

- 2 What does it mean to say ‘true leaders create more leaders, not more followers’? How far do you agree with this statement? Give reasons for your answer.
- 3 How practical is it to argue that leadership can be substituted or neutralized? Can we create leadership substitutes or neutralizers in any industry or organization? Why or why not?
- 4 Choose two perspectives or theories of leadership – the one you liked best and the one you liked least. Compare your choices with those of your peers and try to find out why you and your peers chose those theories or approaches. What was it about the theories that you liked or disliked? What were their strengths and weaknesses? Take note of how and why you and your peers differed or agreed.
- 5 How can contemporary leaders use social media to build followers?
- 6 How might a leader be able to inspire people through the principles espoused by self-determination theory?
- 7 What is coaching and why is it a critical component of leadership?
- 8 Is it realistic to assume that the concept of positive psychology can be applied in the business world? Why or why not?
- 9 Set up a class debate titled ‘There is no such thing as authentic leadership’. Have one team argue for the statement and one team against it. Both groups should use current research supporting and critiquing positive notions of leadership such as authentic leadership, to substantiate their claims.

CASE STUDY

Jacinda Arden – an Authentic Leader in a Time of Crisis

Jacinda Arden was the 40th Prime Minister of New Zealand, in office from 2017 to 2023. During her time as Prime Minister she attracted global attention both for the way she did the job and for the ways she left the job. We begin this case with a discussion of her qualities as a leader.

The qualities that have made Jacinda Arden New Zealand’s most popular prime minister in a century were on display as she took an earthquake in her stride during a live television interview. ‘We’re fine,’ she declared cheerfully as the 5.9-magnitude quake shook New Zealand’s parliament house in Wellington for 15 seconds. ‘I’m not under any hanging lights.’ Her coolness under pressure, self-discipline and the decisiveness of her government’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic led some commentators to call Arden the most effective national leader in the world.

But the key ingredient to her popularity and effectiveness was her authenticity. In the words of Helen Clark, New Zealand’s prime minister from 1999 to 2008, Arden is a natural and empathetic communicator who doesn’t preach at people, but instead signals that she’s ‘standing with them’:

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'They may even think: "Well, I don't quite understand why the government did that, but I know she's got our back." There's a high level of trust and confidence in her because of that empathy.'

How we Respond to Authentic Leaders

The results from a large-scale survey conducted by Andrei Lux and his colleagues (2023) were decisive: employees were, on average, 40% more likely to want to come to work when they saw their line manager as an authentic leader; and those who came to work because they wanted to be there were 61% more engaged and 60% more satisfied with their jobs.

According to Claudia Peus and her co-authors of a seminal 2012 article on authentic leadership, 'Authentic leaders are guided by sound moral convictions and act in concordance with their deeply held values, even under pressure. They are keenly aware of their views, strengths and weaknesses, and strive to understand how their leadership impacts others.'

Authentic leaders know themselves and what truly matters, they recognize their own strengths and weaknesses. They follow a moral compass because they have the courage to stand up and act on their values, rather than bending to social norms. Authentic leaders are aware of their own biases and strive to see things from multiple viewpoints. Acting in the best interests of the collective requires a lucid and compassionate understanding of how our actions affect other people. Authentic leaders cultivate open and honest relationships through active self-disclosure.

Support for an authentic leadership approach isn't unanimous. A notable critic, Professor Jeffrey Pfeffer, has stated that: 'Leaders don't need to be true to themselves; in fact, being authentic is the opposite of what they should do' (Zimmerman, 2015). But Lux et al.'s (2023) research reveals the power of authenticity to unite people behind a collective cause.

What was the Ardern Factor?

Jacinda Ardern became prime minister of New Zealand in 2017, the same year Donald Trump took power in the USA. They could not have been more different: in age and sex, in politics and in style. Where Trump's brash, shoot-from-the-hip tweets sparked outrage, Ardern's humane and empathetic approach sought to strike a conciliatory tone. Nowhere was this more evident than with her response to the Christchurch terrorist attacks when she said, 'they are us', embracing the immigrant and refugee communities targeted.

Ardern showed the power of a different kind of leadership, but what will her legacy be? When we talk about leadership in my gender politics classes at the University of Bath, wrote Hilde Cofe (2023), one name above all others came up in discussions: Jacinda Ardern. Ask students which inspirational political leaders they see in the world today, and Ardern always tops the polls. Ask if they can remember any of New Zealand's former prime ministers before her and there's silence.

Ardern embodied a new kind of politics, one that has been nicknamed a 'politics of kindness'. At the press conference announcing New Zealand's first lockdown in the face of Covid-19, she said: 'Be strong, and be kind.' During her time in office, these words would become synonymous with her politics and style. She even mentioned the word kindness in her resignation speech.

Her decision to step down is as ground-breaking as the way in which she shaped the job and her leadership style. In times when populist leaders with hyper-masculine leadership styles took control from Brazil to Hungary, she brought compassion, kindness and empathy to politics. Her leadership style, and more generally her leadership, inspired many, particularly women. Being the youngest female prime minister for New Zealand ever, she was an exception in what is generally still seen as a 'man's world'.

In the academic literature on gender and political representation, a distinction is made between descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation. The first concentrates on the number of women in positions of power. The second is concerned with the effect women's representation has on policy outcomes, that is: do we get different kinds of policy decisions because women are making them? And the third suggests that women politicians are role models for women in society, inspiring them to engage in political activity and discussion and serving to increase political trust.

Being New Zealand's youngest female prime minister and only the second in the world to become a mother while in office, Ardern inspired many women and showed how young women can take up leadership roles and do it in their own way. As she said when announcing her resignation: 'I hope I leave New Zealand with a belief that you can be kind but strong, empathetic but decisive, optimistic but focused, and that you can be your own kind of leader, one who knows when it's time to go.'

What is Her Legacy?

With this message, she highlighted how everyone can do leadership in their own way, including in a connecting and empathetic way with a strong human touch – a style not commonly associated with politics. Hearing of Ardern's resignation, US presidential candidate Kamala Harris said she had 'inspired millions around the world' and had offered a new way of doing politics.

Equally important has been how she has called out gender inequalities. A well-known, and widely shared on social media, example was when she met with the then prime minister of Finland, Sanna Marin – also a woman and relatively young – in 2023 and was asked by a journalist whether they were just meeting because they were both young (women)? Ardern quickly queried whether former US president Barack Obama and John Key (the previous New Zealand prime minister) would have been asked the same question when they met; clearly stating that they were not only meeting because of their gender but were there to talk about substance and politics.

Questions

- 1 What made Jacinda Ardern an authentic leader?
- 2 What were the key crises that defined her leadership?
- 3 What role do crises play in authentic leadership?

Note

This case was constructed by Stewart Clegg from information in an article by Andrei Alexander Lux (2020) from the website not for profit people (<https://nfppeople.com.au/2020/06/four->

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lessons-on-being-an-authentic-leader-from-jacinda-ardern/) and from an article by Hilde Cofe (2023) in *The Conversation*, on ‘Jacinda Ardern: the “politics of kindness” is a lasting legacy’. Jacinda Ardern has been a fascinating subject for leadership studies. Among the 33 Google Scholar results for ‘authentic leadership’ and ‘Jacinda Ardern’, you will find an article by Ace Simpson and colleagues (2022) on ‘Theorizing compassionate leadership from the case of Jacinda Ardern’, which may be helpful in answering the question. Some of the other scholars mentioned may well be useful.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Check out this great website created by Dave Wraith on leadership and the movies. It contains lots of discussions about films, as well as other useful resources on leading: www.movieleadership.com.
- The website, “The Rest is Politics: Leading”, hosted by Alastair Campbell and Rory Stewart, has some really interesting interviews on it with well-known leaders drawn from many walks of life, not exclusively politics (<https://www.youtube.com/@restispolitics>).
- A recent book on leadership is by a team that includes one of the authors of this book: M. P. e Cunha, S. R. Clegg, A. Rego and M. Berti (2021) *Paradoxes of Power and Leadership*. It contains a full discussion about the power implications of various conceptions of leadership.
- A great book on leadership is John Antonakis and David D. Day’s (2018) *The Nature of Leadership*, 3rd edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. This book has chapters by some of the leading and upcoming thinkers on leadership research, theory and practice and gives you a detailed and in-depth coverage of all things related to leadership.
- An interesting recent book, is written by two female political leaders, Julia Gillard (ex-Australian Prime Minister, currently chair of the Beyond Blue mental health organization and chair of the Global Partnership for Education) and Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (ex-Nigerian Finance Minister, currently head of the World Trade Organization), titled *Women and Leadership: Real Lives, Real Lessons*.
- While none of us (the authors) are fans of war, a powerful but great film about leadership is *Hacksaw Ridge* (Gibson, 2016). This is a true story about Private First-Class Desmond T. Doss. Doss finds himself conflicted about his values as a pacifist but also his belief in defending the freedoms of democracy. He enlists to fight in the Second World War and goes into the frontline of battle, never picking up a gun.