0	0
Women	1	2	0	2	1	1

Men

Category	Count
Leadership Black	1
Leadership White	3
Non-Leadership Black	0
Non-Leadership White	0

Women

Category	Count
Leadership Black	2
Leadership White	1
Non-Leadership Black	2
Non-Leadership White	1
Non-Leadership Latino	1

Timeframe. This study was conducted during March and April 2018. Interviews lasted between 30 – 60 minutes. Six of the interviews were in person and five were conducted over the phone.

Research Methodology

This study is guided by the interpretivist view that reality is relative; thus, it is important to understand that motives, meanings, reasons, and other subjective experiences are time and context bound (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988; Obrien & Lineham, 2014). The goal is to connect the reader to the world of the participants in order to facilitate an understanding of their subjective

experience and illuminate the structures and processes that shape their authentic expression and behavior at work and in their relations with others. Therefore, any representational form should have enough ‘interpretative sufficiency’ (Christians et al., 1993, p. 120) (i.e., possess depth, detail, nuance, and coherence) to assist the reader in forming critical consciousness (Denzin, 2001; Obrien & Lineham, 2014).

The methodological goal is to provide an interpretative portrayal of authenticity at work as perceived and experienced by organizational members as told to and interpreted by a researcher with experience in the corporate environment. I applied a variation of Glaser and Strauss’s grounded theory approach (1967; see also Cooper & Kurland, 2002; Creswell, 1998; Eisenhardt, 1989; and Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Grounded theory is ‘inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents’ by using qualitative research methods in which ‘data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other’ (Cooper & Kurland, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23). That is, researchers want to allow a deeper understanding of the construct to materialize from the data analysis (Cooper & Kurland, 2002).

In taking this qualitative approach, it was important to choose samples that could ‘contribute to the evolving theory’ (Cooper & Kurland, 2002; Creswell, 1998, p. 118). For example I focused on organizations with (1) a history of open and honest communication and integrity; (2) operations for 25 plus years; and (3) at least 500 employees. Interviewing employees from good-sized, established organizations was important for eliciting participant feedback and determining if managers’ and non-managers’ authenticity played a role in their job satisfaction and work effectiveness. In addition, in these companies, the CEO’s vision (for authentic and honest communication) could get lost because of the number of layers between the

executives and the employees. Therefore, the same set of questions was used for both managers and non-managers.

Data Collection and Analysis

Study participants responded to four types of questions: demographic (Section 1), professional development support (i.e., training and coaching/mentoring support - skill; confidence building; personal power support - will) (Section 2), authenticity at work (how manifested/communicated at work) (Section 3), and factors (i.e., fears) that prevent authenticity at work (Section 4). The primary task of the first part of the interview was to build trust and rapport, understand the participants' current job responsibilities, and how long they have worked fulltime in the workforce. Subsequent questions focused on their professional development and their views on authenticity at work (from both an individual and organizational perspective). Questions were mostly open-ended and are included below:

Demographics

- How long have you been working full-time in the workforce?
- What do you currently do for your organization?
- How long in current position?

Professional (confidence, personal power - will) (professional support – skill)

- How has your organization supported your professional growth from a skill or task perspective? From a confidence building and personal power or will perspective?
- Is there someone at work you would consider a mentor?
- How does this individual contribute to your success?
- Did the individual provide a tailwind or a headwind (explain)?

Authenticity at Work

- Have you ever heard someone say, "I'm one way at home and I'm another way at work?" Explain what that statement means to you.

- On a scale of 1 – 10 (with one being the lowest level) how much of yourself do you bring to work? Why do you feel that way?
- How would you define authenticity at work?
- How transparent are you during communications (i.e., what you truly think or how you truly feel about something) with others, including management? Explain.
- What, if anything, concerns you regarding communicating with colleagues at work?
- How important is authenticity in the workplace?
- Do you fear repercussion when sharing your truth or when providing feedback (if it's constructive or not in line with what others have said or believe)?

Fear as preventing authenticity

- What are your (if any) workplace fears?
- Are any of these tied to wanting to be more authentic? Explain.
- What are other workplace factors (in addition to authenticity) that contribute to workplace effectiveness?

Data analysis included review of audio recordings of all interviews, using Temi transcription software to transcribe the data then interpreting the responses. As the sole interpreter of the data, I wanted to carefully determine and report what I thought was important—what new knowledge I could bring to the world. I first reread every interview transcript while simultaneously listening to the actual interviews.

I also kept clarifying notes about my initial impressions. These notes focused primarily on the following: the participants' tone when discussing authenticity; their perspectives on the topic; their understanding of the topic; and their experiences relative to their authentic expression. I then slowly reread each transcript coding key words, sentences, phrases or experiences (what I termed their “moments that mattered”). Many of the initial codes reflected how the participants defined and felt about authenticity; their emotions when discussing their authentic expression; how they viewed their corporate culture; how they communicated with others; and the way their authentic expression at home compared to their authentic expression at work. Some key words and phrases that I noted early on included support, culture,

institutionally-driven, transparency, reputation, chameleon, leadership, mindset, drink the Kool-Aid, values, retaliation, feedback, communicate/communication, advocate/advocacy, navigate, trust, fear, honest, and positive.

The next phase of the analysis involved determining what codes were most important and creating themes (i.e., theme coding). I wanted to identify initial (provisional) concepts in the data. Many of these early codes pertained to interviewee comments relating to what helps and what hinders authentic expression along with the reasons behind it. My initial themes included the following: emotion; communication; follow-through; disposition; truth; image; values; effort; culture; and management. I reconciled these themes to eliminate redundancies. Most redundancies pertained to communication, the business environment and the relationship/support one has with his/her manager and peers. I transferred the themes to index cards and sorted them into piles based on what I perceived was most critical to helping/hindering employees' authentic expression at work.

The next part of my analysis involved noting what factors the participants found to be an advantage, disadvantage or challenge for authenticity (or authentic expression and behavior) at work. I looked for frequency (of words and sentiment) and drew conclusions. I then categorized the words into the themes. After the initial coding, I went back to review my themes and codes to reduce/combine similar themes and codes. Some of the most repeated codes were the following: be true to myself; values; how I'm going to be perceived; feedback; truth; management asks for it but they can't handle it; watch what you say; and culture. I kept comparing data with data, data with the themed categories and themed category with themed category (Bateman & Barry, 2012; Charmaz, 2005, p. 517). I developed a new theme, "authenticity states and traits", and combined it with the previous themes of communication, image, emotion, effort, disposition, follow-

through and truth. I developed another new theme, “organizational culture”, and combined it with previous themes labeled management and culture. I believed that these combinations best represented the essence of each theme and associated coding. Moreover I perceived these three themes, based on my interviews and the analysis of the data, to be the most critical to address the notions of more or less authentic expression.

During the coding process I also searched for: (1) compelling stories; (2) whether authenticity was needed for individual job satisfaction and effectiveness; (3) how authenticity impacted an employee’s level of job commitment; (4) definitions and degrees of authenticity; (5) anything new that would emerge from the data; and (6) future research opportunities. The entire transcribing and coding process uncovered both common and uncommon thoughts, beliefs, and challenges to workplace authenticity.

Finally, I compared how the manager and non-manager answers varied. I also checked to see if there were different responses based on diversity, specifically race, ethnicity, gender, and age. The data reflected the findings discussed in the next section.

Findings

The data analysis findings indicated that both managers and non-managers perceive authenticity as important, to some degree, to employees’ workplace satisfaction, effectiveness, and well-being. More specifically, analysis uncovered the following trends pertaining to authenticity at work: (1) there is no single way to define authenticity at work today; (2) individual and organizational factors contribute greatly to ones’ authentic expression and behavior at work; (3) fear of perceived reprisal plays a large role in authentic expression and

behavior at work; and (4) one's achievement at work is possible without fully authentic expression.

Defining Authenticity

During the interviews, both managers and non-managers offered similar though distinct views on what authenticity is in the workplace. The definitions that were most similar were based on the notion of being true to oneself and/or staying true to ones' values. Tables 3–5 describe the three identified themes, along with descriptive behaviors and representative quotes.

Theme One: Authenticity States and Traits

Theme one informs research question one (What does it mean to be authentic at work?). Participants' comments centered on desired authentic states and traits. State authenticity is the sense that one is currently in alignment with one's true or real self (Sedikides, Slabu, Lenton & Thomaes, 2017). A trait-consistency hypothesis claims that authenticity is generated when individuals act in a way consistent with their personality or individual-level traits, whereas inauthenticity is generated when individuals act in a way inconsistent with their traits, and that having to change one's behavior to accommodate situations takes a toll (Fleeson & Wilt, 2010). Participants discussed the significance of authentic communication and behavior, staying true to oneself and the merits for doing such; however, they also discussed some of the risks in doing so. Their comments reinforced the notion that there is a range for authentic expression and behavior at work, and that people do not want to be seen as *inappropriate* (see Figure 1). Specifically, this includes behavior and expression that is opinionated, self-centered, egregious, disrespectful, and mean-spirited.

In addition to generally relating to authenticity, their comments also addressed the research question: Do leaders and employees perceive that being authentic at work is important? Participants highlighted the importance of the individuals' values being in line with organizational values.

Finally, comments regarding race, state and trait authenticity were shared. Several Black participants commented on consistently holding back a part of their natural, authentic expression because of their race.

Table 3.
Authenticity States and Traits: theme, descriptive behaviors and representative quotes emerging from the data analysis

Theme	Description of Behavior	Representative quotes
Authenticity States and Traits	What you see is what you get; sincerity; straight-talk. Real, not a façade, not phony. Being true to yourself. Not willing to do anything that wouldn't go with your personal values, which hopefully are aligned with the company's values. Washes clean. It feels true. Up front. Not hiding anything. Congruent with your values. Not being filled with guile. Going the extra mile. Caring enough to take time out of your busy work schedule to make sure that you're taking care of something that has been haunting people – that's been lingering and frustrating for them. Consistent. If you say you're going to do	"I don't like phoniness and I don't like fake because I want people to be real with me. Whether it hurts, but do it in love. I want to know the truth so I can correct whatever is wrong. If it's an issue I want to be able to try to work on that issue. If you're not being transparent, then you're not telling me the truth – then I will continue to make that same error or mistake." (AA female non-manager) "Everybody should be able be authentic and honest at work. Now if you espouse or you know, have specific beliefs, I want you to keep that to yourself. I don't want you to be inauthentic, but I want you to be respectful that other people may not feel the same way." (AA female non-manager) "Not being more me did not net me any benefit. So whether I was me, or I wasn't me, I felt like there were external factors outside of me that had decided for whatever reasons there was not going to be any advocacy. So I might as well be me and lose being me than lose being what I think they want any way. And it feels better being successful being me than to find success being a perception. I feel like I'm

	<p>something, keep your word. Making sure that you are not withholding or scared to do something that needs to be done for the sake of your reputation. Being, behaving as much of yourself that you're willing to give without being someone else. Not a comfort-zone zombie.</p>	<p>more successful in my role now because I came into it kind of with that agreement with myself...I feel like I can be myself because of course, the culture kind of leans that way.” (AA female non-manager)</p> <p>“If you push the wrong button, you're going to see the true me because I'm just me. I don't know to be anything else but me.” (African American female non-manager)</p> <p>“If they don't want it or if they can't handle it don't ask me for the truth. If you want the truth that's what you're going to get. I'm not going to sit and tell you something you just want to hear and you're asking me for the truth. You either want the truth or you don't want me to talk.” (AA female non-manager)</p> <p>“I'm not going to sugarcoat it. If you have a question, I'm going to give you the straight answer.” (Hispanic female non-manager)</p> <p>“I'm forever thinking, as a young black woman, how much is this going to be perceived from an unbiased place? I'm trying to do better about not letting that stop me anyway and being authentically myself.” (AA female non-manager)</p> <p>“To me it's still important because I mean it depends on your mindset. If that's all you're focusing on just climbing the ladder, then faking it 'till you make it works for you. But for someone that has a moral compass and looking beyond just trying to climb a corporate ladder, then you're going to be authentic because you know you're trying to please a higher power. You're not trying to please me. You're trying to please a higher power.” (AA female non-manager)</p> <p>“As long as I know my 'why' I feel comfortable.” (AA female manager)</p> <p>“People are not going to feel good about coming to work if they can't be themselves.” (AA female manager)</p> <p>“I don't think I can get to a 10 because I don't</p>
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		<p>think I can love people to that magnitude at work. I care about people but that love is not the same as I have for my husband or my family. My responsibility and my commitment to my family are different from work. Work can come and go. It's not at the same, deeper level." (AA female non-manager)</p> <p>"Be honest or go work for yourself because you'll be miserable and you can't give 40 hours plus a week to a place that you're absolutely miserable...that's why people die early." (AA female non-manager)</p> <p>"Black people can't be activists at work; it's not what they want; my 'sociability' may detract from my performance." (AA male manager)</p>
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Theme Two: Communication.

This theme evolved from the participants' comments pertaining to the "how" or "how much" they believed they were "allowed" to authentically communicate at work to be effective (given the situation), maintain productive relationships with management and non-management members, be true to themselves, and avoid reprisal or reprimand. Most of their comments suggested that, at work, they thought before they spoke rather than the other way around. They knew what authentic communication was, but were very intentional and purposeful when determining what to say and how to say it, given the receiver and location where the communication took place. Authentic communication is typified by a kind of natural, non-hyper-reflective speech (i.e., between friends, family etc.). Their reasons for not fully communicating authentically at times were purely subjective; in other words, there wasn't a specific of evidence-based reason to support their belief, instead reflecting what could be considered a "gut feeling". When not providing full disclosure, they didn't believe they were being inauthentic; they merely thought that at times (given the situation, the setting or the person they were speaking to) less

was more (i.e., less authenticity was perceived to be the most advantageous path to take in certain circumstances).

Additionally, participants’ descriptions of authentic communication behaviors were helpful in painting the picture for what they believed best practices look like. Nevertheless, they expressed inconsistency in following through with those best practices. The phrase “using a communication filter” came up multiple times. Some even shared stories of when they wished they hadn’t communicated as authentically as they did. To them, for the most part, they believe people may ask for the truth, but may not want it.

Table 4. <i>Communication theme, descriptive behaviors and representative quotes emerging from the data analysis</i>		
Theme	Description of behavior	Representative quotes
Communication	<p>Listening and being engaged. What you say to someone’s face is what you say behind their back. You always know where you stand. There’s no ambiguity. Saying what you believe, not saying it because you think people want to hear it. Saying it because you believe it. Not fake. Showing emotion intelligently.</p>	<p>“I can see how you can be one way at home and one way at work. Some of my conversations at home namely, religion, politics and sex don’t translate well at work. Those are the sort of topics we shouldn’t really discuss. I’m going to have a more private conversation with my spouse than with my coworker as a leader. Some of my cultural beliefs that I share at home might offend someone at work, particularly in my role here. We have a circle of trust at home. There’s going to be differences between your demeanor and how you portray yourself with work than you’ll see at home.” (White male manager)</p> <p>“I bring it all in both places. It’s about what filter I’m putting on it. If I see something that I don’t like, I’m the type of person where I’m going to speak on it – in both places. But it’s how I give that feedback. So to my family it’s going to be straight no chaser. When I’m at work you’re going to get that same feedback but I’m going to package it so that it’s not offensive but you will get the feedback and you will understand my message and you will know what you need to improve upon or not do again in my presence.” (AA female manager)</p>

		<p>“With regard to authentic communication with bigger groups I’m less authentic, one on one or small groups I’m very authentic. So I may present something to the team one way then get a couple people in a smaller setting and present it in a different way. Because in a bigger group I’m more worried about how people are going to take things, how it’s going to be translated but in the smaller group I can explain it better. I can frame it better. I’m a 6 or 7 in the big group and a 9 or 10 in the small group.” (White male manager)</p>
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Theme Three: Organizational Culture

The organizational culture of a firm determines what is valued (e.g., time, results, accountability and reliability) and what’s unacceptable affecting such disparate workplace behaviors as how feedback is given, who gives it, and how people communicate in general. In this way, organizational culture is the heartbeat of any organization (Gochhayat, Giri & Suar, 2017). The axioms guiding a firm’s organizational culture do not have to be in writing, but if you look around you can see, sense, and hear that they exist, and participants recognized the extent to which the rules facilitate authentic expression and behavior. Participants’ comments and perceptions addressed all five research questions in some capacity and profoundly reflected upon the organization’s culture. Nearly everyone agreed that organizations ask for authenticity, but only want it to a certain extent. Moreover, the participants accepted this, and also accepted the notion that there is a limit to authentic expression and behavior (for most people). Interviewees discussed the varied impact that organizational culture has had on their career—first, and second, in adhering to its mores, which were taxing at times. They also mentioned the merits, depending on the culture, of inauthenticity or saying the right things to the right people. Their comments and perceptions of the significance of organizational culture on authentic expression highlight the complexities of this construct.

