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Gender, authentic leadership and identity: analysis of women leaders' autobiographies

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Abstract

Purpose: Leadership theories have moved from viewing leadership as a personality trait, towards models that recognise leadership as a social construction. Alongside this theorisation, gender and leadership remains of considerable interest, particularly given the under-representation of women in leadership positions. Methodological approaches to understanding leadership have begun to embrace innovative methods, such as historical analyses. The current study aims to understand how high profile women leaders construct a gendered leadership identity, with particular reference to authentic leadership.

Approach: Thematic analysis of autobiographies, a form of identity work, of four women leaders from business and politics; Sheryl Sandberg, Karren Brady, Hillary Clinton and Julia Gillard.

Findings: Analyses reveal that these women construct gender and leadership along familiar normative lines; for example, the emphasis on personal and familial values. However, their stories differ in that the normative extends to include close examination of the body and a sense of responsibility to other women. Overall, media representations of these 'authentic' leaders conform to social constructions of gender. Thus in the case of authentic leadership, a theory presented as gender neutral, the authenticity of leadership has to some extent been crafted by the media rather than the leader.

Value: The study reveals that despite attempts to 'craft' and control the image of the authentic self for consumption by followers, gendered media representations of individuals and leadership remain. Thus, alternative approaches to crafting an authentic leadership self which extend beyond (mainstream) media is suggested.

Keywords: Autobiography, Gender, Leadership, Authentic Leadership, Identity work

Introduction

Media representations of women in leadership positions are gaining increasing interest (Mavin et al., 2008). The analyses of media representations often focus on everyday constructions of gendered leadership via television, newspapers, websites or photography (e.g. Buysse and Embser-Herbert 2004; Mavin et al., 2008; Trimble 2007). This paper focuses specifically on autobiographies. Similarly to gender, autobiographies are produced in discourse and performance (Coslett et al 2010). Within the context of broader discussions of leadership, however, gender is often presented as invisible, as if the body of the leader is irrelevant to their leadership (Fletcher, 2004). The rise of authentic leadership (Gardner *et al.*, 2005) also suggests that the gender of a leader is no longer of importance as the criteria for authenticity is to "act in accordance with one's true self" (p. 344). Even so, leadership

remains a stubbornly male phenomenon in general (Karelaia and Guillen, 2014), and in the case of authentic leadership in particular (Gardiner, 2013). According to Coslett et al (2010), autobiography is a form of written narrative created for an audience's sentimental story demands. Therefore, it is a form of narrative which may be a 'controlled' expression of identity. Previously, autobiographies have been recognised as constituting media representations of identity and identity construction (Yar, 2012), particularly for women (Buller, 2014). However, the gendered constructions and representations of leadership through the use of autobiography remains an area in need of further research, specifically, how women construct and do authentic leadership.

This paper addresses this gap by analysing women leaders' autobiographies, to understand how gendered leadership is constructed and presented in these forms of media. The paper contributes to two bodies of literature, first, understandings of the gendered social construction of leadership, particularly authentic leadership. Second, a contribution is made to the literature on the use of autobiographies, as a form of identity work, to understand contemporary leadership. We begin by presenting a brief review of authentic leadership theory, specifically women and leadership, moving to a consideration of the potential for leaders' stories, as a form of identity work, to shed light on the social construction of leadership.

Women and leadership

Examination of leadership theory and practice has consistently revealed that the phenomenon is understood through a 'male norm' lens (e.g. Calas and Smircich, 1996; Eagly and Carli, 2003; Patterson *et al.*, 2012a). This is despite studies which seek to question the status quo (e.g. Patterson *et al.*, 2012b; Galloway et al., forthcoming). Thus, in many cases, leadership is often presented as gender neutral or blind, as if the body of the leader is irrelevant to their leadership (Fletcher, 2004; Patterson *et al.*, 2012b). A particular example of leadership style which is presented as gender neutral is authentic leadership (AL hereafter) (Gardner *et al.*, 2005). Although an agreed definition for AL is yet to be established, Ladkin and Taylor (2010) cite three key features, they write: "authentic leadership is the expression of the 'true self', that the leader must be relatively aware of the nature of that self in order to express it authentically, and that the self is normatively inclined towards moral virtue" (p.5). AL, therefore, proposes that an individual whose internal and external selves are concurrent could be said to be expressing authenticity. Thus, from an AL theoretical perspective, the gender of an individual should have little impact on their ability to be authentic in their external expression of internal 'true self'. This is in contrast to social constructivist accounts which acknowledge the social construction of leadership and leadership contexts (Grint, 2005). Therefore, several aspects of the presentation of AL, such as the possibility of 'extreme' self-awareness and its gender-neutrality have been questioned, with research focussing on gender and its intersection with authentic leadership in particular (e.g. Ford and Harding, 2011; Gardiner, 2011; Sinclair, 2013). Furthermore, Gardiner (2013) proposes that it is through interactions with others, that we ultimately define ourselves, thus how can there be a 'true self'. Therefore, the concept of authenticity is itself in doubt, with the extent to which individuals have a true self/identity in question (Brown, 2015).

