

Making conflict work: Authentic leadership and reactive and reflective management styles

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Abstract

The relation between authentic leadership (AL) and conflict management is a topic that has not been extensively researched and merits further empirical examination. In this study, two hypotheses were tested: first, whether AL is positively correlated with active constructive conflict (ACC) behaviors, and second, whether the conflict management styles (CMSs) of the organization moderate the relationship between AL and ACC behaviors. Partial least square structural equation analysis was used to examine the responses of 65 leadership participants in a survey of management styles. The results supported the hypotheses. A statistically significant relationship was found between AL, as measured by the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire, and ACC behaviors, as measured by Thomas–Kilmann Instrument; CMSs, as measured by the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory, moderated this relationship. The implications of these findings are discussed in detail.

Keywords

active constructive conflict, authentic leadership, conflict, management

The Influence of authentic leadership and conflict management style on active constructive conflict

In any organization (governmental, for-profit, or nonprofit enterprises, etc.), conflict and change are bound to occur. Whether these conflicts are constructive or destructive depends significantly on the leader's ability to recognize conflict, harness change, and manage context, to achieve desired outcomes. Constructive conflict can be a positive force when it leads to necessary changes. What ensues is an empirical look at how an authentic leader can influence these very relationships and lead the organization to positive and lasting change (George, 2004).

In the last few decades, positive psychology has gained popularity and has influenced some organizations' orientation toward conflict management by adopting a more proactive approach to managing conflict. This positive psychology approach has shifted some research from trying to find solutions for dysfunctional organizations to evaluating the benefits of using a positive, strengths-based approach (Luthans, 2009). Positive organizational behavior correlates with higher employee performance and increased employee engagement (McHugh, 2001). George (2004)

identifies five essential dimensions of authentic leaders: purpose, values, heart, relationships, and self-discipline. These leadership qualities can be game changers when dealing with conflict.

Conflict is inevitable, especially in a group setting where there is a clash of ideas, goals, and techniques (Tjosvold, 2008). While traditionally conflict was deemed as something negative, and therefore organizations strived to avoid it at all costs, in recent times, management theorists have advocated for an interactionist view on conflict (Trevino, 1986). This approach emphasizes the fact that conflict can be positive (i.e., functional conflict), and a certain amount of conflict is necessary for growth and innovation.

Positive organizational scholarship (POS) is concerned with understanding the integration of positive and negative conditions, instead of merely trying to eliminate the

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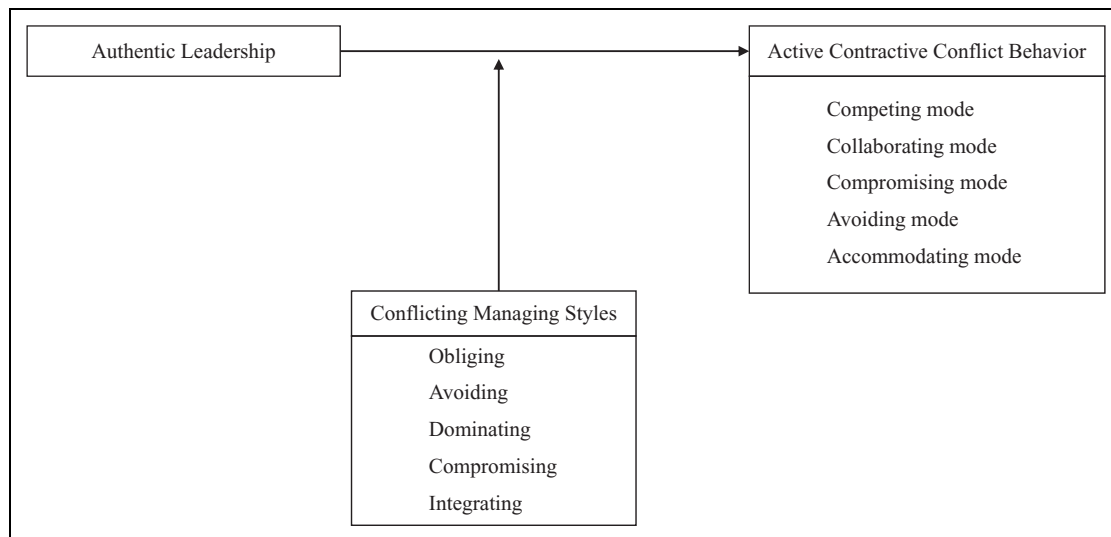


Figure 1. Research model.

negative ones. POS advocates to harness these constructive and negative forces as catalysts for positive change. The POS movement examines organizational performance, and the difficulties and challenges are interpreted, managed, and transformed to reveal their underlying positive domain (Cameron, et al., 2004). Due to the inevitability of conflict, it is now believed a firm's ability to constructively handle conflict can be a source of competitive advantage. Managers can follow the three Rs—*recognition, resolution, and restoration*—to effectively manage conflict, paying attention to the recognition of latent conflict and restoration. These are also two areas often ignored by companies, as they tend to focus solely on resolution. It is important to identify a latent conflict, especially negative one, to be able to deal with it before it escalates (Kotter, 1999).

