Feel Free, Be Yourself: Authentic Leadership, Emotional Expression, and Employee Authenticity

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Abstract

Authenticity is a relational construct, but research to date has largely overlooked the relationship between authentic leadership and follower authenticity. In our first study, comprising 162 leader–follower dyads, we examined the conditions that enhance followers' authenticity in regard to the leader. We found that deviations from prototypical leader emotions (e.g., shame) reinforce the relationship between authentic leadership and employees' unbiased self-presentation. Contrary to predictions, no such effect was found for followers' ingratiation. Our second study examined the generalization of the effect of authentic leadership to the service context, in which authentic self-expression is inhibited by organizational display rules. This diary study of 380 service employees' emotional experiences and authenticity in service encounters found that authentic leadership reinforced the relationship of employees' positive emotions with authentic self-expression.

Keywords

authentic leadership, authentic followership, emotional expression, customer services

Introduction

Authentic leaders represent principles of honesty and transparency, which become more valuable as the complexity of the business world increases. They are characterized by self-awareness and openness to self-relevant information, behave according to their values, and strive for honesty in their interpersonal relationships (Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005).

In a recent review article, Gardner, Cogliser, Davis, and Dickens (2011) remarked on the impressive increase in research on authentic leadership over the past decade but also noted that the focus of most studies has been on the authenticity of the leader. Although two recent studies have addressed followers' authenticity (Hsiung, 2012; Leroy, Anseel, Gardner, & Sels, 2012) more attention should be paid to authentic followership and to authentic leader–follower relationships (Algera & Lips-Wiersma, 2012; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005, Gardner et al., 2011).

Specifically, although researchers have claimed that authentic leadership should enhance employee authenticity (e.g., May, Chan, Hodges, & Avolio, 2003), there is little understanding of how this effect operates. Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012) maintain that because authenticity implies that individuals create their own meaning, it cannot simply be "transferred" from leader to followers; nor can a leader induce authentic values in followers. If authenticity *cannot* be the product of external influence, how do authentic leaders affect followers' authenticity? We suggest that the impact of authentic leaders on employees' authenticity should be framed with regard to organizational pressures toward impression management. In this research, we explore the notion that authentic leaders indirectly promote employee authenticity by generating a sense of ease regarding genuine self-expression, thereby providing an environment in which followers can create their own meaning (Algera & Lips-Wiersma, 2012).

Research has suggested that workplaces may encourage impression management above authenticity in terms of more positive performance evaluations, higher compensation, and better career advancement (Barrick, Shaffer, & DeGrassi, 2009; Higgins, Judge, & Ferris, 2003). Some inauthenticity is prevalent in all organizational relationships (Algera & Lips-Wiersma, 2012), but employees in particular feel the need to inhibit their self-expression and engage in impression management when interacting with their leader or with customers. In these contexts there are high potential costs of expressing one's true self and deviating

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from organizational standards and norms (Diefendorff & Greguras, 2009; Hochschild, 1983). Thus, "authenticity is not just a question of being true to self, but also of being true to 'self-in-relationship' . . ." (Algera & Lips-Wiersma, 2012, p. 119). Although interactions with the leader and with customers are similar in terms of intensity of pressure toward inauthenticity, the sources of such pressures may be different. Deci and Ryan (1985) suggested that two sources of pressure and coercion generate inauthenticity, namely environmental and intrapsychic forces. In service interactions, employees undergo considerable external pressure to behave inauthentically toward customers because of organizational display rules reflected in the service script and conveyed through reward and coercion systems (Hochschild, 1983). Conversely, interaction with the leader is not prescribed by formal organizational rules, yet employees experience pressure to engage in impression management due to their awareness of the power hierarchy (Hecht & LaFrance, 1998), and are consequently motivated to impress the leader. We explore the effect of authentic leaders on employee authenticity toward leaders as well as customers, taking into account the context-related pressures inhibiting genuine self-expression that are mitigated by authentic leadership.

The first study, of leader–follower dyads, examined the notion that authentic leaders affect followers' authenticity by displaying unconventional aspects of themselves. In line with recent recognition of the positive outcomes of leaders' openness regarding their limitations (Diddams & Chang, 2012; Owens & Hekman, 2012), we hypothesized that leaders' emotions that deviate from the prototypical image and may seem as weaknesses—such as shame or irritability—will mitigate the effect of internal pressures on impression management by demonstrating that deviance from impression management norms is acceptable. In the second study, we explore the generalization of the effect of authentic leadership beyond the leader–follower relationship by examining diary data collected in the service context. In this study, we explore the hypothesis that when the leader is authentic, employees feel more comfortable about expressing positive emotions experienced in service interactions.