A key area which challenges the gender-neutrality of AL is the very fact that AL is enacted through use of the body and subsequently interpreted, and 'verified' as authentic, by followers (Ladkin and Taylor, 2010; Liu *et al.* 2015). Thus, the importance of the 'vehicle' for AL 'delivery' is raised; it is not just the spoken word, but the physical body which is an expression of authenticity (Sinclair, 2013). Therein lies the disconnect between the proposed gender-neutrality of AL and the expression of leadership in a female body. Sinclair (2013) writes of how authenticity is not simply an expression of coherence between inner 'true-self' and its expression (i.e. spoken), but rather that "authenticity is allocated, or not, by followers according to often unconsciously held cultural and societal norms about how the members of certain social groups should look and behave" (p. 241). Eagly (2005) describes this aspect as 'relational authenticity'. In the case of women this returns us to the social and cultural expectation that leadership and male are often reduced to synonyms (Patterson *et al.*, 2013a). Consequently both female characteristics and the body are 'other' and deviate from this norm. Males are associated with agentic behaviours (e.g. being aggressive, driven and ambitious) whereas, women are considered communal (e.g. supportive, empathetic, kind) (Patterson *et al.*, 2012a). As an example, Schaubroeck and Shao (2012) examined the characteristics attributed to gender and leaders, finding that male leaders may be able to express anger without threatening their credibility, while women's credibility would be weakened in the eyes of followers. Further, the authors argue that men and women should be aware of the social roles expected of them, and adapt their expressions accordingly, in order to maintain perceived competence as leaders (ibid.; Powell *et al.*, 2008). Thus although there is leadership research emerging which has considered the phenomenon as 'gendered' and performed (Galloway et al., forthcoming; Fletcher, 2004), how women communicate their authenticity to their followers to negotiate the 'double-bind' is limited. Therefore, research which explores and examines the construction of 'authentic gender' of women leaders is required.

Leadership narratives and identity

This paper is informed by the perspective that identities, including leader, are socially constructed, particularly within the workplace (Brown, 2015; Sinclair, 2005; Collinson, 2003). This focus contrasts, for example, with a conceptualisation of identity as an idiosyncratic aspect making a person unique. Social identities are constructed and maintained through identity work, defined by Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) as 'people being engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising' (p.1165) their identities, taking on a particular salience during specific events. Accordingly, identity work is an on-going process and identities are not intrinsic, essential nor fixed. However, identity construction at the individual and personal level remains an area in need of further consideration, (Brown, 2015). An analysis of narratives and story telling by leaders can help to reveal the construction of leadership identities, or the identity work of leaders, at the individual level (Shamir et al., 2005).

With origins in post-structuralist thinking there has been an increased interest in how discourse constitutes social identities (Grant et al., 2004). Discourse, including media representations of women's leadership, are recognised to mutually constitute leadership identities (Wilkinson and Blackmore, 2008). Bruner (1987:15) has argued that 'we become the narratives we tell about ourselves'. Through identity work we both make narratives as

well as use those narratives which are available to us through our culture (Watson, 2009). Watson (2008) argues there is an internal component to identity work - the self-identity which needs to be relatively coherent. This then relates to the external world - social identities. Social identities may be internalised through how a person wishes to see themselves, but they also relate to how a person wishes to present themselves. Of particular suitability for understanding identity work are autobiographies (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1996). Written at the author's own pace, autobiographies represent a crafted presentation of self (Watson, 2009). Further, when considering the articulation of identities, it is important to remember that self-other talk is key in how identities are constructed (Ybema et al., 2009). In other words, what we say about others, in relation to ourselves, forms our own self-identity.

As Simpson (2014) has indicated, identity work is an important component of gendered workplace identities. Discourses of gender differences in the workplace, specifically the use of language around gender exaggerates (or even fabricates) differences between men and women (Mullany, 2009). Powerful gender ideologies then maintain these false differences. This results in a masking of the plurality of masculinities and femininities which are evident within organisational contexts (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Therefore the stories and narratives of leadership have an important role to play in maintaining discourses of gender. For example, media representations of leadership are important indicators of the (un)acceptability of women leaders (Mavin et al, 2010). The attribution of meaning to phenomena through representations including how words, images and stories, are relevant to gendered understandings of leadership (Hall, 1997; Riad, 2011). Further, the signs and symbols, through which representations systems operate, construct and convey meaning. It is important to note that the relationship between the signifier and the signified is not static, with temporal components. Through this framework, it can be argued that in order to understand the signified, we can analyse the signifier (words, images, stories). Further we can draw on post-structuralist approaches to understand how power is used to not only construct difference, but also to produce hierarchies between these differences. This is particularly relevant when considering binaries, such as man/woman, where 'others' are not merely different, but positioned as less acceptable or powerful (Hall, 1997; Ybema et al., 2009). Post-structuralist perspectives emphasise not only the breaking down of false dualisms, but also the removal of the idea that the individual can be separated from the body they occupy and the broader social relations where they are located (Collinson, 2003). Drawing on the thinking of Foucault that subjectivities are socially, historically and organisationally bound within power dynamics, enables a move from gender reductionism which prevails in conventional organisational studies (Collinson, 2003). Autobiographies are useful resources for understanding the leadership narratives of those leaders whose voices/stories are neglected in the broader literature (Hogan, 2008). However, analyses of women leaders may be difficult if we do not hear from the women themselves. This paper draws on these perspectives to understand how women leaders, through autobiographies, construct identity based on the specific stories they choose to tell as they construct a (authentic) leadership identity.