Table 5.

Theme organizational culture, descriptive behaviors and representative quotes emerging from the data analysis

Theme	Description of behavior	Representative quotes
Organizational Culture	Understanding and behaving in-line with the organization's norms and social mores.	<p>“They do want it. They ask for it but they have trouble accepting it. I’ve watched other people unsuccessfully try to be truly authentic and then all of a sudden they’re seen as negative against the culture. You can get away with more if you’re more careful with your words. When you give people polish you have to make sure the polish is in the right color bottle.” (White male manager)</p> <p>“Authenticity in the workplace is a little important. I don’t know if I’d say a lot. I mean everybody’s got to drink their dose of kool-aid and the people that fight it don’t do as well. And if they just didn’t say anything about it and went along with it then it would probably favor them more instead of pushing against it every single time. You don’t have to agree with it but also you don’t have to voice your opinion that you don’t agree with it every time too. If you just stopped and kept your thoughts to yourself every once in a while...there are certain things that are just not meant to say out loud – especially at work.” (White female non-manager)</p> <p>“Inauthenticity is rewarded. In terms of, if you can put on your best front, you say the right things, you meet the right people it is absolutely rewarded. (AA female non-manager)</p> <p>“My previous company’s culture was very, very, very, set in. If you wanted to be authentic it would break you into submission. If you were comfortable being inauthentic, because you think that’s the way all of corporate America is, you feel right at home and you navigate that culture much more easily because you say the right things and you laugh at the right jokes and you go along to get along. Within 18 months you’ll get promoted.” (AA female non-manager)</p> <p>“Organizations don’t want authenticity. They say they do but they don’t really. In</p>

		<p>companies with strong cultures the second something goes against the culture it tends to get shut down pretty quickly. Then all of a sudden you don't fit in with the culture. They're so emotionally tied to it they don't want to admit that things are not as they think they are." (White male manager)</p>
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Based on the interview participants' views, understanding the value that authenticity has at work is difficult to pinpoint. Depending on the context and the players involved, authenticity in expression is sometimes appreciated and other times not. Some employees limit their authentic expression while others suggest that it is the only way they know how to be. They suggested that the organization's "authentic expression limit" does not consistently apply to everyone, as it seems to be lower for those that share the least in common with the organization's *unwritten* norm for success.

Ultimately, from the data analysis, the following conclusions emerged: (1) one's authentic expression does not have to be significant or constant in order for him/her to be effective in his/her role; (2) people often believe that their "at home" persona and level of authentic expression will not be welcomed nor appreciated at work; (3) authenticity means different things to different people; (4) authentic expression is a choice; (5) race is taken into consideration for some in determining how authentic they're going to be; and (6) inappropriate or egregious authentic expression is not welcomed in the workplace.

Factors that Help/Hinder Authentic Expression

Research question three asked, "What helps and hinders employees from being authentic at work?" Interview participants discussed the factors that they believe help/hinder their authentic expression (See Table 6 below). They commented that the organization's culture could

both help and hinder employees’ authentic expression based on if their personal values were in alignment with those of the organization. Interviewees discussed the significance of having support from both their manager and their peers to help with their authentic expression. Some indicated that the perceived risks for being authentic outweighed the perceived consequences. Notably, they cited fear of reprisal, judgement, and not being accepted as their major fears of authentic expression and behavior. In addition, some said that they would rather leave their home persona at home, choosing not to fully disclose that side of themselves in the workplace.

Table 6.
What helps and what hinders authentic expression and behavior.

Helps	Hinders
Organizational Culture	Organizational Culture
Relationship with manager/peer support	Relationship with manager
Individual mindset/choice	Diversity (e.g., race, gender, age)
	Individual mindset/choice
	Lack of management/peer support

Each participant answered yes to the question, “Have you ever heard someone say, ‘I’m one way at work and one way at home?’” However, they differed in whether they believed that sentiment to be true for themselves. There was nearly an unanimous sentiment that, in spite of what today’s leaders ask for regarding authenticity, one still has to be careful. When asked, “Do organizations want and value authenticity?” one participant said:

Organizations ask for authenticity and they appreciate it – if it’s in line with their ideas and their goals; sometimes the truth hurts and they don’t want it and you have to, as an individual, be discerning in determining how much you can give; too

much can be too much. It is not 100% necessary for you to be that 10. You have to navigate. (White male manager)

Another participant provided a totally different perspective when asked the same question:

Who I am at work is who I am at home. I can't switch it up. I am 100% me every day, all day. I wear my heart on my sleeve. I don't honestly know how someone is able to switch up. If you have to switch it up, I feel like you lose who you are, you lose yourself. (Hispanic female non-manager)

It bears emphasizing that these examples represent a clear divide in the degree to which participants perceived that they could be authentic and how much they believed it is truly valued. When asked the question, "On a scale of one to 10 (with one being the lowest), how authentic are you at work?" the average respondent score was 7.9. Three of the 11 responded 10 (the highest rating) and one senior leader responded 2.5. These two examples indicate that: (1) there are opposing beliefs pertaining to whether organizations want and value authenticity at work; (2) employees can be promoted at work without operating with a high level of authenticity; and (3) when some people arrive at work, they leave something (i.e., a part of themselves) at the office door. One of the participants, an African-American male manager, talked about a time when he was asked, by a white female colleague (in front of others) if he felt the government's slow response to the victims of Hurricane Katrina was racially motivated? He told me that he was not sharing his authentic truth (which I presumed was yes) in that moment, believing it would be career suicide. Instead, he replied that he could understand why some people may feel that way. Another participant, when asked to discuss a time when she wasn't authentic at work had this to say:

I remember when I didn't feel like I could be authentic at work it became very stressful. It became a drag. It bled into my home-life....feeling like I had to put on a front, feeling like I didn't have an advocate so I couldn't be honest at work. I ended up venting those frustrations at home or not saying anything at all and that

turned into fatigue. For me it resulted in lethargy and disengagement at home.
(African American female non-manager)

Judging by this sentiment alone, one can see the potentially far-reaching impact that not being authentic can have on an individual. It can take a toll on an individual at work and at home.

Research has found that being true to one's self empowers individuals in the workplace, facilitating feelings of control and mastery that lead to greater job satisfaction and happiness (Boute, 2016). This is a crucial because a sense of empowerment is essential to job satisfaction and engagement (Boute, 2016). Ultimately, emotional intelligence is connected with authentic expression (Miao, Humphrey & Qian, 2018).

Fears that Limit Authenticity

Research question four specifically asked about fears related to authentic expression and behavior. The participants discussed a few major fears, namely fear of reprisal, judgement, and acceptance. Kernis and Goldman (2006) suggest that behaving authentically sometimes takes courage because one's true inclinations may conflict with those of one's peers or authority figures who have strong evaluative or controlling tendencies (Deci & Ryan, 1995). This is where fear enters the discussion. As a powerful, evolutionary-based emotion, fear encourages avoidance behavior, a narrowed perceptual and cognitive focus on perceived threats, and pessimistic judgements about risks and future outcomes (Frijda, 1986; Izard, 1993; Kish-Gephart, Detert, Trevino & Edmundson, 2009; Lerner & Tiedens, 2006; Maner & Gerend, 2007). Given these manifestations, fear may influence a wide array of organizational phenomena, including decisions to reveal "invisible diversity" (Kish-Gephart et al., 2009; Ragins, Singh & Cornwell, 2007), reward and punishment distribution (Appelbaum, Bregman &

Moroz, 1998; Kish-Gephart et al., 2009), team member/leader interaction, communication, and improvement activity (Kish-Gephart et al., 2009; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006).

Fears mentioned by the interview participants are associated with a narrowed perceptual and cognitive focus on perceived threats and pessimistic judgments about risks and future outcomes. For some fear was tied to economic insecurity. Other fears, according to the respondents, help establish a threshold for authentic expression. When asked the question, “Do you believe there is a threshold (see Figure 1) determining how much a person can bring of him/herself to work?” Several participants made statements similar to those set forth below:

Even though you can show your true colors and be authentic you still have to watch how you approach people. (AA female non-manager)

I also think there’s two places of onus on that – the environment that manager creates to have that (authentic communication) and the person who’s creating those thoughts and how they do it. I think we sometimes forget to, and how to, communicate with somebody especially in frustrating times. (White female manager)

Discussion

This study sought to determine what it means to be authentic at work and, in doing so, go beyond survey data and practitioner opinion. What was sought was an understanding of why some people thought it was critical to be authentic at work and others did not. Further, it was important to determine whether authenticity was a key contributor to individual effectiveness and behavior.

The first two research questions asked what it meant to be authentic at work and do leaders and employees perceive that being authentic at work is important. On the surface, one would think that the typical answers to both of these questions would be: (1) to be true to

oneself; to bring your full self to any situation; and to be real, not phony; and (2) absolutely, being authentic at work is important. Study 1's findings, however, suggest that there are varied opinions on both. While most of the study participants (both managers and non-managers) agreed that authenticity at work involves to some degree, being real, transparent, true to oneself and acting and communicating in accord with one's values, some shared that it also involves factors like showing emotion intelligently, not being filled with guile, keeping your word and not staying in your comfort-zone. When discussing the importance of authenticity in the workplace, many struggled with simply answering the question. They would provide an answer then continue with a thought that contradicted their previous sentiment. Some of their responses did not align with their overall thoughts about its value. To a person, every participant agreed that one did not have to be authentic in the workplace to be effective and that there was a limit (or threshold) for how authentic a person could or should be. Based on this notion, one's production seems to be more significant than one's authentic expression.

Of the eleven interviewed, only three said that they were a "10" at work (i.e., the highest rating on my authenticity at work scale). However, they all agreed that you have to be one way at work and one way at home. They expressed that they felt freer to be their true selves at home than at work, such that they were freer to discuss their opinion on workplace dynamics and to communicate and provide feedback without editing their thoughts or carefully choosing their words. Further, all respondents agreed that there are both self-imposed and organizational-imposed limits to an individuals' authentic expression. Despite acknowledging that both favorable and unfavorable results from authenticity are possible, less is known about the circumstances that enable either to occur. Because of these varying perspectives, a model for self – and other – imposed assessment processes could help determine authentic expression

boundaries an individual has to navigate at work. These expression boundaries create a sense of “more or less authentic” rather than the either/or authentic/inauthentic paradigm.

To help illustrate those authentic expression boundaries (at work) in Study 2, the Dual Threshold Model (DTM) of Anger (Geddes & Callister, 2007) is utilized and expanded for authentic expression. In its original form, this model includes an emotion expression threshold, which is crossed when individuals communicate rather than suppress a felt emotion (e.g., anger), and an impropriety threshold, which is crossed if one’s expressed feelings violate organizational emotion display norms (Geddes & Callister, 2007). In this particular analysis, authenticity replaces emotion/anger as the model’s “internal” phenomenon that may or may not be expressed.

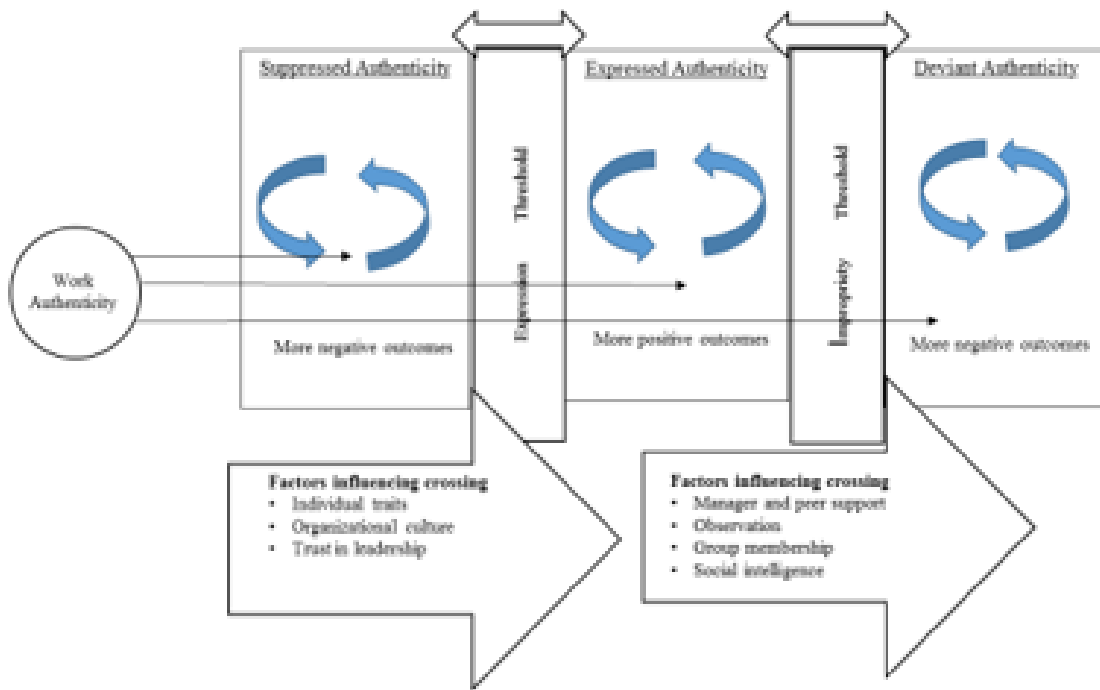


Figure 1. *Dual Threshold Model of Authenticity in Organizations.*

From interview comments, it appears that participants believe being authentic at work can be achieved but that it is associated with some risk. One has to be tuned into the

organizations' or departments' culture and environment and thoroughly understand their manager's leadership style. Ultimately, it seems that a manager's leadership style determines how employees' navigate authenticity thresholds in their organization. Some managers are results-oriented but lack emotional and social intelligence. Some were promoted into leadership roles for being successful individual contributors but never enhanced their people development skills. Even still, some avoid conflict at all costs and aren't good communicators, while others can be direct and autocratic.

The impact of organizational or departmental culture and environment has on employees' authentic expression is explained by Wood et al. (2008). His critical paper built on the person-centered model of Rogers (1961) but adopted a tripartite structure of authenticity (Metin et al., 2016) including self-alienation, authentic living, and social or external influences (see Figure 2). This third dimension, external influences, pertains to the influence the environment has on an individuals' behavior (Metin et al., 2016). Humans are fundamentally social beings and they are affected by the influence of their social environment; hence, the interaction of environment and an individual's deep-lying cognitions is an essential determinant of authenticity (Metin et al., 2016; Schmid, 2005). Both models reinforce the role these factors play.