Therefore, as important it is to avoid negative conflict, it is equally important to maintain a certain level of constructive conflict in an organization (Rahim, 2010). An organization that does not value constructive conflict risks stagnating and eventually losing out to competition. Constructive conflict allows employees to explore different ideas and examine underlying interests, which can lead to innovation. It has also been suggested promoting creativity in an organization encourages constructive conflict by avoiding groupthink and encouraging employees to think outside the box (Rahim, 2010).

This study assesses how leadership styles, specifically a newer approach to leadership, called *authentic leadership* (AL), influences conflict management in organizations to foster high-performance environments. The research model is presented in Figure 1.

Literature review and hypotheses

AL is an emergent leadership concept focused on the moral, emotional, and transparency leadership dimensions. An underlying assumption of AL is controversies are inevitable in organizations (Kanungo and Mendonca, 1996). An indicator of AL is a willingness to engage with others on

controversial issues and to reveal one's own position on these issues instead of the often-embraced managerial approach of hedging one's bets, people pleasing, or trying to portray oneself as an entirely neutral, unbiased figure. AL is predicated on the idea conflict always exists within organizations, and a positive approach to leadership entails not only sharing one's stance on the controversial issues but also balanced processing. The balanced processing aspect of AL means is being able to actually listen to another's perspective, even if it differs from one's own views. Both of these leadership dimensions of AL, *balanced processing* and *relational transparency*, can influence one's approach to constructively resolving the conflict.

AL and ACC

Strategies for conflict resolution are considered in organizational development research as a means to further sustained performance in organizations through employee engagement. Thomas and Kilmann (1974) outlined five conflict management strategies, which have been studied by several other researchers (Wilmot and Hocker, 2011).

Conflict can be negative or positive, depending on how it is handled (Kelly, 1970). It is, therefore, important to be able to measure and evaluate how individuals handle conflict (Thomas and Kilmann, 1974). The responses are categorized into constructive or destructive and active or passive scales and fall into one of these four domains: active constructive, passive constructive, active destructive, and passive destructive.

As measured by the Conflict Dynamics Profile (CDP), *active constructive* behavior involves those responses (which need some effort or overt action) that usually mitigate the adverse effects of conflict, preventing it from escalating. Research suggests effective conflict management is critical for leaders (Runde and Flanagan, 2010). Four key constructive behaviors in conflict management are perspective taking, creating solutions, expressing emotions, and reaching out and making meaning (Runde and Flanagan, 2010).

In positive psychology, the meaning is created when employees find value in their experiences in the workplace and feel renewed and elevated by their work (Avolio and Gardner, 2005). The integration of leadership, ethics, and positive organizational behavior led to the development of the AL construct. AL is defined as a leadership process in which the leader is genuinely aware of his or her thinking and behavior and the context within which it lies. Further, followers perceive the authentic leader is aware of his or her own and others' values and moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths (Avolio and Gardner, 2005).

Authentic leaders are equally concerned with their authenticity as well as how to convey authenticity to others (Avolio and Gardner, 2005). When leaders are aware of how their actions are perceived by those around them—and are transparent about their actions—followers have a better sense of the organizational goals and challenges. Researchers (Walumbwa et al. 2008) have identified four main underlying dimensions of AL: balanced processing, internalized moral perspective, relational transparency, and self-awareness. Based on construct validity, the relationship transparency aspect of AL is incompatible with the avoiding dimension of active constructive conflict (ACC).

The literature on AL (Avolio and Gardner, 2005) refers to conflict in an indirect way by identifying subdimensions such as balanced processing (i.e. the ability to actively listen to another's point of view even when that point of view is in opposition to your own opinion) and relationship transparency (i.e. letting others know where you stand on controversial issues) and by referring to situations where there are differing opinions that lead to conflict. However, this study builds on the idea that AL necessitates dealing with opposing points of views on controversial issues; it includes conflict resolution behavior as a key component of the manager or leader's role. Mintzberg (1971) referred to the role of *dispute resolution* as one of the critical dimensions of the manager; a dispute if not resolved is a short-term disagreement, whereas conflicts are long-term, deep-rooted problems.