Methods

Analysis of leadership stories, particularly autobiographies, are used here to understand how widely recognised leaders craft and construct their identities. Autobiographies were selected

as they allow for an analysis of the subjective, culturally bound presentation of women leader's lives, rather than biographies which tend to be written from an outsider, objective perspective (Anderson and Chawla, 2004). The paper's presentation of gender is consistent with that of Schippers (2007), in that 'the social locations of 'man' and 'woman' are the places where characteristics of masculinity or femininity are embodied or displayed' (Powell and Sang, 2015: 922). The study does not aim to produce universal/population generalisations. Rather, the knowledge is generalisable to a theoretical position, in this case identity work and how it informs the gendered construction of (authentic) leadership (Watson, 2009). The use of autobiographies helps to understand how organisational actors construct and present a self to other parties (Ybema et al., 2009). The subjectivity of these kinds of approaches is a strength of the study as it the subjectivity of leaders' experiences which is the focus.

Although it is important that researchers remember that autobiographies are self-serving in nature, they are useful for understanding leaders' motives (Parry et al., 2014). Using autobiographies provides insight into the processes leaders report having used across their life course and the construction of their identities as leaders (Parameshwar, 2006). This is relevant when considering autobiographies, as followers are the explicit audience of these texts. They are written with the imagined audience in mind. Identity work, such as through autobiographies, is mutually constitutive by the reader and the author (Ybema et al., 2009), and is a core constituent of authentic leadership (Gardner *et al.,* 2005; Eagly, 2005).

While autobiographies have been used successfully to unpack understandings and representations of leadership (for example, Parameshwar, 2006; Shamir et al., 2005), gendered analyses remain limited despite evidence from other disciplines, that the autobiography represents an opportunity to understand the lives of women (Hager, 2015). As Hogan (2008) has argued, autobiographies of women, particularly those whose intention is to challenge patriarchal gender relations, are useful for understanding how the personal is political for women leaders. By retaining a focus only on women's autobiographical writing, research is able to move beyond the male dominated descriptions and analyses of life (Amin and Govinden, 2014) and leadership (Riad, 2011) which has so far dominated the academic discourse.

Like Shamir et al. (2005), the autobiographies that were selected for this study explicitly echo the authors' efforts to reflect a leader self-concept in business and political spheres. Two of the autobiographies used are experiential, business leadership, instruction manuals for women (Brady and Sandberg), while Gillard and Clinton's autobiographies are detailed descriptions of their time in political office in Australia and America respectively. However, both Gillard and Clinton do draw out lessons learned during this time. These women's autobiographies were selected on strong sales figures (indicative of their appeal to followers), high public profile and with contemporary exposure (texts published in 2013 and 2014). Further, these women are sufficiently high profile to have attracted academic attention on their leadership styles due to their minority status in their respective fields (Rhee and Sigler, 2015; Powell and Butterfield, 2011; Cook and Glass, 2014; Cashmore and Cleland, 2011). While by no means conclusive, these were the texts which most commonly appeared on the Amazon (UK) search list for 'women leaders autobiographies'. This is suggestive of their (authentic) appeal and potential (authentic) impact on followers. We make no claims of generalisability, or that these autobiographies tell the totality of the selected

women's leadership stories (Gronn, 2005), rather we aim to present a reading of a selection of popularly read women's autobiographies. By examining the texts written by women leaders, we are able to overcome issues identified in previous research, such as the tendency for key women to be written through the eyes of men (Riad, 2011). Accordingly this paper does not intend to compare these women's leaderships stories with men's. Rather, the paper adopts a feminist stance of prioritising the voices of women (Sang et al., 2013).

[insert table 1 about here]

Similar to the approach adopted by Parameshwar (2006), in our coding and analysis we drew on key events identified in autobiographies. As people may not tell their life stories with explicit references to the underlying themes which underpin their leadership narratives, the researcher must be responsible for identifying what these may be (Shamir et al., 2005). The aim here is not to reconstruct stories, rather to identify, through the narratives, the underlying themes (Chouinard, 2012). This process was repeated until saturation was reached. The texts were read by two authors and coded for themes emerging from the literature, including, personal journeys, 'authenticity', family. This coding was then checked and verified by a third author. This approach allowed for the recurring leadership themes in the autobiographies to be revealed. Such thematic analysis is useful for understanding autobiographical texts and their role in identity construction (Furman et al., 2007). The current study departs from previous research with its focus on gendered constructions of leadership, particularly, how women leaders construct and present an identity of an authentic woman leader.

Findings

The following section sets out the findings from the autobiographies, including the following themes: family, personal values, responsibility to other women and the next generation, long term impact, and roles models. We draw out similarities and tensions within and between the women's constructions of their gendered leadership identity.

Family

All of the women draw on family as an important source of support and core values. Both Clinton and Sandberg present themselves as women who are from a lineage of strong women; women who were and are committed to gender equality. For Sandberg this is her grandmother 'Girlie'. 'I have never met anyone with more energy and determination than my grandmother…When my grandfather's paint business was struggling, she jumped in and took some of the hard steps he was reluctant to take, helping to save the family from financial ruin' (p.13). Clinton emphasises her position in a line of women committed to human rights, including her daughter Chelsea and her mother: 'as I look forward to a grandchild, there is nothing but excitement and anticipation. And I recall what Margaret Mead said, that children keep our imaginations fresh and our hearts young, and drive us to work for a better future' (p.595). Here Clinton is presenting her relationship to her family as maintaining her vigour, as well as connecting herself to the future. In addition, Clinton is articulating how her gender is an important aspect of her leadership identity.