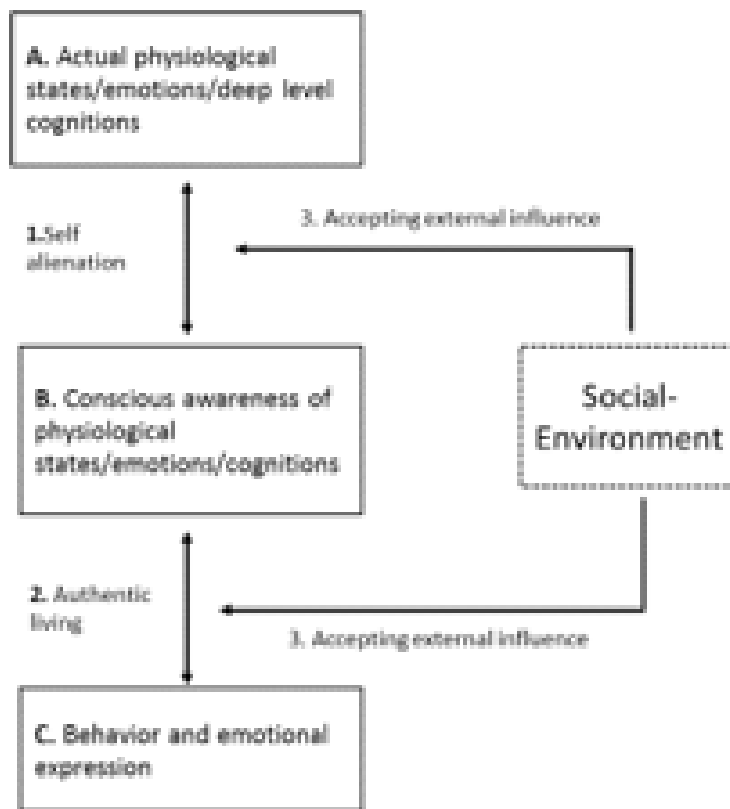


Figure 2. *The person-centered conception of authenticity*

Study participants discussed the significance of the relationship with their manager as playing a role in their authentic expression. They suggested that it determines how (1) they hear the manager’s feedback (if he/she provides it), and (2) if they share their own truth (and if the manager shares his/her truth with him/her). From the participants’ perspective, authenticity is needed on both sides for a successful relationship. In Bill George’s book, *Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value*, he challenged a new generation to lead authentically (George, Sims, McLean & Mayer, 2007, p. 1). Authentic leaders are mission- and people-focused, and their values drive their decisions and behaviors. They know who they are and have the self-discipline to get results; however, at the same time, they establish long-term meaningful relationships (George, et al., 2007, p. 1).

These initial findings reported here are, for the most part, consistent with the authenticity dimensions developed by Kernis and Goldman (2006). These dimensions help with understanding what authenticity can mean at work and in life. The dimensions are: (1) awareness or self-understanding, (2) unbiased processing or openness to objectively recognizing their ontological realities (e.g., evaluating their desirable and undesirable self-aspects), (3) behavior or actions, and (4) relational orientation or orientation towards interpersonal relationships (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Each of these components focuses on an aspect of authenticity that, while related to each of the others, is distinct (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Moreover, these dimensions relate closely with potential factors that drive authentic expression through expression and propriety thresholds as noted in the Dual Threshold Model (i.e., the factors that influence whether one suppressed or expressed authentically and factors that influence whether one's expression is found "inappropriate").

Awareness. The awareness dimension refers to possessing and being motivated to increase knowledge of and trust in one's motives, feelings, desires, and self-relevant cognitions (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Authenticity relates to a multifaceted and integrated self that is anchored in strong self-beliefs, self-confidence, self-acceptance, and agency rather than self-doubt, confusion, and conflict (Kernis & Goldman, 2006).

Unbiased Processing. This dimension involves objectivity with respect to our positive and negative self-aspects, emotions, and other internal experiences, information, and private knowledge (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). In addition, it involves not denying, distorting, or exaggerating based on evaluative information (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). In short, unbiased processing reflects the relative absence of interpretive distortions (e.g., defensiveness and self-aggrandizement) in the processing of self-relevant information (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). The

major benefit of unbiased processing is that it contributes to an accurate sense of self (Kernis & Goldman, 2006).

Behavior. This dimension of authenticity involves behaving in accord with one's values, preferences, and needs as opposed to acting "falsely" merely to please others or to attain rewards or avoid punishments (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). This component reflects the behavioral output of the awareness and unbiased processing components (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). There are instances (e.g., when one's authentic expression crosses the Impropriety Threshold of the DTM) that exist in which the unadulterated expression of one's true-self may result in severe social sanctions (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). In such instances, at the very least, authenticity will reflect heightened sensitivity to the fit (or lack thereof) between one's true-self and the dictates of the environment, and a heightened awareness of the potential implications of one's behavioral choices (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). In contrast, blind obedience to environmental forces typically reflects the absence of authenticity (cf., Deci & Ryan, 2000; Kernis & Goldman, 2006).

Relational Orientation. The final dimension of Kernis and Goldman's (2006) authenticity model is relational in nature, and bears resemblance to Jourard's (1971, p. 133) proposition that "authentic being means being one's self, honestly, in one's relations with his fellows" (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Relational authenticity involves valuing and striving for openness, sincerity, and truthfulness in one's close relationships (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). In essence, relational authenticity means being genuine rather than fake in one's relationships with close others (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). It is characterized by honesty in one's actions and motives as they pertain to one's intimates, and to accuracy in beliefs about oneself and one's intimates (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Moreover, it involves endorsing the importance of close others seeing the

“real” you and relating to them in ways that facilitate their being able to do so (Kernis & Goldman, 2006).

As mentioned earlier, Kernis and Goldman’s four authenticity dimensions relate closely to factors that can potentially affect authentic expression crossing the expression and impropriety thresholds of the Dual Threshold Model (of Authenticity). The Dual Threshold Model of workplace anger is unique in that it distinguishes multiple forms of workplace anger, including suppressed, expressed and deviant anger. It also offers a theoretical framework that identifies conditions likely to increase the probability of negative outcomes along with those that may generate a higher probability of positive outcomes from anger expression (Geddes & Callister, 2007). When replacing anger with authenticity in the proposed Dual Threshold Model of workplace authenticity, similar findings are anticipated. Further, it is believed that Kernis and Goldman’s authenticity dimensions will play a significant role in crossing (or not) expression and impropriety thresholds in the work environment when expressing authentically.

Limitations

Notably, this study did not provide conclusive evidence on the relationship between workplace effectiveness and well-being to authenticity. Moreover, no inter-rater reliability was established, as I was the sole coder of the interview content. The study only included 11 respondents and they were from different industries. A larger sample-size from each industry could provide additional findings. The participants’ answers, pertaining to the factors that limit authentic expression, could have been explored at a deeper level. Participants could have been asked to explain more about their beliefs regarding the limitations created by race and gender. In

addition, they could have been pushed more on why these types of “authenticity at your own risk” cultures are allowed to exist.

Conclusion and Propositions

Study 1 looked to facilitate development of a more robust and inclusive model and propositions to explain how authenticity “works” in today’s workforce. The bulk of the previous research in this area looked primarily at authentic leadership and the role it plays in the workforce. This research, a continuation of the authenticity discussion, provided more of a balanced perspective (i.e., focusing more on employee’s authenticity and the role their manager’s authenticity plays in their daily experiences). In addition, it provided a more current definition and an initial framework for understanding authenticity in the workplace that can be utilized to spawn further research on this area of organizational behavior. Not addressing these factors could be seriously problematic for today’s and tomorrow’s increasingly diverse workplace.

In summary, based on the current findings, the following six propositions need further exploration:

Proposition 1. Both self- and organizationally-imposed factors can help or hinder authentic expression and behavior.

Proposition 2. Expression and impropriety thresholds will reduce or expand “space” for authentic expression in the workplace.

Proposition 3. “Fully” authentic expression is not necessary to experience greater job satisfaction and effectiveness at work.

Proposition 4. Suppressed authenticity can reduce positive outcomes for employees, while expressed authenticity - that doesn't violate cultural norms - can increase favorable outcomes for both employees and their organizations.

Proposition 5. Individual factors/traits may promote greater authentic expression at work.

Proposition 6. Authentic expression is better conceptualized as more or less rather than either/or.

CHAPTER 3

ESSAY 2

Introduction

Issues of authenticity are ubiquitous. From Lance Armstrong to Martha Stewart to Bill O'Reilly and most recently Jussie Smollett, matters of authenticity and authentic expression continue to constitute a pervasive part of our culture, institutions, workforce, and individual selves (Erickson, 1995).

In Study 1, the goal was to facilitate development of a more robust and inclusive model with propositions to explain how authenticity “works” in today’s workplace. In addition, I looked to build theory and determine what helps and what hinders authentic expression and to consider the notion of “thresholds” defining the space where an employee can express authentically without sanctions, and still find success at work. Moreover, I sought individual and organizational fear factors that contribute to one's ability and willingness to express authenticity at work. Study 1 found that both managers and non-managers perceive authenticity to be important to workplace satisfaction, effectiveness and well-being, though to different degrees. More specifically, analysis uncovered the following trends pertaining to authenticity at work: (1) there are myriad, individualized definitions for authenticity at work; (2) individual and organizational factors contribute greatly to one’s authentic expression and behavior; (3) fear of perceived reprisal plays a significant role in authentic expression and behavior; and (4) employees can still be productive without being fully authentic. This final observation was a key factor motivating research for Essay (and Study) 2 that addressed the primary questions: what range of authentic expression allows individuals to be productive at work? Should the concept of authenticity be viewed in terms of degrees (i.e., more or less) rather than as either/or (authentic

or inauthentic)? As such, Study 2 consists of analysis of data gathered from an online survey and a post hoc event analysis/deconstruction discussing the 2018 incident involving larger-than-life, motivational speaker and self-help guru Tony Robbins interacting with one of his audience members, Nanine McCool.

Although researchers have studied authenticity for hundreds of years, it remains an extremely complex phenomenon. On the surface, authenticity appears to be a positive state or trait. Organizations consistently highlight the benefits of authentic expression for both the organization and for the individual. Below the surface, however, there are mixed views on how much authentic expression is valued, needed, or even permitted in the workplace. Recent work in business ethics research calls attention to the promise inherent in the concept of authenticity (e.g., individual fulfillment) for complicating as well as enriching the ways we think about core issues at the intersection of management ethics and practice, like moral character, ethical choices, leadership, and corporate social responsibility (Driver, 2006; Jackson, 2005; Ladkin, 2006; Liedtka, 2008). Organizations that foster or support authenticity may enhance both the business and the people side of an institution simultaneously (Driver, 2006; Jackson, 2005; Ladkin, 2006; Liedtka, 2008).

Is authentic expression truly needed, possible, or even wanted in today's workplace? In business, the rise in corporate manipulation and guile has resulted in increased interest in authenticity (Liedtka, 2008). Over the past decade, management journals, featuring articles on authenticity, have more than doubled (Lehman, O'Connor, Kovacs & Newman, 2018). For example, in 2018, the Academy of Management Annals published a 97-page article on authenticity. Given its ubiquity in popular culture as well as academic research, an increased understanding of this concept is of critical importance (Lehman et al., 2018).

In Study 2, I conducted a quantitative survey that examined authenticity at work as it relates to communication and behavior. Interviewee feedback (from Essay 1) and a more extensive review of the literature lead to developing hypotheses about authentic expression at work in relation to management, peer and organizational support, the Big Five traits of extraversion and openness, and demographic sensitivities (e.g., awareness of gender, race/ethnicity and management status as it relates to being authentic) and emotional intelligence. Also, authentic expression was also considered in relationship with job productivity, job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

To extend the discussion of the importance of recognizing “limitations” place on authentic expression in society, I also provide a post hoc event analysis/deconstruction of a 2018 incident involving Tony Robbins where his authentic expression was called into question and sanctioned. In other words, his “authentic” behavior crossed the impropriety threshold of acceptable norms for those in his social realm. The result of this research is used to further elucidate the importance and impact of authenticity at work and society and to examine to what degree, and in some cases, what topics, one can fully express themselves authentically.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Several goals for Study2 included determining what workplace outcomes (e.g., job productivity, job satisfaction and organizational commitment) can be linked to authenticity and what additional factors contribute to authentic expression. Study1 findings also indicated that there may be differing effects relative to authentic expression based on individual differences, including diversity, and job level of the individual within the organization, so attention was paid to these variables.

Authenticity, Extraversion, Openness and Emotional Intelligence

Historical ideas and perspectives within philosophy that contribute to the development of psychological authenticity suggest that the portrayal of authenticity involves a variety of themes (Kernis & Goldman 2006). Most notably, authentic functioning is characterized in terms of peoples': (1) self-understanding, (2) openness to objectively recognizing their ontological realities (e.g., evaluating their desirable and undesirable self-aspects), (3) actions, and (4) orientation towards interpersonal relationships (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Authentic expression is a choice and employees are consistently considering the impact of their communications. Fleeson and Wilt (2010) performed three studies where they compared two hypotheses - trait consistency, that individuals feel most authentic when acting in a way consistent with their traits; and state-content significance, that some ways of acting feel more authentic because of their content and consequences, regardless of the actor's corresponding traits (Fleeson & Wilt, 2010). Authenticity was consistently associated with acting highly extraverted, agreeable, conscientious, emotionally stable, and intellectual, regardless of the actor's traits (Fleeson & Wilt, 2010). The central question in the study was whether frequent changes in behavior, specifically Big Five trait-relevant behavior, are associated with changes in authenticity, and if so, how (Fleeson & Wilt, 2010)? Big Five traits are used because those factors are commonly accepted to be major dimensions of personality (Fleet & Wilson, 2010; McCrae & Costa, 1994). For Essay 2, I choose two of the Big Five traits—extraversion and openness—as I believed these two subscales would be most associated with authentic expression at work. They both involve proactive and interactive forms of communication and they create greater possibilities for relationship building – which can be for workplace effectiveness and happiness. Extraversion pertains to the desire to

be around people more so than being by yourself and openness pertains to being open to new ideas and new experiences.

Humanistic theories (Maslow, 1968; Rogers, 1961) argue that behaviors that produce growth increase authenticity (Fleet & Wilson, 2010). The state-content significance hypothesis assumes that the more of the content that has consequences for authenticity, the more authenticity (Fleeson & Wilt, 2010).

Emotional intelligence is considerably valued by both managers and non-managers in today's workplace. Emotional intelligence is a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). In addition, among various individual difference variables, emotional intelligence is the variable that has been known to noticeably influence authentic leadership (Ilies et al., 2005; Miao, Humphrey & Qian, 2018). Ilies and colleagues (2005) argued that authentic leaders should be self-aware and aware of their areas of strength and their areas of weaknesses and understand their emotions, all of which are affected by emotional intelligence (Miao et al., 2018). Emotional intelligence is found to impact leader emergence, leader performance and effective leadership styles (e.g., authentic leadership) (Miao et al., 2018; Walter et al., 2011). For example, emotionally intelligent individuals can use their emotional intelligence to decipher the emotional requirements of a situation, empathize with others, and modulate their emotional displays to meet others' expectations, all of which are related to authentic leadership; moreover, emotionally savvy leaders are more likely to have higher perceived authenticity in the eyes of their followers because they can use their emotional intelligence to apply effective emotional labor strategies to gain favorable impression from their followers (Gardner et al., 2009; Miao et al., 2018).

