

# THE INFLUENCE OF AN AUTHENTIC INDIVIDUAL: ARTHUR HENRY KING (1910-2000)

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*“The people influenced by Arthur Henry King are  
themselves, exemplary leaders.”*

## INTRODUCTION

The influence of legendary Brigham Young University football coach LaVell Edwards (1930-2016) was captured by Hall of Fame Quarterback Steve Young upon Edward’s passing: “He had the ability to look at you and get a sense of you and be able to have a vision for your future. To see things that you didn’t see, to see potential in you that you didn’t know about.... It was personal to you” (Scribner, 2016). This research study highlights the influence of an authentic leader (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Banks, McCauley, Gardner, & Guler, 2016; Sparrowe, 2005), like Edwards, and aims to capture how positive leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Cameron, 2013; Quinn, Dutton, & Cameron, 2003) influences those who are led and lifted by authentic leaders. In the LaVell Edwards and Steve Young relationship, we see the influence of the leader in the development of an exemplary person. This study seeks to capture and describe what it is about authentic leaders that is of value in the lives of those who are influenced. Specifically, this qualitative study focuses on the authentic leadership influence of one individual: Arthur Henry King (1910–2000).

In this paper, we review the literature on authentic leadership, describe the methodology framing this study, and introduce how Arthur Henry King was discovered and identified as an authentic leader. We then capture a narrative of Arthur Henry King through the experience of those who were influenced by him and briefly review the writings of Arthur Henry King relative to authentic leadership.

**AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP**

The concept of authentic leadership grew out of the work by Avolio and Gardner (2005), and is part of positive forms of leadership and positive organizational scholarship (Cameron, 2013; Quinn et al., 2003), having roots in positive psychology—a discipline developed by Martin Seligman (Seligman, 2002; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Other forms of leadership closely associated with authentic leadership include transformational (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Banks et al., 2016), charismatic, servant, and spiritual (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). The concept of authentic leadership expands to address authentic leaders, authentic leadership, and authentic leadership development (Avolio & Gardner). What is of concern here are the constructs that characterize authentic leaders. We are not necessarily concerned about the development of authentic leaders, but the conceptual make-up of an authentic leader. As Avolio and Gardner (2005) indicate, the “development of authentic leaders ... is more complicated, because it involves the development of an authentic relationship between leaders and followers” (p. 322), whereas authentic leadership development is concerned with developing programs that develop leaders.

The definition of authenticity used in this study is from Kernis (2003) who describes authenticity as “reflecting the unobstructed operation of one’s true, or core, self in one’s daily enterprise” (p. 13). Further, Kernis outlines four components to authenticity: (a) self-awareness, (b) unbiased processing, (c) relational authenticity, and (d) authentic behavior/action. Each of these components of authentic leadership are reviewed below.

**SELF-AWARENESS**

Part of the definition outlined by Kernis (2003) is an understanding of self. This includes knowing and being aware of values, emotions, goals, talents, and strengths (Banks et al., 2016). Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, and Peterson (2008) developed a measurement through confirmatory factor analysis and with predicative validity as a result of structural equation modeling. This instrument has two items for the category of self-awareness: (a) “Seeks feedback to improve interactions with others” and (b) “Accurately describes how others view his or her capabilities” (p. 121). Add to this an accurate understanding of one’s weaknesses or contradicting points (Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005) and “the role of these contradictions in influencing one’s thoughts, feelings, actions and behaviors” (p. 377). Similarly, Kernis explained that leaders need to be aware of their “inherent polarities” (p. 13). For example, as individuals, we are both introverted and extroverted with an inherent dominant characteristic, but we each represent both in our lives and recognize that both exist and are important for use in different situations we are in throughout our lives. Self-awareness is linked to

emotional intelligence, and “some of the benefits of emotional intelligence for leadership are realized through leaders’ emotional self-awareness” (Ilies et al., 2005, p. 378). The results of increased self-awareness are increased self-acceptance, autonomy, and leadership effectiveness, and may result in a positive effect on follower behavior (Ilies et al., 2005). Another important aspect of self-awareness pointed out by Ilies et al. (2005) is that it is important for a leader to trust what they know about themselves.

