LEADERSHIP IN A MILITARY CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIVE ORGANIZATION:

PERCEPTIONS OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP AMONG SPECIAL AGENTS

by

Precious JeanBatiste

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

Genuine, effective leadership in law enforcement establishes the climate of the organization. Scholars have comprehensively explored the influence of different leadership styles in various criminal justice organizations from multiple facets; however, minimal information exists about how authentic leadership is perceived by special agents assigned to a military criminal investigative organization. This qualitative phenomenological study will provide an increased understanding of authentic leadership from the perspective of special agents assigned to the Criminal Investigation Division (CID), the U.S. Army's primary criminal investigative organization, and the Department of Defense's (DoD) premier investigative organization. The researcher will use a qualitative research design to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of special agents to understand authentic leadership's role in a military criminal investigative organization. This research methodology analyzes the perception of military special agents, with emphasis on their experience while assigned as a "case agent," regarding authentic leadership and how it influences the investigative process. This study contributes to the field of criminal justice leadership body of knowledge by providing an understanding of how special agents perceive authentic leadership at higher echelons in the organization and how this perception affects the quality of conducting criminal investigations. Extensive empirical research focuses on authentic leadership from a leader's perspective in many criminal justice organizations. However, limited research focuses on authentic leadership within a military criminal investigative organization. This study addresses special agents who actively work cases that are not in a leadership position and their perceptions and insight concerning authentic leadership identified in recent leadership research and literature.

*Keywords:* authentic leadership, agent, perception, law enforcement

## Copyright Page

**Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my father who told me at a very young age that I was "born to be a leader." I know that you are looking down on me today with pride. Also, to my family and friends who believed in me, prayed for me, and continuously encouraged me during this journey, I appreciate each and every one of you. Lastly, this dissertation is dedicated to every active-duty military service member who persevered and obtained a college degree while selflessly serving our great country.

**Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank God for giving me the strength, determination, motivation, steadfastness and perseverance to undergo this momentous endeavor. I would like to thank my committee chair Dr. Bentley. You volunteered to be my committee chair at the eleventh hour when you could have declined, so I am very appreciative that you tested faith on me and this process.

I would also like to thank my second committee member, Dr. Joshua Adams. I can remember when I reached out to you while I was in Afghanistan to learn about your doctoral journey and to get advice about starting my own journey. I appreciate your honesty and candidness but most of all your dedication to education while actively serving our country. You followed in my footsteps to become the second Forensic Science Officer of the Year, and I am following in your footsteps by attaining my doctoral degree. What a great example of authentic leadership in action. I am forever grateful.

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**List of Abbreviations**

Criminal Investigation Division (CID)

Criminal Investigation Division Special Agent Course (CIDSAC)

Department of Defense (DoD)

Military Criminal Investigative Organization (MCIO)

Special Agent in Charge (SAC)

**CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

**Overview**

The theory and practice of authentic leadership in criminal justice is a relatively new area of study, especially in law enforcement (Farr-Wharton et al., 2021). Similarly, authentic leadership in military contexts is most often associated with resilience and less often referenced in leadership (Gaddy & Gonzalez, 2021). Authentic leadership development theory speculates that the quality of authenticity in any leader is critical to an organization's success and mission accomplishment (Martino, 2019). Leadership is a consistently core attribute in law enforcement organizations and the military. There is a widespread belief that leadership is a method used to improve social, professional, and personal lives (Northouse, 2019). Some leadership scholars believe authenticity and leadership should remain two separate interests and themes of study in academia (Alvarez et al., 2019; Einola & Alvesson, 2021; U.S. Army, 2019; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Nonetheless, more research on authentic leadership in military law enforcement organizations and the perception of such leadership style is vital for understanding how leadership can contribute to organizational awareness and mission accomplishment (Gaddy & Gonzales, 2021). This chapter provides a background of the issue investigated in this study. It also contains the situation to self, the problem statement, the purpose statement, and the significance of the study sections. Additionally, this chapter introduces the research questions and defines the key terms of the proposed study.

**Background**

The following section provides context, including the historical, social, and theoretical background to frame this study. Historical, social, and theoretical backgrounds allow further development in understanding special agents' perceptions of authentic leadership.