The present research links AL to specific behaviors, such as competing, accommodating, avoiding, collaborating, and compromising, thereby making more explicit the influence of AL on actual practices that resolve conflict. In general, most of the ACC behaviors are positively linked to AL because one expects an authentic leader to actively engage to resolve conflicts.

Conflict sometimes engenders healthy competition, which can lead to performance improvement (Rahim, 2010). The competing style of conflict management is favored by American culture, according to one study (Kaur and Luxmi, 2013). In this research, two conflict-handling behaviors, avoiding and competing, are viewed as being negatively related to AL.

In general, the competing and avoiding approaches to conflict management negatively correlate with team effectiveness (Rodgers, 2012). Rodgers (2012) concluded cooperation, not competition, is an essential element of conflict management for positive team results and human evolution. Similarly, Tjosvold (2008) argued competitive relationships and orientations when dealing with conflict lead to either avoidance or escalation; both serve to sabotage

decision-making and can break relational bonds within an organization.

Little written has explicitly linked dimensions of AL and conflict management (Crevani, et al., 2010). Chester Barnard is one of the few authors to write about the functions of an executive that emphasizes the moral dimensions of management and the authenticity of an organizational leadership (Novicevic et al., 2005). Barnard is clear that cooperation not competition is the key to gaining moral authority within an organization and its leadership. As such, in this research, it is posited that AL is incompatible with the competing mode of conflict management as the competing mode does not lead to high-performing teams and organizations focused on a higher purpose (Jehn and Mannix, 2001). High-performing organizations have authentic leaders who engage employees in undertakings they care about passionately. Therefore, AL is not seen as being congruent with the competing mode of conflict management.

The integration of POS concept of ACC and the AL literature leads to the first set of hypotheses:

H1a: There is a positive relationship between AL and all of the modes of ACC of the individual, except the avoiding and competing dimensions.

H1b: There is a negative relationship between AL and the avoiding dimension of ACC.

H1c: There is a negative relationship between AL and the competing dimension of ACC.

CMS and ACC behavior

Several researchers studied conflict management styles (CMSs) and their outcomes (Jordan and Troth, 2002). The dominating style—focusing on winning the conflict and defeating the opposing side (Runde and Flanagan, 2010)—can be used if the conflict involves trivial or routine matters, or when quick decisions need to be taken (Rahim, 2002). The avoiding style—where issues are ignored—allows another party to fulfill its demands. This avoiding is appropriate when the potential adverse effect of confronting the other side outweighs the potential benefits. Groups with members who avoid conflict tend to underperform because members get frustrated trying to avoid conflict and start competing (Tjosvold, 2008).

An obliging style is when an individual makes concessions in a conflict situation and gives in to the other person (Runde and Flanagan, 2010). This style plays down the differences and emphasizes the commonalities to satisfy the other party's concern and is most useful when preserving the relationship is critical (Rahim, 2002). Therefore, subordinates tend to use a more obliging style with superiors, to maintain the relationship (Rahim, 1983). However, research has shown conflicts resolved through competition, accommodation, or avoidance often has adverse consequences on working relationships and work performance (Jordan and Troth, 2002).

In the compromising style, the parties involved indulge in a "give-and-take" approach to arrive at a mutually

acceptable decision (Rahim, 2002). This method is useful if the conflict involves complex issues and consensus cannot be reached. In the integration style, parties seek to arrive at a mutually advantageous or win-win solution (Runde and Flanagan, 2010). Integration involves information exchange, openness, and finding alternative solutions acceptable to both parties. This is appropriate in situations where it is necessary to have a synthesis of ideas to find the best option. According to the contingency/situational approach, there is no best style. The effectiveness of a CMS depends on the nature of the conflict situation (Jordan and Troth, 2002; Rahim, 2002).

The Thomas–Kilmann model shows how individuals can select among five different approaches to conflict management. However, the present research is not only interested in how people react to conflict but also in how the organizational context influences or moderates the personal choices individuals make. To capture this organizational context, it was determined to use the CMS to measure the respondent’s conflict approach with one’s supervisor.