### **UNBIASED OR BALANCED PROCESSING**

Questioning how a person processes self-critical information or knowledge includes “not denying, distorting, exaggerating, or ignoring private knowledge, internal experiences, and externally based evaluative information” (Kernis, 2003, p. 14). Walumbwa et al. (2008) refer to this as balanced processing, while Ilies et al. (2005) and Kernis (2003) refer to this concept as unbiased processing. Ilies et al. see unbiased processing as “the heart of personal integrity and character” which has implications for both the “leaders’ decisions and actions” and the leaders’ well-being (pp. 378-379). Balanced processing is when leaders consider “others’ opinions and all available relevant information in decision-making while maintaining a relatively objective lens” (Banks et al., 2016, p. 635). Ilies et al. reference Dweck (2000) and her work on incremental and entity theories or mindsets describing how unbiased processing is similar to the incremental mindset in seeking out alternative perspectives that challenge the way a leader might see a decision. With the incremental mindset, an aspect of unbiased or balanced processing, a leader is more concerned with learning and growth and gaining insight as opposed to proving to others that they are right. Two items identified by Walumbwa et al. in their instrument for unbiased or balanced processing are (a) “Solicits views that challenge his or her deeply held positions” and (b) “Listens carefully to different points of view before coming to conclusions” (p. 121).

### **RELATIONAL TRANSPARENCY**

Relational authenticity is the original term identified by Kernis (2003), but others (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008) prefer the term relational transparency “because it better reflects the open and transparent manner whereby authentic leaders and followers are posited to share information with each other and close others” and is “more descriptive” (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 317). Relational transparency, which is not an independent concept separate from self-awareness, balanced processing, and authentic behavior (Ilies et al., 2005), is concerned with how a leader interacts with, and how open and truthful they are with others. Relational transparency is allowing others to see the real you, good and bad, through appropriate self-disclosure, mutual intimacy and trust (Kernis, 2003). Relational transparency may exhibit itself

most clearly in the relationships leaders have with those around them, including past relationships, and measured through peer or follower ratings (Ilies et al., 2005). The result of relational authenticity or transparency may lead to positive and meaningful relationships with others. The two items Walumbwa et al. (2008) specified in their instrument for relational transparency are (a) “Says exactly what he or she means” and (b) “Is willing to admit mistakes when they are made” (p. 121).

### **AUTHENTIC BEHAVIOR/ACTION**

Authentic leaders take authentic action, which enact the behavioral intents of leaders and verifies if a leader is acting in alignment with their true self, including their “values, preferences, and needs” or acting to impress others, attain rewards, or avoid punishment (Ilies et al., 2005; Kernis, 2003). Authentic action requires a sensitive balance between acting falsely and self-preservation within political or social environments or situational demands where their true feelings may damage an important image that must be maintained (Ilies et al., 2005). As Ilies et al. (2005) further describe, there is a difference between authentic leaders filling roles as actors within an organization not related to authenticity. However, the expression of a leader’s beliefs or “authentic self-monitoring” is revealed through their interactions (p. 381). The result of authentic behavior and actions for a leader is eudemonic well-being or happiness where the leader acts “in accordance with their deep-seated values [and] are more likely to experience flow ... be intrinsically motivated and personally expressive” (p. 381). The two items Walumbwa et al. (2008) use in their instrument are (a) “Demonstrates beliefs that are consistent with actions” and (b) “Makes decisions based on his/her core beliefs” (p. 121).

### **DISCOVERING THE INFLUENCE OF ARTHUR HENRY KING (1910-2000)**

This study seeks to explore the influence of an authentic leader: Arthur Henry King. The justification for focusing on King was the discovery of the many people, influential in their own right, who claim Arthur as influential in their lives. The following are four distinct experiences by the lead author and how he came to discover Arthur Henry King as an influential individual who was authentic in his leadership and mentoring of those he interacted with.

C. Terry Warner is a retired philosophy faculty member at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah and founder of the Arbinger institute—A business and leadership consulting firm focused on the problem of self-deception. During 2011, I watched, for the first time, a video on YouTube of C. Terry Warner describing how Arbinger began (Maddukuri, 2009). In the video, Warner describes the influence of his

colleague at BYU, Arthur Henry King. Warner described a conversation where King and Warner were discussing a “basic...text in linguistics” and King posed a question to Warner “*Does the speaker of a sentence have any claim to understand what he is saying better than other people—better than the hearers?*” Warner explains how he went home that night and wrote 25 pages by hand answering this question and that if he could understand what he had written he would understand self-deception.