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Expressed authenticity is positively related to the individual traits of a) extraversion, b) openness, and c) emotional intelligence.

Authenticity, Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, and Job Performance

Studies provide empirical evidence of a positive link between authenticity and work engagement (Cable et al., 2013; Emmerich & Rigotti, 2017; van den Bosch & Taris, 2013, 2014). According to the conceptualization of Kernis and Goldman (2006), authentic behavior is characterized by increased self-awareness and unbiased processing (Emmerich & Rigotti, 2017). Thus, employees who are more authentic possess more detailed, complex, and accurate knowledge of their abilities and inner states with regard to their work and performance (Emmerich & Rigotti, 2017). This equips them to handle the myriad complexities, internal politics, ongoing change, micro-inequities, and various leadership styles that are found in today's workplace. As a result their authentic expression, job satisfaction and job performance is positively impacted which will undoubtedly enhance their organizational commitment.

Research linking authenticity to performance is scarce, but the evidence suggests a positive association between performance and authentic self-expression (Kuntz & Abbott, 2017; Metin et al., 2016). Moreover, when employees are authentic in the workplace, they are spending less time thinking about self-control or fake behaviors (e.g., surface acting), following display rules (Grandey, 2000), or monitoring their expression (Knoll & van Dick, 2013), which in turn leads to increased work ability (Emmerich & Rigotti, 2017). Sheldon and Elliot (1999) state that individuals put more effort into self-concordant goals (i.e., work goals and personal goals), which should further foster employees' work ability (Emmerich & Rigotti, 2017).

Since people spend a substantial amount of their lives at work, it seems reasonable to assume that having a job that fits one's personality and true self and has a supportive environment and culture would be advantageous for both the employee and the organization (Menard & Brunet, 2011; Metin et al., 2016; Van Beek et al., 2012). This coincides with Van den Bosch and Taris's (2014) finding that authenticity and job satisfaction are positively related (Metin et al., 2016). One can reason that authentic expression that does not violate organizational cultural norms or values will be associated with high satisfaction and positive performance (Metin et al., 2016; Wood et al., 2008).

Organizational commitment refers to employees' feeling of obligation to stay with an organization (Rukh, Shahrukh & Iqbal, 2018). It's a psychological bond between the employee and the organization (Rukh et al., 2018). If the employees' authentic expression is welcomed, encouraged and supported and if its rewarded by leadership they will undoubtedly feel a closer connection with the organization therefore leading to enhanced commitment.

Finally, to examine the concept of authenticity at work, Plasticity Labs partnered with Wilfred Laurier University social psychologist Dr. Anne Wilson to survey 213 workers. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods research findings suggest that 80% of the workers who claimed they behaved and communicated authentically believed that it strongly factored in to enhanced performance and productivity at work and lessened their desire to censor their thoughts, expression and behavior (Boute, 2016).

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2a: Expressed authenticity is positively related to a) job satisfaction, b) commitment, and c) job performance.

Authenticity's Relationship to Satisfaction and Commitment in Comparison to Job Performance

Satisfaction in one's work is an effective reaction that incorporates experiences from the whole work environment, rather than merely assigned tasks (Gutierrez et al., 2012; Pope 2018). Previously, researchers have concluded that job satisfaction was solely the result of achievement or production levels (Loi, Chan, & Lam, 2014; Pope, 2018). Subsequent studies show that such a relationship is not necessarily accurate since it is possible for employees to be high producers but be unhappy in their work, or for them to be satisfied with their job, but low producers (Kafetsios, Nezlek, & Vassilakou, 2012; Pope, 2018). As defined earlier, authenticity is the degree to which an individual's values, beliefs, and characteristics (i.e., their true self) fit his/her environment (Metin et al., 2016).

Organizational commitment, an employee's positive attitude toward the organization, refers to the employee's personal psychological intimacy toward the organization that he or she is employed (Yon, Kim, Ko & Park, 2016). In other words, it refers to the employee's relative strength of organizational identification and interest (Yon et al., 2016). Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are perceptual or psychological conditions of employees on various organizations, but they differ in terms of attitude (Yon et al., 2016). While organizational commitment is a comprehensive concept reflecting the emotions of employees toward the organization, job satisfaction is more of an effective response towards the job or particular aspects of the job (Yon et al., 2016). Further, job satisfaction indicates a relatively short-term need-satisfactory reaction and organizational commitment represents an expectation of fulfilling relatively stable, long-term and developmental desires (Yon et al., 2016). Yoon and Suh (2003) demonstrated that the greater employees' satisfaction, the higher their willingness to show extra effort, because they tend to be more committed to delivering high service quality (Kim &

Brymer, 2011). Additionally, research has shown that greater authentic expression can lead to increased job satisfaction, organizational commitment and job performance. However, Study 1 respondents suggested that a person can still be productive at work without full authentic expression. One's job satisfaction and organizational commitment could be impacted greatly if he/she had to, or choose to, suppress his/her authentic expression. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2b: Expressed authenticity's relationship to job performance is weaker than with job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Authentic Expression and Demographic Sensitivities

In organizations, individuals may assume that who they are outside of work is somehow not relevant or important at work and that it's acceptable to be one way at work and one way at home (Ferdman & Deane, 2014). When we choose to bring more of our self to work, we are more likely to critically participate in life. With more active participation, we learn to consider others' expectations and interpretations of us as well as to reject these expectations and interpretations when they do not resonate with our own experiences (Ferdman & Deane, 2014; Heidegger, 1962; Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Bringing one's whole self to work involves being honest about your combination of strengths and areas for improvement, while recognizing that you are constantly developing, evolving and learning (Ferdman & Deane, 2014) and that you adjust your communication displays contextually.

According to Sylvia Ann Hewlett, author of *Executive Presence: The Missing Link Between Merit and Success*, the struggle between conformity and authenticity in the workplace is a major stressor for employees (Steckl, 2018). In addition to performing well, employees want to

fit in. Moreover, some simply want to survive and do what they think is necessary to assist with the process of work. For many workers of color, code-switching, or altering the way one speaks and acts depending on context, becomes the norm to make coworkers and superiors more comfortable (Leiva, 2018). Succeeding in the workplace requires mastery of it (Leiva, 2018). In addition, Hewlett's research shows that women and people of color face more challenges than their counterparts in navigating this balance (Steckl, 2018). In fact, one of her studies found that over 40 percent of professionals of color felt the need to compromise their true selves to conform to company standards (Steckl, 2018). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Demographic sensitivities at work will reduce one's authentic expression in an organization.

Perceived Organizational Support and Authentic Expression

According to research, the emotions that people feel and display are the result of social conventions, norms, socialization processes, and structural positions (Vannini & Franzese, 2008). Even though authenticity is considered to be a genuine expression of the true self, it is certainly not exempt from the same social forces shaping every other experience (Vannini & Franzese, 2008). An area of social life in which emotions are especially controlled, and genuine expression is filtered, is that of paid work (Vannini & Franzese, 2008). People who make up the marginalized groups of a particular social context are more often faced with dilemmas that requires them to choose between acting in accordance with their self-values or in accordance with the expectations of powerful others (Erickson, 1995). The need to "act professional" (or fit in) in work settings can contradict being "real" as employees are often expected to follow role expectations (i.e., go along to get along) and demands from supervisors, clients and colleagues

that are not necessarily consistent with their feelings, values or ideas (Emmerich & Rigotti, 2017).

Researchers have also found that the more employees perceive their leaders to be authentic, the higher their level of satisfaction is with those leaders, which affects their organizational commitment and willingness “to walk the extra mile” (i.e., exhibit Organization Citizenship Behaviors “OCB”) (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009; Moriano et al., 2011; Ribeiro, Duarte & Filipe, 2018). The relevant literature has shown that authentic leadership creates a positive, transparent and fair environment that influences employees’ attitude and willingness to engage in OCB (Ribeiro et al., 2018). Thus, social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) can be used to explain why individuals who perceive authentic leadership develop a feeling of obligation to reciprocate by improving their performance (Ribeiro et al., 2018). Avolio et al. (2004) argue that, if leaders express feelings of confidence, positive emotions, and optimism, followers respond with greater commitment and satisfaction with their work, as well as attributing greater value to their company (Ribeiro et al., 2018). This leads to less turnover, ancillary effort, and consequently, greater commitment and job satisfaction. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Perceived organizational support of authentic expression will increase one's authentic expression at work.

*Authenticity Support, Demographic Sensitivities, Job Satisfaction, Organizational Support, and
Job Commitment*

Even without intending to do so, organizations often quash, suppress and minimize employees’ expectations (Green, Finkel, Fitzsimons & Gino, 2017). Promotion opportunities, job advancement, special projects, professional development and building relationships with certain leaders can be impacted. The structures, norms and cultures of many modern organizations make

it particularly difficult for employees to embrace the allowable organizational norms related to authentic self-expression (i.e., rules, written or unwritten, can restrict and limit full or greater authentic expression) (Green et al., 2017). To the degree that employees bring expectations of authentic self-expression to work, the prospective costs associated with disconfirmation, and the benefits associated with confirmation, compel a deeper examination of the ways in which organizations disconfirm or confirm these approach-oriented expectations (Green et al., 2017).

Maslow, in describing the need for what he called self-actualization, refers to the human “desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming” (Maslow, 1943, p. 384 in Green et al., 2017). Fulfillment of this need to become one’s unique self and to be valued as such takes different forms for different individuals (Green et al., 2017). Authentic self-expression is the fulfillment of an individual’s sense of who he/she is in words, action, and the relational value others place on the authentically-expressed self (Green et al., 2017). Authentic self-expression at work has been associated with personal power, vulnerability, creativity, enthusiasm and innovation. In group settings, authentic self-expression can improve performance, activating the often-dormant benefits associated with diversity (Green et al., 2017; Polzer, Milton, & Swarm, 2002). In search of differentiation and competitive advantage, an organization encourages its employees to perform and communicate in ways consistent with the organization’s values and works to cultivate shared cultural norms and values that pressure individuals to align their thinking and behavior with the leader’s vision (Green et al., 2017; O’Reilly & Chatman, 1996; Pratt, 2000; Schein, 2010).

Given that organizations are conceptualized as instruments aimed at achieving a specific goal that employees may not intrinsically value (Barnard, 1968), organizations attempt to influence employees to internalize their goals (Green et al., 2017; Kelman, 1958; O’Reilly &

Chatman, 1986; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996). These various organizational practices together serve to impress an organizational identity and behavioral code on individuals while suppressing their unique identities (Green et al., 2017; Nicholson, 1984; Sherif, 1958). In the process, employees will inevitably experience a sense of inauthenticity, an experience antithetical to authentic self-expression (Cable, Gino, & Staats, 2013; Green et al., 2017).

There is a clear psychological cost to the enforced suppression of individuality and authentic self-expression within the workplace (Green et al., 2017). Some argue that people who suppress their authentic selves in deference to organizational strictures feel alienated from the self (Grandey, 2003; Roberts, 2012), can be exhausted by the cognitive effort associated with suppressing the self (Hewlin, 2003, 2009), and can even experience a sense of immorality and impurity resulting from a sense that they are being untruthful with their self (Gino, Kouchaki, & Galinsky, 2015; Green et al., 2017). More generally, these relatively common organizational practices—strong socialization processes, a strong focus on process adherence, and demands for uniformity and conformity—hamper employees' ability to authentically self-express in organizational settings (Cable et al., 2013; Green et al., 2017).

Strong cultures, socialization processes, and inspirational, purpose-focused leadership all help employees embrace, and feel embraced by, a collective social identity (Green et al., 2017). Organizational practices like those described above establish an organizational code (formalized processes, uniformity norms, and socialization practices) that signals that an individual's value reflects minimized deviance from that organizational code (Green et al., 2017).

Research has shown the impact that adopting positive forms of leadership (e.g. Arnold et al., 2007, Cummings et al., 2005, Kuoppala et al., 2008, Nielsen et al., 2008b, Skakon et al., 2010, van Dierendonck et al., 2004) has in working toward improving the well-being of workers

(Nelson, Boudrias, Brunet, Morin, De Civita, Savoie, & Alderson, 2014). In addition to the impact that managers can have on employees, work climate is also posited to influence well-being (Brunet & Savoie, 1999; Nelson et al., 2014). Some authors have also postulated that authentic leadership may positively influence work climate (Caza et al., 2010; Gardner et al., 2005; Mrayyan, 2008; Nelson et al., 2014). Therefore, authentic leadership and leadership in general play a significant role in shaping well-being, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and job performance. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Authenticity support at work has a greater impact at work than demographic sensitivities on job satisfaction, organizational support and job commitment.

Methodology and Data Collection

Participants

One hundred and thirty-three American and Australian corporate professionals (managers and non-managers) contributed data for this study. These volunteers worked in the following industries: consulting and professional services; utilities; telecommunications (mass media); insurance and financial services; beauty care products and accessories; commercial moving and installation services; individual and family services; community-based mentoring; pharmaceutical; and commercial and industrial general contracting. There were 133 respondents with a 29% response rate.

Procedure

A representative from each organization was contacted and asked to select a diverse group of employees (25 in total – a combination of managers and non-managers) to participate in

the study. Each representative contacted potential participants online using work email addresses provided by their organizations. In the email, a brief explanation of the study's aim (i.e., workplace communication and behavior) was provided, followed by a hyperlink that led directly to the starting screen of an online Qualtrics survey. The introductory screen explained the survey's purpose and emphasized that participation was voluntary and confidential. In addition, participants were informed that completing the survey would take approximately 15 – 20 minutes. The eight-section, 100-item survey was entitled "Workplace Communication and Behavior." The first seven sections of the survey were to be answered using a Likert scale (six used a response scale from 1 – Strongly Disagree to 7 Strongly Agree; one (Job Performance) used 1 – Far short expectations to 7 Far exceeds expectations). The final three questions were open-ended for narrative responses.

Measures

Authentic Expression

The 25-item Authenticity Degrees Scale (Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliouis, & Joseph, 2008) measures dispositional authenticity, individual communication and behavior. Four items were selected from each of the three dimensions (self-alienation, authentic living, and accepting external influence). These twelve items allowed for a shorter survey and were slightly adjusted to reflect authenticity at work. Four items loaded on the "authentic living" factor measured "authentic expression" at work. These four items included: "At work, I think it is better to be yourself, than to be popular." "At work, I always stand by what I believe in." "I am true to myself in most situations." "At work, I live in accordance with my values." Cronbach's alpha for this four-item scale was .77.

Authenticity Support

The Authenticity Support subscale of my pilot Authenticity Degrees Scale was used to measure the impact of organization culture, manager and peer support on authentic expression. To test the validity and reliability of the Authenticity Support Scale, I conducted an online Survey Monkey pilot study with 138 past and current clients and colleagues. I developed the items for the Authenticity Support Scale based on the main organizationally-relevant factors derived from my first study (i.e., management support, peer support and the organization/corporate culture) that influence one's expression (versus suppression) of authenticity and whether that expression is supported or seen as inappropriate (i.e., crosses the expression and/or impropriety thresholds). Fourteen of the eighteen items were used to measure the participants' perception of the support they receive to be authentic. Sample items include: "Our company's employee policies influence how authentic I am at work.", "My manager plays a significant role in how authentic I am at work.", "My co-workers support my authentic expression at work.", and "My co-workers and I discuss being authentic at work." Cronbach's alpha for this fourteen-item scale was .872. The remaining four items were used to measure demographic sensitivities (that play a role in authentic expression support). Sample questions include: "My gender impacts the support I receive to be authentic at work.", "My age impacts the support I receive to be authentic at work.", and "My ethnicity impacts the support I receive to be authentic at work." Cronbach's alpha for this four-item scale was .781.

