

Equine coaching to improved authentic leadership for future generations

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The value of leadership qualities; Authenticity, Self-confidence, Vulnerability, and Resilience in current and future leadership and to what extend are these enforced by equine assisted coaching.

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Abstract

This qualitative research aims to discover to what extent Authenticity as trait is a starting point for leadership qualities Vulnerability, Self-Confidence, and Resilience, and enforced by equine assisted coaching (EAC), for now and with the upcoming generation of leaders. EAC is a form of coaching with horses being essential to be used as mirror and metaphor for the coached. This research offers a new perspective on authenticity as leadership trait by further exploring its definition, the correlations with vulnerability, self-confidence, resilience and how this is enforced by EAC. The current trend in leadership shows an increased importance of soft skills. Leaders are expected to take a role as coach or guide. People look for a connection with their leader and that the leader does no longer have to meet the skills of the team. It works better to also be more tangible as leader and no longer just a status symbol. Eleven structured interviews were conducted with leaders, equine coaches and participants of equine coaching which gave insight on the value of authenticity, vulnerability, self-confidence and resilience and also on the extend of which these are enforced by equine coaching. Authenticity as leadership trait is a complicated term that is found to consist of two parts. One's inner self which includes self-awareness being one's self, the values and talents one possesses. Part two is the interaction of the inner self with the environment, here the correlation of authenticity with vulnerability, self-confidence and resilience takes place. A strong association with learning and learning theory has also been found. The interviews also revealed that leaders often go to equine coaching in with a work related problem and do not only work on these but also on their own role as leader and other competences. Authenticity, self-confidence and resilience are strongly associated with equine coaching while vulnerability seems to be more a side effect of the interaction with the horse and not an active goal. This data has been compared with the literature on the use of horses in coaching, leadership, authenticity, vulnerability, self-confidence and resilience. The findings support the theory that Authentic leadership is relevant and connected with self-confidence, vulnerability and resilience. Additionally this redefined view on authentic leadership seems to be enforced by equine assisted coaching. This research contributes to equine assisted coaching with a new perspective on authenticity and confirmation of their roles in developing such leadership.

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Introduction

The expectation of leadership is changing with time. Over the generations, leaders have developed, changed and adapted. There are currently four generations working together: The baby boomers (1946 – 1964), generation X (1965 – 1980), Generation Y (1981 – 1995), and generation Z (1996 - 2012). All four generations bring their own background to the workplace which can cause friction, but also adds diversity and additional knowledge. Companies are changing their leadership approach since the environment is changing faster and faster. To keep up with this development, they focus more on the individual's ability to self-manage or self-leadership (Weerheim, Van Rossum, Ten Have 2019; Marques-Quinteiro, Vargas, Eifler, & Curral 2019). Leadership skills have therefore become more important for everyone. Emotional intelligence as a part of leadership has only entered in scientific research since the end of the 90's. Since then, it gained much popularity in leadership skill development (Riggio & Lee, 2007).

To stay updated with the current needs and trends in leadership, people more often reach out to Business coaches (Prince, 2018). In a review of a survey done in 2018, it is shown that there is a worldwide increase in the need to strengthen leadership development (Leimbach, 2018). Ways in which companies provide coaching and training is varied. From outdoor teambuilding activities and animal assisted activities, to simpler indoor games that are designed to build team spirit, and to improve cooperative and leadership skills. An example of a leadership development activity that aims to develop a leader's personal and social skills is equine assisted coaching (EAC). In this training the horse is used as a tool for personal and social development in an organizational context (Trotter, 2012). Common topics are: authenticity, vulnerability, self-confidence and resilience.

This research will be looking into equine assisted coaching as method to improve authentic leadership, self-confidence, vulnerability, resilience and the overlap between these traits. Authenticity and the value of this in leadership is much debated (Ibarra, 2015). More recent studies show that the relation between the subconscious, conscious and the external influences of an individual are determining factors in their authenticity (Wood et al., 2008). While others suggest that without awareness, vulnerability and self-confidence, one cannot be authentic (Goldman & Kernis, 2005).

Vulnerability is often described as a weakness; something to avoid. Though, true connection cannot exist without vulnerability. One needs to have the self-confidence to share vulnerability since at the end of the day, no one is perfect and everyone is vulnerable (Brown 2010). Being vulnerable in connection means to be in open interpersonal encounters where egos and defenses are not in place. It is about seeking contact and fulfilment and accepting that this state means one is susceptible to potential harm (Erskine, 2013;

Blekkingsh, 2015). As mentioned before, self-confidence is the enabler for being vulnerable and authentic. Self-confident individuals are more inclined to perform difficult tasks and stay strong in the face of adversity (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998; Kouzes & Posner, 2008). Self-confidence is therefore also an essential trait in resilience (Bandura, 1997). The generally accepted definition of a resilient person is that one is able to bounce back, overcome and move forward from setbacks, losses and troubling times (Reeves & Allison, 2009; Luthans, Youssef & Avolio, 2007).

Equine Assisted Coaching (EAC) is, as previously mentioned, a form of leadership training or coaching that uses horses to support these leadership traits. Horses respond immediately on a human's emotional state without judgement (Gehrke, 2009; Fransson, 2015). It is incredibly hard to implement a judgmental system of right and wrong or good and bad on Equine Assisted Coaching, as the base of these workshops is to improve soft skills. The activities cannot be done right or wrong: it is about the experience and what the participants take home from it (Wojtkowska, Kaczmarek, & Gazdowska, 2019). A study conducted by Bivens Et al. (2007) prove that Horse Assisted Education improves self-efficacy indirectly contributing to other leadership skills such as planning, motivating and organizing. Approximately since the mid-90s, EAC has been researched as method for personal development and proven to be beneficial for the development of multiple soft skills (Academy, 2019).

The focus of EAC for leadership is on leadership skills, such as confidence, vulnerability, authenticity and resilience (Zimmermann, 2018). By conducting interviews with equine coaches, leaders and participants of EAC, this research aims to determine to which extent these leadership traits are being developed with equine assisted coaching, their definition and to what degree these terms are still in demand as modern leadership traits in moving forward to the next generation of leaders. In the following pages the goal of this research will be presented in more detail, followed by the literature review, methodology, results, discussion and conclusion.

Problem definition

Modern leadership encompasses multiple traits that meet the requirements to be able to lead the new generation and to cope with the constant development of the work environment. Over time things have changed, though four traits keep coming back in literature and in EAC: Authenticity, Vulnerability, Confidence and Resilience. By questioning the relevancy of these traits and discussing the longevity within leadership and EAC, this research will focus on finding the value of these four leadership traits for current and future leaders.

Research objective

To determine the extent of which these leadership traits confidence, authenticity, vulnerability, and resilience are being developed with equine assisted coaching and to what degree these terms are still in demand as modern leadership traits in moving forward to the next generation of leaders.

Research Questions

Main research question

To what extent is authenticity as trait a starting point for the leadership qualities vulnerability, self-confidence and resilience, and enforced by equine assisted coaching, for now and with the upcoming generation leaders?

Sub research questions

1. What defines authenticity based on literature review and interviews with leaders who participated in EAC, leaders that did not participate in EAC, leadership experts and equine assisted coaches?
2. What defines vulnerability and how does it relate to authenticity according to literature and interviews with leaders who participated in EAC, leaders that did not participate in EAC, leadership experts and equine assisted coaches?
3. What defines self-confidence and how does it relate to authenticity according to literature and interviews with leaders who participated in EAC, leaders that did not participate in EAC, leadership experts and equine assisted coaches?
4. What defines resilience and how does it relate to authenticity according to literature and interviews with leaders who participated in EAC, leaders that did not participate in EAC, leadership experts and equine assisted coaches?
5. Are the terms authenticity, vulnerability, self-confidence and resilience still suitable to use for next generation leaders and does EAC enforce these skills according to literature and interviews with leaders who participated in EAC, leaders that did not participate in EAC, leadership experts and equine assisted coaches?

Literature Review

Leadership has developed much over the years. The types of leaders as well as the type of people led are much different than 100 years ago (Mecca, 2010). To understand why, it is interesting to have a look at the different generations and their correlated work ethic, leadership style and comfort. It is relatively easy to become a leader through receiving the title, though, the title alone does not make a good leader. To be a successful leader it is important to understand the employees and have the skills and qualities that enable a leader to carry out their tasks (Duncan, 2018). This research will only focus on the leadership traits as personal skills and not focus on the dynamic between leader and subordinate.

Generation leadership and attitude

The veteran generation (born before 1945) is interesting as they are generally no longer working, but their influence still echoes in the following generations. The veterans are the generation before the baby boomers and generation X. They value obedience over individualism. The communication structure this leads to is described by Zemke (1999) as indirect and cumbersome. Veterans hold on to authority and believe in the power of those that are in charge to make the decisions that are best for the company. Leaders in the veteran generation are authoritative and respectful (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 1999).

In the time of the veterans Mayo (1933) conducted the Hawthorne experiment: he researched the influence of external factors on the productivity. By accident, he found that these factors have little influence. Productivity increased when employees felt appreciated. This appreciative leadership style came forward in the next generation. Baby boomers (1946 – 1964) thrive in a work environment that is sociable humane and democratic. They revolutionized participative management and teambuilding. This generation is service-oriented, driven, people-oriented, want to please, and are good team players. The conflict between the veteran generation and the baby boomers was that in leadership roles there was often a veteran, while the employees were striving towards the more sociable, informal leadership (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 1999).

The following generation is generation X (1965 – 1980), whom are now mostly occupying leadership functions. As response to the baby boomers, this generation has a work ethic that is very adaptable, independent but also impatient (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 1999). They appreciate working for their free time and do not necessarily see work as a part of their fun life. They tend to be more loyal to their profession than a specific employer. Generation Xers are also much more technically clever than most baby boomers. They grew up with the rapidly changing technologies and are used to having readily

available information at their fingertips (Keaveney, 1997). They do not appreciate authoritative leadership styles and generally do not have very strong people skills. They thrive when they can choose the way in which they work and have flexible work hours (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 1999).

The new generation of leaders is generation Y (1981 – 1995). Their work ethic is in some ways similar to that of the Veterans. They are optimistic in nature and believe that great things can be accomplished when all are on the same page. This generation trusts centralized authority and combines the team work from the baby boomers, the work attitude from the veterans and the tech knowledge from generation X. This generation works for their dreams. They feel comfortable in a creative and innovative environment and want to feel as if they can make a change (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 1999). Generation Y likes confining in mentor programs and being mentored themselves. They thrive in a team with equally ambitious people and share knowledge and learnings from each other (Patterson, 2007). Though, this generation can be unreliable as they value a healthy work-life balance even more than the previous generations and when their work is not fulfilling enough they are more likely to change jobs. They are less bound to the idea of security (Helyer & Lee, 2012).

Generation Z will be the new workforce and leaders in training (1997 – 2012) this age group are the kids of generation X and even some from generation Y. They grew up after the financial crisis and in the middle of the environmental one (Gardner & Davis, 2013). Generation Z is also described as the app generation because of their relation with social media and even faster developing technology. They are described as; fast, big consumers, interactive, easily dissatisfied and result-oriented (Berkup, 2014). In a study conducted by Bako (2018) There is a difference in how generation X and Z perceive good leaders. Generation Z considered risk-taking, self-sacrificing, and being convincing to be characteristics that contribute to effective leadership, while these attributes were not rated as high by Generation X (Bako, 2018) The reason why Generation X rated these attributes lower may be linked to their self-reliance (Strauss & Howe, 1991) and that they do not feel like their leaders should take any risks or sacrifice themselves for them (Tulgan, 1995). On the other hand, Generation Z requires these attributes in a leader because they are more career-oriented, value their personal time and are more individualistic (Levine & Dean, 2012).

The combination of Gen Y's work value and ethics will form their leadership style and help to understand and train the next generation workers (Generation Z 1997 – 2012) to become great leaders

Modern leader qualities

In the 21st century, leaders and managers need to combine all of the previously mentioned characteristics and the leading of these 3 generations while coping with quick changing markets and ever growing technical influences which pushes people further away from a traditional 8 hour work day at an office set up. The modern work environment is requiring more flexibility, personal growth and responsibility, and relationships are as important as the work itself (Dike, Odiwe, & Ehujor, 2015). Leadership has always been a pillar for the success of an organization. There are many kinds of leadership and the developments are continuous but so is the environment in which leaders operate (Maccoby, 1979).