In the present research, there is a link between the AL and the ACC choices individuals make—whereby the moderating variable of organizational CMS, which captures the organizational context, influences the relationship between a person’s AL and ACC options. The CMS instrument measures the organizational context of conflict management—in this case conflict with one’s supervisor.

The review of the literature leads to the second set of hypotheses:

H2a: The relationship between AL and ACC is moderated by the avoiding style with the supervisor, such that the relationship is weaker.

H2b: The relationship between AL and ACC is moderated by the obliging style with the supervisor, such that the relationship is stronger.

H2c: The relationship between AL and ACC is moderated by the dominating style with the supervisor, such that the relationship is stronger.

H2d: The relationship between AL and ACC is moderated by the compromising style with the supervisor, such that the relationship is weaker.

H2e: The relationship between AL and ACC is moderated by the integrating style with the supervisor, such that the relationship is weaker.

The research model is displayed in Figure 1.

Methods

Qualtrics, a survey platform service, was used to contact 85 executives who held a leadership role, defined as being in charge of at least five manager subordinates. Participants completed the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory (ROCI), the Thomas–Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, and the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ). The final sample size was 65, representing a valid item response

Table 1. Latent variable, instrument, and measurement indicator of research model.

Latent variable	Instrument	Measurement indicator
Active constructive conflict behavior	Thomas–Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument	Competing mode Collaborating mode Compromising mode Avoiding mode Accommodating mode
Conflict management style	Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory	Integrating Obliging Dominating Compromising Avoiding
Authentic leadership style	Authentic Leadership Questionnaire	Balanced processing Internalized moral perspective Leader self-awareness Relationship transparency

rate of 76.4%. Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was conducted.

Results

Table 1 lists the latent variables, instruments and the measurement indicators of the research model. The demographic characteristics of respondents are presented in Tables 2 and 3 which show the Pearson correlations of the variables. Table 4 is the factor and cross-factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and reliability.

The factor analysis CMS moderator presented two factors, as shown in Table 4. The first factor consisted of the avoiding, obliging, and dominating styles. This was named the *reactive CMS*. The two other CMS measurement indicators, the compromising and integrating styles, were therefore named *reflective CMS*.

AL was entered as a latent variable, formulated with the subdimensions of balanced processing, internalized moral perspective, leader self-awareness, and relationship transparency. Results indicate AL exhibited high convergent validity as presented in Table 4.

Hypothesis testing

H1: Table 5 shows there is a positive relationship between AL and collaborating mode ($\beta = 0.444$), compromising mode ($\beta = 0.375$), and accommodating mode ($\beta = 0.138$), and there is a negative relationship with avoiding mode ($\beta = -0.100$) and competing mode ($\beta = -0.405$). The R^2 values indicated AL explained the

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of respondents.

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	36	55.40
	Female	29	44.60
Age (years)	31–40	23	35.40
	41–50	20	30.80
	51–60	11	16.90
	26–30	7	10.80
	≥60	3	4.60
Company type	Private	38	58.50
	Public	23	35.40
	Nonprofit organization	1	1.50
	Other	1	1.50
Current position	CEO/president	16	24.60
	Senior-level manager	13	20.00
	Executive/vice president	12	18.50
	Owner/partner	10	15.40
	Middle manager	8	12.30
	First-level supervisor	6	9.20
Total gross sales volume of company	>\$50 million	17	26.20
	\$5 million–\$10 million	10	15.40
	\$2.5 million–\$5 million	9	13.80
	\$1 million–\$2.5 million	7	10.80
	\$20 million–\$30 million	6	9.20
	\$10 million–\$20 million	4	6.20
	\$25,000–\$49,999	3	4.60
	\$30 million–\$50 million	3	4.60
	\$100,000–\$199,999	2	3.10
	\$500,000–\$999,999	2	3.10
\$600,000–\$999,999	2	3.10	

highest proportion of the variance in collaborating mode (19.7%), followed in order of magnitude by lower proportions of the variance in competing mode (16.4%), compromising mode (14.0%), accommodating mode (1.9%), and avoiding mode (1.0%).

All the t values exceeded the critical value, $t(\infty) > 1.96$, $p < 0.05$. There is a significant positive relationship between AL and all of the modes of ACC of the individual, except the avoiding dimension; thus, hypothesis 1a is supported.

Similarly, as predicted by hypothesis 1b, there is a significant negative relationship between AL and the avoiding dimension of ACC. Also, as predicted by hypothesis 1c, there is a significant negative relationship between AL and the competing dimension of ACC.