Brady, Clinton and Sandberg also draw on their experiences as mothers to craft their identity as leaders. Work and family are the key identities that Brady establishes early in her text: 'That is what I am - a mother who works. My work and my children are the most important things in my life.' (p.3). In contrast, Clinton's self-representation as a mother is rather different, perhaps in part because her autobiography covers her later life. Chelsea (Hillary and Bill Clinton's daughter) is presented as key to Clinton's leadership role, as the following excerpt from her speech to the Democratic National Convention in August 2008 illustrates: 'When the time came, Chelsea introduced me. I could not have been prouder of her or more grateful for how hard she had worked throughout the long primary campaign' (p9).

Gillard is the only one of the four women not to have children, she is also not married, but has a long-term male partner. For Gillard, family is comprised of her partner and her parents, both of whom were alive when she became prime minister. Following the 2010 Australian general election where Gillard's Labor party neither won, nor lost, family is presented as an important coping mechanism: 'Somehow, making sure everyone had breakfast and consoling them, particularly my very anxious father, was restorative.' (p.54). Here, the importance of family is evident, along with the presentation of a care-giver identity. For Gillard, family is also a metaphor for shared identity, as evidenced by her chapter 'Our Children'.

Further, the women reflect on the familial expectations for them to compete equally with men. The expectations of Sandberg's parents were the same for the boys and girls 'Even though I grew up in a traditional home, my parents had the same expectations for me, my sister, and my brother' (p.13). Thus, it is her experience that she is an equal, therefore imagine her surprise when that's not what happens! The disconnect motivates her to challenge this limiting approach because it is her belief that it is the right thing to do. In addition, Gillard reflects on the messages her parents taught her about women's roles in life, specifically that she was expected to be financially independent, and transgress the social norms of the time; 'My parents, particularly Dad, taught me through word and deed that the world does not owe you a living. That you should expect throughout your life to be required to earn what you intend to spend. Looking back on it, this was in some ways an unusual message to drum into a girl in the 1960s and '70s. The message was never that my life would be spent at home as a wife and mother; my mother worked.' (p.136). Sandberg recalls the influence of her parents' values in relation to purpose as well as hard-work, given their emphasis on 'the importance of pursuing a meaningful life' (p.55). Therefore, the women all identify strongly with family. This conveys the messages in their texts that they are ground to strong 'moral' values of family, work and equality, thus reinforcing their authenticity.

Personal values

Each of the women describe how they maintain a sense of 'authenticity'. For Brady, Gillard and Clinton, this includes how they embody leadership. Clinton recalls comments on her appearance, reflecting that with age she feels able to 'if I want to wear my glasses, I'm wearing my glasses. If I want to pull my hair back, I'm pulling my hair back' (p.7). Gillard constructs a gendered identity whereby she does not embody a 'girly-girl' (p.281) presentation of femininity, refusing the pressure from advisors to wear colours which did not fit with the leadership model embodied by Winston Churchill (p. 282). This embodiment of a

particular form of femininity - the refusal to dress according to guidance from others is relevant to both Clinton and Gillard, as they have both faced public critique over their appearance and dress sense. Further, it constructs an identity as one which refuses to present an identity which is not a reflection of their preferred embodiment. This expression of a 'true' inner self extends to times where Clinton 'ditched the diplomatic talking points, and said exactly what was on my mind, whether it was telling off the leader of North Korea or pushing the Pakistanis on the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden' (p.7). Here Clinton presents a narrative of transparency and ultimately authenticity as she knows her 'true self', and is open to expressing it.

For Sandberg, risk taking is key to her presentation of her identity as a woman leader. She takes control, she is bossy (this has become established in family 'legend'), she is a risk taker. 'Career progression often depends upon taking risks and advocating for oneself - traits that girls are discouraged from exhibiting' (p.15) and she has already established herself within the text as being a risk taker through recalling examples of feeling 'scared' by going into business meetings when she has felt out of her depth. Sandberg continues this narrative, presenting herself as approachable to other women by constructing an identity of one which is shared by the women reading her autobiography 'I have made every mistake on this list. At times, I still do' (p.8). Sandberg repeatedly refers back to life stories to place her experiences at the forefront and to make her a 'real' person who has actually experienced many of these issues. However, she also reveals an awareness of the criticism her 'lean in' advice has received, 'I knew this message could be misinterpreted as my judging women for not making the same choices that I have' (p.25). These passages reveal that Sandberg is constructing a leadership identity which seeks not to alienate her audience and by being 'honest' about her privileged position, she exhibits self-awareness.

Similarly, Brady attempts to connect with the reader by highlighting her 'very normal upbringing' and her father's humble origins (p.18-19). Although Brady comes from an affluent self-made family, in her autobiography she distances herself from the social and economic capital available to her. She says: 'When my brother was 17 my dad bought him a Ferrari as his first car. (…) I had a Ford, but I soon gave it up, got a loan and bought a battered old Golf.' This story is also used by Brady to support one of her main narratives, i.e. an image of a strong and independent woman. This image is a main topic of chapter 2 'My road to independence: childhood and beyond', where Brady constructs herself as a child who is determined to follow her own way and is above other's approval and disapproval. The same values re-emerge throughout the autobiography. They are constructed with the use of tales or in reference to other people. For example, Brady says: 'Boys are like dogs – they need lots of exercise, lots of food and lots of pats on the head. To me, they're simple creatures, very easy to work out.' (p.31). This passage creates an image not only of an independent woman but is also a person in control and in charge. Brady demonstrates that she is not afraid to use a phrase that is derogatory towards boys. With a use of 'humour' and diminutive reference to 'boys' rather than 'men' she seemingly avoids accusation of sexism.