To keep up to date with the current needs and trends in leadership, people more often reach out to Business coaches (Prince, 2018). In review of a survey done in 2018, there is a worldwide increase in the need to strengthen leadership development (Leimbach, 2018). Ways in which companies provide coaching and training is varied. From outdoor teambuilding activities and animal assisted activities, to simpler indoor games that are designed to build team spirit and to improve cooperative and leadership skills. In this paper the focus lays on Equine Assisted Coaching (EAC).

Equine Assisted coaching

Multiple studies have proven that working with or around horses is beneficial for soft skills, therapeutic purposes and personal development. Studies done by Earles, Wernon and Yetz (2015) tested the benefits of horse assisted psychotherapy and the results showed a significant decrease of symptoms such as anxiety, PTSD and depression. Additionally, the participants resort less to alcohol consumption and became more mindful and self-aware. In another study conducted with the focus on young adults in a high risk group such as; people with emotional disorders, veterans, victims of domestic violence and autism also showed positive results. They worked for 5 weeks with horses and they found positive changes in attitude; they had more basic hope, self-efficacy and decreased symptoms of depression (Frederick & Hatz, 2012).

Equine assisted coaching in leadership skills

People in leadership positions are a different group that benefit from Equine assisted coaching. The results of a study done by Bivens Et al. (2007) prove that Horse Assisted Education improves self-efficacy indirectly contributing to other leadership skills such as planning, motivating and organizing. It is incredibly hard to implement a judgmental system of right and wrong or good and bad on Equine Assisted coaching, as the base of these workshops is to improve soft skills. The activities cannot be done right or wrong. It is about the experience and what the participants take home from it (Wojtkowska, Kaczmarek, & Gazdowska, 2019).

In 2017, Gunter et al conducted an experimental research with a team of executive nurses that had to work in a form of shared leadership. They participated in equine assisted leadership coaching. The result was a success as the experience motivated the team to make conscious leadership decisions for the benefit of the team and improving skills as communication, alignment of direction and congruence (Gunter, Berardinelli, Blakeney, Cronenwett, & Gurvis, 2017). The previous examples suggest that leadership coaching with horses can contribute to several leadership skills including authenticity. Horses respond immediately on a humans emotional state without judgement (Gehrke, 2009; Fransson, 2015).

During a horse assisted session the participant will become more aware of their behavior as well as their emotional influence. This allows the participant to change their way of interacting with the horse and get a direct response to this change. Horse assisted coaching helps leaders to read other people and situations and to get more in touch with non-verbal cues (Duff, 2010). Duff (2010) Also states that participating in horse assisted coaching can benefit other aspects of everyday work, such as assertiveness, communication, relationship building and responsibility. Additionally, she states that since every horse is different, participants learn to be flexible with their leadership style as there is no one way to tackle all (Duff, 2010). Business leaders state that working with the horses developed confidence, assertiveness, emotional control, communication skills and power of action. These skills have helped them in their business careers (Fransson, 2015).

Equine assisted coaching Die Pferdeakademie

The exact date is hard to come by, though since the 90s EAC has been researched as method for personal development and proven to be beneficial for the development of multiple soft skills (Academy, 2019) . In 2005 Die Pferdeakademie was started by Verena Neuse as a response to the demand of rapid leadership developments previously mentioned, in regards to different generations in the lead and digitization of the work environment . Equine Assisted Coaching might not directly seem as the solution for these developments. However, more and more people are finding benefit in these principles as trust and close collaboration are harder to come by in this digital age. The focus of EAC for leadership is on leadership skills, such as confidence, vulnerability, authenticity and resilience (Zimmermann, 2018).

Authenticity defined

This study focusses on authenticity as a personal quality or trait. A trait defines itself by an individual's inclination to feel, think or act a particular way across circumstances (Endler, Parker, Bagby, & Cox, 1991). From a humanistic point of view, authenticity has been described by many, but most influential were Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow. Rogers (1961), described an authentic individual as one who can receive, interpret and act upon their internal stages and emotional responses in an open fashion. He noted that individuals that are unable to display authenticity could be at risk of remaining stagnant and are unable to become fully realized. Maslow (1968) categorized authenticity as a psychological need in this pyramid, necessary to become self-actualized.

To create a more applicable theory, Deci and Ryan (1995) came up with a theory of self-determination. The theory states that there are three basic psychological needs in humans: Competence, autonomy, and relatedness. When these three are satisfied, internalization of goals will occur and are the prelude to authenticity. To make this theory more tangible, a two week study has been conducted to measure the correlation between autonomy, competency and relation to others and authenticity. This study found a positive correlation between the satisfaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs and authenticity (Heppner, et al., 2008). Not a lot of additional research has been done to prove the claims of Deci and Ryan but the theory gave further research a start in developing more conceptualized ideas.

Kernis and Goldman (2006) created the multicomponent conceptualization of authenticity. They define authenticity as "the unobstructed operation of one's true- or core-self in one's daily enterprise" (Kernis & Goldman, 2006 p. 294). This described state consists of four components: *unbiased processing*, *behavior*, *awareness*, and *relational orientation*. *Unbiased processing* refers to evaluating self-relevant information

no matter what the source might be in an objective manner. Objectivity creates a clearer image of one's self due to the lack of biases or defense mechanisms.

Blekkingsh (2015) describes these defense mechanisms as "The ego layer" (Blekkingsh, 2015 p. 87) in his seven layer model he describes that this layer is there to protect and shield one's authentic self from the environment because of the fear that the authentic self might not be good enough. In the *behavior* definition of Kernis and Goldman (2006), this fear and other emotional influences are being bypassed by the introduction of objectivity. Which makes the defense mechanism obsolete. This means that an individual will be able to act on their internal goals, needs, desires and values without being influenced by external factors. This would then again lead back to one of the three basic psychological needs as the expressions of autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 1995).

The *awareness* component is defined as the knowing of all parts of one's self – such as traits, strengths, desires, motives, emotions, weaknesses etc. – and not just recognizing the parts that reinforce an individual's self-concept. This is including the acceptance and honest reflection of one's self even (or especially) when these might conflict or contradict. The last component is *relational orientation*, which stands for the ability to be one's true self in close relationships. This component relies on the ability to show openness and reveal both good and bad parts. This level of authenticity is often established once the three other components are further developed (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Choosing to show one's weaknesses can be described as vulnerability in the sense that one consciously chooses to be vulnerable and so open up the possibility to deeper relations with the individuals around them (Brown, 2010). To be authentic means to be vulnerable; to show the environment weaknesses and strengths that one would normally hide. In this instance this paper will not focus on vulnerability as weakness but as a state of being required to be more authentic.

In 2008 another group of researchers presented a three part model clarifying authenticity as shown in figure 1.

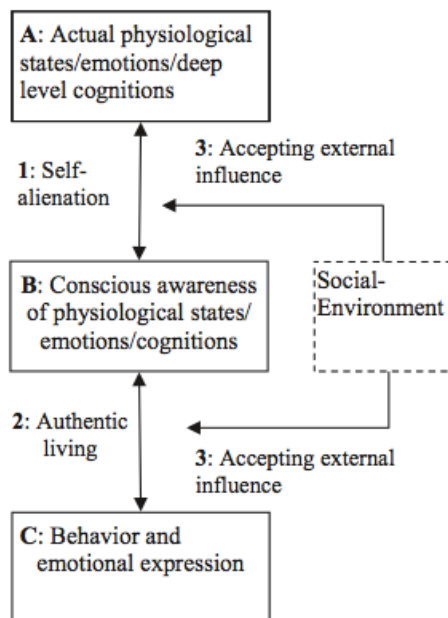


Figure 1 The person centered model of authenticity (Wood et al., 2008)

This model (figure 1) describes three levels of experience as well as three aspects of authenticity in between. The first level consists of the primary experience: this can be described as the basic of unconscious states of an individual. The second level comprises the states, thoughts and feelings which a person is consciously aware of. And the third level is the person's acted experience or behavior.

The first phase of authenticity takes place between the first two levels, or a person's unconscious states and the conscious ones. While those levels seem to never perfectly align, the larger the misalignment or as described in the model *self-alienation*, the higher the potential for mental instability or sickness. As natural consequence, the closer the first two levels align, the greater one's well-being. The second aspect of the authenticity model takes place between level two and three, which are the conscious awareness and a person's behavior. If a person behaves conforming those conscious states, it is called authentic living.

The third aspect of this model is accepting external influence, which is ever occurring since it is able to exist between levels one and two, but also levels two and three. It describes to what extent the social environment contributes to self-alienation and authentic living (Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, & Joseph, 2008). For example, a person could let cultural traditions like a simple act of shaking hands as a greeting, contradict with one's authentic inclinations. When one really does not like to do it, but ends up doing it

anyway, one can interfere with their underlying feelings and end up not acting authentically. Being authentic requires a certain level of self-confidence. Self-confidence to share and show one's vulnerabilities to step aside from the environment's influence to be objective and be one's true self. Consequently, self-confidence can be increased by authenticity as the confidence to be oneself can benefit other aspects of one's life as well (Goldman & Kernis, 2005).

The authentic person routinely chooses to engage with and act upon the world, rather than retreat into the safety of passive inaction (Maddi, 1989). White (1959) stated in his work on competence that self-awareness leads to more hardiness and commitment. Besides having more self-confidence and acceptance of their vulnerability, authentic people can invoke resilience into others as well as themselves, as they are aware of their inner goals. Therefore, one can stay more objective and confident in trying times (White, 1959; Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Authentic people can be described as resilient or hardy in this sense, because of the ability to be in control of their own feelings, goals and abilities, despite the reality of an uncertainty or sometimes difficult future (Maddi, 1989).

Where these studies and theories overlap is that all of them require an authentic individual to be aware of themselves, and to act upon their true self towards the outside world to embrace vulnerability and to be and become self-confident and therefore more resilient.

Authenticity and vulnerability

As mentioned before, this paper will focus on vulnerability as a positive quality and not as a weakness. Vulnerability can be described as a state of being in which a person expresses oneself, while still feeling secure. It is present in open interpersonal encounters where egos and defenses are not in place. It is about seeking contact and fulfilment and accepting that this state means one is susceptible to potential harm. (Erskine, 2013; Blekkingh, 2015) When one shares vulnerability in a heart-to-heart conversation, there is a level of authenticity present which is healing. “A relationship that involves two individuals in full interpersonal contact” vulnerable and authentic (Erskine, 2013 p. 3).

Brown (2010) states that allowing oneself to be vulnerable creates the possibility to connect more deeply and in a meaningful way with one another.

“Imperfections are not inadequacies; they are reminders that we’re all in this together.”-

(Brown, 2010)

A research done with doctors by Beach et al. (2004) shows that doctors who are showing their vulnerability to their patients were in more meaningful conversations. Additionally, when the doctors acknowledged their patients fears and frustrations and answered their vulnerability with their own, they had a more satisfactory consultation. This type of vulnerability implies that you need self-confidence to be yourself and substitutes professional distance with uncertainty and emotional exposure (Seppälä, 2014). Even though sharing one’s vulnerability and stepping away from professional distance can be a high risk strategy, doing so may offer personal relief (Beach, et al., 2004).

Authenticity and vulnerability go hand in hand. Authentic people are open, wholehearted and sincere in sharing both their capabilities and shortcomings. By acknowledging one’s vulnerability and appreciating one’s true self, the opportunity arises to have meaningful connection and compassion with others (Cashman, 2008). Brown (2012) states that to have this connection based on shared vulnerability, one needs to have the courage to be vulnerable. This leads to the next topic of self-confidence and how this enables authenticity.

As David Whyte, poet and author of *The Heart Aroused*, wrote:

“We need to learn to love that part of ourselves that limps.”