**Historical Context**

In the 1960s, authentic leadership first appeared in academic literature as another category of transformational leadership, asserting that transformational leadership may either be authentic or inauthentic (Covelli & Mason, 2017; Gardiner, 2017). Thenceforth, authentic leadership has developed into a style embraced by various organizations, including law enforcement. However, the perception of leadership styles and culture within law enforcement organizations is ambiguous and is often subject to frequent scrutiny (Nilsen et al., 2018). Nevertheless, police leaders across the globe are required to understand and develop their leadership proficiencies to effectively support their staff in an environment of escalating demand and economic and organizational uncertainty (Davis, C., 2020). Leadership styles in the public and private sectors are of high interest to practitioners and scholars as an avenue for understanding and improving organizational performance. It is often argued that the complexity of criminal justice organizations and the concept of leadership are often overlooked concerning how leadership affects change. Contrary to the authentic leadership style, traditional styles and methods of police leadership is considered archaic (Davis, C., 2020).

Leadership is the relationship between leaders and followers (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Hoggett et al. (2019) suggested that police leadership and training should undergo radical change to improve efficacious leadership practices. This belief is commonly shared in society's personal, professional, and academic sectors (Droffelaar & Jacobs, 2018; Kirchner & Akdere, 2017).

Ribeiro et al. (2018) suggested that authentic leadership is an emerging leadership style that improves organizational performance. It can create an environment of openness and trustfulness centered on the leader's desire to be true to their moral character and concern for others. The key to leadership is determining its effect on an individual based on implementation and results. Effective leadership in law enforcement organizations reflects how several leaders seek to implement their definition of leadership, which ultimately establishes the climate and productivity of an individual within the organization. Defining leadership and ensuring genuine engagement and effective leadership usually involve being authentic. The theory guiding this proposed study is Bill George's Authentic Leadership Theory (2003), which focuses on a management style where leaders are transparent, engaging, and supportive of the follower, which results in positive outcomes.

**Social Context**

The global dynamics of police leadership are experiencing a time of significant transition (Davis, C., 2020). Eterno et al. (2021) suggested that criminal justice organizations focus on leadership, police culture, and communities to uphold ethical practices. Eterno et al. (2021), Pyle and Cangemi (2019), and Smith (2019) suggest this substantiates the concept that leadership requires an individual to be adaptable in their styles and techniques to meet the new environment. The same applies to police leadership in military criminal investigative organizations who have the investigative responsibility to investigate criminal offenses under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). Notwithstanding, MCIO leadership is an aspect that existing literature does not explicitly address. Northouse (2019) suggested that increased public and private leadership failures initiated the high demand for integrating authentic leadership styles in organizations. Hoch et al. (2018) posited that leadership must cultivate subordinates'

development and well-being to accomplish long-term organizational goals. Furthermore, understanding the perceptions of authentic leadership can provide insight into how it relates to accomplishing organizational tasks and missions.

**Theoretical Context**

This study will explore the lived experiences of former special agents who served as special agents in the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division (CID). Bill George's authentic leadership theory establishes the theoretical lens for the study. George (2003) claimed authentic leadership is dependent on an individual's susceptibility to being authentic and genuine to oneself. Authentic leadership theory identifies three factors influential to the development of authentic leaders: positive psychologic capabilities, moral reasoning, and critical life events (Covelli & Mason, 2017). In addition, Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory strongly underpins authentic leadership theory (Maslow, 2018). Similarly, authentic leadership undertakes a humanistic viewpoint that originates from a person's individual experiences (Covelli & Mason, 2017). Moreover, authentic leadership is deeply rooted in other positive leadership approaches, including transformational leadership theories that examine authenticity versus inauthenticity in leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardiner, 2017). Bass (1985) suggested transformational leadership may be the most significant contributor to authentic leadership theory. Conversely, George (2003) surmised that authenticity remains the primary factor in ineffective leadership, irrespective of the fundamental leadership style.