The model predicted a high AL is related to (a) increased compromising (i.e. arriving at more mutually acceptable decisions), (b) increased collaborating (i.e. arriving at more mutually advantageous decisions), (c) increased accommodating (i.e. less neglect of the leaders' concerns to satisfy the needs of others), (d) decreased competing (i.e. less assertive and uncooperative behaviors), and (e) decreased avoiding (i.e. less adopting of a wait-and-watch approach in a conflict situation).

H2: CMS is divided into two latent variables because two dimensions, as explained above, were extracted from the ROCI item scores using confirmatory factor analysis.

The CMS of avoiding, obliging, and dominating, with convergent validity which is named *reactive* conflict management (factor loadings = 0.685, 0.793, and 0.685, respectively, explaining 44.8% of the variance in Table 6). The CMS of compromising and integrating with convergent validity (factor loadings = 0.884 and 0.809, respectively, explaining 28.3% of the variance) is named *reflective* conflict management (Table 6). The two latent variables of CMSs were named as reactive and reflective. The reactive CMS represents the contrarian mindset of a leader who takes a minority viewpoint, whereas the reflective CMS represents a conformist mindset where the leader opts to maintain status quo and to follow generally accepted convention and to collaborate with subordinates.

Statistical evidence in Table 6 demonstrates support for the moderating effect described in hypothesis 2. Thus, high levels of reactive or reflective CMS were positively associated with high levels of ACC.

There is a significant effect on the collaborating mode ($\beta = 0.17$; $p < 0.05$; change $\beta = 0.13$; $p < 0.05$) due to the interaction between reactive CMS and AL. There is also a significant effect with the collaborating mode interaction ($\beta = -0.014$; $p \leq 0.05$; change $\beta = 0.35$; $p \leq 0.05$) due to the interaction between reflective CMS and AL. Finally, there is a significant effect in the avoiding mode interaction ($\beta = -0.35$; $p \leq 0.05$) due to the moderating effect of reflective CMS and AL.

Table 6 also shows the interaction effect. The reactive or reflective CMS moderate the relationship between AL and collaborating mode. There is a significant negative relationship between reactive CMS and collaborating mode, $\beta = -0.270$, $t(\infty) = 12.72$, $p < 0.05$. Thus, if there is an increase in reactive CMS (i.e. more avoiding, dominating, and obliging), then a high AL results in a decrease in the collaborating mode (i.e. the participants would not arrive at more mutually advantageous decisions and solutions).

There is a significant positive relationship between reflective CMS and collaborating mode, $\beta = 0.129$, $t(\infty) = 3.60$, $p < 0.05$. Thus, if there is an increase in reflective CMS (i.e. more compromising and integrating), then a high AL results in an improvement in the collaborating mode (i.e. the participants arrive at more mutually advantageous decisions).

Statistical evidence in Table 6 shows support for hypothesis 2b that CMS moderates the relationship between AL style and competing mode. There is a significant positive relationship between reactive CMS and competing mode, $\beta = 0.187$, $t(\infty) = 12.83$, $p < 0.05$. The positive path coefficient for reactive CMS predicted if there is an increase in reactive CMS (i.e., more avoiding, dominating, and obliging), then a high AL increases the competing mode (i.e., more assertive and uncooperative behaviors). There is a significant negative relationship between reflective CMS and competing mode, $\beta = -0.263$, $t(\infty) = 4.99$, $p < 0.05$. Thus, if there is an increase in reflective CMS (i.e. more compromising and integrating), then a high AL results in a decrease in the competing mode (i.e. less assertive and uncooperative behaviors).

Table 3. Correlation matrix.

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Authentic leadership	0.842	0.032	–	0.241**	0.252*	0.442**	–0.417*	–0.510*	–0.224**	–0.443*
2. Collaborating mode	0.306	0.133		–	0.100*	0.310*	–0.128*	–0.092*	–0.415***	–0.120*
3. Compromising mode	0.271	0.169			–	0.147**	–0.029*	–0.207**	–0.657*	–0.473**
4. Accommodating mode	0.169	0.190				–	–0.289**	–0.300*	–0.482*	–0.327*
5. Competing mode	0.327	0.131					–	0.184*	–0.574*	–0.435**
6. Avoiding mode	0.139	0.179						–	–0.410**	–0.388**
7. Reactive CMS	–	–							–	0.129**
8. Reflective CMS	–	–								–

Note: CMS: conflict management style.
p* < 0.05; *p* < 0.01; ****p* < 0.10.

Table 4. Factor and cross-factor loadings, average variance extracted, and reliability.