Authenticity and self-confidence

From vulnerability grows self-confidence, just like authenticity requires vulnerability and self-confidence to be present. To grow from vulnerability to self-confidence is to accept that everyone is vulnerable and having the courage to show one's own vulnerability (Brown 2012). Confidence in general is defined as "one's belief about his or her ability to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action necessary to execute a specific task within a given context" (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998b: 66)

To be self-confident in authenticity means that one often has to confront the truth about oneself and daring to engage with others in these truths. It takes self-confidence to accept those truths and work through and with them and to encourage others to show vulnerability as well (Kreber, 2010).

Self-efficacy and self-confidence are often linked to each other. Though, self-confidence and self-efficacy are not completely the same. Self-confidence is an overall sense of competence that has been considered a personal trait. In comparison, self-efficacy is a personal belief, a self-judgment about one's task-specific capabilities. But even though there are some conceptual differences, the two are related to some extent as highly self-confident people are inclined to report also higher levels of self-efficacy (see Brockner, 1988; Hollenbeck, 1991; Bass 1990).

Furthermore, people with high self-confidence have the tendency to give difficult tasks a try (Kouzes & Posner, 2008). It influences the direction people will go and how high they set their goals. Additionally, self-efficacy and self-confidence have shown to relate to how long people will persist when they face obstacles, difficulties, and disappointments in reaching their goals (Maurer, 2001). This perseverance is directly related to the resilience of a self-confident person (Bandura, 1997).

Authenticity and resilience

Resilience is described as a quality of people that are able to bounce back, overcome and move forward from setbacks, losses and troubling times (Reeves & Allison, 2009; Luthans, Youssef & Avolio, 2007).

Resilience also relates to optimism, as many resilient individuals also reported to have energetic and curious approaches to life. They adapt to new situations rather quickly and inspire others to support them and do so as well. Resilience stretches the learning zone out of its boundaries so one can overcome and move forward from tough situations. (Masten, 2001; Tugade & Fredrickson 2004; Folke et al., 2010) see figure 2 of Senningers Learning zones.



Figure 2 Example of Senningers Learning Zones

The three zones represented in figure 2 stand for every individual's unique situations which they can find themselves in. The Comfort zone is the zone in which you perform tasks that are familiar to you and it includes routine and habits. The learning zone is the optimal zone where one gets triggered to explore one's abilities and skills further; this zone evokes creativity (Cohler, 1987; Helson 1999), solutions and perspective. Finally, the stress zone, which should not be confused with the learning zone. The stress zone is where one gets thrown of the deep end into an overwhelming situation

where one is more likely to shut down rather than exploring new possibilities and opportunities (Senningers, 2000). Being resilient helps people to remain in the learning zone during hardship. They adapt to the situation more easily, they learn to combine situations, share knowledge and adjust to the situation (Folke et al. 2010)

It has been researched that just like with authenticity according to Maslow (1968) and Rogers (1961), resilience is most likely when individuals have sufficiently covered their needs towards self-actualization. These needs cover the basic material needs, like food and a roof above one's head, but also, money, education, the sense of belonging, love, respect and self-confidence (Masten & Reed, 2002: Maslow, 1968). Additionally, resilience is more likely in individuals that have experienced success, building the self-confidence and motivating them to succeed again (Masten & Reed, 2002).

Authentic leaders

To come back to authenticity in its application, this research focusses specifically on individuals in leadership positions which includes managers. Being in the leadership role itself requires a certain form of exposure of one's self. To be in this leading position one needs to allow themselves in this social position, show their sense of direction, self-confidence and self-efficacy (Berson, Kark, Eilam-Shamir, & Katz, 2018). Being an authentic leader comes down to 4 qualities: (1) Honesty and transparency, also when one makes mistakes; (2) Practice what you preach, striving to do the right thing and communicating on what is being done; (3) being open to different perspectives without losing sight of the general goals and direction and; (4) self-awareness: being aware of one's actions and how these impact others (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004). Authentic leaders need the self-confidence to have self-knowledge and help others recognize their capacities (Luthans & Avolio, 2003).

In summary, authentic people are self-aware and value all of what they are. This awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses enables authentic leaders to be more engaged and have focus on the team, organization, and marketplaces, and less on themselves (Cashman, 2008).

Authenticity Paradox

Herminia Ibarra (2015) argues the benefits of authentic leadership. In her experience it is a limitation to develop. Being yourself or leading from values would only work when the environment is also asking for this type of leadership. Being oneself can also limit exploring further positions, skills and experiences. Leaders might lose credibility by sharing their every thought and feeling (Ibarra, 2015). A research done by Nyberg and Sveningsson (2014) explores the limitations of authenticity further by looking into what happens to the authenticity ideal when leaders are confronted with conflicting organizational situations and demands. This ideal of being an authentic leader can influence organizational interactions negatively when managers behave in the presumed authenticity role towards their subordinates. The managers of this study described that their vision of authenticity becomes nothing more than a dream. It is hard to see oneself as an authentic leader when their organizational environment contradicts these authenticity ideals. This puts the leader in an awkward position to try to fit in but also act on their authentic beliefs of their identity (Nyberg & Sveningsson, 2014). Therefore it can be misleading to disassociate authentic leadership ideals from the organizational context in which it takes place (Algeria and Lips-Wiersma, 2012; Shaw, 2010).

Methodology

This thesis includes results from mixed research, making use of qualitative research in the form of a literature review, structured interviews with equine assisted coaches as well as leaders who have done one or more equine assisted coaching sessions and leaders who have not done EAC. This has been done to determine firsthand what they think of authenticity and the traits; vulnerability, confidence, and resilience as terms used in current leaders as well as the lasting effects on these qualities after equine coaching.

Interviews with leaders

For the structured interviews, a list of predetermined questions had been created (annex 1). These questions aimed to understand the demand and personal experience for the variables that have been researched. The data was recorded with a voice recorder when agreed upon. If not agreed upon, the conversation had been transcribed on scene. In either case, a data confidentiality document (annex 4) has been provided and signed by both parties before the interview. The interviews took place either in person or over the phone or via another digital medium. The interviewees were 4 current or experienced leaders and managers and/or experts in the field of leadership. A leader is defined for this research as a person that is or has been in charge (within the last year) of more than one subordinate, either as team leader, manager, CEO, head of department, or other comparable job description. The interviewee had been invited over e-mail to take part in this research (annex 5).

Interviews with equine assisted coaches

For the structured interviews, a list of predetermined questions had been created (annex 2). These questions aimed to understand the demand and personal experience for the variables that have been researched. The data was recorded with a voice recorder when agreed upon. If not agreed upon, the conversation had been transcribed on scene. In either case, a data confidentiality document (annex 4) was provided and signed by both parties before the interview. The interviewees were 5 certified Equine Assisted Coaches with different backgrounds of study and/or nationality. The interviewee had been invited over e-mail to take part in this research (annex 5).

Interview with leader participants of equine assisted coaching

For the structured interviews, a list of predetermined questions had been created (annex 3). These questions aimed to understand the demand and personal experience for the variables that have been researched. The data was recorded with a voice recorder when agreed upon. If not agreed upon, the conversation had been transcribed on scene. In either case, a data confidentiality document (annex 4) was provided and signed by both parties before the interview. The interviewees were 2 leaders who have participated in EAC within the last year matching the aforementioned definition of leaders for this research. The interviewees had been invited over e-mail to take part in this research (annex 5).

Data analysis

The data has been processed by recording and transcribing the structured interviews (annex 6). Organizing the transcribed interviews in excel and color-coded to match overlapping or thematically matching answers (Annex 7). This has been done according to the method of Bree and Gallagher (2016) using Microsoft Excel to code and thematically analyze qualitative data: a simple, cost-effective approach. The literature review and interview results have been combined to define the definitions of authenticity, vulnerability, self-confidence and resilience and their relation. Furthermore, the results of the interviews and the literature review have been used to create a framework supporting the upgraded definitions to use in EAC.

The interviews were first transcribed, then the answers to the questions summarized and highlighted. This summary was then further analyzed, narrowed down and categorized under the sub questions. Per sub question, the given statements were narrowed down first per speaker then by theme and the themes color coded (Annex 7).

This resulted in an overview where each theme would only have one answer per person, but a sub question could include multiple statements from one person as opinions often combine multiple themes. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that the figures in the results section are organized by the amount of times a certain theme was discussed related to the sub questions of this research. The reoccurring themes have been organized into a word cloud and the colors used to connect the strongest associations with the main topic. There are 4 word clouds in total, put together to redefine authenticity, vulnerability, self-confidence and resilience. It resembles a mind map to combine the results and an overview of the results regarding Equine coaching and leadership trends.

Results

The results have been structured as responses to the sub questions of this research.

What Defines Authenticity

A total of 11 people answered this question (annex 7 authenticity). Seven of the interviewees answered that it had to do with being yourself, staying close to yourself, being in tune with yourself. Additionally, the majority said being authentic had something to do with self-awareness and congruence.

“That you really are as you think as you talk as your act, so you're kind of congruent.”

Equine Leader

To the question if one's authentic behavior can be developed or changed, most said that authenticity is something that can be learned. It is a learning curve from birth till death.

“It is based on the talents and strengths you have, to behave in a way you feel comfortable with. Feeling comfortable can be practiced and your repertoire of behavior can be expanded to feel authentic.” *Equine coach*

One leader said that learning behavior to be authentic comes down to nature versus nurture but that learning is surely a part of it.

“I believe in that you can change more than you think you can. If you're open to it.”

Leader on if authenticity is expandable

The answer of “being myself”, was also often linked to transparency, communicating values and being an imperfect human. Additionally, two leaders mentioned that authenticity in the workplace was not always feasible due to one-sidedness with their superiors or relations to others. The following page includes figure 3, which is a word cloud showing the themes related to authenticity that were discussed during the interviews.



Figure 3 Word cloud Authenticity: Themes related to authenticity from the interviews. Color coded and sized by number of times the theme was discussed.

What defines vulnerability

The 11 interviewees answered this question as well (annex 7 vulnerability). Seven of them mentioned acknowledgement of imperfection and awareness of these feelings as key factors of vulnerability. Vulnerability is also often linked to failure and hurt depending on the context.

“If we look at leadership 4.0 so let’s say in a couple of years, we are so far that vulnerability is accepted and also part of leadership skills. To be able to show emotions, to be able to show maybe that you’re not knowledgeable about something, and to show that you sometimes get hurt.”

Equine coach

Five interviewees described vulnerability in general as something that can hurt while put in a leadership context, 4 of those also associated vulnerability with openness and trust.

“Yes because I think, to perform the best, you need an environment of trust and honesty. Also both ways positive and negative... you're creating this environment of safety.”

Leader on the question if vulnerability has a place in leadership.

Five participants also associated vulnerability with being in the learning zone and thus out of the comfort zone. One leader noted that in the beginning it might feel uncomfortable, but with practice, it becomes second nature and that feels good.

“I got confidence to talk about that... I felt so safe and so strong to do it right away. And it became just second nature to do so, because it feels good.”

Leader on sharing strengths and weaknesses

Two interviewees specified that vulnerability makes one human and puts one on the same level. The following page includes figure 4, which is a word cloud showing the themes related to vulnerability that were discussed during the interviews.



Figure 4 Word cloud Vulnerability: Themes related to Vulnerability from the interviews. Color coded and sized by number of times the theme was discussed.

What defines self-confidence

This question was answered by the same 11 interviewees (annex 7 self-confidence). Six of them regarded self-confidence as an awareness of strengths and a learning opportunity about yourself. Five interviewees also stated that it had something to do with self-acceptance and vulnerability. Three of the interviewees states that self-confidence has to do with your ability to make decisions and communicate.

“Only if you're kind of self-confident, you're able to manage yourself and with that subsequently, you can manage other people. Self-confidence, self-reflection, are enabling you to continuously work on yourself and you accept yourself as a public person which is going to do so.”

Equine coach on self-confidence

Within these themes, four interviewees focused on the words: skills, abilities and improvement. While the others used words like believing, acceptance and worthiness. Three people correlated self-confidence with empowering others to be self-confident as well. Three of the interviewees also mentioned, in addition to their other statements, that too much self-confidence can also be bad. It could indicate a lack of self-esteem, ego centered leadership and not being able to reflect anymore.

“Self-confidence, in my opinion, can be important, but can also become easily a danger in the case of ‘too much’ self-confidence... Safety of the whole herd can get lost in the case of too much self-confidence or a lack of authentic self-confidence. We see this a lot because of knowledge self-confidence that is more important to leaders and managers.”

