GREAT LEADERSHIP - TURNS OUT IT'S NOT ROCKET SCIENCE AFTER ALL
A NEW MODEL OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP

ABSTRACT

Over the past ten years, the concept of Authentic Leadership has become an important area of study, encompassing, as it does, personal beliefs and values and how they are aligned and lived in one's everyday leadership experience (Cooper et al. 2005, Avolio & Gardner 2005, Luthans & Avolio 2003). However, the concept of Authentic Leadership is fragmented, complicated by different theorists' perspectives and compounded by a dearth of empirical research, particularly within the UK. (Gardner et al. 2011).

This research presents a new theoretical model of Authentic Leadership developed using UK business leaders and senior serving UK RAF officers. Based on Novicevic et al.'s (2006) conceptualisation differentiating Authentic Leadership between its psychological and philosophical components, a 4 factor model was developed and empirically tested using a standard psychometric approach (Nunnally 1978, Kline 1979) and a 360° feedback design.

A 3 factor model emerged which both simplifies and unifies previous theoretical conceptualisations of Authentic Leadership. Whilst not a direct part of the research study, the author suggests that all modern leadership failures can be traced back to a deficiency in one of these 3 'Pillars' of Authentic Leadership: Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation or Ethics. Some implications for Authentic Leadership development are identified and suggestions for future research made.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

• An extensive literature review reveals fragmented and potentially contradictory theoretical perspectives on Authentic Leadership

• Empirical research comprises student population samples, not real leaders

• There is a lack of empirical research regarding Authentic Leadership, particularly in the UK

THE RESEARCH APPROACH

An extensive literature review resulted in the development of a new 4 factor model of Authentic Leadership (Fig. 1). To test this empirically, 150 item statements were generated which were reviewed by an expert panel. Some items were deleted and others added, resulting in a final item bank of 100 questions. These were piloted, in a self-report format, on a business leader population sample of 140 genuine leaders who were members of either the UK Institute of Directors or the Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development. In the final study, using a 360° design, 54 senior RAF officers (Table 1), were rated by their superior officers, subordinates and peers.

Fig 1.
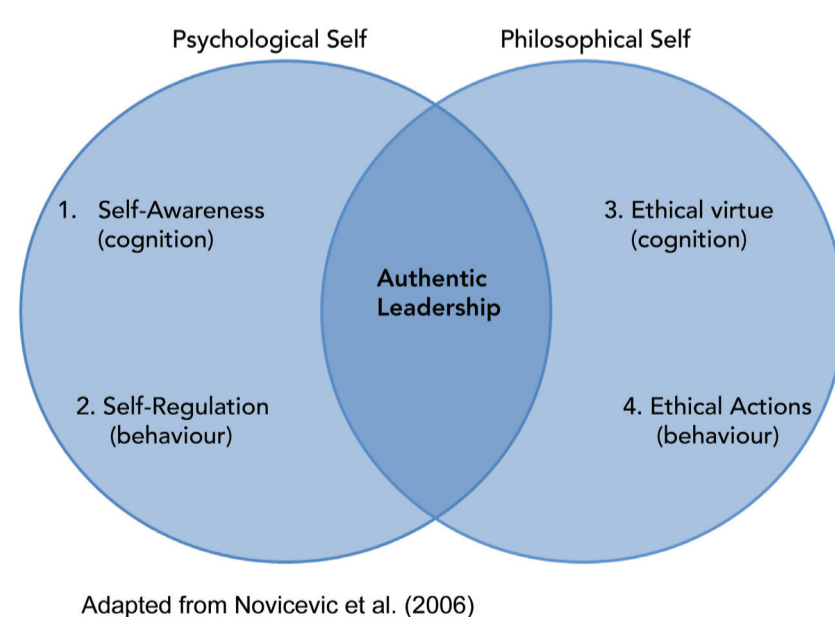Proposed 4 Factor Model of Authentic Leadership

Adapted from Novicevic et al. (2006)

Table 1.
RAF Population Sample Statistics

	Age Range	Mean Age	Service Range	Mean Service	% Male	% Female
Total Population n=54	30-51	40.11 SD=7.27	8-31	19.23 SD=6.29	80%	20%
Group Captain n=25	40-51	44.04	18-30	23.12	96%	4%
Squadron Leader n=19	30-47	33.32	8-31	14.05	63%	37%
Wing Commander n=10	36-48	40.40	14-24	18.70	80%	20%

FINDINGS

A 3 factor model emerged from the pilot study using business leaders. An identical 3 factor model emerged from the final study using RAF officers (Fig. 2, Table 2 and Factor Item Statements). Scale reliabilities, measured by the co-efficient alpha, were good, and scale inter-correlations suggest the independence of the factors (Table 3). It is therefore proposed that the 3 'Pillars' of Authentic Leadership are: Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation and Ethics (Fig. 3), and that this model will be generalizable across other leadership populations.