Gillard constructs a similar narrative around the importance of her life story to her integrity as a leader, also describing the importance of coming from a hardworking family, 'I firmly believe that work is the vital key to unlocking the life you want…(p.304). She deliberately uses this narrative for promotion purposes in her 2010 campaign, when she says: 'As prime minister, I will be driven by the values I have believed in all my life. The importance of hard

work, the fulfilling of the obligation that you owe to yourself and to others to earn your keep and do your best. (...) I learnt these values in my family home, from my father and mother, who migrated to this country and worked unbelievably hard to give my sister and me the best of life's chances.' (p.134). The campaign document cited in the book directly draws on the heritage of noble personal values in order to give Gillard credibility as a leader. She says: 'Driven by these values, under my leadership...' (p. 135). Noble personal values, such as strenuousness are linked with Gillard's modest upbringing in a working/middle class family, what can be seen as an attempt to connect with the reader, like Brady. Gillard and Brady both highlight the importance of determination in achieving your goals. Brady says: 'If you have an idea, and the energy to see it into a business, you're an entrepreneur. I meet a lot of people with great ideas, but they lack the energy and determination to see them through. But if you are determined, with a steely core and a can-do attitude, you're an entrepreneur.' (p.9). This individualistic-centric understanding and presentation of key character traits is indicative of how these women have recognised (and internalised?) the language of leadership norms.

Thus, as per the language of AL, each of the women seek to craft an authentic 'true self' position in relation to the reader or potential 'authentic follower'. Yet this may be more a becoming process of identity construction rather than an essentialist process of becoming a true self. Nevertheless, AL theory proposes that it is the role of the authentic leader to "produce heightened levels of followers self-awareness and self-regulation leading to positive follower development and outcomes" (p.346). Therefore, each woman is seeking to build followership by sharing aspects that appeal to their 'target' follower. In doing so, they fit with expectations of what their largely female audience want to hear: how to perform femininity in this male norm context. For example, the challenges of how to dress (i.e. the issue of the body), the challenge of how to manage the double bind (i.e. the issue of conforming to being 'scared' in male environments). In these cases, the personal values expressed by these leaders are a call to followers to be authentic by conveying the message that gender must be managed and fit within a context of wider social norms and expectations. Further, these expressions of personal values also extend to crafting a presentation of leadership which includes responsibility for others. The following section turns to a consideration of how this is constructed by the four women.

Responsibility to other women and the next generation

'Mom measured her own life by how much she was able to help us and serve others. I knew if she was still with us, she would be urging us to do the same. Never rest on your laurels. Never quit. Never stop working to make the world a better place. That's our unfinished business' (Clinton, 2014: 589). Through this quote, Clinton, emphasises not only her family lineage, but also her commitment to work with other women ('our') to improve the world. She is presenting a narrative that she has a greater purpose than her own advancement and that she is communal in her (leadership) behaviour and beliefs. This communality is observed with all four women expressing a sense of responsibility to other women, and the next generation. For Sandberg and Brady this responsibility is presented as the motivation for writing the autobiographies. Sandberg reflects on the route she took to writing her book. Following her Barnard College commencement address, she writes: 'I know my speech was meant to motivate them, but they actually motivated me. In the months that followed, I

started thinking that I should speak up more often and more publicly about these issues. I should urge more women to believe in themselves and aspire to lead. [...] I should take my own advice and be ambitious. Writing this book is not just me encouraging others to lean in. This is me leaning in. Writing this book is what I would do if I weren't afraid' (p.26). For Brady, the writing of her autobiography is presented as an act of altruism for other women, 'I was left with the distinct feeling that someone needed to inspire this generation of women, to get them going and help them through – hand on the baton, if you like.' (p.1) However, she also recognises the responsibility of all women to bring change to work environment 'I shouldn't have to spell this out, but I will: being an ambitious women certainly doesn't mean you're a bitch. We have to change that thinking. In the same way we have to change the perception of feminism'. Further, Brady links the responsibility to help the next generation with her family and the desire to help them. '...young women should feel free to enter professions that have traditionally been seen as male. If my daughter wants to be a painter and decorator, a scientist or an engineer, I want that to seem like a perfectly natural choice.' (p.8). Here Brady, addresses the (woman) reader directly ' I hope to inspire you not to feel guilty for having a dream, for having ambition and not being afraid to go out there to do something about it. To turn your dream into reality. After all, if you don't champion your career, who will do it for you? I want to make things better for my daughter, for you and yours.' (p.13)

Sandberg and Clinton also express concern for a sense of female solidarity, not just between themselves but also among women readers. Sandberg emphasises this shared womanhood, saying 'It also helps to lean on one another. We can comfort ourselves with the knowledge that the attacks are not personal' (p.50). Clinton expresses a keen awareness of responsibility to other women and to girls: 'If the speech [concession speech to Obama] was hard to write, it was even harder to deliver. I felt I had let down so many millions of people, especially the women and girls who had invested their dreams in me' (p.6). For Clinton, this sense of responsibility is argued to have a long history, one which she evidences to her time as First Lady: 'If there is one message that echoes forth from this conference,' I declared, 'let it be that human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights, once and for all' (p.561). Clinton goes on to explain her concerns for women's rights globally, recalling a positive response to her speech 'When the last words left my lips, the delegates leaped from their seats to give me a standing ovation. As I exited the hall, women hung over bannisters and raced down escalators to shake my hand' (p.561).