Equine coach

Two people said that trust and authenticity plays a key role in self-confidence.

“Between actions and self-confidence and the way you want to be perceived, opening up means you link back to your authentic self.”

Leader on vulnerability and self-confidence

The following page includes figure 5, which is a word cloud created from the themes that were discussed.



Figure 5 Word cloud Self-confidence: Themes related to self-confidence from the interviews. Color coded and sized by number of times the theme was discussed.

What defines resilience

Ten of the interviewees answered this question (Annex 7 resilience). Regarding its definition, four of the interviewees stated that it had something to do with persistence. Four of them also said it had to do with learning from mistakes and past experiences and learning in general.

“It’s what I always tell to people when I talk about it; even though it’s not a nice experience at that moment, you also you get back stronger. You can rely on experiences you had.”

Leader on resilience

It has to do with taking care of oneself and self-reflection. Resilience was mentioned as a professional trait, but also as a personal trait according to 3 interviewees. It was about focusing on goals and communication with subordinates, change and age. Four others stated it was about empathy and transparency.

“In one definition it sounds like resilience is a tool... I know how to cope with problems. That it’s more of a method than really my inner feeling. And the person being resilient.. will be that privately, professionally, with children, with managers and with colleagues.”

Equine coach on resilience definitions

Regarding the question if an authentic leaders is resilient, five of the interviewees stated yes. Three of those five said that it was indisputably connected to each other. They specified that it is about knowing yourself, your strengths and therefore your ability to overcome.

“The more resilient you are, the more authentic you can act... you don’t care that much about reactions or about risks you take, because you know you will be able to manage them.”

Equine coach on authenticity and resilience

Two other interviewees stated that it is not necessarily correlated as resilience can be a learned trait or skill. Thus a resilient leader doesn’t have to be authentic but an authentic leader will always be resilient.

“If you are a strong leader and you don’t share much about yourself... you are just goal oriented ... the team are good collaborators.... it can still be resilient because everybody knows how to handle the situation... If you’re authentic and that means to me... communication... knowing each other. I think you will always be resilient.”

Leader or authenticity and resilience

Below in figure 6 a word cloud created to show the themes discussed in the interviews about resilience.



Figure 6 Word cloud Resilience: Themes related to resilience from the interviews. Color coded and sized by number of times the theme was discussed.

Definitions combined

To create a more complete overview from the found definitions and the overlap, a mind map has been created below in figure 7, showing the 4 topics with their correlating themes. Learning comes back in all four topics. When discussing authenticity, people spoke about needing self-confidence and self-awareness and that being aware of your strengths would make one self-confident. While talking about self-confidence people also mentioned that it takes self-confidence to be vulnerable and showing vulnerability would make one more self-confident.



Figure 7 Mind map of the interview results regarding the definitions of Authenticity, Vulnerability, Self-confidence and Resilience

Do authenticity, vulnerability, resilience and self-confidence stay relevant in leadership?

To this question the four leaders and the two leaders that participated in equine coaching all agreed that these terms will be relevant for future leadership (Annex 7).

“Yes, because it is necessary. This is as well, if I get younger people into my team, this is exactly the expectation they do have and lean on, more and more, much more than people over 50. Over 50 is the generation which learns a leader needs a donkey to be your friend... the new generation wants not only a leader... but a partner.. a trust relationship.”

EAC participant on do the 4 topics stay relevant.

They specified that the terms might change for instance, agility is used quite often, but the meaning will remain the same. One also added that authenticity might become more important than self-confidence and that there are more leadership traits important as well. All 11 interviewees state that focusing in these skills is about trust, authenticity, what leaders need to do to self-reflect, to be open and honest. Also, to create connection and that it is about the expectation from the new generation.

What are the trends in leadership and what are the expectations from the new generation?

Eleven of the interviewees answered this question (annex 7 Leadership trends and expectations). Two of the leaders stated that the new generation leaders and subordinates expect more from each other and themselves. They also focus on soft skills and personal connection to their leaders.

“Yeah, I think so, I think it is a movement ... I do see a lot of activities from other companies as well to train people more on soft skills then and on said skills to bring people more in the position to be an authentic leader.”

Participant EAC on leadership trend

They want it all and have high expectations from each other. Two leaders stated that this is what they suspect to be the reason why so many get burn-outs. Additionally, the younger generation wants to know answers to the questions like “who am I?” An equine coach also added that the younger generation is looking for answers earlier not just to “who am I?” But also to “what are my talents?” According to a leader who participated in EAC, the younger generation is also much more open to authenticity than the older generation is. Leaders change from being followed, because of their status symbols, to what makes them worthy of following as human. There is change in leadership, according to 3 leaders and 2 equine coaches, but no company or leader is the same. Generally, leaders are expected to create an environment of trust.

“You just need to be brave enough to let it go. Let the goals be reached in different ways and be able to open up the dialogue with the younger team members... It's not something that you do easily, particularly... about being a charge of international teams, you don't see your people that often and have to know how to manage them across distances. So they need to have freedom and trust.”

Equine coach on leadership trends

The interviewees state that people look more for a coach and connection in their leader and also that the leader does no longer have to meet the skills of the team. It works better to also be more tangible and no longer be in this status role.

“Soft skills and personal skills will become more important, especially in the role of a leader, which I in the future more see as the role of not being even the one who is the best task but more like who's the best in being a leader.”

Leader on leadership trends

“It's creating an environment where the team performs the best. So actually, it might be possible that in 10 years, the leader or the manager of a team doesn't even meet the skills of the actual team members.

Because leadership is something completely different than having skills.”

Leader on leadership trends

Equine assisted leadership coaching

This method has been described by the equine coaches as tool for self-development (Annex 7 Coaching). They offer a platform which allows the participant to grow. It helps finding solutions for a team as well as for an individual. The horse mirrors the person and gives direct unaltered feedback. The horse coach is there to help translate this feedback to the participant and apply this to a professional setting. Oftentimes, the participant is asked to analyze their own exercise in a form of self-reflection. It is about changing.

“If you look at learning psychology you learn outside the comfort zone. You learn with your senses, new visuals, smells and sensation. With horses you bring people out of their comfort zone with new feelings smells and sights. The second part is the horses give you the possibility of receiving feedback that doesn't hurt.” Equine coach on EAC

Authenticity applies to equine coaching, because whenever a person is authentic, the horse will be more likely to follow. One equine coach explained that a horse will show when one's authenticity is lacking, since the horse is a flight animal and might not feel comfortable. A big part of the coaching is about finding strengths. All participants and coaches agreed that it feeds into self-confidence. Every exercise with the horse is different and when speaking about resilience, it is often about failing in front of your peers or not succeeding at the task and ending up changing approach, moving forward and looking back on what changed. It also aims to change perspective and to see the situation with more optimism. The long lasting effect of the coaching is also discussed regularly.

“In different situations I often think back on the coaching and imagine how I felt in a similar situation with the horse or donkey. It works very well to a better perceive and solve situations with challenges.”
EAC participant

Vulnerability is often mentioned as a side effect of the coaching. It entails creating mindfulness and an open mind, allowing feelings to be a part of it and reflecting on this.

Discussion

In the next paragraphs the results are being discussed using the literature review and the method of this research. The starting point is authenticity and the themes associated with this. The next part is about the correlations with the other topics: vulnerability, self-confidence and resilience and lastly the application in EAC, a model based on the findings, and lastly, the role of this research in sustainability.

Authenticity is a fluid term. Depending on the context interpretation and previous knowledge, people associate the term with many different themes this is seen in the mind map (figure 7) on page 31. Most commonly, people associate authenticity with: being themselves, being self-aware, accepting their own imperfections, being transparent and communicative about one's values and beliefs. These terms largely match the multicomponent conceptualization of authenticity by Kernis and Goldman (2006). They address openness, self-awareness and acting upon one's inner goals. Where the results of this research and theory differ, is in that Kernis and Goldman (2006) speak about objectivity in their 1st step of authenticity; *unbiased processing*. People did mention self-reflection during the interviews, more often than not this was associated with the horse coaching or one of the other terms that were discussed like self-confidence and resilience. Interestingly, self-reflection or objectivity were not noted as a key aspect of authenticity. On the contrary, people mostly focused on the aspects of authenticity about self-acceptance and the self-confidence of being oneself. This type of association with authenticity correlates more with the depiction of Rogers (1961) where he described an authentic individual as one who can receive, interpret and act upon their internal states and emotional responses in an open fashion. Authenticity is therefore often looked at as an inner state of being oneself, their values, talents, what they are born with and having this self-awareness.

One major topic discussed during the interviews, but is not often touched upon by literature, is the expandability of one's authentic traits. In this research this is described as learning. To the question if people can learn new behaviors to become authentic, all but one of the interviewees stated that: Yes, one can expand their authentic repertoire, but it takes openness and commitment. On the one hand the interviewees are speaking about accepting oneself as is, while on the other hand most of them are keen on learning and developing and therefore changing oneself. One equine coach noted that authenticity means being in congruence with yourself but also be fitting with the environment. This meant that one checks in with one's self if they are still feeling good about what they are doing though, one does also take the environment into account. This point of view overlaps with the three part model of Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, & Joseph (2008). In their model they formulate three layers of authenticity; the one

between your subconscious self and your aware self, the one between your aware self and your behavior and the interaction with the external influences. Important to note is that not everyone agreed that new behaviors can become authentic. One of the 11 interviewees noted that acting in a new socially acceptable way after a coaching might help the environment, but even though it is done many times and strengthens the relations in the workplace, it still does not feel authentic. Here the research found a clear overlap between authenticity and learning where in authentic leadership one cannot overlook the interaction with the outside environment.

Taking external influences into account is valuable for authenticity in a leadership context. Most interviewed leaders still report to someone and they described that it is not always possible to be authentic around their bosses, but they felt generally authentic around their subordinates. This phenomenon seems to be the point of the research of Nyberg and Sveningsson (2014). They interviewed leaders with the wish to be an authentic leader, but due to circumstance in their work environment they were not able to sustain this authentic behavior.

“However, in contrast to the positive images portrayed in the authentic leadership literature, the managers expressed that acting according to their true self promoted negative responses and made them feel bad.”
Nyberg & Sveningsson (2014 Leadership p. 438)

Two leaders of this research opted for a similar explanation about authentic leadership in practice. They felt like they could only sometimes be authentic and especially in their relations with their superiors they missed the authentic interaction.

This raises the question if authenticity is the answer. Since someone might, for example, be naturally very introverted. Maybe one delivers great work, therefore gets a promotion and suddenly has to interact with a lot more people. This goes against one’s authentic behavior and beyond what this person is comfortable with. Does this mean one should not take the promotion or should not ever practice interacting with others comfortably? This is one of the points Herminia Ibarra (2015) makes. She describes authentic leadership (depending on the definition) as a limitation.

However, as many of the interviewees of this research stated and what learning theory is based on; one needs to step out of their comfort zone to learn and develop. Authenticity, therefore, does not have to mean to stop developing and exploring. It is aiming to see what the natural limits are and try to cross those to an extent where one is still in touch with themselves but can learn and does not shut down. The only way to be fully aware of those limits is to be aware of oneself. Thus, the definition of authenticity as described by Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, & Joseph (2008) and Kernis and Goldman (2006) and the

statements made by the interviewees of this research are applicable again. This could mean that one sometimes needs to change themselves and sometimes needs to change the environment to be able to fit in authentically in the surrounding one works in. In conclusion, to be able to learn and develop, one needs to be authentic and be aware of their limits, strengths and weaknesses.

Maddi (1989) argues that an authentic person is more likely to interact and engage upon the world and their surroundings rather than retreat. This has to do with the confidence one gains from exploiting one's strengths and self-awareness. One could say that it gets a lot less bad or scary to delegate something that one as leader is not good at, once this leaders also knows the things he or she is very good at. Not just in private but especially in their leading position. This touches on the topic of vulnerability and self-confidence which are closely intertwined when looking at the results. The interviewees stated that being self-confident means to know one's skills as well as knowing that one can succeed. This self-awareness helps to acknowledge feelings, being open, showing empathy and accepting that one is not perfect. This results overlaps strongly with the statements from Blekkingh (2015) about vulnerability. It is about being open and interacting with each other where ego's and defenses are not in place. This interaction takes place as a result on one's self-awareness and therefore directly buildings in one's inner authenticity.