This research increases understanding of the impact of authentic leadership, showing how authentic leaders may indirectly enhance employees' authenticity by mitigating both internal and external effects on impression management in organizational contexts. Practically speaking, followers' authenticity can be expected to influence the quality of leader–follower and employee–customer relationships, and to enhance employee well-being (Brunell et al., 2010; Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Glasø & Einarsen, 2008). Recent research has emphasized that authentic functioning contributes to optimism and resilience (Luthans & Avolio, 2003), self-esteem (Harter, Marold, Whitesell, & Cobbs, 1996), and better interpersonal relationships (Brunell et al., 2010).

Higher levels of authenticity in various social roles were found to be associated with greater role satisfaction and lower levels of depression (Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi, 1997).

Below we review literature on the constructs of authentic leadership as well as impression management and authenticity in leader–follower interactions. Next, we review literature pertaining to the relationship of authenticity with employees' experiences of authenticity and positive emotions in service encounters.

Authentic Leadership

Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, and Peterson (2008) define authentic leadership as a

> pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capabilities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development. (p. 94)

Authentic leadership thus comprises several interrelated dimensions: self-awareness, balanced processing (Gardner et al., 2005), authentic behavior, and authentic relational orientation (Ilies et al., 2005). Self-awareness refers to the leader's awareness of and trust in his or her own personal characteristics, values, motives, feelings, and cognition. Highly authentic leaders understand their own strengths, weaknesses, and motives, as well as recognize how others view their leadership. Balanced processing involves objectivity and acceptance of one's positive and negative attributes and qualities, and is associated with selecting self-relevant information that has important implications for leaders' decision making. Authentic behavior refers to whether leaders act in accord with their true values and preferences. Authentic relational orientation involves striving for openness and truthfulness in relationships. Gardner et al. (2005) maintained that authentic leadership extends beyond the authenticity of the leader to include authentic relations with followers, characterized by transparency, openness, and trust, guidance toward worthy objectives, and emphasis on follower development. Recently, Hannah, Walumbwa, and Fry's (2001) study showed that authentic leadership is associated with authentic group relationships. Leroy et al. (2012) found that authentic leadership strengthens the relationship of followers' authenticity with basic need satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which in turn enhances followers' performance. Hsiung (2012) found that authentic leadership is related to employee authenticity, reflected in voice behavior as mediated by employee positive mood and the quality of the leader–member relationship, and moderated by procedural justice perceptions.

Impression Management and Authenticity in Leader–Follower Relationships

The literature on leader–follower relationships in the workplace suggests that followers' behavior toward leaders is often inauthentic and reflects strategies of impression management, described as the process through which individuals seek to influence the image others have of them (Rosenfeld, Giacalone, & Riordan, 1995). A major strategy of impression management is ingratiation (Bolino, Kacmar, Turnley, & Gilstrap, 2008; Liden & Mitchell, 1988), that is, "A set of assertive tactics which have the purpose of gaining the approbation of an audience that controls significant rewards for the actor" (Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984, p. 37). The *major goal of ingratiation is to be liked* (Jones & Pittman, 1982), which is accomplished through other-focused *and self-focused* ingratiation tactics. Other-focused strategies focus on making the target feel good (Bolino et al., 2008; Liden & Mitchell, 1988) by showing attraction to the target, flattering the target, doing favors for, or agreeing with the target. With self-presentation, the individual attempts to create an image of himself or herself that will be perceived favorably by a target individual (Liden & Mitchell, 1988). Self-presentation strategies may involve attempts to either look good or avoid looking bad (Levashina & Campion, 2006; Rosenfeld et al., 1995).

From the followers' perspective, leader–follower relationships are almost always characterized by an imbalance of power, that is, a follower tends to be more dependent on the leader than vice versa (Hecht & LaFrance, 1998). Thus, supervisor-focused impression management is often reflected in ingratiation flattery, biased self-presentation, and conformity with the values and opinions of the leader (Bolino et al., 2008; Treadway, Ferris, Duke, Adams, & Thatcher, 2007). Ingratiation with the supervisor has been found to be positively related to career success (Judge & Bretz, 1994; Stern & Westphal, 2010), compliance (Blickle, 2003), and promotion (Watt, 1993). Followers also regulate their emotions rather than expressing genuine feelings to impress management (Rosenfeld et al., 1995; Schlenker, Dlugolecki, & Doherty, 1994). Specifically in interactions with leaders, followers hide or control negative emotions and amplify positive emotions (Diefendorff & Greguras, 2009; Hecht & LaFrance, 1998).

May et al. (2003) suggest that authentic leaders install norms of openness and honesty by striving for these qualities in their interpersonal interactions, by demonstrating such qualities, and by displaying expectations that followers will do the same. This promotes followers' trust, allowing the latter to express themselves honestly (Ilies et al., 2005; Walumbwa, Luthans, Avey, & Oke, 2011). However, the notion of direct and deliberate effects of leaders on followers' authenticity is incongruent with the concept that authenticity is about expression of the genuine self rather than compliance with external pressures (Kernis & Goldman, 2006) as well as the creation of one's own meaning (Algera & Lips-Wiersma, 2012) rather than agreement with meaning proposed by the leader. Accordingly, in the first study, we explore the notion of the indirect impact of authentic leadership generated by deviance from the prototypical positive leadership image.

Diddams and Chang (2012) maintain that while awareness and expressions of weakness are inherent in the conceptualization of authenticity, research has largely overlooked the important role played by human flaws. Owens and Hekman (2012), studying humble leadership, found that leaders' "unique strength involves having the courage to show their humanness to followers" (p. 794), including expression of limitations that, in turn, free followers from the burden of concealing their own limitations. By displaying unconventional aspects of himself or herself rather than maintaining a "perfect leader" image, an authentic leader may generate the sense that followers can also deviate from prototype and engage in genuine self-expression. We focused on leaders' emotions, which significantly affect how followers perceive them (Humphrey, 2002; Newcombe & Ashkanasy, 2002). Leadership prototype theories suggest that followers compare leaders' emotional expression with their own ideal-leader prototype. Because leaders are judged by their emotional displays (Humphrey, 2002), they may try to convey emotional expression to followers in order to make the desired impression. They may express emotions such as hope and suppress others such as anger or impatience during interactions with followers. Indeed, some leaders may actively distance themselves because expressing feelings could conflict with their professional role (Glasø & Einarsen, 2008; Humphrey, Pollack, & Hawver, 2008). Gardner, Fischer, and Hunt (2009), discussing the conflict between emotional regulation designed to maintain a positive impression and the leader's authenticity, suggest that authentic leadership is positively related to the expression of genuine emotions and to deep acting (i.e., attempts to genuinely modify emotions in order to align them with required emotional display) and negatively to surface acting (i.e., attempts to regulate displayed emotions while inner feelings remain unchanged).

Engaging in impression management in order to be liked is often viewed as a route to close relationships with the leader and career success (e.g., Watt, 1993; Wayne & Green, 1993). However, the decision as whether to engage in ingratiatory behavior is affected by situational factors and is partly determined by the ingratiator's perceptions of target characteristics (e.g., Mowday, 1979). We suggest that displaying emotions that deviate from role norms that leaders typically tend to suppress (e.g., shame, fear) may enhance followers' authenticity because the leader's authenticity signals to followers that unconventional self-presentation is

acceptable, and that impression management is not necessary for achieving important goals.

We address two aspects of follower authenticity as reflected in striving for openness, sincerity, and truthfulness in close relationships (Kernis, 2003): self-focused impression management reflected in unbiased self-presentation and other-focused ingratiation directed at the leader. Unbiased self-presentation reflects an honest presentation of one's weaknesses and mistakes rather than *engaging in ingratiation to make oneself appear likeable or at least not unlikeable* (Levashina & Campion, 2006; Rosenfeld et al., 1995). Gardner et al. (2005) maintained that the process of genuine self-presentation is operative when an authentic relationship is formed between a leader and followers. A complementary aspect of followers' authentic relationship with the leader is associated with "other presentation," that is, refraining from ingratiation to inflate the leader's self-image, and relating honestly to the leader. We therefore expect leader emotions to play a moderating role in the leader–follower authenticity relationship. The following hypothesis is tested in Study 1:

>   *Hypothesis 1a*: Leaders' emotions that deviate from role norms will moderate the positive relationship of authentic leadership with followers' unbiased self-presentation: The relationship will be stronger with more intense leader emotions.
>
>   *Hypothesis 1b*: Leaders' emotions that deviate from role norms will moderate the negative relationship of authentic leadership with followers' ingratiation toward the leader: The relationship will be stronger with more intense leader emotions.

Emotion Regulation and Authenticity in Service Encounters

Service is a context in which organizations often inhibit employees' authentic behavior by means of display rules, that is, representations of social conventions about emotions to be displayed (Diefendorff & Croyle, 2008). Internalization of and compliance with display rules are maintained by socialization (e.g., Diefendorff & Croyle, 2008; Hochschild, 1983), rewards, and punishments (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). To comply with rules, employees often fake emotional displays in interactions with customers (Hochschild, 1983). Whereas negative emotions are completely suppressed, positive emotions are minimized in order to maintain standardization, to detach oneself from the service role (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993), or to present an unbiased attitude to customers (Trougakos, Jackson, & Beal, 2011). Employees in service roles occasionally act on genuine positive emotions such as compassion, but such behaviors may involve costs (e.g., a sense of disloyalty) when they are not congruent with organizational expectations (Yagil & Medler-Liraz, 2012).

However, authentic leadership that demonstrates the legitimacy of genuine self-expression may reduce the tension involved in the conflict between organizational rules and authentic emotional display. Authentic leaders express their genuine emotions and thus may be open to emotional expressions by both themselves and others. With an authentic leader, employees may experience less apprehension related to self-expression, and may thus feel more able to genuinely display positive emotions to customers. Accordingly, we expect employees' positive emotions to be more genuinely expressed in service interactions under strongly authentic leadership. The following hypothesis is tested in Study 2:

>   *Hypothesis 2*: Authentic leadership will moderate the relationship of positive emotions with employees' authentic self-expression in service encounters: The relationship will be stronger under strongly authentic leadership.

Study 1

Method

Sample and Data Collection. The study used a convenience sample comprising 162 Israeli leader–follower dyads from banks, education centers, high-tech and communication organizations, restaurants, call centers, and insurance companies. Of the leaders, 51% were female, mean age was 35.4 years ($SD = 10.2$), with average 14.5 years of education ($SD = 2.3$) and average job tenure 3.7 years ($SD = 4.5$). Of the followers, 69% were female, mean age was 28.3 years ($SD = 8.6$) with average 13.7 years of education ($SD = 2.0$), average job tenure 3.1 years ($SD = 5.0$), and average 3.1 years of acquaintance with the manager ($SD = 5.5$).

Leaders were approached during work hours and asked to participate in a study measuring attitudes in the workplace. They were informed that questionnaires would be administered to one of their employees. The leaders were asked to indicate their followers, and a questionnaire was administered to a follower who was available at the time and agreed to participate in the study. Each respondent answered the questionnaire individually.

Measures. An emotion scale was administered to leaders. Scales of authentic leadership, unbiased self-presentation, and ingratiation were administered to followers.

State-related leader emotions were assessed with items from the *Positive and Negative Affect Schedule*, or PANAS scale, developed by Watson, Clark, and Tellegen (1988): distress, shame, guilt, upset, and irritability. Leaders were asked to assess how often they experienced each of these emotions during interactions with followers. These emotions were selected as deviating from leadership norms of emotional expression because leaders often try to maintain

a calm, self-confident, and powerful image (Glasø & Einarsen, 2008; Humphrey, Pollack, & Hawver, 2008; Lewis, 2000). Unlike other negative emotions that leaders suppress, such as anger, these emotions are not directed toward followers and thus do not generate apprehension. Response scale ranged from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*frequently*). Reliability was .81.

Authentic leadership was assessed by the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (Walumbwa et al., 2008) consisting of 16 items (e.g., "Says exactly what she or he means"). Response scale ranged from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*frequently, if not always*). Reliability was .90.

Ingratiation was assessed with five items from Strutton, Pelton, and Lumpkin (1995). Typical items were "I volunteer to help her or him even if this means extra work for me," "I listen to her or his personal problems even if I'm not interested," "I laugh at her or his jokes even if they are not funny." Response scale ranged from 1 (*disagree*) to 7 (*agree*). Reliability was .71.

Unbiased self-presentation was assessed with four items developed by Mayer and Gavin (2005) to measure trust. Because no scale measuring unbiased self-presentation existed at the time of this study, we used items that reflect willingness to be vulnerable (i.e., trust) by engaging in unbiased self-presentation, admitting mistakes, weaknesses, and disagreements. The items were "I would tell my supervisor about mistakes I made on the job, even if they might damage my reputation," "I would share my opinion about sensitive issues with my supervisor even if my opinion was unpopular," "If my supervisor asked why a problem occurred, I would speak freely even if I were partly to blame," "If my supervisor asked me for something, I responded without thinking about whether it might be held against me." Response scale ranged from 1 (*disagree*) to 7 (*agree*). Reliability was .72.

We used the back-translation method (Brislin, 1970). The items were translated into Hebrew by the first author and then, independently, retranslated into English by the second author. The translated version was compared with the original English version, after which the authors discussed differences and reached an agreed version.

Results and Discussion

Preliminary Analyses. Given that some of our data were collected from a single source, we used the Harman one-factor test, the most common technique for addressing common method variance (Pugh, Groth, & Hennig-Thurau, 2011). Comparison of the one-factor solution with a three-factor solution (authentic leadership, unbiased self-presentation, and ingratiation) indicated that the single-factor model did not fit the data well (χ^2 = 861.055 on 299 degrees of freedom; comparative fit index [CFI] = .63; incremental fit index [IFI] = .64; Tucker–Lewis index [TLI] = .56; root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = .11), and

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations: Study 1.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Length of acquaintance with follower	37.15	65.60	—				
2. Authentic leadership	3.73	0.65	−.03	—			
3. Leader emotions	2.33	1.12	−.12	−.02	—		
4. Follower ingratiation	3.15	1.12	−.02	.25**	.13	—	
5. Follower unbiased self-presentation	4.90	1.27	−.03	.39***	−.05	.12	—

Note. N = 162.
* *p* < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

was, in fact, significantly worse, $\Delta\chi^2(76)$ = 486.065, *p* < .001, than the three-factor solution.

Testing the hypothesized model. Means, standard deviations, and correlations for variables are presented in Table 1. Because relationship tenure was found to affect the quality of the leader–follower relationship (e.g., Sin, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2009), it was included as a control variable.

The hypotheses were tested with hierarchical regression analyses (see Table 2). Relationship tenure was the control variable in the first step, authentic leadership and emotions were entered in the second step, and the interaction term (Authentic leadership × Emotions) was entered in the third step. Independent variables were centered on their respective means to reduce the multicolinearity between the main effects and the interaction term, and to increase interpretability of the beta weights of the interaction terms (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). This linear transformation has no effect on multiple *R* coefficients or beta weights for main effects.

Hypothesis 1a proposed that the relationship of authentic leadership with followers' unbiased self-presentation would be moderated by leader emotions deviating from role norms. The latter interact significantly with authentic leadership behavior to influence followers' unbiased self-presentation (β = 0.17, *p* < .05). Figure 1 shows that the results are consistent with the hypothesis, in that the relationship between authentic leadership and followers' unbiased self-presentation was stronger for higher levels of leader emotions. Using the procedure outlined by Pugh et al. (2011) and Zhang and Bartol (2010), we also conducted a simple slopes test. The results confirmed that authentic leadership has a stronger positive effect on followers' unbiased self-presentation with a high level of leader emotions that deviate from role norms (β = 0.84, *z* = 5.94, *p* < .001) than with a low level of emotions (β = 0.48, *z* = 2.65, *p* < .001). Hypothesis 1b stated that leaders' emotions would moderate the negative relationship of authentic leadership with followers' ingratiation. However, the relationship was

Table 2. Regression Summary of the Interactive Effect of Authentic Leadership and Leader Emotions on Followers' Unbiased Self-Presentation and Ingratiation: Study 1.

Predictor	Ingratiation					Unbiased self-presentation				
	R^2	ΔR^2	B	SE B	β	R^2	ΔR^2	B	SE B	β
Step 1	.01					.00				
Length of acquaintance			.00	.00	.01			−.00	.00	−.04
Step 2	.09**	.08**				.16**	.16***			
Authentic leadership			.46	.13	.27**			.76	.14	.39***
Leader emotions			.14	.08	.14			−.05	.08	−.04
Step 3	.09**	.01**				.18***	.02***			
Authentic leadership × Emotions			.00	.13	.00			.32	.14	.17*

Note. N = 162.
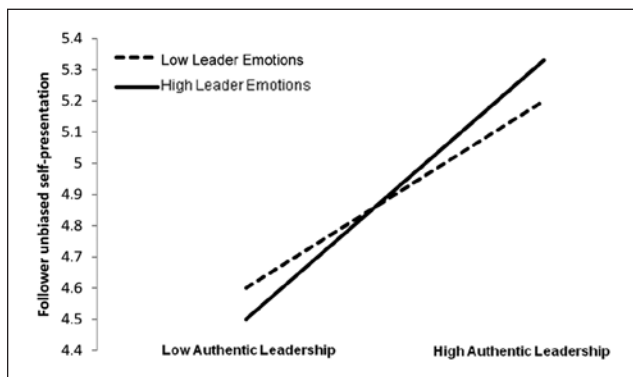***** *p* **<** .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Figure 1. Moderating effect of leader emotions on the relationship of authentic leadership and followers' unbiased self-presentation: Study 1.

positive (β = 0.27, *p* < .01) and the interaction was not significant (β = 0.00, *p* > .05).

We conducted separate hierarchical regression analyses for each emotion (distress, shame, guilt, upset, and irritability). The results show that distress and shame interact significantly with authentic leadership behavior to influence followers' unbiased self-presentation (β = 0.17, *p* < .05; and β = 0.22, *p* < .01, respectively). The test of the emotion upset yielded marginally significant interaction effect (β = 0.13, *p* = .08), whereas the interactions effects for irritability and guilt were not significant (β = 0.07, *p* > .05, and β = 0.06, *p* > .05, respectively). We also found that none of the leader's emotions significantly moderated the relationship of authentic leadership with followers' ingratiation (distress β = −0.07, *p* > .05; upset β = −0.09, *p* > .05; guilt β = 0.02, *p* > .05; shame β = −0.08, *p* > .05; irritability β = −0.08, *p* > .05).

The results suggest that authentic leadership may mitigate followers' concerns about making the "right" impression on the leader. When authentic leaders reveal their own unconventional emotions by displaying emotions such as distress or shame that deviate from the prototypical image, followers are encouraged to also engage in unbiased self-presentation.

Contrary to expectations, authentic leadership was positively related to followers' ingratiation, and there was no moderating effect of leader emotions. These results are in line with previous research, which suggests that followers tend to ingratiate with the leader regardless of the quality of their relationship. For example, Wayne and Green (1993) found that subordinates in a high-quality relationship with their leader, who already receive special treatment from the supervisor, still engage in other-focused impression management behaviors such as other-enhancement, opinion conformity, and favor rendering. A possible explanation is that the ingratiating behaviors measured in this study reflect genuine emotions rather than pretended positive emotions to promote the follower's interests. For example, volunteering to help the leader or laughing at the leader's jokes might be a demonstration of affection (e.g., Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004). Furthermore, a major intention of ingratiation is to be liked (Liden & Mitchell, 1988), and since more as opposed to less authentic leaders appear to be liked by their followers, as suggested by the positive relationship between authentic leadership and satisfaction with supervisor (Walumbwa et al., 2008), ingratiation may be a way of increasing reciprocal liking. In addition, ingratiation toward the leader might reflect followers' positive organizational attitudes such as job satisfaction (Giallonardo, Wong, & Iwasiw, 2010) or high organizational commitment (Jensen & Luthans, 2006) which are associated with authentic leadership.

Although the first study explored authenticity within the leader–follower relationships, the second study explores the effect of authentic leadership on followers' authenticity in the relationship of service provider to customer.

Study 2

Method

Sample and Data Collection. Respondents were 94 undergraduate students (a convenience sample) in a management course, working in part-time service jobs, who participated to obtain credit for a research participation requirement. Participants had worked an average of 1.8 years (SD = 1.54). Jobs included call center representatives, administrative workers (secretaries, clerks), and waitresses/waiters. Fifty-five percent of the participants were female. Ages ranged from 22 to 55 years, with an average of 26 years (SD = 4.5).

In collecting the diary data we followed the method of Heppner et al. (2008) for exploring daily experiences of authenticity. For 2 weeks, participants completed a set of measures after each of five shifts as service providers. They received five diary sheets, one for each workday, on which they were asked to record the number of customers served per shift, positive emotions, and authentic interactions experienced during the shift. To reduce common method bias, we introduced a time delay between measures (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). Thus, 2 weeks later, participants had completed a measure concerning the authentic leadership of their direct supervisor.

To ensure that respondents followed the instructions and reported experiences corresponding to the definition of authenticity (Harter, 2002), they were asked to write a brief description of an authentic interaction with a customer. An example provided by a bank employee was as follows:

> I served a customer who was nervous because his previous encounters with the service had been unsatisfactory. I told him that I understood, and manifested entirely genuine emotions because the service he had received in the past was too lengthy and indicated irresponsibility.

Eighteen of the participants described experiences of interactions that had no relevance to authentic behavior. These were not included in the analyses. The final sample included 76 participants who recorded a total of 380 service experiences.

Measures. Authentic leadership was assessed from the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (Walumbwa et al., 2008) as in Study 1. Reliability was .90.

Employees' positive emotions were assessed with emotional states from Leu, Wang, and Koo (2011)—happy, energetic, calm, at ease. Regarding each emotion, participants were asked, "To what extent did you experience this emotion during the shift?" Response scale was 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*). Reliability was .85.

Table 3. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations: Study 2.

Variable	M	SD	1	2
1. Authentic leadership	3.25	0.71	—	
2. Employee authentic self-expression	48.22	34.03	.28***	—
3. Employee positive emotions	4.42	1.32	.23***	.50***

Note. N = 76.
* *p* < .05. ** *p* < .01. *** *p* < .001.

Employees' authenticity was assessed by giving respondents the following instructions: "Considering all the customers you have served today, try to evaluate how many times during the day or your shift, you felt that your behavior was completely genuine, with no need to pretend." This measure is based on Harter's (2002) claim that self-report best reveals authenticity because, to qualify as authentic behavior, one requires the phenomenological experience that one's actions are authentic or not. Erickson and Wharton (1997) also suggested that individuals are able to differentiate experiences of authenticity from those of inauthenticity because the sense of authenticity is grounded in basic assumptions that individuals make about who they are. To control for variance in the number of customers served (and consequently the number of opportunities for behaving authentically), we calculated the percentage of authentic events according to the number of customers served. The scales were translated to Hebrew according to the method described in Study 1.

Results and Discussion

Analysis Strategy. Because each respondent described five different events, an analytical technique was required for nested data such as repeated observations (i.e., daily reports) within individuals (Heppner et al., 2008). Hypothesis 2 was therefore analyzed with hierarchical linear modeling, taking into account the nested structure of the data (Bliese, 2002; Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992). Analyses used the SAS PROC MIXED Version 9.1.3, suitable for multilevel, hierarchical-linear, and individual-growth models (Singer, 1998).

Hypothesis Testing. Means, standard deviations, and correlations for variables are presented in Table 3. Prior to analysis, we group mean–centered all predictors. All coefficients were modeled as randomly varying, and were fixed.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that authentic leadership would moderate the relationship of employees' positive emotions with authentic behavior. As seen in Table 4, the interaction of authentic leadership with employees' positive emotions was significant, coefficient = 2.51, $t(300)$ = 2.00, p < .05. Figure 2 shows that the results are consistent with the

Table 4. Interactive Effect of Authentic Leadership and Employees' Positive Emotions on Employee Authenticity: Study 2.

Predictor	Employees' experiences of authenticity		
	Estimate	SE	t (df)
Authentic leadership	9.05	3.91	2.31 (73)*
Positive emotions	8.57	0.97	8.78 (300)***
Authentic leadership × Positive emotions	2.51	1.25	2.00 (300)*

Note. N = 76. Results are unstandardized parameter estimates from SAS PROC MIXED multilevel analyses. Numbers in parentheses are degrees of freedom.
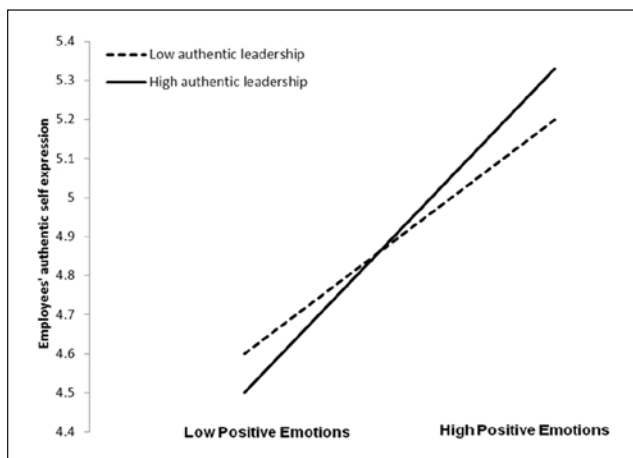* $p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Figure 2. Moderating effect of authentic leadership on the relationship of employees' positive emotions and authentic self-expression: Study 2.

prediction, in that the relationship between employees' positive emotions and authentic behavior was stronger under higher authentic leadership. A simple slopes test confirmed that employees' positive emotions are more strongly related to authentic behavior when authentic leadership is high ($\beta = 10.35$, $z = 7.33$, $p < .001$) than when authentic leadership is low ($\beta = 6.79$, $z = 5.43$, $p < .001$). The results suggest that authentic leadership may mitigate service encounter norms regarding restricted expressions of positive emotion. They further indicate that authentic leadership can be beneficial by contributing to the quality of service encounters.

General Discussion

The results of this study suggest that authentic leadership provides employees with an environment that allows authentic self-expression by demonstrating that being "natural" is acceptable. Because followers strive to make a good

impression, they may only express themselves in a way they feel is acceptable to the leader, or conceal mistakes and attributes that may be viewed as undesirable. However, when the leader displays emotions such as irritability or shame that deviate from the prototypical leader image, followers' concerns about making the "right" impression in self-presentation may be mitigated. By deviating from norms of emotional expression, leaders become more accessible and thus reduce followers' apprehension regarding the consequences of genuine self-presentation, as well as signal to followers that they too can deviate from such norms. As demonstrated in Asch's (1951, 1956) classic conformity studies, one member's deviation from a group norm can dramatically reduce other group-members' conformity. Asch suggested that such deviation reduces the threat of rejection by group members and also undermines the group's authority. Display of counter-normative emotions by the leader may thus "legitimize" authentic workplace behaviors for employees.

The results of the second study, concerning authenticity in service roles, show that leader effects on employees' authenticity are generalized beyond leader–follower interactions. By generating norms of authentic self-expression authentic leaders may enhance followers' authenticity in their interactions with customers. In addition, authentic leadership may reduce service employees' apprehension concerning sanctions arising from genuine emotional expression.

Practical Implications

Employees' unbiased self-presentation, admissions of mistakes, and sincere expressions of opinion are of great value for leaders (Park, Westphal, & Stern, 2011). However, because employees attempt to present their better side to the leader, increasing attempts to achieve honesty may increase both followers' fears of sanctions and tendencies to engage in impression management. Our results have implications for manager training and development because they emphasize the benefits of openness and honesty with followers. This has specific implications regarding emotional expression in leadership roles, as discussed in previous studies (e.g., Humphrey, Pollack, & Hawver, 2008). The results suggest that emotions which deviate from "proper leadership" may actually enhance leader–follower interactions. Thus, rather than regulating emotion and presenting a prototypical leader image, leader training should encourage expression of genuine emotions. In addition, the results of Study 2 suggest that authentic leadership may play an important role in service contexts in which authentic self-expression is inhibited by organizational rules (Diefendorff & Croyle, 2008). Consequent employee inauthenticity is associated with burnout and self-alienation (e.g., Grandey, Fisk, & Steiner, 2005; Hochschild, 1983) as well as with

customers' distrust of employee and organization alike (Groth, Hennig-Thurau, & Walsh, 2009). By enhancing the authenticity of service encounters, leaders may mitigate the negative outcomes of compliance with display rules, both on employees' well-being (Hochschild, 1983) and on customers' evaluation of service quality (Groth et al., 2009).

Limitations and Future Research

The research was based on convenience samples that were biased toward younger and educated participants. This may have influenced the results, since such variables may affect emotional expression and authenticity (e.g., Dahling & Perez, 2010). Using a convenience sample inevitably limits generalizability, thereby decreasing external validity (Murray, Rugeley, Mitchell, & Mondak, 2013), especially when a sample only comprises individuals who actively come forward to participate (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). Furthermore, the use of inferential statistics is limited when sampling is not random (Dodge, 2006). In addition, in Study 1 we addressed followers who were indicated by their leaders. This may have biased the employee sample, because leaders may have chosen followers who had a high-quality relationship with them and are therefore likely to evaluate them positively. Thus, the results are likely to be biased upward in regard to both evaluation of leaders' authenticity and followers' reports of their own authenticity.

The cross-sectional design precludes drawing cause–effect conclusions about followers' self-expression. An additional limitation concerns the common-source bias. To minimize that bias, in Study 1, we collected data from two sources (leaders and followers), and in Study 2, we separated the measurement of authentic leadership from that of authentic behavior by collecting the data at different times and using different measures, that is, diary reports and questionnaires (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Podsakoff et al., 2012). Yet in Study 1, we collected data concerning authentic leadership and authentic behavior from followers, and in Study 2, data regarding authenticity and emotional expression were retrieved from followers. We also conducted Harman's one-factor test, which suggested that common-source bias had no major effect on the results, but this test is inconclusive (Podsakoff et al., 2003). However, the impact of common-method variance on our results was limited, since both studies tested moderation hypotheses, and common-method variance does not inflate the outcomes of interaction tests (Podsakoff et al., 2012).

Because the norms of positive emotional expression are inherent in the service context, some respondents might find it difficult to differentiate between their expressed and their genuine emotions (Hochschild, 1983). In Study 2, we took measures to control possible misinterpretations of the concept of authenticity, but it would be desirable, in future research, to assess the measure's construct validity, for example, by crossing employee self-reports with customer evaluations of employee authenticity.

The results suggest several interesting directions for future research. First, future research should explore the effect of authentic leadership on follower authenticity beyond the interpersonal context, for example, authentic leadership may affect followers' self-awareness, openness to feedback, or honesty in conveying information to colleagues. In addition, it would be desirable to explore the effect of positive deviation from normative leader behaviors (e.g., silliness) on followers' genuine self-expression. In addition, because sanctions on expression of negative emotions toward customers are severe, we only addressed the effect of leadership on expression of positive emotions, assuming that even with an authentic leader, employees would not explicitly express negative emotions toward customers. However, authentic leadership may be associated with certain expressions of negative emotion. For example, employees may engage in subtle expression of negative emotions, for example, through nonverbal communication; or express negative emotions, which may be acceptable to customers, such as sadness. Future studies should investigate the effect of authentic leadership on expressions of negative emotions in service interactions.

In line with previous studies, the present research explored authentic leadership reflected in employees' perceptions of the leader. Future research should measure leader authenticity as reflected in leadership behaviors, to clarify the effect of authentic leaders on followers. This is especially important in light of the positive relation of ingratiation to authentic leadership, which might indicate that the authentic leadership measure reflects general liking of the leader.

Employee authenticity should also be explored across cultures. Casimir, Waldman, Bartran, & Yang (2006) suggested that cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1980) such as individualism/collectivism or power distance (i.e., the extent that less powerful members accept that power is distributed unequally in relationships) affect leader–follower relationships as reflected in trust. The authors conclude that leadership research should consider the cultural context within which leadership occurs. Israel has low power distance, so that the baseline of authenticity among Israeli employees may be higher than in cultures of higher power distance.

In conclusion, our results address the positive effect of authentic leaders on employee authenticity in contexts that are often marked by norms of impression management, in particular in follower–leader interactions and in employee interactions with customers. The value of authentic leadership is manifest in employees' free and genuine self-expression in regard to many aspects of organizational behavior.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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