

Explicating Authenticity in Public Relations

Ejae Lee

Master's Student at Indiana University

I. Research Questions

- How was authenticity defined and which attributes or constructs of the concept were emphasized in various academic fields?
- What would be the definition and constructs of authenticity in public relations?

II. Theoretical Framework

- This study explicates authenticity following by Chaffee's (1991) iterative process of concept explication—focal concept, literature review, meaning analysis, review of the tentative definition, and modified definition.
- This study explores various definitions and constructs of authenticity in a) human communication (Kernis & Golman, 2006; Wood et al., 2008), b) online communication (Lim et al., 2015), c) leadership management (Gardner et al., 2005), d) brand communication (Beverland, 2005; 2006), and e) tourism (Wang, 1999; Taylor, 2001).

III. Several Observations from Multidisciplinary Literature on Authenticity

- As for one of the important construct of authenticity, it is necessary to focus on how an individual, an entity, or groups *are aware of one's true self*.
- Different characteristics of objects are considered to be authentic objects in various areas: i.e., an individual, an online media user, a leader, a brand(history), and a tourism(places).
- It is possible to determine authenticity from not only *internal* perspectives but also *external* perspectives on the basis of one-self.
- It is scarcely possible to consider that a certain individual or entity is authentic if there is a huge *difference between an expressed one and its true-self*.
- Authenticity can be determined depending on the extent to which a certain message, behavior, or product is authentic; That is, a certain *expressed one* can be a standard for deciding whether or not it is authentic.
- Some constructs—relational orientation, accepting external influence, the expression of real me in the column of the outside perspective—need to have a **relationship with others' perception or judgment** which can influence whether the expressed message or action is authentic.

IV. Tentative Conclusion: True-self awareness & Genuineness

- **An organization** is an object which is authentic or not based on the two perspectives—*“organization perspective”* and *“public perspective”*.
- **Key stakeholder publics** can determine whether an expressed message or a behavior from the organization's true-self is authentic.
- As for the essential constructs in public relations, true-self awareness involves whether and how an organization is aware of its true-self and genuineness is concerned with how the organization express the perceived true-self as a certain form of communications—

Transparency

Consistency

Engagement

Decision-making style - listen to both sides

Values/Morals

Authority

Identify

Truthfulness

Authentic organizations -

Authentic organizational leads - Obama - Tim Cook

- Political

↳ organization
lead more for the person

have to consider antecedents of authenticity

Some messages delivered in new media vs traditional

content also matters -

Behind the scenes worked better than scripted

assuming authentic = good