In the results, the link between authenticity and vulnerability is in the fact that one is human and imperfect and one can accept this, share this, and create relationships through this. Like being authentic, being vulnerable means that one is looking for fulfillment, contact, trust and accepting that one can potentially be harmed (Erskine, 2013). It could also result in more openness to try new things, because failure is a part of life. Failures hurt, but it provokes new approaches and allows one to ask for help and to learn from it. Not every circumstance asks for vulnerability and it can be high risk to expose oneself. Though, Beach, et al., (2004) found that it can be of personal benefit to do so. The results of this research complement that finding. Showing imperfections lead often to communication, transparency, shared vulnerability and empowerment.

The interviewees stated that, in leadership context, vulnerability is about creating a safe environment and trust. Vulnerability is also described as the future of leadership by multiple interviewees. This does not come back explicitly in the previously discussed literature, though Brown (2012) does state that being a strong and courageous leader involves vulnerability.

Vulnerability is also viewed as being in a position that could hurt. Some of the interviewees stated that, in their understanding of the word, it would mean that you are not stable or not in a good place. After receiving this feedback multiple times, specifically from German interviewees, the translation was looked

at more closely. The German word for vulnerability is “verletzbarkeit”. Verletzbarkeit does indeed mean vulnerability, but the German definition also suggests being breakable or the Achilles heel of the person. This definition is also commonly used in the English language. However, depending on the context, one looks at vulnerability as a personal quality or state of being open, honest and sincere. The insecurity is that one could take advantage of this vulnerability, but since everyone is vulnerable why would one want to do this (Brown 2010). Vulnerability can consequently also have its drawbacks. Too much can lead to instability, and hurt, while sharing vulnerability in a balanced manner, can lead to many benefits.

As mentioned previously, self-confidence is a big part of authenticity as well as vulnerability. Some interviewees did state too much of self-confidence is not good. Just like any strength taken too far comes with its downsides. For self-confidence they stated that this would limit one’s ability to self-reflect and could affect the safety of the environment.

Self-confidence was also associated with the ability to have trust in one’s own abilities and that from others. To empower others to be self-confident as well and enable them to trust the leader and be vulnerable. This comes back in the works of Kreber (2010) where courage and authenticity are directly correlated with vulnerability, one’s ability to self-reflect and to invite others to show their vulnerability as well.

Stajkovic and Luthans (1998) mentioned confidence as one’s belief about one’s ability to turn motivation, knowledge and plans into action to take on a specific task. This can be interpreted as one’s belief in one’s own skills and strengths which was mentioned by some interviewees as well. It could also be interpreted as one’s ability to trust in one’s own ability to succeed even when one might not have the full skill set. This was mentioned by some of the interviewees as personal confidence where one can communicate transparently and make decisions based on trust in oneself and their team. For them, self-confidence was also more about self-acceptance and having the courage to acknowledge one’s feelings and share these. Self-confidence was also associated with having no fear to make mistakes and live up to them, learn from them and change approach. This comes back in the literature from Kouzes & Posner (2008) and Maurer (2001). They found that people with self-confidence are more likely to take on difficult tasks and have the strength to continue even in the face of adversity. This is also where self-confidence relates to resilience. The words changing approach and having the confidence to make decisions.

The results of this research show that in order to be resilient, one needs to be able to self-reflect, be open and empathetic, be persistent, communicate, be goal oriented, make decisions and dare to change. Additionally, it was mentioned that people often need a change in perspective. Interestingly, in the interviews people also stated that a resilient person does not necessarily mean one is authentic. They

state that resilience can also be a skill or tool used to reach the goal and in current leadership almost unavoidable due to the fast paced, changing markets and work environment (Dike, Odiwe, & Ehujor, 2015).

On the other hand, almost all interviewees agreed that when one is authentic, one will also be more resilient. This had to do with one's self-awareness, self-confidence, openness, communication and trust. Just like with authenticity, one will become more resilient when one's needs toward self-actualization have been covered (Masten & Reed, 2002; Maslow, 1968). One leader also stated that resilience might have a correlation with age, as one is younger one has less people relying on them and often also feels more free to change and seek out new opportunities. This idea comes back to the generations and how they perceive leadership and work. Where the younger generations value personal life at least equal to work, want to have some form of fulfillment and want to make a change (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 1999). One enabler of resilience that did not come back in the literature so far and was described by several interviewees as caring for oneself. Caring for oneself was associated with setting boundaries, knowing when to step back and return to the topic at a later time, to avoid getting overwhelmed. Resilience was also associated with learning from past experiences. Change can be difficult, but it often brings also new opportunities and one can always rely on the experiences they gained from the past.

The results of this research also look at the new generation of leaders. They expect more openness and relations across ranks. This is in line with the description from Patterson (2007), Bako (2018), Levine & Dean (2012) where the new generation would like to see leaders as a mentor or coach and prefer to have open communication with them. Additionally, they like leaders who put effort in explaining their decisions and have individualistic leadership approaches (Patterson, 2007; Bako, 2018; Levine & Dean 2012). An individualistic leadership approach might not completely be in line with an authentic leadership approach. An authentic leader might level with subordinates and are sincere, but they might not try to adapt their leadership style to the individual. One could argue that being able to adapt to an individual to fit their most productive leadership style might be the most rewarding down the line. Some authentic individuals might be naturally so adaptable while others do not possess this skill at all, while still being authentic. This personal relation and understanding that is expected from leaders, comes back in the results of this research.

The next generations ask a lot from themselves, this came back in the results and also in the literature. They value meaningful work as much as a personal life (Helyer & Lee, 2012; Zemke, R., Raines, C., & Filipczak, B. 1999). The interviewees also stated that it seems as if the younger generation focuses more

on the question: “who am I?” which could consequently be the reason why the younger generation leans toward coaching leadership rather than authoritative. Nonetheless, a more guiding and coaching style of leadership is preferred by the younger generation. The interviewees stated that this is a major struggle for companies that adhere to a more hierarchal leadership approach. One sees a trend toward more collective rather than individual leadership, despite the fact that individual development is also increasing in popularity. (Petrie, 2011). As one of the leaders who participated in equine coaching stated, there is a bigger focus on soft skills and to be enabled to become a more authentic leader. Additionally, interviewees discuss that leadership is no longer just about having the best skills or track record at the company. It is about having good leadership skills and these are two very different things. In conclusion, the future leaders are expected to be more like coaches, be supporting and understanding and also empowering and showing trust in the subordinates. Looking at the expectations, there is a clear overlap with the abilities an authentic leader possesses. To be in touch with one’s self and to interact with self-confidence, vulnerability and resilience to the outside environment.

In the next paragraph, the role of Equine assisted coaching in development of authentic leadership will be discussed. EAC is a proven method to work on soft skills, for instance; confidence, assertiveness, emotional control, communication skills and power of action (Fransson, 2015). The equine coaches and participants of EAC that were interviewed for this research all agree that it is beneficial to work on soft skills with horses. As they are flight animals, they are very responsive especially to nonverbal cues, they respond without judgement. This is also seen in the literature of Wojtkowska, Kaczmarek, & Gazdowska (2019), Duff (2010), Gehrke (2009) and Fransson (2015). With techniques and exercises, participants get the chance to find and work on their strengths. Participants shared that they felt more energetic and resilient after the coaching. Additionally, approaching different situations as they did with the horses helped them look from different perspectives. It gave them confidence and the ability to self-reflect. Literature supports this, stating that equine coaching had helped in multiple practical cases to work on communication, alignment of direction and congruence (Gunter, Berardinelli, Blakeney, Cronenwett, & Gurvis, 2017).

This feeds back into authenticity as we describe it in this research. Often the exercises require a person to make the horse follow. The horse responds to self-confidence and sincerity and will show very bluntly when one does not come over as such. This puts leaders often in a vulnerable position, as one cannot talk their way out of the situation, but has to reflect and look at their inner self and start to acknowledge in this vulnerability that they need help, need to change their attitude or that they feel insecure. All equine coaches agreed that even when one is insecure, the horse will follow once one has accepted this

insecurity as a part of themselves. Equine coaching takes place outside the comfort zone of most leaders. Therefore, they are in the green learning zone of the learning theory previously discussed in the literature review (Senninger, 2000).

Going out of one's comfort zone can lead to a stress response. However, with the right guidance in equine coaching they aim to create a safe environment where one can reflect and develop and focus on the strengths rather than weakness or failures. The interviewees stated it is often about changing perspective of the coachee. Supporting, enforcing, helping them develop themselves when the exercise works out and supporting to pin point what happened when the exercise did not go as planned. Self-confidence often is a result after finding one's strengths and also after acknowledging one's own actions in the case of being stuck in an exercise.

This last example is also where one often shares their vulnerability with the rest of the coaching group. The coaches help to support this interaction by inviting others to help or reflect together on how they perceived the exercise. In a group of leaders it is often about collaboration with the team which is not going to be smooth. Here they can use the horses as metaphor to discuss and act out different approaches to a situation. Since every horse is different, the leaders need to be resilient and flexible since one horse has maybe a bit more character and might not be as easily convinced, than the other.

This helps leaders cope with different characters while staying close to themselves, as the horse will not be comfortable with the leader, when the leader tries to put on a façade. The results of research done by Grootveld (2015) overlaps strongly the results from this research where Equine coaching is said to focus on self-awareness, empathy and transparency as well as adaptability. The activities during an equine coaching session cannot be done right or wrong; it is about the experience and what the participants take home from it (Wojtkowska, Kaczmarek, & Gazdowska, 2019). The interviewees state that the effect of equine coaching is longer lasting than most regular training or coaching sessions. They believe this is because one subconsciously picks up on a lot of information about oneself and can reflect on this once a comparable situation occurs. The participants state that they still use the horses as metaphors for situations within their work to help resolve an issue faster. In conclusion, equine assisted coaching shows to help leaders develop themselves and resolve problems by showing different approaches, sharing strengths, vulnerability and becoming more resilient while still staying close to oneself. Now that these 3 different aspects of authenticity have been discussed and the relations to equine coaching has been made, one can recognize two separate definitions of authenticity. One definition talks about one's inner

self, while the other talks about interaction with the environment. In the visual representation below (figure 8) the three circles represent the 3 layers of authentic leadership.