Factor	AVE	α	Factor loadings	Cross-factor loadings
Authentic leadership	68.4	0.841		
Balanced processing			0.806	–
Internalized moral perspective			0.865	–
Leader self-awareness			0.860	–
Relationship transparency			0.775	–
Reactive conflict management style	44.8	0.697		
Avoiding style			0.685	0.142
Obliging style			0.793	0.283
Dominating style			0.685	–0.281
Reflective conflict management style	28.3	0.694		
Compromising style			0.884	–0.152
Integrating style			0.809	0.411

Note: AVE: average variance extracted.

Table 5. Summary of path analysis for authentic leadership and active constructive conflict.

Pathways	β	<i>R</i> ²
AL → Collaborating mode	0.444	0.197
AL → Compromising mode	0.375	0.140
AL → Accommodating mode	0.138	0.019
AL → Competing mode	–0.405	0.164
AL → Avoiding mode	–0.100	0.010

Note: AL: authentic leadership.
p* < 0.05; *p* < 0.01.

Statistical evidence in Table 6 shows support for hypothesis 2c that CMS moderates the relationship between AL style and compromising mode. There is a significant negative relationship between reactive CMS and compromising mode, $\beta = -0.180$, $t(\infty) = 6.86$, $p < 0.05$. Thus, if there is an increase in the reactive CMS (i.e. more avoiding, dominating, and obliging), then a high AL results in a decrease in the compromising mode (i.e. the participants arrive at less mutually acceptable decisions). There is significant positive relationship between reflective CMS and compromising mode, $\beta = 0.226$, $t(\infty) = 6.86$, $p < 0.05$. Thus, if there is an increase in the reflective CMS (i.e.,

more compromising and integrating), then a high AL results in an increase in the compromising mode (i.e., the participants arrive at more mutually acceptable decisions).

Table 6 shows support for hypothesis 2d: that CMS moderates the relationship between AL style and accommodating mode. There is a significant negative relationship between reactive CMS and accommodating mode, $\beta = -0.189$, $t(\infty) = 19.34$, $p < 0.05$. If there is an increase in the reactive CMS (i.e. more avoiding, dominating, and obliging), then a high AL results in a decrease in the accommodating mode (i.e. the leaders would not neglect their own concerns to satisfy the concerns of others). There is a significant positive relationship between reflective CMS and accommodating mode ($\beta = 0.289$, $t(\infty) = 10.83$, $p < 0.05$). The positive path coefficient for reflective CMS predicted if there is an increase in the reflective CMS (i.e. more compromising and integrating), then a high AL increases the accommodating mode (i.e. the leaders tend to neglect their own concerns to satisfy the concerns of others).

Table 6 shows support for hypothesis 2e that CMS moderates the relationship between AL style and avoiding mode. There is a significant positive relationship between reactive CMS and avoiding mode, $\beta = 0.393$, $t(\infty) = 28.18$, $p < 0.05$. If there is an increase in the reactive CMS (i.e. more avoiding, dominating, and obliging), then a high AL results in an increase in the avoiding mode (i.e. more adopting of a wait and watch approach in a conflict situation). There is a negative (yet nonsignificant) relationship between reflective CMS and avoiding mode ($\beta = -0.031$). The model predicted if there is an increase in the reflective CMS (i.e. more compromising and integrating), then a high AL results in no change in the avoiding mode (i.e. there is no effect on the adopting of a wait and see approach).

The results of the present study indicate there is a positive relationship between AL and some modes of ACC. This finding suggests leaders scoring higher on AL favor compromising, collaborating, and accommodating behavior when confronted with conflict, thus confirming hypothesis 1. The model predicted a high AL resulted in (a) increased compromising, (b) increased collaborating, (c) increased accommodating, (d) decreased competing, and (e) decreased avoiding.

According to Thomas and Kilmann (1974), leaders who score highly on collaborating approach conflict in an assertive and cooperative manner and often work creatively with the opposing party to find new solutions that expedite goal

Table 6. Path analysis of AL and reflective and reactive management style on ACC.