Clinton also expresses her shared womanhood through her refusal to participate in sexist critiques of other women political opponents, including Sarah Palin; 'They [Obama's political team] immediately issued a dismissive statement and reached out to me in the hopes I would follow suit. But I wouldn't. I was not going to attack Palin just for being a woman. I didn't think it made political sense and it didn't feel right.' (p.11). Here Clinton is presenting a narrative of shared womanhood, while also resisting the expectations placed upon her by her political colleagues. She is presenting herself as being true to core principles, highlighting her self-awareness and authenticity, particularly in contrast to the advisors who asked her to attack Palin. Further, this approach may be a politically astute attempt to demonstrate allegiance to women, thus appealing to women voters.

For Gillard, a defining moment in her public reputation was her now infamous 'misogyny' speech in the Australian parliament; 'The speech has been raised with me by world leaders.

By mothers who said they watched it with their daughters and cried and then watched it again. By women who say they have watched it hundreds of times and it cheers and rallies them. By a woman in India - one of the police detailed to look after my security - whose first words to me, other than her name, were 'Great speech' (p.111). Here we can see Gillard constructing an identity for herself which reflects her connection to women, not just within Australia, but globally. She is crafting a sense of shared womanhood, which essentially illustrates her communal characteristics. In Sandberg's case she recalls staff (women) attending a meeting with Tim Geithner who was the Treasury Secretary and the 'women had every right to be at this meeting, but because of their seating choice [they didn't sit at the table], they seemed like spectators rather than participants. I knew I had to say something' (p.27). Again, Sandberg (2013) expresses her commitment to women by pointing out their limitations in relation to desire to be likeable - 'I believe this bias is at the very core of why women are held back. It is also a the very core of why women hold themselves back' (p.40). This is part of a broader narrative of Sandberg's that women lack the necessary attributes and behaviours, such as confidence and seating choices, to succeed in leadership positions. This presents a homogenous view of women. Yet it also presents Sandberg as a person who can understand these struggles and has overcome them through being true to herself.

Long term impact

All four texts present a common theme of constructing a leadership identity by having an impact beyond the current generation. For example, Gillard positions herself as a person who has set an example for future generations of women leaders. In her final speech as a prime minister she said: 'I am absolutely confident...it will be easier for the next woman and the woman after that and the woman after that. And I'm proud of that.' (Gillard, 2014:114). This is also the case for Clinton. When reflecting on her experiences after her loss to Barack Obama in the presidential primaries of 2008, Hillary Clinton recalled meeting with her campaign staff. The quote below illustrates Clinton's sense of obligation to her campaign team, particularly the younger members, in addition to demonstrating her historical political lineage (presumably her husband's campaigns).

> 'Being surrounded by the dedicated team that had fought so far for me was inspiring and humbling. Some were friends, who had worked with us on campaigns going all the way back to Arkansas. For many of the younger people, this was their first race. I didn't want them to be discouraged by defeat or turned off of electoral politics and public service, so I told them to be proud of the campaign we'd run and to keep working for the causes and the candidates we believed in'. (p.4)

Brady and Sandberg also include reference to the importance they place on influencing future generations of women and/or leaders. Brady clearly sets out that one of her goals is to be a source of inspiration for the young generation. 'When I meet young girls who tell me their ambition is to marry a footballer I always say, 'Why? Your ambition should be to own a football club!' (...) We need to encourage young women to open their minds to the possibilities to what they can achieve.' (p. 9). Here Brady creates a shared identity with slightly older women, yes reaches out to young women entering adulthood. She uses her success story to set goals and motivate women to change (p.13).This further reinforces her image as a leader. Sandberg presents a similar concern, for her leadership story to be of

inspiration to women in a range of settings. She says: 'I am writing it for any woman who wants to increase her chances of making it to the top of her field or pursue any goal vigorously…My intention is to offer advice that would have been useful to me long before I had heard of Google or Facebook and that will resonate with women in a broad range of circumstances' (p.10-11). Having an impact on the reader is the purpose for her writing the book. She adopts a position of authority to comment and guide women's behaviour towards leadership. Thus, all of the women show themselves to be supportive and helpful through showing concern for others and being in tune with the challenges that purusing ambitions can create.

Role models

All the women craft narratives which recognise personal role models, while also illustrating their high levels of social capital. When referring to role models outwith the family domain, these role models and source of advice are largely male or historical figures. There are also repeated references to, and emphasis on, their connections to senior and well-known contemporary leaders. These connections are close, for example, Clinton references her 'good friend Senator Dianne Feinstein' (p.2). Further, Clinton uses evidence of these connections to position herself within broader political dynasties, specifically indicating the sources of advice she is able (and willing) to draw on. When Clinton describes her decision to accept Obama's offer to become Secretary of State, reference is made to her sources of advice and strong existing political connections:

> 'I already had relationships with many key leaders, from Angela Merkel in Germany to Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan. John Podesta, a valued friend, the co-chair of the Obama Transition Team, and a former Chief of Staff for my husband in the White House, called me on November 16 to talk over a few issues and to reinforce how much the President-elect wanted me to accept. (p.16).