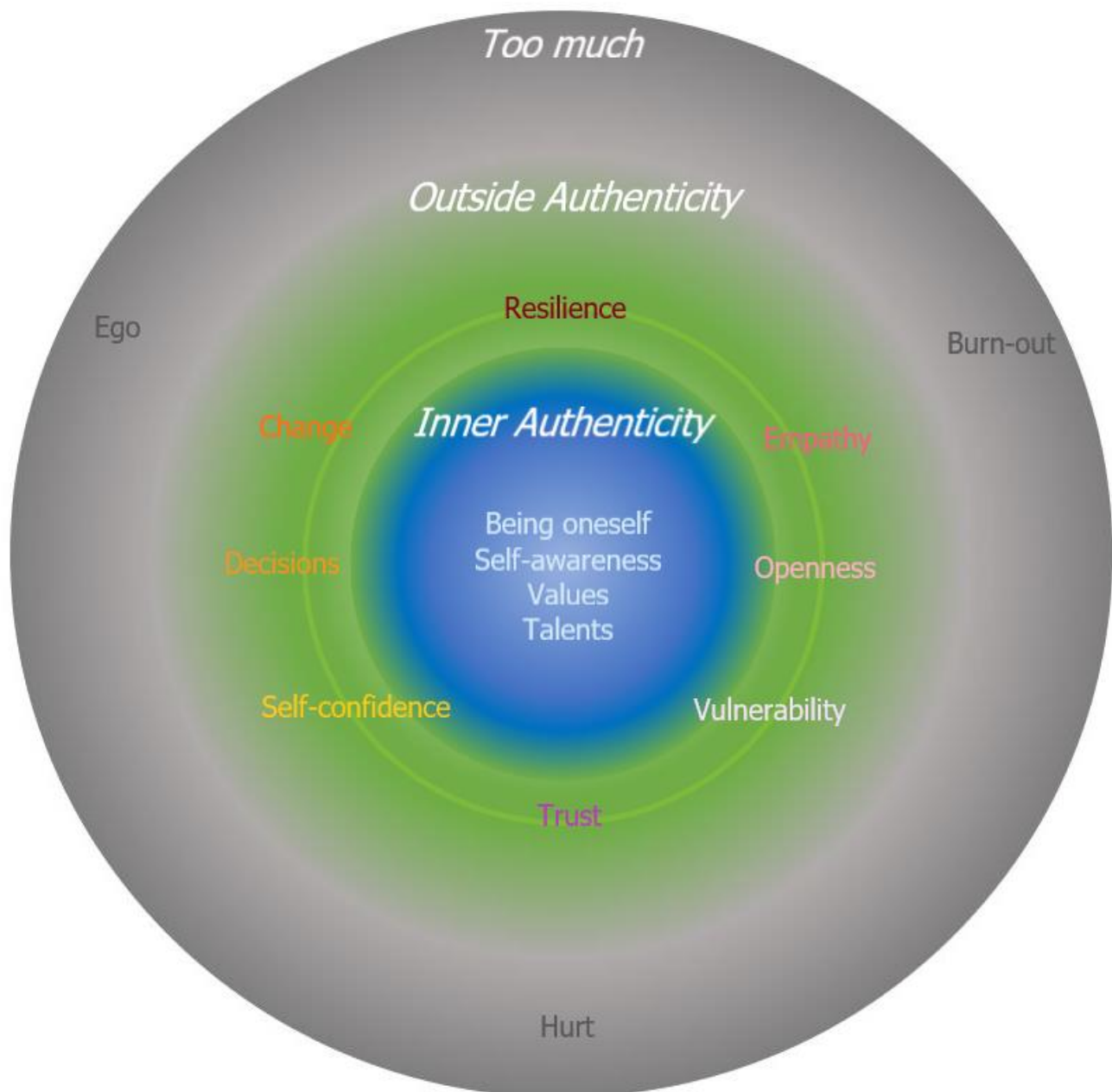


Figure 8 The three layers of authentic leadership. A depiction of how authenticity interacts with oneself, can develop in the right environment and where one steps too far away.

The inner circle is one's inner authenticity, the self-awareness, acceptance, the values and talents one is born with. The second layer is the learning layer named the outside authenticity. This is where one explores one's strengths, weaknesses, gets in touch with their vulnerability and has the self-confidence to share this with their environment. This is also the layer where authentic leadership takes place. The outside authenticity brings one to resilience, making decisions, learning from mistakes and past experiences. The connecting terms *change* and *decisions* are chosen from the results of this research as they show the strongest connection between self-confidence and resilience. As changing perspectives and daring to change is often necessary in order to learn and to be resilient. The terms empathy and openness were chosen to represent the link between resilience and vulnerability. These terms describe the interaction with the environment and how one needs to show empathy not only to others, but to themselves. Resilience, authenticity and vulnerability were correlated with openness in the context of sharing one's values but also being open to others. Self-confidence and vulnerability were found to be linked by trust. Trust is an important term in this research, as being authentic was associated with creating a safe and trusting work environment. People give trust to one with self-confidence, though it also works the other way around when one shares vulnerability, others trust to do so as well.

This second layer is where one's inner authenticity can grow, those talents exploited and expanded upon. This is also the layer where relations are created when one connects with others and can share their inner authenticity. The third layer however, is where one is outside one's authenticity, where one is pushed or steps too far away from their inner authenticity and can no longer feel authentic and/or lost touch with oneself. This is the layer of too much. Too high expectations, too much self-confidence, too many changes. This is therefore the layer where one could consider changing their environment for their own wellbeing. One sees that the layers don't share hard borders. This is represented this way on purpose since authenticity is a fluid concept. Certain traits cross these borders depending on how close or far these are from one's inner authenticity. For example, with resilience comes learning from mistakes and mistakes are made because we are imperfect humans, linking it back to vulnerability and inner authenticity. This model could be used to help redefine authenticity when one is stuck in their development and is afraid to step out of their comfort zone.

Sustainability

Equine assisted coaching is a very sustainable coaching method. This is due to the fact that equine coaching is an investment in personal development for leaders that works over a longer period of time. The effect of equine coaching is also described more as a snowball effect where one does not change drastically from one day to another, but gradually starts implementing the knowledge one gained from the coaching. Therefore, the investment in equine coaching is for a company not just human sustainable, but also financially since one session can last for a longer time. This was also supported by research done by De Beer (2016) about the lasting effects of equine coaching on leaders and managers and the research of Grootveld (2015). When looking into the three P's of sustainable development or the three bottom lines:

Profit: Measuring corporate profit. For instance, the return on investment.

People: Looks at how socially responsible an organization has been throughout its operations.

Planet: Measures the environmental responsibility of a firm.

Down the line, coaching has been researched to have a positive impact on people as they see it as an investment in themselves. Additionally, the ROI of coaching has proven to be great for the company as well as the individual (McGovern et al. 2001). Smith, Oosten and Boyatzis (2009) have also found a more sustained psychological change in individuals as a result of coaching in their work. This research contributed in multiple ways to sustainable development. It raises awareness for the social implications of leadership styles, expectations of the generations toward leadership and the role of equine coaching in sustainable personal development for leaders.

Possible Limitations

To determine the value of equine coaching for authenticity, vulnerability, self-confidence and resilience, equine coaches, EAC participants and equine coaches have been interviewed. Less EAC participant interviewees have been reached as planned, which makes the results on their own regarding equine coaching less reliable. To compensate for this small number of participants, the missing data was complemented with literature that looked into the effectiveness of EAC and what traits came forward out of this. Furthermore, the findings are expressions of the participants. What the interviewee stated in the interview and what he or she is actually doing could be different. Gehrke (2009) shared the same limitations in her study on the new approach to use horses in leadership development. The interviews with the EAC participants have been conducted up to 2 years after the coaching session. Therefore, memory is a limitation, which means that the findings regarding the EAC participants are retrospective in nature. The final limitation in this research is that the leaders and coaches come from different countries with different mother tongues. Therefore, this research had to consider some language barrier where the researcher had to interpret a direct translation. This has not led to significant changes in result though, as discussed previously, it can lead to a different understanding of a term and has to be taken into account.

Conclusion

There is high value of authenticity, vulnerability, self-confidence and resilience in current and future leadership. Authenticity is found to be an important but difficult term to define, linking self-confidence, vulnerability and resilience together. This research found that authenticity has two definitions. One where the research considers one's internal authenticity looking at the terms self-awareness, being one's self, one's values and one's talents and the second definition where one interacts authentically with the environment and so enables vulnerability, self-confidence, resilience and learning as part of one's authenticity. Being an authentic leader in this sense has been perceived as important for current leaders to develop and future leaders to expand upon. The terms might change and even the application might change. When looking into the leadership development where leaders are more like coaches or there are self-organizing teams, authentic leadership or authentic self-leadership will stay relevant. Every individual will bring new qualities to the team and vulnerability, self-confidence and open communication is therefore of even more importance. Even though one cannot conclude that equine coaching benefits these specific terms in leadership solely based on the results of this research. The supporting literature and the outcome of this research combined, do strongly suggest that EAC supports the development of authentic leadership including the correlated terms of vulnerability, self-confidence and resilience.

Recommendation

In this section, a recommendation is made for equine assisted coaching facilities in response to the outcomes of this research. Additionally, a recommendation is given for future research.

Practical application for Equine Assisted Coaching facilities

From the results obtained through this research, one can conclude that there is interest in soft skills development across companies. People have often heard of equine coaching, though they do not understand the full benefit and long lasting effects. This research shows how being put out of one's comfort zone and therefore into the learning zone, can be beneficial for authentic leadership development. As equine coaching puts people out of their comfort zone and focusses on soft skill development, one can see a clear overlap in demand, expectation of leaders and the content of equine coaching. The traits authenticity, vulnerability, self-confidence and resilience have still been found relevant, even though some suggest that people use different terms like agility, they felt that in the meaning the idea remained the same. To equine coaching facilities, the advice would be to use the new found definition of authenticity as a starting point for the coaching sessions to have a clear visual aid to describe the learning zone in which one can practice their outside authenticity. This can give people a clear overview of the possibilities and to what EAC can accomplish for leaders, teams and companies once one is put out of their comfort zone.

Application for current and future generations of leader

The trend in leadership leads us to believe that companies are making more and more an effort to reorganize their organizational structure to meet the demands of the younger generations of workers and leaders coming into the market. This research shows that new leaders are expected to be more tangible and present themselves more authentically. Equine assisted coaching is a good starting point for leaders to develop themselves in this direction.

Future Research

To further confirm and put emphasis on the value of EAC for traits authenticity, vulnerability, self-confidence and resilience would be advised to focus a study purely on the effect of equine coaching on the traits authenticity, vulnerability, self-confidence and resilience for leaders with more participants that participated in EAC previously to the interview. Moreover, it would be interesting to research if one can observe a equine coaching session to see if there is a difference in long term effect and direct experience.

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Annex

Annex 1 Interview leaders

Main questions	Questions based on yes answers	questions base on no answers
<i>intro to me and the research and the interviewee</i>		
What does authenticity mean to you?		
Could you summarize this into a definition ?		
How would you describe your own authenticity as leader?		
<i>For my research I work with this definition of authenticity:</i> <i>An authentic individual is aware of him or herself, and able to act upon his or her true self towards the outside world, to embrace vulnerability and to be and become self-confident and therefor more resilient. Being authentic according to this definition brings an individual to lead from a place of connection.</i>		
Do you tend to share your strenghts and weaknesses with your peers in your position?	if yes	if no
	How does it feel to share your strengths and weaknesses?	What is the reason you decide not to share your strenghts and weaknesses?
<u>How would sharing your vulnerability Influence your self-confidence?</u>		
What does self-confidence mean to you in your position?		
You described self confidence as..... and vulnerability as how would this relate back to authenticity?		
Can you describe a situation within your career that included a big change or a trying time you had to come back from?		
Did that situation require a certain level of resilience from you?	if yes	if not
	What leadership skills did you use in that situation?	How did you manage that situation?
	Could you summarize this into a definition?	How would you define resilience?
<i>You defined authenticity as:</i>		
Do you think skills from an authentic leader overlap with those of a resilient leader?	if yes	if not
	Where do you think they differ?	Why not?
<i>There is currently a big market for training sessions into different leadership styles and skills.</i>		
Did you already participate in a form of leadership coaching?	if yes	if no
	What were the topics of these sessions?	
Would you expect that the current definitions of an authentic and resilient leadership skills will still be relevant or used in future leadership training?	if yes	if no
	Why do you think these skills will stay relevant?	What do you think the future direction of leadership training will be?
What is your opinion on EAC?		
Do you think you would participate in EAC in the future?		
Do you have anything to add that we havent covered yet regarding the topic?		

Annex 2 interview Equine coaches

Main questions	questions based on Yes answers	question based on no answers
intro to me and the research and the interviewee		
Why do you think equine assisted leadership coaching is beneficial for leaders and managers?		
For this research I am looking into the benefits of EAC for leadership qualities authenticity, vulnerability, self-confidence and resilience.		
What does authenticity mean to you?		
Could you summarize this into a definition ?		
What importance does Authenticity have in EAC?		
(what is the role of the horse in this?)		
How do you perceive vulnerability?		
In this research we look at vulnerability as a positive quality:		
Vulnerability can be described as a state of being and expressing yourself, while still feeling secure and in control. It is about daring to show that we are not perfect.		
In what way would EAC help people with showing or sharing vulnerability?		
Do you see a difference during EAC sessions when people are vulnerable compared to when they are not?	if yes	if not
	How would you describe that difference? then not	
What is your opinion on self-confidence in leaders?		
How would self-confidence be enforced by EAC?		
Can you name some reasons why leaders choose to participate in EAC?		
How does EAC help leaders cope with transitions, changes and/or trying times in their work environment?		
Can you attach some specific qualities and skills to this?		
Which of these skills trained in EAC overlap according to you with authenticity?		
(if resilience isn't mentioned) As mentioned as the topic of the research we also look at resilience.		
When we look at the qualities and traits you mentioned that are related to leaders coping with some hard situations in their position. How would these traits relate back to resilience?		
With the next generation of leaders coming into the work field (Y & Z) do you still see people requesting leadership coaching in the direction of authenticity?	if yes	if not
	Why do you think these topics stay relevant for future leaders?	Which qualities are they focussing on?
Can you describe a trend in leadership coaching what direction next generation leaders are focussing on?		
Do you have anything to add that we haven't covered yet regarding the topic?		