Pathway	Moderator variable: Reflective and reactive CMS	Moderator		Moderator and interaction term	
		β	R^2	$\Delta\beta$	ΔR^2
AL → Collaborating mode	Reactive	0.166*	0.214	0.130*	0.221
	Reflective	-0.014*	0.139	0.020*	0.145
AL → Compromising mode	Reactive	0.022	0.445	0.011	0.437
	Reflective	0.151	0.251	0.189	0.258
AL → Accommodating mode	Reactive	0.370	0.367	0.245	0.378
	Reflective	0.423	0.275	0.348	0.276
AL → Competing mode	Reactive	-0.282	0.392	-0.268	0.396
	Reflective	-0.150	0.242	-0.160	0.25
AL → Avoiding mode	Reactive	-0.469	0.499	-0.433	0.506
	Reflective	-0.352*	0.311	-0.352	0.311

Note: ACC: active constructive conflict; CMS: conflict management style; AL: authentic leadership.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

attainment for all involved. Collaborating and having an open mind means the leader is receptive to learning from others' insights and tries to find a creative solution to an interpersonal problem.

The statistical evidence also supported the second hypothesis (at the $p < 0.05$ level) that CMS moderates the correlations between AL and the five modes of ACC behavior. Five PLS path models explained 21.4–48.7% of the variance in the five modes.

If there is an increase in CMS, involving more avoiding, dominating, or obliging, then the PLS path models predicted an increase in AL is associated with (a) a decrease in collaborating, (b) an increase in competing, (c) a decrease in compromising, (d) a decrease in accommodating, and (e) an increase in avoiding. In contrast, if there is an increase in the levels of CMS involving more compromising and integrating, then the PLS path models predicted an increase in AL is associated with an increase in collaborating, (b) a decrease in competing, (c) an increase in compromising, and (d) an increase in accommodating; however, there is no change in avoiding.

Discussion of the research findings

Results from this study suggest when the leader is more authentic, he or she manages the conflict more constructively. Furthermore, operationalizing the subscales of the variables sheds greater light on what behaviors were more strongly correlated with the particular dimensions of the AL construct.

The results obtained in this present study support previous research in the area of conflict management and AL. Past research (Goleman, 1998; Thomas and Kilmann, 1974) identified several skills as hallmarks of collaborative conflict management, which also comprises some of the key components of the five modes of ACC.

This study found organizational leaders used the integrating style most frequently, followed by the compromising style and dominating style. The obliging and avoiding styles were the least commonly used among the leaders. This finding is consistent with previous research found the most commonly used styles—as reported by both leaders and subordinates—to be integrating, compromising, obliging, dominating, and avoiding, respectively. Another

similar study on healthcare leaders found the compromising style to be the most frequently used, followed by collaborating (integrating), accommodating (obliging), and, finally, competing (dominating) (Woodtli, 1987).

Previous research also reveals there are significant interrelationships among the different CMSs. The integrating style is positively related to the obliging and compromising styles and negatively related to the dominating style. The obliging and compromising styles are also positively related to the avoiding style. As noted by Rahim (1983), leaders need to be equipped with a range of strategies to handle conflict. Results of the present study have several implications for leaders, teams, and their organizations. The instruments used in this study can be leveraged as productive assessment tools to improve organizational employment practices (screening, hiring, orienting, evaluating, promoting, etc.), as well as to gain a better understanding of the interdependent dynamics of work groups and teams. Developing AL reduces reliance on outside dispute resolution services by showing that underlying interests, if unheeded, lead to conflict.

The success of well-integrated, high-performing teams is often attributed to the leader and his or her command of the various constructs (AL and ACC behaviors) and the moderators (CMS) presented here. Specifically, this research demonstrated how managers leverage the AL attributes of self-awareness and emotional regulation (i.e. avoiding inappropriate emotional outbursts) to determine the best course of action. Authentic leaders create systematic environments conducive to the operating principles and core values of the organization, allowing the team to achieve high-impact results in shorter periods of time (Harkins, 2006). The five CMSs explored here also offer leaders an opportunity to harness differences, and leverage conflict, as a catalyst for constructive change that leads an organization to greater innovation (Runde, 2012).

Leveraging the findings from this study, leaders can have a greater awareness of their own culture; understand the importance of constructive organizational environments; and identify the factors supporting the growth of their support teams, managers, and personnel (Senge, 2014). Accordingly, to thrive, leaders can create a constructive environment that encourages and equips their staff with tools to reach their full potential

(Walumbwa et al., 2010). The organization, therefore, has to entrust the leader and allow him or her to empower his or her respective teams with the tools necessary to achieve higher levels of engagement, motivation, growth, satisfaction, and teamwork. These constructive cultural norms are evident in environments in which quality is valued over quantity, creativity is valued over conformity, cooperation is believed to lead to better results than competition, and effectiveness is judged at the system level rather than the component level.