Extraversion

Extraversion was measured by using the extraversion subscale of The Big Five Personality Test (Digman, 1990). Sample questions include: “Is talkative.”, “Is full of energy.”, “Generates a lot of enthusiasm.”, and “Is original, comes up with new ideas.” Cronbach’s alpha for this eight-item scale was .83.

Openness

Openness was measured by using the openness subscale of The Big Five Personality Test (Digman, 1990). Sample questions include: “Is curious about many different things.”, “Has an active imagination.”, “Is inventive.”, and “Likes to reflect, play with ideas.” Cronbach’s alpha for this eight-item scale was .86.

Emotional Intelligence

The Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue) (Petrides, 2009) was used to measure emotional intelligence. The full measure is found in Appendix (Scale 5). Sample items included: “Expressing my emotions with words is not a problem for me.”, “I can deal effectively with people.”, “I’m usually able to find ways to control my emotions when I want to.”, and “On the whole, I’m pleased with my life.” Cronbach’s alpha for this 30-item scale was .83.

Job Commitment

Job commitment was measured using the six-item Affective Commitment Scale (Meyer, Allen & Smith, 1993). Sample items included: “I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.”, “I do not feel a strong sense of ‘belonging’ to this organization.”, and

“This organization has a great deal of personal meaning to me.” Cronbach’s alpha for this six-item scale was .82.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction was measured using the eight-item Job Satisfaction Scale (Schleider, Smith, Casper, Watt, & Greguras, 2015). Sample items include: “The competence of your supervisor in making decisions.”, “I feel that I am happier in my work than most other people.”, and “Most days I am enthusiastic about my work. I find real enjoyment in my work.” Cronbach’s alpha for this eight-item scale was .90.

Job Performance

The two-item Performance Scale (Kiefer & Barclay, 2012) was used to measure job performance. These items included: “How would you rate your performance over the last six months?” and “How would your employer rate your performance over the last six months?” Since this was only a two-item measure, a third item was added, which was: “How would you rate your performance in relation to your peers over the last six months?” Responses ranged from 1 = “far short of expectations” to 7 = “far exceeds expectations”, with 4 = meets expectations. Cronbach’s alpha for this three-item scale was .92.

Qualitative Responses

Three open-ended questions were asked in the survey, consistent with interview questions asked in earlier, in-depth interviews. The questions included: “How important do you think authenticity is at work?”, “Do you think a person has to be authentic in order for him/her to be

productive at work? Explain.”, and “What helps and what hinders your authentic expression at work.” These were hand coded for post hoc analysis and discussion.

Results

Table 7 shows the means, standard deviations, scale reliabilities (Cronbach’s alpha), and correlations for study variables. Four independent variables (i.e., authentic support, extraversion, openness, and emotional intelligence) correlated positively with authentic expression. Demographic sensitivities was negatively correlated with authentic expression. All dependent variables (i.e., work outcomes) job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job performance) correlated positively with authentic expression.

H1: Expressed authenticity is positively related to the individual traits of (a) extraversion, (b) openness, and (c) emotional intelligence. Correlations show significant positive correlations for each trait. Based on these results, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

H2a: Expressed authenticity is positively related to (a) job satisfaction, (b) commitment, and (c) job performance. Correlation analysis indicates a significant, positive relationships with these variables. Based on these results, Hypothesis 2a is supported.

H2b: Expressed authenticity's relationship to job performance and organizational commitment is weaker than with job satisfaction. Correlations show this hypothesis is partially supported. While all were positively correlated, job satisfaction was more highly correlated with expressed authenticity than job performance.

H3: Demographic sensitivities at work will reduce one's authentic expression in an organization. Correlation analysis shows a significant, negative relationship between these two variables. Subsequent T-tests were performed with groups split above and below the mean. T-

tests showed that people with lower demographic sensitivities (below the mean) were not significantly different in their authentic expression at work than those with higher sensitivities (above the mean). Both statistics helped clarify this relationship. Based on the non-significant T-test (shown in Table 8), this hypothesis is partially supported based on the significant, negative correlation.

H4: Perceived organizational support of authentic expression will increase one's authentic expression at work. Analysis show significantly high correlations between these two variables. A second T-test compared groups separated above and below the mean. People with lower perceived authenticity support (below the mean) were significantly different from those with higher perceived authenticity support regarding their authentic expression. That is, with increased organizational support, people were more likely to express authentically. Based on the T-test (shown in Table 8), this hypothesis was supported.

H5: Authenticity support at work has a greater impact at work than demographic sensitivities on job satisfaction, organizational support and job commitment. Correlations indicate authenticity support is more highly correlated with the dependent variables than demographic sensitivities. Based on these results, this hypothesis is supported. Regressions also were performed by entering the independent and demographic variables into the equation to predict each dependent variable. Results showed that authenticity support found in the organization was the best predictor for all of these dependent variables (see Table 9).

Analysis of Survey Open-ended Questions

The three open-ended questions at the end of the survey were:

(1) How important do you think authenticity is at work?

(2) Do you think a person has to be authentic in order for him/her to be productive at work? Explain.

(3) What helps and what hinders authentic expression at work?

Surveys can limit the depth of responses, so I wanted to provide a vehicle for respondents to share additional perspectives regarding their views on authenticity at work. Of the 133 survey respondents, 84 provided answers to the questions. Over half of the respondents (57) answered “very” to the first question. Other answers to the question included “vital”, “nice but not necessary”, “somewhat”, “not”, “critical/extremely” and “quite”. For question two, 37 respondents answered “yes” while 29 answered “no”, not a significant difference. The other answers included “not necessarily”, “to a degree”, and “yes and no”. Three participant’s comments reflect the difference in thought:

Yes. It benefits the individual if they can be true to themselves as well as those around the person so they can know who they’re truly working with. Any place there is truth there is freedom. Authenticity breeds trust even if the person who is truly revealing himself is not exactly the kind of person you prefer to be around. At least they’ve shown you who they truly are. You can trust that.

No. Based on the type of work you do it is highly possible to complete tasks without being your true self. Being a minority that deals with stereotypes on a daily basis conditions you to monitor your behavior and communication style to ensure you are able to meet your career objectives in good standing. For example, being extremely happy or extremely angry is fine, expressing these emotions however, does involve a degree of calculation because of the cultural assumptions that others may make

No and yes. I believe that a person can put on a facade to get through work...but I believe if they recognize that they are unique and that uniqueness about themselves will allow them to propel themselves to heights they couldn’t have imagined.

With regard to question three, a number of themes emerged. These themes were similar to those found in Essay 1 that evolved from the semi-structured interviews conducted. A list of the

comments can be found in Tables 10 and 11. The themes for what helps and what hinders authentic expression were:

Helps	Hinders
Management support	Lack of management support
Culture/environment	Culture/environment
Recognition	Gossip
Individual attitude/mindset/choice	Lack of peer support
Peer support	Fear (being judged, reprisal, not understood)
Independence/freedom to do one's job	Choice; Individual values different from company's

The three questions were developed to see if the sentiment reflected in the Likert scale survey responses would be similar to these open-ended options. I also wanted to see if there would be outlier data. Nevertheless, authenticity support, in the form of organizational culture, management and/or peer support, emerged again as the pivotal contributor to one's authentic expression at work. Lack of support had the reverse effect. While authenticity is certainly a desired behavior, more than half of the respondents answered "very" to question one. Over one third answered that authenticity was not necessary for an individual to be productive. Their accompanying comments reinforced this sentiment. This is an indication that people have learned to work, and be productive, without full authentic expression. Workers may believe that the perceived risks of expressing authentically outweigh the perceived rewards. Hence, there is an opportunity to widen the space for authentic expression.

General Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to continue to explore the merits of authenticity at work. Authenticity over the years has mostly been described as either/or experience rather than as a more or less concept. My research showed that the range of authentic expression is better explained using degrees rather than binaries. In addition, I wanted to explore self- and organizationally-imposed factors that helped and hindered authentic expression and behavior at work as well as determine which constraint had greater impact. Finally, I wanted to see how authentic expression impacts work outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job performance. Results indicate that authentic expression is important at work; however, full authentic expression, which is a false concept, is not needed for a person to be productive. In addition, the findings show that authenticity support within the organization (i.e., management and peer support) is integral for greater authentic expression at work. The data also provided insight into the degrees of authentic expression at work, causing one to draw conclusions regarding the relative space for “safe” expression (that space, as indicated on the Dual Threshold Model, is between the suppression and impropriety thresholds). Organizations can enlarge this space by moving the expression threshold more than the impropriety threshold because they can’t let people express without some consequence for making “inappropriate” comments authentically.

My findings expand on existing theory regarding authenticity at work (van den Bosch & Taris, 2014; Metin, Taris Peeters, van Beek, & van den Bosch, 2016; Plasticity Labs & Dr. Anne Wilson, 2016; Deloitte, 2013). The findings reinforce Ryan et al.’s, (2005) work with Self-Determination Theory (SDT). SDT argues that individuals are authentic when their actions are congruent with their core self, meaning when they are autonomous and self-determining (Metin

et al., 2016). The likelihood of greater, positive work outcomes occur when employees are more self-determining. This research also reinforces Wood et al.'s study with the tripartite structure of authenticity. Their research revealed that higher levels of authenticity (as measured in terms of three subscales of authentic living, self-alienation and accepting external forces) were associated with positive affect, self-esteem, autonomy, happiness, environmental mastery, personal growth, self-acceptance, and gratitude (van den Bosch & Taris, 2013). This can lead to enhanced job satisfaction, organizational commitment and job performance. My findings reinforce Goffman's (1963) theory of felt identity. According to Goffman, felt identity is an individual's subjective sense of his or her own situation and the continuity and character that an individual comes to have because of his or her various social experiences (Erickson, 1995). This felt identity helps employees navigate the workplace landscape and determine their perceived range for authentic expression.

The respondents' feedback in both Study 1 and Study 2 regarding their authentic expression and their belief about authenticity in general is explained in the above theories. Moreover, their feedback calls to mind Anais Nin's words, "We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are." My findings also fit in with Kernis & Goldman's (2005b) subjective authenticity theory. A person is high in subjective authenticity when agreeing that he or she is "really being me" or "acting like my true self" (Fleeson & Wilt, 2010). On the other hand, a person is low in subjective authenticity when judging that he or she is "putting on an act" or does not "feel like my true self" (Fleeson & Wilt, 2010). This range of subjective authenticity (feeling and behaving) parallels the range of authentic expression discussed in some detail in the Dual Threshold Model (Geddes & Callister, 2007). Nevertheless, my findings open up avenues for future research regarding the "nice but not needed" notion of authentic expression, the role

privilege plays in authentic expression, the power of authenticity support, the risk of going against the grain and speaking truth to power.

Perhaps the three most interesting findings of the research can be summarized as follows. First, the results supported the hypothesis (in Study 2) that discussed the profound impact authentic support has on authentic expression and that authentic expression had positive correlations with the job characteristics (i.e., job satisfaction, organizational commitment and job performance). If a person believes that he/she has manager and peer support, he/she is more likely to challenge the status quo, test expression boundaries and reveal more of him/her true self. With this added “freedom to be me”, they are likely to be more satisfied, committed, and productive at work.

Second, the results showed that demographic sensitivities at work will reduce one's authentic expression in an organization. These sensitivities included race/ethnicity, gender, management status and negative perceptions of previous experiences. With regard to the semi-structured interview responses and survey open-ended question responses, none of the white respondents, in either study, discussed ever having to change or alter who they were personally to be productive or to fit in. However, they did state that they changed aspects of their behavior or the way they communicated. In contrast, non-white respondents reported that they had to alter both who they are (i.e., personal aspects), how they conduct themselves, and how they communicate at work.

Third, my findings reinforced the idea that speaking truth to power is still a risky endeavor for some. In essence, speaking truth to power risks offending those in power. On the one hand, speaking truth to power can position a person to be seen as a change agent for expressing his/her firm values. On the other hand, the same person can be seen as an individual

with an agenda. This phenomenon was reinforced in both my semi-structured interviews and in my post hoc event analysis/deconstruction.

Takeaways and conclusions, from this research, for practitioners and organizational leaders include the followings: (1) although many in the workplace believe that authenticity is important they also believe that the current work environment is becoming more difficult for others, especially leaders, to accept it; (2) there are a number of fears associated with authentic expression and many employees believe that despite its potential benefits, authentic expression or limited authentic expression can be explained by economic security and insecurity; (3) authenticity is a moral category that's used to police behavior; people are accountable for a constantly moving standard; (4) authenticity is socially constructed which makes it difficult to define; in the world it means different things to different people; and (5) there is a small engine of inequality associated with authenticity (i.e., some would argue that people with power and privilege have more space (i.e., room) for authentic expression.

The findings addressed all research questions and paved the way for new questions that are discussed in the Limitations and Future Research chapter below. Finally, the findings created a picture that informs what employees really think about the value of authenticity at work. They believe that organizations can benefit from it. At the same time, however, they (i.e., employees) can still be productive and profitable with limited authentic expression. Being able to refer back to an “inner, true self” helps individuals to manage themselves and their lives through varying works demands and challenges (Di Fabio and Kenny, 2018), especially in the context of the increasing flexibilities and insecurities of the modern work life inside and outside organizations (Emmerich & Rigotti, 2017; Savickas, 2011).

Limitations and Future Research

There were several limitations in Study 2. While efforts were made to compensate for limitations, there were some that must be acknowledged. First, although the sample size was adequate for a quantitative study (more would be even better), the lack of racial and ethnic diversity limited perspectives on authentic expression. Research has shown that people of color experience the workplace differently from non-people of color (Steckl, 2018). The semi-structured interviews support this notion as well. This lack of diversity in the sample makes it difficult to generalize the results. It would be amusing to see if the rich information gathered in both studies would hold true across a larger, wider range and even number of white and non-white employees.

Second, the voluminous number (100) of survey questions in Study 2 might have taken away from the respondents' momentum when completing the survey as well as the limitation of a one-time cross-sectional data collection. Although it took only 15–20 minutes to complete the survey, the sheer number of questions could have decreased fully active participation. Out of the 133 respondents, 102 answered every question. In attempting to determine what assisted with promoting more authentic expression at work and during the survey's development, it would have been better to select fewer variables.

Additionally, the questions did not specifically address respondents' opinions relative to the amount of space one has for authentic expression or their belief regarding the either/or, more or less authenticity argument. Obtaining both their quantitative and narrative perspectives would have added another level of depth to the data.