During 2014 or 2015 I was reading an online news article about Sterling Van Wagenen, a co-creator with Robert Redford of the Sundance Film Festival. The specific article mentioned how Sterling was a student of Arthur Henry King and how Arthur had influenced Sterling in his career in a significant way. The initial reference is no longer found. However, the significant influence of King on Van Wagenen is documented through personal email communication (Van Wagenen, 2016). Through this communication I learned how King introduced Van Wagenen to film scholars who helped define his perspective as a filmmaker. Benson (2011) documents Van Wagenen’s contribution to the creation of the Sundance Film Festival.

In the Spring of 2012 I received in the US Postal Mail, as a graduate of the McKay School of Education at Brigham Young University, a copy of the McKay Today Magazine and read an article by Russel T. Osguthorpe (Osguthorpe, 2012), professor of Instructional Psychology at Brigham Young University and ecclesiastical leader. In this article, Osguthorpe referenced his relationship with Arthur Henry King and how King taught him and encouraged him through their personal conversations.

During 2014 I came across an article written by Joe Cannon, then the editor of the Deseret News (Cannon, 2010), about his experience and interaction with Arthur Henry King when he was a student at Brigham Young University. Cannon shared in the article how students he associated with, while in the BYU Law School, sat in on Professor King’s lectures. Cannon reflects on the significant impact those lectures had on him.

## **METHODS**

This study is a phenomenological and hermeneutic study (Gadamer, 1975; Heidegger, 1962; Husserl, 1964) utilizing Ricoeur (1984, 1985, 1988) and drawing on the framework by Sparrowe (2005). The phenomenon studied is the authentic leadership influence of Arthur Henry King. For this study, a total of 7 (3 Females and 4 Males) individuals were identified using the snowball sampling method and were interviewed because they self-identified as having been influenced in a profound way by Arthur Henry King. Sparrowe (2005) points out the “importance of others as sources of narrative possibilities...

both as a source of alternative plot lines and in relation to esteem and regard” and that a leader develops their leadership identity from the narratives of “provisional selves he or [she] has available from friends, colleagues, and acquaintances” (p. 435). In this study, Arthur Henry King is presented as an example of an authentic leader for possible leaders to emulate.

### **WHO IS ARTHUR HENRY KING?**

From a personal history compiled by his fourth wife Kathleen Patricia King and provided to the researchers by Fred Pinnegar, Arthur Henry King was born on February 20, 1910 in Gosport, Alverstoke, Hants, England and had one sister. He grew up in a musical home and at one time he considered becoming a concert pianist. The family’s religious beliefs, while he was growing up, were Quaker. His father worked the land and was a conscientious objector during the first world war. When Arthur was nine, his father died. Arthur’s mother, amid criticism from family members, refused to take Arthur out of school for him to work and help support the family, preferring instead to have Arthur focus on his schooling. He excelled in this education, learning many languages, studying English at Pembroke College in Cambridge, and becoming the youngest person to receive the Charles Oldham Shakespeare Scholarship. He graduated from Cambridge in 1931 and went to Sweden where he studied at Lund and Stockholm Universities and received his Doctorate at Lund in 1941. His first two marriages ended in divorce. His third wife died after 14 years of marriage in 1962. He spent 34 years, until his death, with his fourth wife and second cousin, Patricia. Arthur worked with the British Council starting in 1943, serving in several countries between 1943 and 1971. King started teaching at Brigham Young University in 1971. King was a Shakespeare scholar, being twice decorated by the Queen of England, and was a scholar and administrator in the teaching of English as a second language.

When King came to BYU as a Shakespeare scholar in the Department of English he was asked to teach multiple Shakespeare plays each semester. King refused to teach, more than one play a semester, claiming that he would teach one play in-depth, providing the necessary tools for the students to study additional Shakespeare plays on their own. King Lear was the Shakespeare play King would teach most often to his students. Ultimately King would end up in the Philosophy Department, in part because of his relationship with Warner.

The people interviewed for this research study were identified, through snowball sampling, as having been influenced by Arthur Henry King. Many of these individuals were known in relationship to King and are still identified within their continued

social group as ‘honoraries’ or ‘honorary children’, denoting their close relationship with King. Cannon (2010) described his observation of those who were considered King’s honorary children, though he himself indicated he was not an honorary: “these were remarkable young [people], and I was deeply impressed that though very different in personality, they each bore the strong imprint of Professor King, the common denominator among them” (§ 1). The following is a brief description of each of the individuals, or honoraries, interviewed in this study, capturing their relationship with King and their current role.