Annex 3 Interview EAC participants

Main questions	question based of yes answers	questions based on no answers
<i>Intro to me, the research and the interviewee</i>		
What brought you to participate in EAC?		
How did you experience the training?		
Which qualities were you working on actively in EAC?		
What aspects of leadership were you working on actively in the coaching?		
Was there a bring home message after you had participated?		
Did you take action to change aspects of your life or worklife after participating in EAC?	if Yes	if Not
	What did you change?	What was the value for you of participating in EAC?
	In yourself?	
	Toward others?	
<i>For this research I am looking into the benefits of EAC for leadership qualities authenticity, vulnerability, self-confidence and resilience.</i>		
What does authenticity mean to you?		
Could you summarize this into a definition ?		
How would you describe your own authenticity as leader?		
Why would EAC enable you to be more authentic?		
Do you generally share your strenghts and weaknesses with your peers or subordinates?	if yes	if not
	How does it feel to share your strenghts and weaknesses?	What is the reason you decide not to share your strenghts and weaknesses?
Can you describe a situation where EAC actively made you aware your strenghts and weaknesses?		
Did this make you feel vulnerable?	if yes	if not
	How would you describe the experience? experience?	how did this make you feel?
	How did you cope with this afterwards?	How did you cope with this afterwards?
How does vulnerability relate back to authenticity according to you?		
Can you describe a situation in EAC where you changed your approach in order to succeed?		
Did that situation require a certain level of resilience from you?	If yes	if not
	What leadership skills did you use in that situation?	How did you manage that situation?
	Could you summarize this into a definition?	How would you define resilience?
<i>You defined authenticity as:</i>		
Do you think skills from an authentic leader overlap with those of a resilient leader?	if yes	if not
	Where do you think they differ?	Why not?
With the next generation of leaders coming into the work field (Y & Z) do you still see people requesting leadership coaching in the direction of authenticity?	if yes	if not
	Why do you think these topics stay relevant for future leaders?	Which qualities are they focussing on?
Would you recommend EAC to leaders and managers?		
If you were to do another EAC session what leadership traits would you like to focus on?		
Do you have anything to add that we havent covered yet regarding the topic?		

Annex 4 Interview consent form

Consent Form for Interviews:

Thank you for reading the invitation sheet about the interview. If you are happy to participate then please complete and sign the form below. Please initial the boxes below to confirm that you agree with each statement:

*Please Initial
box:*

I confirm that I have read and understood the information in the invitation dated
and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.

☐

I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.

☐

I agree for this interview to be tape-recorded. I understand that the audio recording made of this interview will be used only for analysis and that extracts from the interview, from which I would not be personally identified (unless specifically agreed upon), may be used in any conference presentation, report or journal article developed as a result of the research. I understand that no other use will be made of the recording without my written permission, and that no one beside the researcher will be allowed access to the original recording.

☐

I understand that, to ensure my confidentiality all tape recordings will be destroyed after the completion of the thesis and no later than September 2020.

☐

I agree that my anonymised data will be kept for future research purposes such as publications related to this study after the completion of the study.

☐

Additional comment _____

☐

I agree to take part in this interview.

_____	_____	_____
Name of participant	Date	Signature

_____	_____	_____
Name of researcher	Date	Signature

To be counter-signed and dated electronically for telephone interviews or in the presence of the participant for face to face interviews

Copies: Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, and the information sheet. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the main project file which must be kept in a secure location.

Annex 5 Interview invitation email

Subject: Invitation to participate in an qualitative research project on Leadership traits (and equine assisted coaching)

Dear [Name],

My name is Laura Groenesteyn and I am a student at Van Hall Larenstein university of Applied Sciences. I am working on a research project under the supervision of Lecturer R. Wagenknecht.

I am writing to you today to invite you to participate in a study titled "Authenticity, Vulnerability, Self-confidence and Resilience in Equine Assisted Coaching". This study aims to determine the extent of which these leadership qualities, are being developed with equine assisted coaching and to what extent these terms are still in demand as modern leadership qualities in moving forward to the next generation of leaders.

This study involves one maximum 45 minute interview that will take place in a mutually convenient, location or over the phone. With your consent, interviews will be audio-recorded. A consent form will be send separately upon your answer.

While this project does involve some questions that are personal, care will be taken to protect your identity. This will be done by keeping all responses anonymous and allowing you to request that certain responses not be included in the final project.

All obtained research data, including audio-recordings and any notes will be for my eyes and ears only. Transcribed Research data will only be accessible by the researcher and the research supervisor.

If you would like to participate in this research project, or have any questions, please contact me at +49 173 26 56 017 or laura.groenesteyn@hvhl.nl .

Sincerely,

Laura Groenesteyn

Annex 6 Example Transcript Interview

What brought you to participate in EAC?	My friends gave me the coaching on the subject of "Authentic Communication" by horses for my 40th birthday. The training was great. In a small group. Mixed humans. 3 people. Everyone with a different professional, private and especially horse background.
How did you experience the training?	The training primarily dealt with the area of "Authentic Communication". The external effect of communication, according to the motto: "You cannot not communicate"
Which qualities were you working on actively in EAC?	For me, I especially practiced the aspects of clear addressing and that "perfection" does not always have to be 100% to be perfect.
What aspects of leadership were you working on actively in the coaching?	authenticity, reliability, self-confidence, load-bearing capacity
Was there a bring home message after you had participated?	My personal message to me was that I can also feel happy with 2/3 and more often lower my demands to bring more quietness to my team.
Did you take action to change aspects of your life or worklife after participating in EAC?	In different situations I often think back on the coaching and imagine how I felt in a similar situation with the horse or donkey. It works very well to a better perceive and solve situations with challenges. I think a lot more today before I act. I have calmed down in situations that I cannot change, am less annoyed and try to avoid taking things personally in conflict discussions.
For this research I am looking into the benefits of EAC for leadership qualities authenticity, vulnerability, self-confidence and resilience. What does authenticity mean to you?	Be real and not perfect. That has been my thinking and acting since the coaching and means for me to be real / authentic. A horse realizes whether you are real and want to solve exactly this situation together, or whether it has a different background and you must do something. If a horse does not trust me, the rope as a connection does not help, because the horse / donkey is usually physically superior to me... anyway they react negatively to pressure.
Could you summarize this into a definition ? How would you describe your own authenticity as leader? Why would EAC enable you to be more authentic?	Authenticity is being your imperfect self After the coaching I became more authentic though it is not always possible. A horse realizes whether you are real and want to solve exactly this situation together, or whether it has a different background and you must do something. If a horse does not trust me, the rope as a connection does not help, because the horse / donkey is usually physically superior to me... anyway they react negatively to pressure.
Do you generally share your strengths and weaknesses with your peers or subordinates?	In my work environment I cannot share my strengths and weaknesses due to my position, which is sometimes difficult, especially with the employees with whom you have a good relationship.
Can you describe a situation where EAC actively made you aware your strengths and weaknesses?	In private, my family, friends and my partner know my strengths and weaknesses and we share them 100%. It feels good and right, because I trust my private environment. I have been involved with horses since I was a little girl. I have a foster horse since 3 years and I go to a riding school regularly. Merlin and me, we are a well-coordinated team. I quickly realized that just because a horse, pony, or donkey looks cute, trust and watching is for sure not nice, but form e it was a good step in the right direction to put away the perfection that I had for many many years. Before the coaching of course everything it had to work for me. I will do it in the best way ever. I know what to do to do in the best way. A Poor Katja, and relaxed Johnny. For the following exercises, I try to be a little more relaxed with it and have used the 2/3 perfection. The goals became more realistic, the exercise with the partner horse became more relaxed and everything went better. A human thinks a lot in advance, especially the older you get. Jobs and other social circumstances shape us and always push us into the „You must be good“ way. Children, for example, are easygoing about tasks and situations due to the lack of life experiences (both positive and negative). To see the world through children's eyes more and more, especially when situations does not make the work more worse, but easier, more balanced and easier.
Did this make you feel vulnerable?	Think of the bumblebee: According to the laws of aerodynamics, it is impossible to fly with the ratio of the wings to the body. But the bumblebee doesn't know, and still flies. So just think less and act more. With all the experience I had with horses within the coaching it was like a switch was flipped. In that moment: As if someone had pulled the handbrake from the horse in that coaching. A locked situation, I really wanted to get out and every attempt made me more insecure and the situation got even more stuck. Authenticity and vulnerability are very closely related.
How does vulnerability relate back to authenticity according to you? Can you describe a situation in EAC where you changed your approach in order to succeed?	A Haflinger that was brought to the paddock by a little girl was my partner. I should go for a lap with him. Just plain and simple. The girl did that too. But with me, he didn't move any little step. Johnny was relaxed. The question of employees for this situation made it even worse. I felt that I was still able to work under pressure, but towards the end my resilience had reached its limits. So situations can always appear simple and suddenly become a total challenge. These days, especially in employee conversations, I am prepared for the fact that there are many small puzzle pieces that influence the moment. I can adjust to the situation more quickly and listen to the employees differently. When I enter a room I notice how a meeting is going and put my puzzle together for the moment. So every day is not normal, it's different and that is perfect for me.
You defined authenticity as: Be real and not perfect. Do you think skills from an authentic leader overlap with those of a resilient leader?	I think, who wants to lead authentically, must also be resilient, because all living creatures are different. You have to adjust individually to everyone and you can't compare them all together. One of them needs a clear message, the other rather a little softer circumscribed. So every leadership can be stressful to lead each individual as he / she / it needs. So I believe that they are different in their way, but still belong together in today's leadership of employees.
With the next generation of leaders coming into the work field (Y & Z) do you still see people requesting leadership coaching in the direction of authenticity?	I think it is not about the young leaders, but about the management environment. There are companies that have clear rules and there are companies that abide by laws such as the collective agreement. I think the young generation is more open to authenticity than the older generation. These days we often learn that we can find a better place in society if we make ourselves more tangible instead of just being "the big boss".
Would you recommend EAC to leaders and managers?	I would always recommend horse-assisted coaching. There are so many topics that you can treat with it. But you should be open for this topic. I think it has already taken a path in recent years. In horse-assisted coaching, the horse reflects the participant - this means that only empathy and your way are decisive for whether and how intensively you can win the horse for yourself. The topic of being too much critical is also often in the focus. It should encourage you to try different approaches instead of defending yourself.
	Because usually all have the same goal in one company. Maintaining this to make money. And what could be nicer if this happens is a team rather than as only being a member of a big group by it self. I love the training an like to do much more to, learn more about me, myself and I ☺

Annex 7 Results reworked in themes

Authenticity

	What defines authenticity based on literature review and interviews with leaders who participated in EAC leaders that did not participate in EAC, leadership experts and equine assisted coaches?	
3b	Authenticity means being human not a machine.	
3a	A lack of authenticity makes people lose trust	
3d	Communication of your expectations / no charades / be kind to yourself	communicate human
2e	be congruent, you think as you talk as you act while fitting in your situation.	
2b	Authentic is to be aligned with your inner thoughts / you know what you can do.	
2c	Act according to what you think and feel	Awareness
2d	Being fully aware of your strengts and your weaknesses. / Be willing to accept them	
3b	Telling the truth / what you say is what you mean.	
3a	Sticking to your values / be open / be yourself / don't play a role.	values
3d	Live by your values	
2a	Something you are born with talents and genetics that you cannot learn.	born with
1b	Be real and not perfect / being your imperfect self	being imperfect
2e	Be real and vulnerable	
1a	Confident with yourself / agree with yourself	selfconfidence
1a	It takes time to become authentic.	
2a	Authenticity includes the ability to learn new behaviors / talents strenghts / learn to be comfortable with new	
3a	learn to be authentic / learn about your authenticity	
3b	Knowing yourself / your capabilities / learning curve / birth till death.	
3c	you can learn more than you think you can / you're never to old to learn.	learning
3d	Becoming authentic is a learning curve / first acting on others expectations / Then you learn alternatives that work for you. / your authenticity is unique	
1a	being myself / being confident with who I am.	
2d	To be in tune with yourself. Don't be to hard on yourself.	
3a	Authenticity is being true to yourself and showing your true self to other people.	
3b	Surrounding knowns who I am / how I interact / I am myself / Say what I mean	
3c	Stay close to yourself / your drives / beliefs / loyal to yourself / trust your feelings / be who you want to be	being myself
3d	Stay close to yourself / values into actions	
2e	Being congruent / fitting	
	1 = coaching participant	
	2 = Equine coach	
	3 = Leader	