Future research should examine different facets of authenticity and how they relate to outcomes like job satisfaction, organizational commitment and job performance. First, from an

independent variable standpoint, research could explore the role privilege has on authentic expression. That would initially require a study of privilege overall and what types of privilege (e.g., race, gender, physical ability, sexual orientation, national origin, etc.) are most prevalent in the workplace. Second, research could investigate the impact of technology on authentic expression at work. Technology is disrupting nearly every industry. Thus, at work, technological devices (e.g., smartphones, iPads, laptops) could play a significant role in employees breaching issues of confidentiality and overall daily operation communications. Third, future research could investigate the sanctions associated with crossing the impropriety threshold of authentic expression and if those sanctions are levied consistently regardless of one's role or position in an organization. Fourth, future research could explore the benefits of expanding the space for authentic expression at work. Considering most organizations have rules on what's considered acceptable and allowable decorum, a variety of elements must come together to show how organizations will benefit from expanded authentic expression. For instance, would businesses that allow free expression reduce risks associated with employees keeping their mistakes to themselves? To target the space of appropriate authentic expression future research studies could use the following questions when conducting interviews: When do you feel most safe to communicate authentically at work?; What could organizations do to help widen the space for authentic expression at work?; What have you done in the past to increase your authentic expression?; When (i.e., what situations) have you felt that it was in your best interests to keep your truth to yourself? Finally, future research could explore the impact of "pretending" behavior on one's health, well-being and self-esteem. Does wearing a professional mask, on a daily basis, take a toll on employees? And what are the costs for the employee and for the business? This work includes, but is not limited to, impression management (Goffman, 1959), interactive

service work (Bowens & Cummings, 1990, pp. 4-5) and emotional labor (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Grandey, 2000: 97, see also Gross, 1998; Hochschild, 1983; Morris & Feldman, 1996).

There are myriad opportunities for future research concerning the impacts of limits on authentic expression (and perhaps enhanced suppression) at work.

A Post Hoc Analysis

A Case of Authentic Expression Gone Too Far: Tony Robbins

Many still believe that authentic expression at work can feel like a double-edged sword (Bassett, 2018). While expressing your honest opinion and your true personality can be perceived as better than faking it or going along to get along, in some cases, it has the power to damage your reputation (Bassett, 2016). Building on Study 2, I examined the extent to which full authentic expression at work can influence how one is perceived and where the line for that full expression is drawn by organizational observers.

As mentioned earlier, authenticity involves the ability to regulate one's behavior in a way that is consistent with internally-held values and goals (Harvey, Martinko, & Gardner, 2006; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). What happens, however, if the regulation of those values and goals is magnified to the point where one's expression and behavior becomes intolerable to others? Entrepreneur, best-selling author, philanthropist and self-proclaimed number one life and business strategist, Tony Robbins had such an experience (Bailey, 4/13/18).

In this section, I offer a post hoc case analysis/deconstruction to illustrate the particulars involved in his March 15, 2018 #MeToo movement, impropriety threshold crossing incident at his Unleash the Power Within (UPW) event. I will discuss the players, identify significant takeaways, and examine what this experience sheds light on. My motivation was to illustrate

how this incident helps to clarify what it means to cross the impropriety threshold of workplace authenticity and to draw insights into how authenticity can impact ones' code of professionalism at work. What's equally significant regarding this incident, especially considering the emphasis placed in Studies 1 and 2 on authenticity as a spectrum, is determining when Robbins' expression and behavior was most authentic. Was it during the 11-minute exchange with Nanine McCool (i.e., the UPW audience member who challenged and questioned Robbins' representation and understanding of the #MeToo movement)? Or was it in his online apology that followed shortly after recordings of the incident went viral. This analysis will provide evidence for how changing, salient protocols ultimately reduce or expand the 'space' given to authentic expression at work.

Method

Procedure

I facilitated an event deconstruction using archival data in the form of articles, podcasts, videos, websites, reports, and other online resources relating to the experience; I also interviewed Nanine McCool. I did an electronic database search in Lexis-Nexis using key words related to the incident collect journal articles, online newspaper and magazine articles, and media interviews. In addition to reference materials collected through the electronic database search, I acquired public documents by searching the Internet sites suggested by Google.

Data Collection: Google

My initial data collection included reviewing Tony Robbins' website (www.tonyrobbins.com) and doing a Google search on Nanine McCool and on Antoinette

Collins (aka, Butterscotch), whose video recording of the incident started the avalanche of media and societal reaction. The McCool Google search alone uncovered 19 pages of articles, videos, blogs and podcasts discussing topics such as: (1) the actual incident; (2) McCool's past and disbarment, her post-event interviews and response to Robbins' apology; (3) Robbins' apology, backlash and "mansplaining"; and (4) body language analysis. The videos that assisted most in this research were: (1) McCool (March 25, 2018); (2) ButterscotchMusic (May, 2018); (3) ABC News (April 10, 2018); (4) ABC News, Nightline (April 10, 2018); (5) TODAY, (April 11, 2018); (6) NBC News (April 10, 2018); (7) KCRA News (August 14, 2007); (8) Facebook/Butterscotch (March 25, 2018); (9) THE GOOD MEN PROJECT (April 11, 2018) and (10) NowThis News (April 13, 2018). Podcasts that contributed to the research were: (1) Catherine GraceO (April 26, 2018); (2) Global Transformatrix (April, 18, 2018); and (3) Karen Sterling (April 12, 2018).

Using Temple University's online library, I started searching data bases. Of the 773 databases to select from, only Access World News, Lexis-Nexis Academic (Nexis Uni) and the Wall Street Journal Full Text (1984 – present) had information discussing the event. I put the following terms in the search engines: Tony Robbins Nanine McCool, Tony Robbins Nanine McCool since the incident and Tony Robbins Nanine McCool #MeToo. The publications that contributed the most to the research were: (1) *The Charlotte Observer* (Bailey, 4/13/18); (2) *The Fairfield Mirror* (Dirienzo, 4/18/08); (3) *The San Jose Mercury News* (Ross, 4/9/18); (4) *The Republican American* (4/18/18); and (5) *The Daily World* (Krauss, 4/11/18).

Event Participants

Tony Robbins

Entrepreneur Anthony J. Robbins (born Anthony J. Mahavorick), better known as Tony Robbins, is arguably the nation's number one motivational speaker (although he does not like being referred to as such). He's wealthy, charismatic, tall (6'7"), handsome, and has an enormous following. On his website (www.tonyrobbins.com), he calls himself, "a recognized authority on the psychology of leadership, negotiations and organizational turnaround" and "the nation's number one life and business strategist". He has worked with presidents, Olympic athletes, corporate executives, entertainers, professional athletes and teams, and celebrities.

Tony Robbins, who never attended college, chose the self-help/motivational speaking industry at the age of 17 after attending a seminar facilitated by author, entrepreneur and motivational speaker, Jim Rohn. Robbins has been a mainstay in the industry for more than 40 years. Known initially for his infomercials and seminars, Robbins evolved into a best-selling author, philanthropist and life coach. According to the top celebrity wealth sites, his net worth is believed to be approximately \$480 million and is listed in the 62nd position on Forbes' wealth power rankings (Wallace, 2018). Having presented to, and worked with, hundreds of thousands of clients nationally and internationally, he has over 30 companies operating in more than 100 countries (Wallace, 2018). Those companies include asteroid mining, credit cards, hospitality, nutritional supplements, private equity, sports teams, 3-D printed prosthetics and wealth management (Inc. Magazine, 2016). An aggressive and brash speaker who welcomes and confronts issues during his live events, Robbins has built an empire on the central message that anyone can learn to be confident. The caption on the homepage of his website reads, "Close the gap between where you are today – and where you want to be."

Nanine McCool

According to many, Joyce Nanine Nyman McCool has spent a lifetime “speaking truth to power.” Her March 15, 2018, encounter with Tony Robbins at his Unleash the Power Within event was not her first confrontation with a powerful figure. The 5’8”, 55-year-old former U.S. Coast Guard and lawyer (who was disbarred for using social media, namely Twitter, to encourage readers to reach out to two judges who she believed had been unwilling to consider all of the evidence in two child custody cases) hails from New Orleans, Louisiana. As a lawyer, she practiced family law and had long been an advocate and activist for human rights. McCool, no stranger to taking on issues, is herself a sexual abuse survivor (at the age of three) and home abuse survivor. She has been a supporter of the #MeToo movement since its inception.

McCool says she attended the UPW event on a whim because she thought well of Tony Robbins and his mission. Prior to paying the \$3,000 registration fee, she said that she did research on his background, teachings, and beliefs, and discussed it with her husband. She admitted that participating in motivational workshops was not something that she typically did, but she was feeling out of sorts since her disbarment and was looking for inspiration. She saw an advertisement about the event and decided to attend.

Butterscotch

Antoinette Clinton (Butterscotch) is an internationally-known singer, songwriter, musician, beatboxer and LGBTQ and #MeToo activist. She plays the piano, saxophone, flute, guitar, and bass guitar. The 33-year-old entertainer and recently-turned speaker, hails from the Sacramento-Davis, California area. Having gained national exposure from her appearance on the second season of America’s Got Talent in 2007, Butterscotch has continued her career both as a

musician and an activist. Her video recording of the 11-minute confrontation between Robbins and McCool started the media explosion and coverage of the incident.

The Event

Robbins' Unleash the Power Within event is a three-and-a-half-day motivational and empowerment experience. According to Robbins' marketing materials the session is designed to enable attendees to break down the fears and psychological limitations which are holding them back from achieving massive success with their life. UPW events are held both nationally and internationally. The event in question occurred on March 15, 2018, in San Jose, California. Over 12,000 people were in attendance.

The Incident

Using her smartphone, Butterscotch began video-recording the incident just after Robbins finished making supportive comments about his good friend Steve Wynn. Wynn is a casino magnate who had recently stepped down from his post as CEO and chairman of Wynn Resorts amid multiple accusations of decades of sexual misconduct and abuse. Robbins then moved into a discussion about the #MeToo movement. Apparently, he had made #MeToo comments earlier and returned to the topic to continue his thoughts. Robbins began by saying that women were using the #MeToo movement to hold onto their victimhood to gain significance. He continued by saying that they were attacking men and accusing them of abusive behavior that really was not abuse at all in order to attempt to make themselves relevant. After sitting in her chair squirming, because of what she felt were a series of untruths and misrepresentations, McCool stood up and

yelled, “You don’t get it...you got it wrong.” Robbins didn’t immediately hear her but within seconds one of his team members handed her a microphone and he made his way toward her.

During the next eleven and a half minutes, of which he spoke for nearly ten, Robbins used profanity, audience engagement techniques, his voice, his platform, his physicality, and his larger-than-life positional power to convince McCool that her #MeToo movement beliefs were misguided. As he challenged her #MeToo sentiment, Robbins consistently made his argument to both McCool and the 12,000 plus people that were in attendance. He encouraged the audience members to raise their hand or say, “Yes,” if they were following him or agreed with his point.

When McCool made her first statement, asserting that Robbins mischaracterized the #MeToo movement, he interrupted, challenging her response. He spoke for 140 seconds without pause, mentioning Jesus, quoting scripture and dropping the “F” bomb in subsequent sentences. When he did pause, letting McCool respond, he listened as the crowd cheered and applauded her thoughts. This moved Robbins to take her from the relative “safety” of her audience seat and bring her into the aisle alongside him. Next, he did a “push exercise” with her, demonstrating what he felt the #MeToo movement was doing to men. He asked her to extend her arm and make a fist. His fist met hers and he commenced with pushing her down the aisle. His lesson was that when you push people, you don’t get results; you get pushback and angry people, so everyone loses. Robbins, who is 6’7”, appeared to outweigh McCool, who is 5’8”, by at least 100 pounds. The demonstration (i.e., the push) lasted approximately 30 seconds. He finished with one last push (or thrust) of his own for emphasis.

Robbins continued by telling a story about a high-ranking friend of his who works in Hollywood. Indicating that he hears stories like the one he was about to tell all of the time, without hesitation, he continued his argument. He said that his friend interviewed three people

for a job – a woman and two men. The woman was more qualified, but she was extremely attractive. Fearing that hiring her was too much of a risk, he hired someone else. Seeing McCool shaking her head disapprovingly and hearing her utter that that was an excuse, Robbins continued to make his case, uninterrupted, for another minute and a half. McCool then chimed in reminding him that he was a very influential man and that his mischaracterization of the #MeToo movement was a disservice. Her words were again met with more cheers and applause and another Robbins interruption, where he continued to assert his point for another 90 seconds. When someone from the audience called out that he needed to apologize, Robbins' offered the following response:

I'm not going to be inauthentic and say I'm sorry about something that I'm not sorry about. I'm not sorry...this is what so many people are doing. They're saying they're sorry when they're not just to comply. I'm not here to comply...but what I wouldn't do is be inauthentic. It would be inauthentic for me to go, 'Oh no it's fine, everybody should comply...'

Robbins finished their disagreement with three non-stop minutes of commentary regarding how to gain significance in life. McCool didn't get the opportunity to speak again. He asked the audience to give her a hand, he then kissed her hand and continued with the session. One of Robbins' closing thoughts was peculiar. He talked about why he brought up the #MeToo movement in the first place. This caused me to wonder: Did he script, plan, and prep to opine on the #MeToo movement? How much did McCool's interruption alter his plans and his authentic expression?

Shortly after the March 15th UPW event (March 20th to be exact), Butterscotch posted the video on her Facebook wall. After 70,000 plus views and several hundred comments, Robbins' legal team instructed her to take the video down. She kept it up for two additional days even after being threatened with legal action. On March 25th, McCool posted the video on YouTube and a

couple of days later, the video was picked up by *NowThis* News. They posted a one minute and thirty-eight second clip of the video on their social media platform and the video went viral. The backlash was immediate. #MeToo founder Tarana Burke (who was initially contacted by Robbins' team, before she saw the video, to provide context/damage control) called out Robbins. The video trended on Twitter. Multiple celebrities shared their shock and dismay. On April 9th, after the video had gone viral (25 days after the actual event), Tony Robbins issued the following apology on his Facebook wall:

At a recent Unleash the Power (UPW) event in San Jose, my comments failed to reflect the respect I have for everything Tarana Burke and the #MeToo movement has achieved. I apologize for suggesting anything other than my profound admiration for the #MeToo movement. Let me clearly say, I agree with the goals of the #MeToo movement and its founding message of 'empowerment through empathy,' which makes it a beautiful force for good.

For 40 years I've encouraged people to grow into the men and women they dream to be. I watch in awe as more and more women all over the world find their voice and stand up and speak out. All of our growth begins with learning. My own started with a childhood marked by abuse. I am humbled that others have looked to the path I have taken in the decades since as lessons in their own journey. But sometimes, the teacher has to become the student and it is clear that I still have much to learn.

I teach that 'life happens for you, not to you' and what I've realized is that while I've dedicated my life to working with victims of abuse all over the world, I need to get connected to the brave women of #MeToo.

I am committed to being part of the solution.

I am committed to helping to educate others so that we all stay true to the ideals of the #MeToo movement. I will never stop examining my own words and actions to make sure I am staying true to those ideals. That begins with this brief statement but will not end until our goals are reached.

Tony Robbins

It has been nearly a year since the incident. Robbins has not publicly discussed or addressed the matter since. McCool, who stayed for the entire four-day session and who was

later reimbursed the entire \$3,000 registration fee, appeared on a number of radio, television and podcast interviews after the event discussing what occurred. She posted several videos on her YouTube channel to continue the conversation. She and Butterscotch remain advocates for the #MeToo movement and other causes.

Discussion

This case analysis provides an example to help illustrate what can happen when someone's authentic expression crosses the impropriety threshold in a culture whose threshold has been set by the observers, i.e., audience members at the March 15, 2018, Tony Robbins' UPW event (Geddes & Callister, 2007). As a result of his authenticity crossing this threshold (and his lack of understanding of the challenges that women face in business), Robbins had sanctions levied against him during and immediately following the event. First, he lost a portion of the crowd after his fiery, one-sided debate with McCool, and second, he subsequently received a groundswell of media, social media, #MeToo and celebrity backlash. This example also provides a better understanding of the "limited" range of expressed authenticity.