- Female who worked as a research assistant for many years, including while raising a family, is now an attorney.
- Female who sat in his classes delved deep in a scholarly way into research teaching and learning, works at a university helping to develop faculty as teachers.
- Female who worked as a research assistant for Arthur, went on to become a college professor in education.
- Male, studied with King as a new faculty member. Went on to study film and philosophy. Current philosophy professor.
- Male, developed a personal relationship with King while in graduate school. Curator of many of King’s personal writings, including poetry and facilitator of continued relationships among the king honoraries. Current advisor and mentor to undergraduate students.
- Male, considered a grandchild honorary, studied film, music, acting, and philosophy. Became a professor, now a business consultant.
- Male, informally mentored by King as an undergrad and continued a personal relationship for many years. Business owner.

### **AUTHENTICITY OF AHK**

Two initial themes emerged from the interviews: listening and learning together. These describe the relationship King had with the honoraries and highlight King’s authentic leadership and influence. These themes are reviewed below.

### **LISTENING**

Those interviewed describe how Arthur was a good listener. One interviewee stated, “people felt like he would listen and that he would care.” Another described how “you were able to talk to him very frankly about” any issue and that “people were perfectly comfortable talking to him and he ... to them without any ... sense of class or division.”

Still another explained that “Arthur attracted all kinds of people to him, some were unstable but he was willing to listen to them and be their friend.” One interviewee compared the way Arthur listened to Cordelia, the favorite daughter of *King Lear*, and her own coming to herself: “Arthur’s experience with working with people is in a way analogous with her, it is helping them find their way through their own posturing, their own pretentious[ness], and their own self-consciousness and fear until they can find and speak the truth.”

The experience of one of the interviewees captures the kind of listener Arthur Henry King was. This student, while an undergraduate, was contemplating giving up on his education, because he felt like he was not really learning anything, and he did not feel like he knew how to learn in the way that would help him learn from his teachers. As he shared his concerns with a fellow student, the fellow student suggested that he visit with Arthur before making his decision to drop out. An appointment was scheduled with King for 10 minutes, but the one-on-one meeting ended up taking two hours. The student shared his concerns about continuing his education and said, “I just have one question. How does a person learn how to learn?” King proceeded to ask the student several questions about his background, personal growing up experiences, and former experience with learning. The interviewee said, “He really wanted to understand me, what I had experienced in education up until then.” King then proceeded to share his personal insights and observations about the student as an individual, his personality, and his potential. The last topic of conversation began with King asking if he could share and talk about his “personal feelings of education.” This interviewee’s description of this two-hour long interview with King was, “I had never experienced something like that.... I had been listened to more carefully than I had ever been listened to at any other time in my life.... I had this feeling he was listening to every word that I was saying and really trying to understand me.... It was a very reverential experience.” This interviewee shared that he went home and wrote the following in his journal: “I think I have had the most important two hours with any human being.”

One of the interviewees referenced an essay written by Brenda Ueland (1993) titled *Tell Me More* in which Ueland describes the great thing that listening is. This interviewee indicated that this was the kind of listener Arthur was and the way he affected others:

When we are listened to, it creates us, makes us unfold and expand. Ideas actually begin to grow within us and come to life. You know how if a person laughs at your jokes you become funnier and funnier, and if he does not, every tiny little joke you weazens



up and dies. Well, that is the principle of it. It makes people happy and free when they are listened to. And if you are a listener, it is the secret of having a good time in society (because everybody around you becomes lively and interesting), of comforting people, of doing them good. (p. 205)

### LEARNING WITH OTHERS

A common description by those who were interviewed is of Arthur sitting down one-on-one or in small groups to read together a Shakespeare play or other scholarly work and every word and line being considered for its meaning and understanding. “When we worked, we sat side by side and worked together.” The interviewees described how he loved to interact with students, often offered critiques, and “pushed them to read much more carefully.” One of the interviewees described how they “sat down together and we were starting *Othello*. [Arthur would ask] what do you find interesting about this page?” Another interviewee said, “Nobody ever critiqued more brutally than Arthur, but it never bothered me because I knew that he knew I could do better, it felt complimentary.” From another interviewee, “If he used words he didn’t think... you knew, he would on the spot explain it. You never felt dumb or less than when you worked for him.” One interviewee described how as a child he sat with King and one of his siblings as King read the novel *A Tale of Two Cities*. What stood out to the interviewee was the reverential nature of how King approached the novel. Though it was not King’s first time reading the book, he treated it as a sacred learning experience.