Fig 2.
Research Result

3 Factor Model of Authentic Leadership
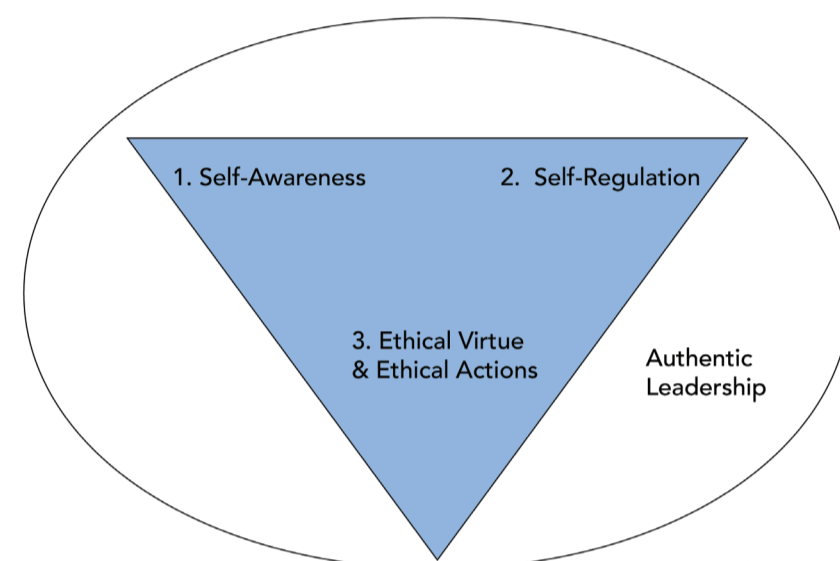
FACTOR ITEM STATEMENTS: THE ALQ 360

Factor 1: **Self-Awareness**   As a leader, I...

1 Always put myself "in other people's shoes" and look at things from their perspective
4 Am aware of my own feelings, beliefs and motives
7 Am aware of how my moods and actions affect other people
12 Use what happens to me as an opportunity to learn more about myself
15 Stay in touch with my feelings so I am aware of how they are affecting me

Factor 2: **Self-Regulation**   As a leader, I...

6 Display self-discipline
8 Don't suffer from mood swings
9 Remain approachable even when facing significant challenges
10 Consistently act as a role model for others
14 Keep my ego in check

Factor 3: **Ethics**   As a leader, I...

2 Remain ethically steadfast in the face of dissent from others
3 Am clear about my core values; those values I am not prepared to negotiate on
5 Believe that my role as a leader includes an ethical responsibility to others
11 Discuss difficult ethical issues with others
13 View ethics as an active choice rather than as a compromise

Table 2.
Principal Component Analysis

Varimax rotation with Kaiser normalisation. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

n=380
Leaders=54
Raters=326

Item #	1. Self-awareness	2. Self-regulation	3. Ethics
1	.610	.351	.005
4	.702	.082	.205
7	.733	.280	.077
12	.597	.069	.350
15	.685	-.151	.331
6	.078	.670	.175
8	-.086	.709	.050
9	.221	.704	.118
10	.268	.714	.126
14	.093	.557	.129
2	.206	.302	.632
3	.182	.098	.662
5	-.046	.315	.578
11	.226	.003	.631
13	.176	.075	.639

Table 3.
Means, Variances, Standard Deviations and Scale Inter-correlations

	Mean	Variance	SD	1	2	3	All items
Factor 1 Self-awareness	16.971	20.398	4.517	.755			N=380
Factor 2 Self-regulation	19.773	9.706	3.115	.204	.744		
Factor 3 Ethics	18.039	18.170	4.262	.363	.246	.696	
All items (15)	54.784	87.336	9.345				.831

Scale reliabilities, measured by the co-efficient alpha (Chronbach), are shown in **BLUE** in the leading diagonal. Scale inter-correlations are shown in **RED**.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP: THE 3 REASONS LEADERS FAIL

Historically, leadership failure may have involved a deficit in knowledge or expertise. Modern leadership failures, however, invariably seem to involve either a lack of self/other awareness, a lack of self-regulation/discipline or a moral/ethical deficit.

In other words, a leader found wanting in any one of the 3 'Pillars' of Authentic Leadership will not achieve their potential and may, ultimately, fail.