Vulnerability

	What defines vulnerability and how does it relate to authenticity according to literature and interviews with leaders who participated in EAC leaders that did not participate in EAC, leadership experts and equine assisted coaches?	
3d	people on the same level.	level
2e	not professional yet	
1a	very necessary attitude to have	leadership
2a	not appreciated in leadership context yet / Valuable in leadership 4.0	
1b	Failing is not nice / Makes insecure	
3b	Getting compromised / using vulnerabilities against you.	
2a	show emotions / admit when you don't know / get hurt.	
2b	less than 100% / get hurt / not stable	hurt/failure
3c	is scary / showing emotions / insecure about reactions	
1a	Trusting people with your feelings	
2d	great quality / prerequisite of trust / openness / communication about weaknesses / shortcomings and anxieties	
3a	trust and honesty / create safe environment	Trust
3b	Not fear / being open / not letting trust get compromised	
1a	Being honest and open.	
2b	great level of empathy and empathy.	Openness
3c	when you're honest and vulnerable you are just you / Vulnerability is necessary to be open and to learn.	
1a	Going back to yourself	
2b	really know their feelings / not just ratio / brain heart and gut	
2d	acknowledging vulnerability leads to a win win situation	
1b	accepting imperfections	
3a	step behind own ego / acknowledge your flaws or shortcomings / to yourself and to peers	acknowledge
2c	Dare to admit and share / you don't know everything / mistakes and failures / transparency	
2e	not have to be deep or dramatic / accepting that you're imperfect / being okay with this.	
3b	Not about knowing everything about yourself / its acknowledging and communicating that you	
1b	Necessary to try different approaches	
2c	Dare to reflect and learn and accept.	
3c	You learn to share your strengths and weaknesses.	learning
3c	Initial discomfort / becomes second nature / feels good	
3d	Feedback / opportunity for growth / Turn weaknesses into strengths / learning opportunities	
2e	Vulnerability is about being human	Human

Self-confidence

	What defines self-confidence and how does it relate to authenticity according to literature and interviews with leaders who participated in EAC leaders that did not participate in EAC, leadership experts and equine assisted coaches?	
1a	Vulnerability and feedback gives self-confidence.	
2b	Self- confidence is believing in your strenghts	
2d	It enables you to constantly work on yourself and accept yourself in your role.	Awareness and learning
3b	Balance self confidence and self awareness.	
3c	It enables you to do self research	
3d	Turning mistakes into learning moment.	
2d	empowers others to be self confident	
3c	Trust in others / let others complement your skillset/ develop confidence in others.	Empowering
3d	Empowering the team / have self confidence / find own solutions / leaders asks "what would you do?"	
3a	Being authentic helps being confident about desicions.	
2d	Self confidence is nececcary to be trusted by others	Trust
2a	self confidence has whole spectrum / too much is not right / cannot reflect anymore / need	
2c	important / easily too much / safety of the whole herd / step away from ego / believing in your abilities is good.	too much is bad
3a	Responding hard and defensive to feedback / shows a lack of self esteem	
1b	Accepting yourself / including flaws / gives self confidence	
2a	brought forward by knowing our strengths and abilities.	
2e	It comes from knowing that you are as a person worth it, to lead others	
3a	actions / way you want to be perceived / opening up / authentic self.	acceptance and vulnerability
3c	Important competence / helps analyze yourself / strengths weakensses / improvement	
3d	accepting others for the way they are.	
3b	comes from the skills / descisions / mistakes are humand / communication	
3d	Confidence in yourself to makes descicions and stick with them.	Descisions and communication
2e	Professional knowledge / clear communication / goal orientation	

Resilience

	What defines resilience and how does it relate to authenticity according to literature and interviews with leaders who participated in EAC leaders that did not participate in EAC, leadership experts and equine assisted coaches?	
3a	being young / not a lot of people depending on you	age
2e	Switching perspective /changing attitude	
2c	Dare to change direction / inner balance	dare to change
3c	Having the confidence to step up	
2d	communication /non verbal / verbal	
3b	Transparency / clear goals / open and communicate	transparency
3d	be honest / communicate / support / keep people on board / paradox	
1a	It means to balance your own resources.	take care of yourself
2a	listen to yourself	
3c	Resilience is choosing for yourself	
3c	bouncing back / room for new	
2a	Resilience can be authentic / can also be learned / no necessary overlap	Resilience is not authentic
3b	Can be professionals / good collaborators working towards the same goals / no personal sharing.	
2e	The more authentic you are and act / the more you can train your resilience. The more resilient you are/ the more authentic you can act. You don't care that much about reactions / risks you take / you know you can manage them	
1a	Authenticity should always be together with resilience / need resilience to move forward / need to reflect / receive feedback	
2d	They all feed into authenticity.	
3a	Inescapable change / adapt / develop / getting lost in change means losing authenticity / acknowledging / communication / being authentic while being resilient.	Authenticity = resilience
3b	Authentic leader /Awareness / Communication / knowledge of his people / to get through situations. A resilient leader must not be authentic but an authentic leader will always be resilient.	
1b	You learn to adjust / listen / work with what you have	
1b	Situations are a puzzle / appear simple can become challenge / solving the puzzle	
3c	Experiences / rely on skills you already have / get stronger / have more knowledge	learning
3d	Constant change / learn from hard times / gain experience/ flexible / take knowledge to next situation.	
2e	Mindfulness / reacting to the situation as it presents itself	
2a	Set boundaries / be open for others opinions / mindfulness.	Mindfulness
2e	Reflecting	
2a	Have empathy / self reflection /	
2d	Mental agility / sensitivity / empathy / self reflection,	Empathy and self reflection
3a	Resilience means to be able to reflect, learn from and therefore prevent mistakes and be confident about your decisions.	
1a	The ability to restart yourself at the point where you just want to give up.	don't give up
2d	Cope with change	
3b	fast switching / effort to save the situation / empower people / Don't give up.	
2e	optimism and persistence	
2e	goal orientation	
2d	need for direction.	goals
3b	Motivate to work towards the next goal	
2b	- No answer	

Coaching

	Does horse assisted coaching benefit resilience, vulnerability and confidence and authenticity in leaders based on literature review and interviews with leaders who participated in EAC leaders and equine assisted coaches?	
1b	We worked on self-confidence	
2a	EAC helps people find their strenghts / they become more self confident.	
2c	Discovering with eac your own / unknown qualities / powers / competences / strenghts / creates self confidence and trust.	
2e	The horse shows that it / does not matter how / being self confident having the goal in mind / he will folow / It gives self confidence that a 600 kg animal follows out of free will.	
2c	Developed by working on your strenghts / focus on what you already have / build on these.	self confidence
2d	discover unknown qualities / gives them confidence / understand their patterns / get inbiased feedback / gives energy	
2a	EAC makes leaders often a bit more vulnerable / admitting your weaknesses is showing strenght / not widely accepted in Germany / horse is vulnerable / makes you vulnerable / bond / connection / communication.	
2b	Reflecting makes vulnerable / makes human / touching the horse / interacting / trusting yourself, the horse, your peers / safe vulnerability.	
2e	People learn that asking for help or not succeeding at once is okay.	Vulnerability
2d	Coping with vulenrabilit is hard / eac helps / self reflect / open up / equality / honest	
1a	Gives energy / gives motivation / changes perspective	
1b	Working on load bearing capacity	Resilience
2a	Outside their comfort zone / explore things / different perspective / finding strenghts / applying to new or real situation / mindfull / aware / attentive	
2b	Resilience training / communication / team building/ find underlying issue / believing in capacity / stress management .	
2c	Horses show leadership skills / nature / coach translates to workplace / communication / inner balance / vision / direction / boundaries / inviting the team and give them	
1a	You use our body to speak	
1b	You cannot not communicate	
2a	Horses can see through a façade	Mirror
2e	Horse are a mirror	
2e	Horses give feedback without hidden agenda	
2b	Horses are the mirror and help you reflect on what you did.	
2c	The horse mirrors the person and shows what is missing/ can be authenticity / Co workers might not tell you that you come over unauthentic, but the horse will.	
2d	Horses are sincere / seek your authenticity / subcontiously people let go of their roleplay when interacting with the horse.	
1a	The horse responds to your authenticity	
1b	Authenticity is worked on actively / horses realize when you are real / I became more authentic but it does not always suit the situation.	
2a	Its not all about finding your authenticity / Findign the character / strenghts / learning / depending on your definition authenticity may or may not be present.	Authenticity
2b	It isn't always about becoming authentic / people come with problem / underlying belief or issue / links to authenticity / horse shows what is missing.	
2c	Horses do not react well to a lack of authenticity / when sub contious and contious are out of balance leads to tension.	
2d	learning oppurtunities / doesn't matter if we are aware of all our strenghts and weaknesses / It is about authenticity and expanding on what you know/ checking	
1b	it focusses on Reliability	reliability
2e	Horse can be used as metafor	Methafor

Leadership trends and expectations

	Are the terms authenticity, vulnerability, self-confidence and resilience still suitable to use for next generation leaders according to literature and interviews with leaders who participated in EAC leaders that did not participate in EAC, leadership experts and equine assisted coaches?	
1a	Yes it is necessary	
3a	Yes / Softskills more important.	Yes they are relevant
3b	Authenticity, resilience, vulnerability and self confidence will stay relevant for sure.	
3c	Learning authenticity / vulnerability / resilience / self confidence / being nice to yourself	
3d	the terms might change but the meaning will stay the same.	
2a	In leadership coaching these themes stay important	
2e	EAC works over longer period of time as a snowball effect. Subconsciously start to change your behavior over the long run rather than an instant unrealistic personality switch.	
3a	But I think definitely think EAC can mean something and that makes sense. And you can learn a lot from doing it.	Coaching
3b	Leadership coaching would definitely be beneficial and especially for people that don't realize yet that they're not authentic.	
3c	I believe coaching is very beneficial.	
1a	The expectation from the younger generation	
1a	It builds a trust relationship	
2a	It is about authenticity	
2c	It depends on whether they are aware of authenticity but I think they will discover the need sooner or later.	reason
2d	Leaders need to be able to self reflect and focus on vulnerability based trust openness and honesty.	
3a	Hiring your best specialist as a leader can mean that you lose your best specialist and have a bad leader. It's a lose lose situation.	
3c	People struggle with the questions like who am I	
3d	Connection is very important to have real connection you have to be authentic and communicate.	
3d	It is important to stay honest to yourself and others about your feelings.	
3a	Leader does not have to meet the skills of the team / leadership requires different skills.	
1b	These days it works better as a boss to make ourselves more tangible instead of just being "the	trend
2b	There is a trend in leadership development and I think the traits you mentioned will be even more important as leaders will need to be more like coaches.	
2d	They are looking more for a coach or enabler than a traditional boss.	
2e	Change from being about the status symbols / to it's about what makes you as a human worth to follow / People want to speak to another human not to a façade.	
1b	There are companies that have clear rules and there are once for collective agreement / young generation more open to authenticity, than older generation.	
2a	Definitely the new generation is much earlier busy with the questions like who am I and what are my talents.	
3a	Purpose and meaningfulness are important these days / create an environment of open and honest communication.	expectation generation
3b	There is a change in leadership / change management / agile leadership / no single blueprint / people want to develop.	
3c	more burn outs / follow the demands of others / they want to know who am I	
3d	wants it all / high expectations / themselves / each other.	