Several of the interviewees described experiences of going to Arthur’s house as a student for social or learning experiences. The social experiences involved sharing of talents, especially music, where Arthur would ask students to sing or play the piano. Frequently Arthur and his wife Patricia “would invite students to their home if they were struggling with a grade and he would ask them to bring what material they were working on and what they were reading.” “He was the first professor that I knew very well. He and Patricia would host students about once a semester.” Another explained how he would identify students who were struggling and call “them in and meet with them. If there was an individual that was a problem, then he would call them in and meet with them.” The critique process was described by one of the interviewees:

He would read your writing and he never criticized your writing. He never said ‘well this is bad and this is bad’ or he never tried to get you to write a certain way. He would say ‘After reading your writing, I think you should read this author... And let’s talk about what you see and what you think.

One of the interviewees explained how the interaction she had with Arthur “influenced the way that [she] interact[s] with [her] students.” This same person said; “I believe that I am a scholar because of Arthur, I learned how to learn from him.”

One of the interviewees described the personal interactions with Arthur over many years as, “the distance between us and him, age wise, culture, education, and everything it gave us a window on the world that we would never have any other way.” This interviewee used an analogy of a roller coaster describing the learning experience with Arthur:

We are on a roller coaster now and we are going to go down this roller coaster. We know that we are going to go up and ... we are going to go down. But we are going to go down this together and I'm going to hold you children with me and it was wonderful, it totally shaped my life.

The people who had an opportunity to learn from King as honoraries had the opportunity to learn from someone who appears to have seen himself and those around him as incremental learners (Dweck, 2000, 2006). He nurtured learners, but more than helping others learn, he grew as a learner and allowed those who were learning with him to grow with him in an authentic way.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the framework of authentic leadership as outlined allows us to look for and find uniquely authentic individuals who are influential to learn from. We learn that Arthur Henry King was an authentic leader who put the needs of those he was leading and mentoring as a priority. He took the time to get to know them by listening and learning from and with them. As he truly knew them and developed a trusting relationship with them, he was able to advise and mentor them in their intellectual development. The lives of the people impacted by Arthur Henry King may be the most telling indicator of his influence. The people influenced by Arthur Henry King are themselves, exemplary leaders. Avolio and Gardner (2005) describe a central characteristic of authentic leaders is that they give “priority to developing associates to be leaders” (p. 326). Perhaps the most compelling sign and determining aspect that defines Arthur Henry King as an authentic leader is that the people who were influenced by him describe him as authentic, even while describing many of his flaws and shortcomings. Walumbwa et al. (2008) state that:

Authentic leaders show to others that they genuinely desire to understand their own leadership to serve others more effectively....

By encouraging diverse viewpoints and building networks of collaborative relationships with followers, they lead in a manner that followers perceive and describe as authentic... (p. 96)

Perhaps the most central supporting element of the authentic leadership of Arthur Henry King is captured both in a statement about leadership by one of the interviewees and by Arthur Henry King himself in his writings about authenticity. The following comment from the interviewee speaks to the influence of Arthur Henry King as a leader, particularly how his version of leadership meant focusing on others' needs and mentoring those needs:

Leadership is often portrayed as the person who takes charge and leads the way to make the change. The leader is the one who immerses themselves in the needs of those around him/her. Influence, in the end, is responsiveness. If you want to lead, [you] have to be disrupted, moved off of your program.

Arthur Henry King captured his own thoughts about this topic and seems to address most clearly why he was influential in the lives of many, even 16 years after his death:

One of the mistakes we make over and over again in life is to go directly for the things we think are important. But if we aim at self-fulfillment, we shall never be fulfilled. If we aim at education, we shall never be educated.... These things are indirect, supreme results of doing something else, and the something else is service... it is trying to do the right thing, the thing that needs to be done at each moment. (King, 1998, p. 265)

Authentic leaders possess an accurate understanding of self, are balanced in their processing of information about themselves, are authentic in their relationships with others, and constantly act in authentic ways. What we have discovered through this research is that Arthur Henry King was authentic in his leadership and was ultimately influential because he was authentic in all of the ways an authentic leader is authentic. He utilized that authenticity for the benefit of those he led to make them better people. His leadership was about the people around him and doing for them what was needed for their personal growth and development.

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