RELEVANCE: IMPLICATIONS FOR AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

• It is well known that leaders who self-report their own performance tend to over-estimate it (Atkins & Wood 2002). The 360° feedback design of this research and its output, the ALQ 360, mitigates this bias, thereby generating more 'accurate' performance measures

• The ALQ 360 questionnaire and associated report, with its UK population sample means, can be used to support executive leadership development, particularly in a test re-test design, pre and post development, such as an MBA or in-house programme

• Understanding the reasons for leadership failure is as important as understanding the components of leadership success

Fig 3.
The 3 Pillars of Authentic Leadership
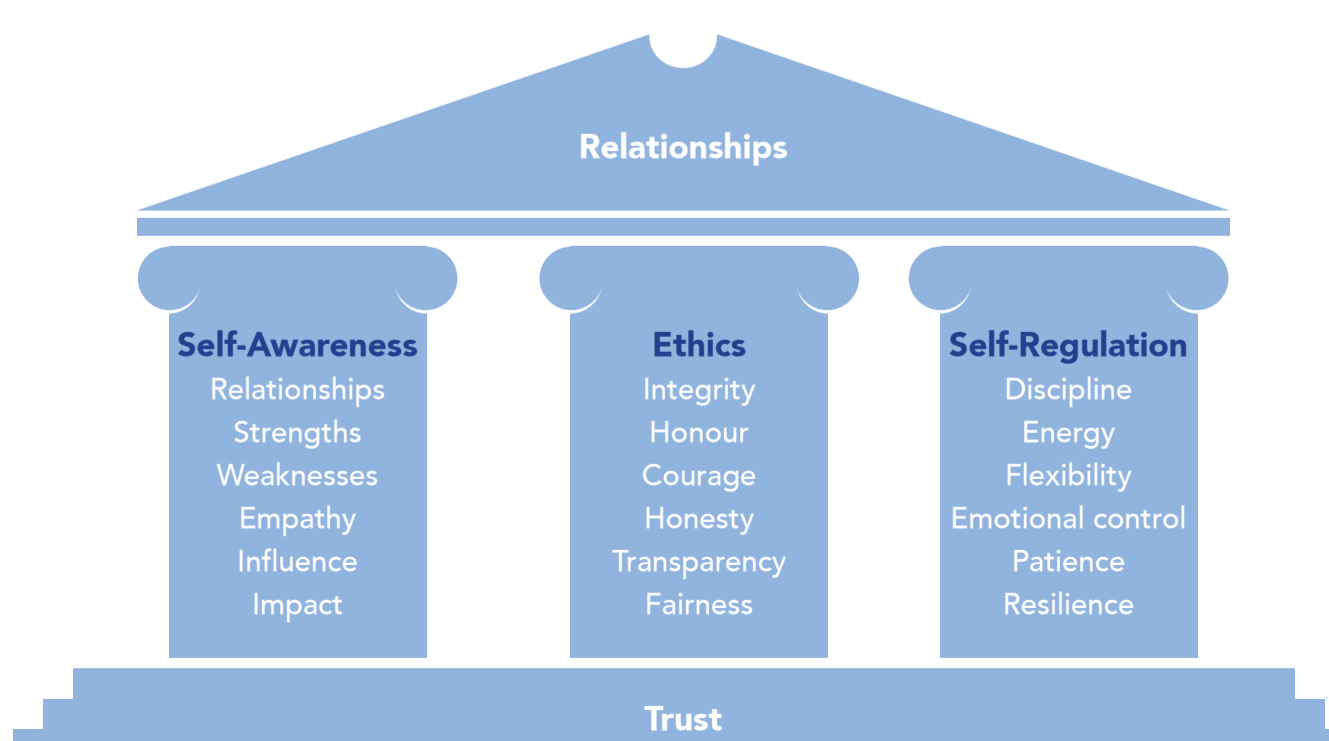
CONTRIBUTION

• A new model of Authentic Leadership which simplifies and unifies previous theoretical conceptualisations

• Empirical research using genuine leadership population samples, rather than a student population with little real leadership experience

• A new 360° questionnaire and feedback report (The ALQ 360), available for leadership development interventions and future research

• 'Thought Leadership' on the reasons for leadership failure

FUTURE RESEARCH

• Authentic Leadership and followership

• The emergence of Authentic Leadership

• How Authentic Leaders can be developed

• Studies with other models of leadership

• Other population samples and cross-cultural research

• Empirical studies using other inventories to further explore the inter-relationships between the various elements of leadership

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