To clarify and to better explain the range of expressed authenticity, I used the Dual Threshold Model (Geddes & Callister, 2007) in Study 1. In its original form, this model includes an emotion expression threshold, which is crossed when individuals communicate rather than suppress a felt emotion (e.g., anger), and an impropriety threshold, which is crossed if one's expressed feelings violate organizational emotion display norms (Geddes & Callister, 2007).

In the current research study, authenticity replaced emotion/anger as the model's "internal" phenomenon that may or may not be expressed. Crossing this threshold is a function of both actor behavior and observer perceptions; thus, there is a type of actor-observer

interaction inherent in the model (Geddes & Callister, 2007). The thresholds and their placement in relation to each other represent authenticity display rules and norms operating formally or informally within the organizational context (Geddes & Callister, 2007). Although no formal rules were established by the audience members at the UPW event, societal mores and attitudes pertaining to: (1) gender communication norms; (2) opinions regarding how abused women should deal with their abusers; and (3) empathy that should be showed toward abuse victims, were clearly salient. Robbins appeared to have planned to make disparaging remarks about the #MeToo movement as part of his presentation, having alluded to it at the end of his dispute with McCool. Perhaps her challenge, which he didn't anticipate, contributed to his aggressive, physical, and misplaced authentic expression.

Robbins' behavior falls in line with what the Dual Threshold model calls deviant behavior. According to the model, deviant anger (and in this case, deviant authenticity) crosses an impropriety threshold reflecting the norms and mores of the cultural and/or organizational climate. In other words, the behavior "deviates" from salient norms of propriety within a particular context and/or community. Thus, deviant anger behaviors may involve actions as seemingly benign as raising one's voice, giving someone the silent treatment, or sending an all-caps email as well as those more universally viewed as unacceptable (Geddes & Callister, 2007). Moreover, an individual whose expressions are considered improper (or deviant) in context is more likely to be labeled as volatile, out of control, aggressive, or unprofessional, thus damaging his or her reputation and perhaps his or her ability to function effectively at work, (Geddes & Callister, 2007). Once the impropriety threshold is crossed, attention and effort may be directed toward controlling and reprimanding the angry individual and away from issues that may have produced the employee's negative emotion (Geddes & Callister, 2007). It may prove difficult to

determine the extent of sanctions against Robbins' via lost revenues, reduced product sales, fewer talk show invitations, etc. However, the majority of those reporting and commenting on the incident offered informal sanctions, many expecting or hoping for some sort of more formal admonition in the offing. Nevertheless, the initial social media and mainstream media backlash he received for dismissing the #MeToo movement as women trying to gain significance appears to have waned. Does this mean that celebrities, influencers, wealthy individuals and people of privilege are given more space for crossing a threshold? Or that people lose interest and memory with time?

Kernis & Goldman (2006) believe that authenticity is not a single unitary process. They posit that it can be broken into four separate components—awareness, unbiased processing, behavior and relational orientation. The behavior component involves behaving in accord with one's values, preferences, and needs as opposed to acting "falsely" merely to please others or to attain awards or avoid punishments (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). They acknowledge that situations exist where behaving in accord with and staying true to one's values may result in severe social sanctions. This appears to be the case with Robbins (although the informal sanctions he received are not known). Additionally, they presume that authenticity will reflect the heightened sensitivity to the fit (or lack thereof) between one's true self and the dictates of the environment, and a heightened awareness of the potential implications of one's behavioral choices (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Robbins, seemingly, underestimated the impact of his authentic expression and behavior or thought that he could convince the audience to agree with his perspective.

His apology illustrates that authenticity is not easily attained nor is an either/or experience; instead, it is often more or less. Ericson (1995) posits that authenticity can be

conceptualized as a continuum along which individuals can vary between the extremes of being fully authentic and completely inauthentic. Nevertheless, as it relates to language, scholars and people in general tend to treat authenticity as a binary generalization--an entity is either authentic or inauthentic (Lehman, O'Connor, Kovacs & Newman, 2018). Authenticity generalizations are rarely expressed with any language qualifiers. Scholars and people in general, very seldom refer to people as “kind of authentic,” producers as “sort of phony,” or objects as “somewhat counterfeit” (Lehman et al., 2018; Qian, 2014). Yet people seem to be sensitive to degrees of authenticity even if what’s said is not expressed with those exact words (Lehman et al., 2018). It seems that authenticity is, therefore, “not an all or nothing, black or white, distinction but rather a matter of degree” (Cooper et al., 2005: 490; Lehman et al., 2018). Social life is made of compromises, deals, and negotiations (Strauss 1978) and authenticity—as wholesome as it may seem—cannot be exempt from the need to strike a balance between the “true to oneself thing to do” and the “necessary thing to do” (Vannini & Franzese, 2008). This incident sheds light on several critical workplace factors discussed below.

Going against the grain. While at work, do we all have to think alike? If a person doesn’t go along with the dominant thought of the day, will he/she be ostracized? Does it depend on the topic in question? Certain issues (e.g., race, religion and politics) are obviously still sensitive matters to discuss in the workplace. What this situation does illustrate is that if a person goes against the grain on a controversial topic, he/she runs the risk of crossing an impropriety threshold and experiencing at least informal sanctioning. Ones’ power, status and level of influence may not shield him/her from sanctions or reprisal since impropriety is judged by observers not the actor him or herself.

Organizational leaders, and society in general, espouse that they want your truth, but does your truth require alignment with their truth? McCool in subsequent interviews said she applauded Robbins for sharing his truth about the #MeToo movement although she disagreed with his perspective and his misogynistic and aggressive approach. Is the workplace prepared for (or will it allow) people to take an unpopular stand relative to something they perceive is impacting their workplace experience or society? Organizations that open space for people (i.e., support colleagues) to be more authentic will likely increase the benefits for individuals and companies alike with higher levels of job satisfaction, commitment and productivity.

Information travels quickly. The oft-quoted, unofficial workplace statute, “what’s said here stays here” or “what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas” may have run its course. Due to technology, and the “tell all and show all” society we live and work in, people rush to share information, incidents and experiences online. Now anything one says or does, within seconds, can be shared throughout the world. This alone could impact authentic expression going forward – in the workplace, in board rooms, in locker rooms, in classrooms, at self-help seminars and the like. Should educators, speakers, executives, physicians, coaches, meeting leaders, etc., be concerned with their authentic expression being recorded (video or audio) during classes, sessions, meetings and presentations? If Robbins had known his debate was being video-recorded, and would later go viral, he might have altered how he approached his #MeToo movement diatribe or he may have avoided the subject altogether. The use of poetic license may have run its course as well if people self-censor what they say.

Code of professionalism. Regardless of one’s position at work, he/she has to adhere to behavioral guidelines and conduct norms. Certainly, there are situations where greater authentic expression could provide additional clarity; however, no one can be fully authentic and expect

not to have backlash or punishment. People would benefit from being more emotionally intelligent. There are times that call for people to be more assertive regarding who they are and what they feel, but they should understand that they when they choose that course it's at their own risk. This reinforces the "authenticity is more or less" conversation.

Do people, at work, differentiate enough between who they are, what they believe or what they feel or value and how that is expressed? This could be what Robbins was struggling with. He may have felt freer to express himself because of his status and unbeknownst to him, his white male privilege. He's a mega personality with an enormous following. He's wealthy, charismatic, and engaging. He's tall. He's a white. He's a man. Some might say that, as a result, society has opened more space for his authentic expression without repercussion. However, within the culture created by the UPW audience, there were people who disagreed with his sentiment and challenged that aspect of his authenticity, and also disagreed with how he facilitated the debate. The image of the physically-imposing man interrupting, pushing, using profanity and speaking loudly to a woman, on the topic of women who have been abused, undoubtedly factored into their point of view. His behavior went against the code of professionalism as judged by his audience. Since how we feel is so tied to who we are, our lack of experience in other peoples' lives makes us more vulnerable to biases that are preventing others from being themselves or who they want to be in our presence at work or any place else—except in this instance, McCool didn't back down.

The Dual Threshold model proposes that there is potential value in establishing or altering emotion (authenticity) policies and standards that expand the space between the expression and impropriety thresholds (Geddes & Callister, 2007). The threshold is going to move culturally and move with time. We've seen the evolution of allowable/acceptable

behaviors (e.g., drinking onsite at workplace events). Nevertheless, these are still sensitive times and what you say about others, not only can affect them in a negative way, but can also damage you. And one single interaction can last a very long time.

Truth to power. Speaking truth to power is holding people in power accountable for what they say. On one hand, speaking truth to power can position a person to be seen as a change agent. On the other hand, the same person can be seen as an individual with an agenda. McCool had a history of speaking truth to power and she has experienced both sides of the pendulum. She was disbarred for her authentic “social media” expression about two judges’ handling of a child custody case, but was lauded for being courageous as she unwaveringly stood her ground with Robbins.

What does this mean for the workplace? Every organization, its culture, its leadership and its core values are different. Keen knowledge of each can help in determining the degree of ones’ authentic expression with leadership. This may impede how quickly the space for authentic expression in the workplace expands but it can at the very least, kick-start previously non-discussed topics and perspectives. Liedtka (2008) argued that increased attention to authenticity and its themes (i.e., the differentiated sense of self located within a larger social context; each individual’s “once occurredness,”; the importance of voice, active participation, and emotions; and the tension between the novel and the familiar) brings a different lens through which to explore business strategy making, offering new methods to consider and examine key strategy concepts that challenge traditional approaches.

Privilege. As a fundamental concept, privilege relates to, and involves, unearned benefits given to powerful social and reference groups within systems of oppression (Case, Iuzzinni, & Hopkins, 2012; Kendall, 2006; McIntosh, 1988). Social forces at the societal and institutional

levels bequeath privilege to individuals and groups categorized as belonging to a particular social identity (typically recognized as being part of the dominant or majority group), e.g., white, male, heterosexual, upper/middle class) (Case, Iuzzini & Hopkins, 2012). Does privilege play a role in who's allowed to communicate more authentically at work? Does privilege provide a greater sense of confidence for some to project more authentically than others at work?

As I watched the video of Robbins constantly interrupting McCool then pushing her up the aisle to illustrate a point, I couldn't help but wonder why he was permitted to continue his aggressive, profanity-laden behavior during their debate. For me and those present, he crossed way over the impropriety threshold with his assertions and with his physical approach. At one point he said that the #MeToo victims needed to stop being so sensitive. He said that he was not knocking the #MeToo movement; he was knocking victimhood. He also offered that we're seeing people (i.e., #MeToo victims) attempting to make themselves significant by making someone else wrong and getting certainty.

What message was he sending to anyone observing about a woman's place in society? According to McCool, that message was, "Women, if you fight back, it's just going to get worse...so shut up and take it." What message was he sending to women (and people in general) regarding taking a risk to challenge a successful, white male icon's perspective during his show? The audience even clapped after their debate was over. McCool, during our interview, offered the following regarding privilege, authenticity and her experience with Robbins:

...well he (Robbins) is used to being worshipped and I do think that issue of privilege was very, very telling here and that it was very much involved...he's a good looking, wealthy white guy. I see it all of the time. Privilege can be so insidious...that the idea that you're wrong doesn't occur to you. But I think for someone like Tony Robbins or a lot of men, and white men in particular, and white women too, I think there are tiers...I think there is this underlying presumption that if you get in a disagreement with someone who is not in your group and

depending on where you are in the hierarchy that's how you decide if you're right or wrong. And I think it's almost invisible and I think in that moment when Tony Robbins pulled me over...he just thought he was going to come out smelling like roses like he always does. He was going to pull me out there and do his thing and everybody was going to love it and that I somehow was going to be different than what he expected... you know, what I turned out to be...and he was angry. Somehow I triggered him perhaps to the same degree he triggered me...he was angry and he wanted that confrontation at some level.

Everything he said sort of demonstrated how out of touch...but I think as far as authenticity goes, in that moment, he was being authentic. He was triggered. He was in a place where he felt pretty safe. And he felt like this was his domain. And here I was this person daring to challenge him. He didn't think about it. He spoke from his true authentic self.

I think it's really hard for a lot of white people to understand about privilege is that space that we have – that to us is normal, it's 'here's my space and don't mess with it – here's my rules'. And when we're in a situation when perhaps we're not the dominant group or if we're outnumbered by whomever the group is (African Americans or gay people if we're not gay, whatever) then we feel like we're being attacked because we're losing something that belongs to us or that we're entitled to it.

Why was Robbins permitted to continue without more people coming to her defense?

Why did McCool stay for the entire four-day session? She later admitted that she wasn't proud of the way she acquiesced to his power. She felt that she got small during their debate. Did anyone else leave? (It appears some did.) Was it celebrity privilege? Was it gender privilege? Was it racial privilege? Or was it any of the other privileges (e.g., class, sexual orientation, education, physical ability, age, national origin) that are commonly discussed that allowed him to express authentically beyond what others found acceptable? Researchers from the University, California, Berkeley (California) and the Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto (Ontario) (2012) performed seven studies that revealed that upper-class people behave more unethically than lower-class people. Greed tends to be the motivating factor (Piff, Stancato, Cote, Mendoza-

Denton, & Keltner, 2012). More research is needed to explore the role privilege plays in authentic expression at work.

Final Thoughts

Was Robbins' apology truly authentic? Why did he wait 25 days to apologize? Was it a full apology? Why did his people contact Tarana Burke after the incident to provide context? Why did he issue an online, written apology rather than making it in-person? Most importantly, for whom was the apology intended? It didn't seem to be specifically directed toward McCool. Finally, critical to our purposes, when was his expression more authentic, during the incident or in the apology?

This incident sheds light on the power (or lack of power) of apologies once the apologizer recants for sharing what was once his/her authentic expression. In his book *Mea Culpa: A Sociology of Apology and Reconciliation*, Nicolas Tavuchis discusses the significance and process of apologies. Tavuchis posits that the process of an apology as a dyadic interaction between offender and offended, where remorse and forgiveness are at the core (Retzinger, 1992). Apologies aren't easy and involve risks, self-exposure and accountability (Retzinger, 1992). One compelling element of Tavuchis's views on apologies is that he believes that apologies are not a single action of attrition but rather ongoing steps between persons to repair relationships (Retzinger, 1992). Research on conflict management offers that an apology is a compelling tool, used by violators, to clear up a wrong-doing, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of the victim (Fehr, Geland, & Nag, 2010; Fisher & Exline, 2006; Shumann, 2018). Apologies help victims: (1) feel validated; (2) improve their opinions of their wrongdoers; (3) reduce their frustration, animosity and resentment toward their wrongdoers; (4) increase their compunction

and alacrity to forgive their wrongdoer (Barkat, 2002; Eaton, 2006; Ohbuchi, Kameda, & Agarie, 1989; Shumann, 2018). However, although apologies are powerful reparation tools, wrongdoers sometimes don't apologize, don't apologize in a timely manner, or don't apologize appropriately (Shumann, 2018). Robbins' apology, in some regard, falls into all three categories. And, recalling Tavuchis's view on apologizing (i.e., it's not a single action), Robbins misses the mark again because he hasn't said anything since the incident. Tavuchis says that a true apology involves both saying and feeling sorry. Moreover, Robbins never apologized directly to McCool—not for his views on the #MeToo movement, but for what appeared to be the bullying techniques he used to get her to come to his side. The ironic aspect of this entire incident was that they were debating women asking for help in dealing with abusers, primarily men, and he was being abusive. It was a delayed apology, and it contradicted what he said about apologizing during the incident. Apologies regarding authentic or inauthentic expression may be the most difficult to embrace and accept.