This quote illustrates not only Clinton's social capital through her networks with world leaders, but also places her in the political lineage of her family. It also illustrates the importance of her husband's career to her own. This is further developed when Clinton describes her experiences of setting up European alliances 'Some [European leaders] I already knew and liked from my time as First Lady and Senator. Others would become new friends.' Clinton is presenting herself as embedded in the context of global leaders.

Sandberg also demonstrates her social capital through referencing her close friendships and working relationships with Larry Summers and Mark Zuckerberg; 'Less than six months after I started at Facebook, Mark and I sat down for my first formal review. One of the things he told me was that my desire to be liked by everyone would hold me back.' (p.51). Sandberg also reports taking guidance, not just from leaders, but also from male peers. When negotiating her contract to join Facebook she was keen to accept the job at the 'price' offered. However, her brother-in-law interjects to say 'Damn it, Sheryl! Why are you going to make less than any man would make to do the same job?' (Sandberg, 2013, p.46). However, Sandberg also references a number of women leaders to illustrate her points - Arianna Huffington, Padmasree Warrior, Virginia Rometty.

Similar is seen with Brady and her detailed description of her friendship with Alan Sugar. Gillard also sets out her friendships and working relationships with other world leaders, placing these relationships in the context of Australia's international diplomatic and trade partners. Each leader places herself in relation to well-known male leaders; asserting her position and her social capital. Further, Clinton and Gillard locate their leadership approaches within the history of key leaders, including Abraham Lincoln, William Henry Seward and Winston Churchill, 'I started to wonder if Seward's ghost was following me' (p.14). These references are carefully created to position these women as the contemporaries of recognisable male leaders. This, therefore, underpins their credibility to hold leadership positions as they have been 'recognised' by the leadership 'norm'.

Discussion

Through analyses of the media representations, via autobiography, of four women leaders, this paper adds to the literature on the social construction of leadership, especially authentic leadership. The use of autobiography as forms of media representations which underpin notions of authenticity for leadership is congruent with previous research (Smith, 2010). The current research suggests these forms of media representations of AL is particularly relevant for the women studied. The analyses have revealed that these women engage in a form of AL which is consciously gendered, outlining clearly the impact they feel their identity as women has had on their careers and leadership approach and roles. Yet how conscious they are of reinforcing gender stereotypes remains in question. The autobiographies are written by women who are extraordinary in that they have overcome (to some extent) societal gender constraints, to reach positions of international leadership. However, these texts largely conform to gendered expectations of women; for example, all four women locate themselves within domestic contexts, including family life and exhibit 'feminine' communal leadership traits. Findings reflect the research of Mavin *et al.* (2010) who examine media representations of women political leaders (also Patterson *et al.*, 2012a). Although Gillard has resisted gender norms to some extent, by not marrying or having children; nevertheless, she is not exempt from establishing an 'appropriate' gender identity, supported by the importance she attributes to family and her caring role. The general conformity to gender norms is perhaps not surprising if we remember that discourse is a vehicle for transmitting ideology (Koller, 2004). In this case, these texts transmit a gendered hegemony, albeit while resisting some gender stereotypes. This is further evidenced by how each woman places emphasis on her connectedness to other women; the imagined audience or followers. These followers are often constructed as women with familial concerns including work-life balance. This interconnectedness is a key aspect of the post-heroic models of leadership, which Fletcher (2004) argues have failed to take hold, and yet is a key aspect of authentic leadership (Avolio and Gardener, 2005), which seeks to impart idealised behaviours in followers (Ford and Harding, 2011). In addition, the attribution of importance to family may be part of a professional self which a follower expects to hear discussed as part of a gendered route to a position of leadership. It is possible that a lack of discussion on this topic would be perceived by followers as negative and lacking in 'authenticity'; no woman gets to the the top without addressing her 'dual life' and making sacrifices on the way.

All four women reflected on the importance of their families to their leadership practices. This included reflections on the personal values of hard work they had learned from family members, including parents and grandparents. The importance of this informal mentoring is

consistent with Parameshwar's (2006) study with social leaders. In addition the women emphasise their social networks through discussion of role models. As Burt (1998) has argued, social capital is gendered, with the traditionally higher levels for men demonstrating legitimacy for senior roles. The women here are adopting a similar strategy, but locating themselves in the contemporary leadership networks within their fields. The women in the study also locate themselves within the historical lineage of leadership, drawing on mentoring from historical persons, including leading male figures. Both Clinton and Gillard locate their leadership practices within the context of figures such as Winston Churchill. These are names which would be familiar to an audience, names which are commonly recognised as associated with particular visions of leadership. To locate themselves here lends legitimacy to their political positions and practices.