Leadership autonomy in practice

Leaders should create an environment that is comfortable with conflict (De Pree, 1989). Findings from this study support the idea that authentic leaders can lead to more constructive conflict behavior. Furthermore, leaders who are equipped by their organizations, entrusted with some autonomy, and given explicit latitude to practice a range of AL can recognize and skillfully handle conflict through collaboration and avoid overreliance on the compromising CMS (Rahim, 1983), which can often be detrimental to organizational growth.

Training programs developed to address AL, CMS, and ACC behaviors positively impact the organization's growth potential and allow authentic leaders to gain greater self-awareness and self-regulation (Qian et al., 2012), which translates into more effective leadership all around.

Cross-cultural diversity

Cultural context is a significant variable that should be considered in organizational leadership in an ever-increasing global marketplace. Work ethics, conflict management behaviors, communication styles, and leadership–management–labor relationships are different from country to country; therefore, a successful global authentic leader must recognize and understand the cultural backgrounds of his or her personnel and should be able to freely operate across a range of contexts. In a competitive global landscape, authentic leaders who can effectively manage diversity can also implement increasingly complex business strategies (Okoro, 2012).

Leaders need to appreciate cross-cultural differences and leverage them into amicable outcomes for all involved. Leaders must exert greater appreciation for individual cultural differences without personal bias. In doing so, leaders can better fulfill their responsibility to create a cross-cultural organization conducive to greater organizational innovation.

In recent years, the importance of cross-cultural diversity and AL has even prompted scholars to measure a leader's cultural intelligence or cultural competence (Rockstuhl et al., 2011). Because cultural competence is significantly related to individual international experiences, global leaders should be aware and appreciate the diversity they face in leadership practices.

Moreover, the importance of cross-cultural diversity is significantly more pronounced nowadays that leadership and management positions are increasingly occupied by females, culturally diverse individuals, older individuals, individuals with disabilities, and individuals with diverse lifestyles (Carr-Ruffino, 2005). On the surface, this wide

range of people translates into new challenges and inherent workplace conflict; however, it also offers organizations new and fresh ideas and perspectives, leading to a unique competitive global advantage. Leaders who can recognize and respect such inherent differences and can effectively navigate the complexities and avoid racism, sexism, and ageism using the tools in this research can further enhance organizational competitiveness and performance.

Conflict as catalyst to innovation

Another purpose of this research is to explore change and conflict as it inevitably occurs within organizations. These differences often create greater relationship complexity and tension among personnel. Whether it's cross-cultural diversity or workplace disputes, tensions can have negative results; yet, they can also be an organization's greatest asset—if properly harnessed. An authentic leader with self-awareness and a range of ACC behaviors can draw such strength from diversity or conflict to initiate positive innovation.

A prime example of a leader's ability to instigate constructive conflict as a catalyst for positive change is Tim Cook CEO of Apple, a master at constructive conflict (Lashinsky, 2015). Cook's meetings with subordinates often last 5–6 h as he relentlessly goes over every detail. His subordinates prepare for the meetings like they were preparing for a last, most decisive test. If perchance any number was not right or missing, Cook seizes on it and as a result, these meetings could be intimidating. Cook often solicits an inquiry from a representative many times. Over and over, Cook asks questions: Why is that?; What does it signify?; I don't get it, Why are you not making it clear? Cook's conflict style has played out in the public sphere, where he criticized the BBC for a documentary critical of Apple's labor practices in China. Although Cook adopted a competitive approach, with the BBC as he did with his subordinates, in the end, he pursued collaborative solutions, including partnerships with NGOs to ensure 60-h working weeks in China. This is an example of a contrarian leadership style.

Contrarian leadership takes best practices and shows why leaders should sometimes do the opposite. This present study's findings stretch the view of leadership practices to include this contrarian approach to conflict management. Specifically, collaboration within leadership can be enhanced by adding contrary actions to accomplish a common goal. The leadership has to strike a balance between collaboration and leadership. This can be particularly in the context of cross-functional teams, where conflict management is a fundamental challenge.

Any organization can celebrate organizational change, harness its inherent systematic differences, and leverage its diversity of human capital—each person's capabilities, engagement, performance, creativity, integrity, and commitment to quality and customer care—to effectively succeed in ways that were historically not possible. This contrarian approach, integrating collaboration with competition, can be particularly useful in the maturity stage of the organizational life cycle when organizations often prioritize planning and routine work focus over innovative expansion. This study validates that authentic leader can

leverage their organizational climate to empower employees to embrace differences and in so doing elevate the organization's competitive advantage.

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