Authenticity points toward different expression, practices, attitudes, choices, perspective and the resulting behaviors (Liedtka, 2008). Will organizations begin to add authenticity expression guidelines to its corporate policies? Will organizations support more space and more support for authentic expression as noted by the Dual Threshold Model for authenticity? Will leaders truly begin to embrace authenticity, address inherent biases that they may have and create cultures where employees feel free to express more of who they are and, respectfully, more of what they think to avoid crossing an impropriety threshold. Taylor (1991) points out that organizations should not be the enemy of authenticity – they should be its host (Liedtka, 2008). Boyle (2003) asks an extremely provocative question: What kind of world do we create when we accept that each of us—nearly all of whom spend the majority of our waking lives working

within the confines of one kind of institution or the other—can be fully authentic only at our leisure (Liedtka, 2008)?

Conclusion

In this paper, my aim was to extend the contributions of the numerous researchers who have studied authenticity in the past by focusing on its impact in the work setting; most specifically, uncovering a more current definition and exploring the degrees of authenticity and the range of authentic expression. In order to do this, I conducted both qualitative and quantitative studies. I concluded with an ad hoc case analysis/deconstruction illustrating what can happen if someone crosses an authentic expression impropriety threshold (i.e., violated expression norms) within their organizational environment.

Authenticity is supposed to be about being who we naturally are (or strive to be), not who we believe we have to be in order to be productive and safe at work. Although organizations ask for authenticity and truth, research gives evidence to the notion that there is a limit to what type of authentic expression is wanted and encouraged. As illustrated in the Robbins' case, sometimes full authentic expression can cross impropriety thresholds established by the workplace culture. The culture dictates the organization's values, beliefs, communication methods, practices, decision making, time focus, strategy, goals and more. These, in turn, influence authentic expression and behaviors.

What does this mean for the 21st century workplace? Does it mean the workplace is going to continue to be a place where people perceive that “going along to get along” is safer than “I've got to be me”? Are diversity dimensions like race and gender going to continue to impact an individual's concerns about authentic expression? Are there still going to be organizations that create and sustain cultures and environments where people fear repercussion or reprisal for

authentic expression? Or is the 21st century workplace, with its numerous changes, going to be a place where individuals feel safe to express authentically, given the situation? These are questions to answer moving forward.

This research is merely another step in a compelling and complicated authenticity journey. Authentic expression at work will continue to be examined and explored – much work remains to be done. Researchers will continue to analyze, at a deeper level, the factors that help and hinder authentic expression and what creates larger or smaller space to express authentically at work. Some believe that full authentic expression at work will never be possible in cultures that impose control over daily practices—and that give you a vote but not a voice. Nonetheless, what is known today is that authentic expression has both costs and benefits to individuals at work.

TABLES

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 Authentic Expression	5.90	0.92	0.77											
2 Extraversion	5.06	0.95	0.2028*	0.83										
3 Openness	5.01	0.96	0.2977**	0.2750**	0.8600									
4 Emotional Intelligence	5.19	0.51	0.4972**	0.3980**	0.4253**	0.83								
5 Job Satisfaction	5.47	1.01	0.4241**	0.2580**	0.1445	0.3710**	0.90							
6 Job Commitment	4.93	1.20	0.2445**	0.1110	-0.0255	0.1295	0.6746*	0.82						
7 Job Performance	5.77	0.90	0.3328**	0.2100*	0.2734**	0.4582**	0.4180*	0.1989*	0.92					
8 Authenticity Support	5.11	0.91	0.5619**	0.2494**	0.1690	0.3809**	0.6721*	0.4586*	0.3641*	0.78				
9 Demographic Sensitivity	3.49	1.37	-0.1820*	0.0749	0.1587	0.0025	-0.1583	-0.1785*	0.03	-0.1944*				
10 Gender	1.56	1.07	-0.0477	-0.2412*	-0.0627	-0.2272*	-0.0194	0.0607	-0.0533	0.0672	-0.0222			
11 Tenure	10.97	6.79	0.0899	0.1188	-0.0245	0.0486	0.0119	0.0589	-0.0697	0.0215	-0.2202*	-0.0907		
12 White/Nonwhite	0.75	0.44	-0.0052	-0.1565	-0.1622	-0.1959*	-0.0684	0.0401	-0.1093	-0.0331	-0.2250*	0.0112	0.1732	
13 Manager/Nonmanager	0.63	0.48	-0.0689	0.0401	-0.0334	-0.0165	-0.1251	-0.0317	-0.1604	0.0046	-0.1134	0.1733	0.0864	0.2481*
Cronbach's alpha score on main diagonal														
n=133														
Gender (female = 1, male 2); White = 1, Nonwhite = 2														
*p<0.05; **p<.01														

Table 8: T-Tests 1 and 2

T-test #1: Demographic Sensitivities		F	Sig.	t	df
Authentic Expression	Equal variances assumed	0.89	0.347	-1.085	131

T-test #2: Authenticity Support		F	Sig.	t	df
Authentic Expression	Equal variances assumed	12.032	0.001	5.624	131

Table 9: Regressions for Dependent Variables

<u>Independent Variables</u>	<u>Job Satisfaction</u> β	<u>Organizational Commitment</u> β	<u>Job Performance</u> β
Gender	-0.66	0.029	0.056
White-Non-White	-0.046	0.056	-0.018
Manager - Non-Manager	0.061	0.172	-108
Demographic Sensitivities	-0.006	-0.1	0.029
Authentic Expression	0.049	-0.054	0.157
Extraversion	0.088	-0.019	0.029
Openness	0.01	-0.177	0.127
Emotional Intelligence	0.122	-0.095	0.364**
Authenticity Support	0.69**	0.476**	0.235*
R Squared	0.476	0.185	0.134
F	90.16**	22.69**	15.479**

*p < .05; **p < .001

Table 10. Survey Responses Question One
How important do you think authenticity is at work?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although I think it is important, I think in the current work environment in general, it is becoming increasingly more difficult for others to accept authenticity at work.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very important. It is important to never lose sight of your values and morals just because of a job. Your work environment should promote these same values you have.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very important, though not essential.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not too important. I don't think it hinders success much at all, though I think it would influence happiness/enjoyment if you never had to worry about "acting" in front of others.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you don't demonstrate and receive authentic experiences in the workplace - how can trust exist? Authenticity is essential!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending upon the situation it is usually very important. However, the politics sometimes leads you to be not so authentic.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'd say you have to be at least an 8 on a 10 scale otherwise you're just taking orders and not being creative. You can't be two different people; sending mixed messages to co-workers will cause a breakdown in relationships.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are limits. Professionalism requires a certain level of decorum, and sometimes you simply have to buck up because work is paid for a reason -- people are not going to do it for free.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very important but not often supported by upper level management to be authentic.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very. Part of diversity is diversity in thought as well as background.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not important, fake it 'til you make it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authenticity is critical to the productivity and job satisfaction of ANY individual in the workplace. If employees feel they can't be themselves at work, they are going to spend a lot of time and energy "covering". That is time and energy that could have otherwise been spent on their actual work.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extremely important. It benefits the individual if they can be true to self as well as those around the person so they can know who they're truly working with. Anyplace there is truth there is freedom.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People should be themselves unless it impacts how they perform. For example, a person who is very quick to react will need to temper that quickness if they are in a role that requires them to be a good listener and gather all of the facts before weighing in on a situation and/or presenting a solution.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very. It is critical that employees feel they can bring their authentic self to work. That requires a culture that encourages and is accepting of everyone and the experiences, background, knowledge, etc. that they bring to the job. It creates a wall if as a company we do not support authenticity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do. It can be very difficult for someone who has to constantly worry about what others are going to think or trying to hide something in fear of what others may or may not think.

Table 11. Survey Responses Question Two

Do you think a person has to be authentic in order for him/her to be productive at work? Explain.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. I think you can probably be more productive if you are authentic, but people have been going to work for years and years without totally being themselves and they have managed to survive and even thrive.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not necessarily. I believe depending on the job/role and the degree of contact with other people necessitates the level of authenticity required. That said I believe being authentic and genuine will most often get people further and allow for more success, unless their authentic self is a jerk.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a person isn't authentic, their work isn't authentic, and by that it isn't being fulfilled to its best potential. Being authentic will affect a person's emotions, mental stability, and demeanor and when those aspects are negative it has a corresponding impact on that person's output.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No authenticity is linked to social interaction. Productivity is linked to production – so if the person needs to wear his/her mask to get the work done so be it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes - the buck stops here. It starts with each individual contributing to the whole. If you stand out as a "Me Me" person then the breakdown will start. Work has to be integrated with a person's true self for him/her to give his/her all. At the same time, it's not utopia and people are paid to work; some compromises may be required.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absolutely. Progress cannot be made or measured in the workplace without it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, if you're faking who you are you can't be creative or problem solve effectively - or at least what you do come up with won't be as good.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No, the work will still get done but turnover may be higher and satisfaction lower.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matrix and hierarchy and the political games that one must play to get their ideas supported can hinder one's ability to remain authentic.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No, all that matters is the leader's perception of you, and if you have to influence others, how they feel about you.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A person has to be part of the right club. I am actually leaving my current job after 19 years due to the poor management and lack of respect by management. The company I work for says that they value inclusion and want to create a structure where everyone is heard. They will never get there with the current management in place. I have seen the company change from God Old Boy's club mentality to the new age of female bullies in management. I actually think the age of the "female bully" culture is worse. At least in the good old days they appreciated you if you were good at getting things done. The female bullies are untrusting and feel threatened by others so they are always looking for ways to undermine you unless you are part of the cool kids under 40 Club!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, because nobody wants to work for a bull shitter. Be real. Be yourself. People really respect and appreciate if you are yourself.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes. I think being authentic makes you more productive. People trust you more so they work harder. People aren't trying to figure out your motives so you are more efficient. Conversations can be faster and decisions made quicker when people give their honest opinion. You come to better decisions when everyone participates and shares their perspective.

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I believe that the more authentic a person is at work, the more productive he/she will ultimately be. Putting on a facade requires effort, expends time and generally promotes a bad taste in one's mouth. These types of "negativities" can certainly counteract an individual's productivity in a day's/month's/year's work. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No, I think some people are comfortable being inauthentic, in fact, some people are naturally inauthentic, and it may be difficult for those people to be their authentic self at work. Personally, I can't function if I can't be myself. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Yes. Authenticity promotes engagement. Being yourself without fear of judgment or retribution allows for creativity and doing things differently. |

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APPENDIX

AUTHENTICITY SURVEY

Section 1: Demographics

Please complete the following information about yourself:

Organization: _____

Gender: _____

Race: _____

Ethnicity: _____

Number of years with your company: _____

Number of direct reports (i.e., people you manage; if you do not supervise anyone, put 0): _____

Section 2: Authenticity Scale

Please respond to each item below using the following response option range: 1 – strongly disagree to 7- strongly agree.

Strongly Disagree Mostly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neither agree or disagree Somewhat Agree Mostly Agree Strongly Agree
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

	Strongly Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat Agree	Mostly Agree	Strongly Agree
At work, I think it is better to be yourself, than to be popular.							
I don't know how I feel inside.							
At work, I am strongly influenced by the opinions of others.							
I usually do what other people tell me to do.							
At work, I always feel I need to do what others expect me to do.							
At work, other people influence me greatly.							
I feel as if I don't know myself very well.							
At work, I always stand by what I believe in.							
I am true to myself in most situations.							
At work, I feel out of touch with the 'real' me.							
At work, I live in accordance with my values and beliefs.							
At work, I feel alienated from myself.							

Section 3: Authenticity Support

Please respond to each item below using the following response option range: 1 – strongly agree to 7- strongly disagree. Mark your answer.

Strongly Disagree 1 Mostly Disagree 2 Somewhat Disagree 3 Neither agree or disagree 4 Somewhat Agree 5 Mostly Agree 6 Strongly Agree 7

	Strongly Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat Agree	Mostly Agree	Strongly Agree
Our company's employee policies influence how authentic I am at work.							
My manager plays a significant role in how authentic I am at work.							
My gender impacts the support I receive to be authentic at work.							
My age impacts the support I receive to be authentic at work.							
My ethnicity impacts the support I receive to be authentic at work.							
Past experiences in this company make me comfortable being authentic at work.							
Believing I can be authentic at work helps my productivity.							
At work, I feel free to express my true feelings with my manager.							
At work, I feel free to express my true feelings with my co-workers.							
My manager knows the real me.							
My co-workers support my authentic expression at work.							
My manager wants us to be authentic at work.							
My co-workers know the real							

me.							
Our company expects us to be authentic when we interact at work.							
My co-workers and I discuss being authentic at work.							
Some people have more freedom than others at work to express their authentic self.							
My manager and I have very candid conversations about work.							
My coworkers help create a supportive environment for me at work.							

Section 4: Big 5 Subscale

Here are a number of characteristics that may or may not apply to you. For example, do you agree that you are someone who likes to spend time with others? Please mark the box that corresponds with each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement.

Strongly Disagree 1 Mostly Disagree 2 Somewhat Disagree 3 Neither agree or disagree 4 Somewhat Agree 5 Mostly Agree 6 Strongly Agree 7

I see myself as someone who...	Strongly Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat Agree	Mostly Agree	Strongly Agree
Is talkative							
Is reserved							
Is full of energy							
Generates a lot of enthusiasm							
Tends to be quiet							
Has an assertive personality							
Is sometimes shy, inhibited							
Is outgoing, sociable							
Is original, comes up with new ideas							
Is curious about many different things							
Is ingenious, a deep thinker							
Has an active imagination							
Is inventive							
Values artistic, aesthetic expression							
Prefers work that is routine							
Likes to reflect, play with ideas							
Has artistic interests							
Is sophisticated in art, music or literature							

Section 5. Emotional Intelligence Subscale (TEIQue-SF)

Instructions: Please answer each statement below by putting a circle around the number that best reflects your degree of agreement or disagreement with that statement. Do not think too long about the exact meaning of the statements. Work quickly and try to answer as accurately as possible. There are no right or wrong answers. There are seven possible responses to each statement ranging from ‘Completely Disagree’ (number 1) to ‘Completely Agree’ (number 7).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Completely Disagree **Completely Agree**

1. Expressing my emotions with words is not a problem for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I often find it difficult to see things from another person’s viewpoint.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. On the whole, I’m a highly motivated person.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I usually find it difficult to regulate my emotions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I generally don’t find life enjoyable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I can deal effectively with people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I tend to change my mind frequently.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Many times, I can’t figure out what emotion I’m feeling.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I often find it difficult to stand up for my rights.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I’m usually able to influence the way other people feel.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. On the whole, I have a gloomy perspective on most things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Those close to me often complain that I don’t treat them right.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. I often find it difficult to adjust my life according to the circumstances.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. On the whole, I’m able to deal with stress.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. I often find it difficult to show my affection to those close to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. I’m normally able to “get into someone’s shoes” and experience their emotions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

18. I normally find it difficult to keep myself motivated.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. I'm usually able to find ways to control my emotions when I want to.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. On the whole, I'm pleased with my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. I would describe myself as a good negotiator.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. I tend to get involved in things I later wish I could get out of.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. I often pause and think about my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. I believe I'm full of personal strengths.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. I tend to "back down" even if I know I'm right.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. I don't seem to have any power at all over other people's feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. I generally believe that things will work out fine in my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. I find it difficult to bond well even with those close to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. Generally, I'm able to adapt to new environments.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. Others admire me for being relaxed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section 6: General Questions and Comments

Please provide your thoughts to the following questions:

1. How important do you think authenticity is at work?

2. Do you think a person has to be authentic in order for him/her to be productive at work?
Explain.

3. What helps and what hinders your authentic expression at work?

Additional comments:
