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Honors: Leadership and IPC

Reflection #2

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Authentic Leadership and Politeness Theory

After reading the chapter on authentic leadership I now understand why it is a type of leadership approach. Some people see authentic leadership as the leadership approach that is emerging in response to societal demands for genuine, trustworthy, and good leadership” (Northouse, p. 220). I see authentic leadership as a leader showing their followers that he or she is a genuine individual that the followers can depend on. The chapter in Leadership Theory and Practice described two ways that the authentic approach can be used. They are the practical approach and the theoretical approach. For the practical approach in authentic leadership the chapter shows how Bill George explains the basic “how to” steps to become an authentic leader. In the theoretical approach the chapter shows that “researchers have identified four major components of authentic leadership: self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency” (Northouse, p. 220). I see authentic leadership as an important role to my own style of leadership because I want my followers to trust in me to know that I will always do what is best for the majority.

The self-assessment questionnaire for this chapter was created from the theoretical approach of authentic leadership, and it shows the person who took the questionnaire what components of authentic leadership are strong and which ones can be improved. From the assessment I scored the highest in self-awareness with a 19 out of a possible 20. Self-awareness describes how well a person knows themselves and his or her own personal insights. I know a lot about my own personal strengths and weaknesses. However, I did not figure out all of them on my own. I had help from team members and also my peers to figure out what I thought were my strengths and weaknesses. For example, I could easily name my three greatest weakness on my own because I believe that as humans we always seems to look at what is wrong with ourselves first instead of what is right. My first weakness is that I sometimes forget that there are people around me I can ask for help. I seem to forget that I’m not all be myself during some situations. My second weakness is that I am annoyingly impatient. I cannot stand it when I am not being told something or if I have to wait long periods of time for something I can do on my own. My third weakness is I have a tendency to control anything I can around me. At times I can be a little bit of a control freak, but I have learned ways to cope with that side of myself. As for my strengths I would name of few off to people and they would agree with them, but then they would help me by giving a few of their own thoughts of what they think are my greatest strengths. For example, my parents always told me that my independence and individuality was my greatest strength when I would always name my adaptability. Different peoples’ perspectives have helped shaped how I use and view my strengths and weaknesses.

Next for the self-assessment I scored a 16 on the internalizing moral perspective questions. I have very high moral standards and I help them guide me when I interact with people. It is very rare for me to allow outside pressures to control my decisions. As a journalist I find it best to make sure my opinion and point of view are unbiased and nonjudgmental. That is why I believe I scored high in this category. My choice in career has and will continue to form me into the leader I want to be. For balanced processing I scored a 15. I believe I got a 15 in this section because I always look for other peoples’ opinions before expressing my own because I want to know what everyone has to say before a decision is made. I also think that a few points were lost because if I am in a type of leadership position I will make quick decisions sometimes without the consultation of my followers or team members that I feel do not need their opinions. For example, on things that need quick decisions like story headlines for an article I am writing I won’t consult my team members unless I need help to meet the deadline. Lastly, for relational transparency I scored a 15. I believe I scored a 15 because I am very good at openly communicating with people I am close to. However, when I am around people I am not fairly close to I tend to be closed off. It can be difficult for me to openly share my feelings with others I feel I cannot trust. From this questionnaire I was able to learn how I can improve my authentic leadership skills and how my leadership type connects to my communication skills.

The interpersonal relationship topic I found most interesting was from the Defending the Self chapter. The idea of how the politeness theory tries to understand why we are so polite when communicating with others is interesting to me because almost all people do it without knowing they are doing it. The way people are polite can be built throughout their childhood and early adulthood by the ways that person was raised and by events he or she has been through. Politeness theory suggests that “we are likely to be polite with others who have relatively more power than we do,” that “we are likely to be polite with others who are socially distant from ourselves,” and lastly researchers “claim that the comments we make to others differ in how large an imposition we are place on them” (Canary, p. 226). Politeness theory helps explain why we help people save face. We each have two face “needs”: positive face needs and negative face needs. “Positive face needs refer to being like and respected by others” (Canary, p. 227). “Negative face needs deal with our desire to be free from constraints and obligations­­­ -- we are autonomous, independent, and not tied down to anyone” (Canary, p. 227). A polite person will usually respect another’s positive and negative face needs and will always try his or her best to avoid face-threating acts. Face-threating acts are acts that threaten the face of any other person. These act always vary in strength by how politely they are phrased. Some can be phrased carefully so the recipient’s face isn’t threatened severely and others can be phrased less carefully and the recipient’s face can be threatened. By understanding politeness theory and saving face I can learn, as a leader, valuable ways to positively communicate with others.

By combining politeness theory with authentic leadership I was able to see how an authentic leader can build their communications skills. By knowing about saving face and how to respond to people an authentic leader can avoid face-threatening acts. For example, if an authentic leader responds with face-threatening acts than some followers may not find them trustworthy because someone they look up to violated their trust and made them embarrassed. If that authentic leader knew a better way to respond that wouldn’t create such a severe response their followers would continue to see them as the authentic leader they have been known to be. Another way that politeness theory connects to authentic leadership is that both of the theories have something to do with how the individual was raised or the individual learning from critical life events. In the authentic leadership chapter critical life events are argued to be both positive and negative and connect heavily to the insights people attach to their life experiences.

In class we talked about how our degree of politeness comes mainly from how we were raised. When I was younger I was always told to respect my elders and to rarely question authority. As I have grown up and experienced some of my own critical life events my politeness has changed mainly with the people I am closer to. I am still very polite and gentle to strangers, but with close family or people I know fairly well I can be very direct and sarcastic. My family and close friends have grown accustom to this side of me, but if someone I didn’t know very well saw this side of me he or she might be somewhat taken aback. I find that for my type of leadership it would be best to have my team members or followers gradually become acquainted with the blunt and sarcastic side of me. For one we need to be professional in most settings but then there are always times to have fun and relax so we can personally get to know our team members. I would use the communication skills to make my team members comfortable in getting to know me and by doing so I will become the authentic leader I want to be. For the future, I can see myself using this new information and communication skills to develop my unique form of leadership, so I can begin to understand how my followers and I can benefit and continue to learn from each other.

References

Canary, Daniel J., Michael J. Cody, and Valerie Lynn. Manusov. Interpersonal Communication: A Goals-based Approach. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003. Print.

Northouse, Peter G. Leadership: Theory and Practice. 7th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2004. Print.