The women in these texts do not construct a leadership identity which presents leadership as a trait. Rather, they present their personal journey to leadership, the influence of their families, and refer to their perceived lack of traditional markers of leadership; for example Sheryl Sandberg's reference to not being selected for sports teams. Such a construction is in line with current leadership theory which has moved away from the heroic male model, towards an understanding that leadership is practiced (Fletcher, 2004). However, this appears to be evidence of Sandberg presenting an 'authentic' version of herself to elicit followership. In the case of women, these vulnerabilities (e.g. not being 'perfect' by not being picked for sports) is how women do authentic gendered leadership. This contrasts with the stories presented by mostly male leaders in Shamir et al's (2005) study, in which the leaders argued they were either born leaders, or that leadership had developed naturally later in life and was not a struggle. This presents a further contrast with the women in the current study, for whom the move to leadership is presented as a struggle in itself, because they are women in men's worlds. Even so, the concept of a struggle to achieve is common in the story of the hero and as such these women identify with a male norm of overcoming their shortfalls to achieve a prestigious reward. Possible evidence that as authentic leaders, Clinton, Gillard and Brady strive to express their inner 'true' potential, that they know themselves (and therefore reward was within their reach) and that they are virtuous in overcoming their challenges. Each aspect fitting with the tenets of AL.

The women also reflect on the role of their bodies in their leadership, an important aspect of the gendering of authentic leadership (Sinclair, 2013). Both Clinton and Gillard express their refusal to dress as others advise, bringing their bodies into their leadership style. Karren Brady's brain aneurysm also brings her body into visibility. As Riad (2011) has argued, the bodies of leaders are rarely considered in analyses of leadership, unless the leaders are women or ethnic minority (also Sinclair, 2013; Ladkin and Taylor, 2010). However, the bodies where leadership is enacted matter (Fletcher, 2004). These women leaders consideration of their bodies may be a reflection of the intense interest expressed within the popular media. Clinton and Gillard use their autobiographies to present this interest in their bodies to their own advantage, they take the criticism of their dress sense as a route to constructing an identity which reflects a 'true self' - one which does not allow them to present themselves as inauthentic. Here a link to Ladkin and Taylor's (2010) framing of authentic leadership can be seen, with a desire to align an internal self with an external self or presentation. However, there is a tension here with Clinton's prior compromises on her appearance, including wearing contact lenses and changing her hair (Pilkington, 2015). Such tensions are an aspect of authentic leadership and identity work previously discussed

in the leadership literature (Petriglieri and Stein, 2012) where individuals navigate societal structures to craft identities (Brown, 2015). Further investigation is required to understand the tensions between crafting an identity and its fit with authenticity, specifically referencing where an identity may have changed over time and how this can be reconciled in the minds of the authentic follower.

The women leaders presented here construct an identity in part bound by responsibility for other women. This is consistent with approaches which associate women's perceived leadership styles as associated with transformational models of leadership (Simola et al., 2010). As such, these women are not presenting an approach to leadership, which transgresses societal gender norms, rather, it is consistent with these norms. This is despite these women having overcome these restrictive norms to reach senior levels within politics and business. This is not surprising given that women who enact forms of leadership incorporating the development and support of others are conforming to gendered norms of motherhood (Fletcher, 2004).

It is important to note that all the women studied occupy positions of considerable social privilege. The women in the current study implicitly reflected on their position as white and middle class, through reference to women from other class and national backgrounds. These constructions of whiteness and class, and their intersection with gender, are difficult to tease out from these implicit considerations. The data gathered in our study contributes to the ongoing discussion on privileged women leaders (e.g. Mavin and Grandy, in press). Future research must consider how gender interacts with other identities, within particular temporal and spatial contexts, to shape leadership and its conceptualisations (Corlett and Mavin, 2014). Researchers must consider the extent to which identities are temporal, particularly in the context of an expanding range of identities available to individuals (Brown, 2015; Brubaker, 2015). Further, research should extend the analysis of the body's role in the construction of a leadership identity, for both men and women. While new studies on the impact of leaders' appearance emerge (e.g. Mavin and Grandy, in press; Mavin and Grandy, 2016) further nuanced analysis of privilege and its role in shaping gendered understandings and performances of leadership is needed.

In summary, this paper contributes to our understanding of media representations of women leaders and their crafted authenticity. The paper's contributions are both empirical and methodological. The findings indicate that the women in this study used their autobiographies as a means to grow their follower base and connect with new followers. However, as per Eagly (2005) and Sinclair (2013), authentic leadership is 'relational' whereby it is allocated to leaders on the basis of conforming to cultural and societal norms. The paper's methodological contribution demonstrates the potential for the analysis of existing, crafted texts, to understand the gendered presentations of leadership. Thus, media representations of women can further contribute to their presentation of authenticity. The leaders in this study have carefully crafted a 'true self' which is concurrent with reader/follower norms. This is indicative of the power of media to shape the perceptions, discourse and norms of leaders, gender and more. It is with caution that we interpret these crafted narratives around leaders and at our risk do we forget the importance of the follower in maintaining authenticity.

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Name	Area of influence	Age	Roles
Karren Brady Married with two children	Business and sport	40s	Member of the House of Lords, television presenter (The Apprentice – UK), soccer management (vice-chair of West Ham United), fiction author
Hillary Clinton Married with one adult child	US and international politics	60s	Former First Lady, senator and Secretary of State. Currently engaged in philanthropic work, particularly education including with Julia Gillard. Recently announced intention to run for US Presidential election 2016.
Julia Gillard Partner, no children	Australian and international politics	50s	Former leader of the Australian Labor Party and Prime Minister, currently Chair of Global Partnership for Education and visiting Professor at University of Adelaide
Sheryl Sandberg Married (husband recently died) with two children	Business and social media	40s	Chief operating officer of Facebook. Previously Vice President at Google and Chief of Staff for the United States Secretary of the Treasury.

Table 1. Biographical details of women whose autobiographies are analysed in the current study.