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**Situation to Self**

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Several factors contributed to my interest and motivation to pursue this study. First, I am an active Army service member of 23 years, where I have held numerous leadership positions in various and differing military organizations. A personal philosophy I always shared with my

Soldiers and agents was to "never compromise your integrity or lose your core values." I shared this learned philosophy over the years and nearly lost my identity after becoming a law enforcement officer. Over time, and with experience in the field, I learned the importance of maintaining your authentic self in a profession that challenges your faith, beliefs, and moral compass daily. Second, as a special agent who served in leadership and non-leadership positions, I know leadership's critical function and how a leader's styles or strategies contribute to the investigative process. Throughout my over 15 years as a special agent, I have frequently witnessed that poor and ineffective leadership plays a significant role in conducting and managing felony-level criminal investigations. Finally, as a special agent who spent many years as a case agent before becoming a supervisor, I developed an in-depth understanding of the importance of being an authentic leader while overseeing and directing investigations. Although several factors contribute to my interest and motivation to pursue this study, my primary motivation lies in my passion for genuine leadership in law enforcement and how it can make a difference in criminal justice.

Leadership in a military criminal investigative organization can be complicated to understand and navigate. I have experienced different leadership styles in my career and have personally been critiqued about my leadership style by superiors, subordinates, and peers. I have embraced candid discussions and feedback on my leadership style, which often included special agents' perceptions of it and how it translated to their investigative methodologies. When I decided to conduct a study on the perception of authentic leadership in a military criminal investigative organization, I wanted to understand how the perception of this leadership style factored into the investigative process to learn better ways to lead effectively. Recently, Army CID was under much scrutiny concerning leadership and handling several high-profile

investigations. The Fort Hood Congressional Report found many discrepancies in investigative processes and directly correlated this to poor leadership (United States Congress, 2020). Due to this finding, Army CID is undergoing a drastic transformation. A deeper understanding of the perception of authentic leadership from the case agent or followers' perspective may give insight into the interconnectedness of leadership and the investigative process. This study aims to fill the current gap in the literature concerning authentic leadership in federal law enforcement organizations such as Army CID. Through my study, I intend to gather information to develop further and understand authentic leadership in military law enforcement organizations.

The three assumptions important to my study are ontological, epistemological, and axiological. My general assumption is that the participants, former special agents, would answer the questions and explain their lived experiences truthfully and candidly. First, my ontological assumption is based on the concept that a phenomenon has innumerable realities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As the researcher is intimately involved in the process, it is crucial to understand that I and the participants and readers of this study may have different views of realities. Also, an assumption will determine how a phenomenon is experienced. Second, my epistemological assumption is based on my personal and professional experience as a special agent and leader. This commonality between myself and the participants creates an intimate environment conducive to understanding the participants' experiences (Bansal, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Glesne, 2016; Patton, 2015; Tomaszewski et al., 2020). Third, my axiological assumption is that research is a human construct vulnerable to presenting biases. Notwithstanding, this study is value-laden, where multiple perspectives and biases are inevitably present compared to their role in the study context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Although my professional experience and perspective concerning authentic leadership may be shared with the participants, it is critical to

maintaining axiological integrity. Axiological integrity is maintained by retaining values in transferring, translating, or synthesizing axiological evidence (Kelly et al., 2018).

Phenomenology is the chosen research paradigm to guide this study. It is one of many qualitative research approaches in the social sciences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Laverty, 2003). Phenomenology can permeate human experiences, detect the quintessence of a phenomenon and amplify it in its original construct as experienced by the individuals (Patton, 2020; Suddick et al., 2020). This qualitative phenomenological study incorporates the use of semi-structured, open-ended interviews to capture the participant's perception of authentic leadership garnered from their experiences to the greatest extent possible (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Gardner et al., 2021; Suddick, 2020).

## Problem Statement

Genuine and authentic leadership are essential components to the success of any criminal justice organization, yet understanding this complex and multifaceted phenomenon can be challenging. Authentic leadership in military law enforcement organizations within the Department of Defense is obscure. There is substantial peer-reviewed literature and research on military leadership, civilian police leadership, and separate leadership topics (Kirchner & Akdere, 2017; Kouzes & Posner, 2017; Martin et al., 2017; Moreno et al., 2021; Winn & Dykes, 2019). However, current literature does not explore authentic leadership in military criminal investigative organizations. Notwithstanding, genuine and authentic leadership are essential components to the success of any criminal justice organization. Moreover, the recent social climate in law enforcement, amid historic protests calling for change, national scrutiny on several high-profile incidents, and other circumstances, have increased the need to foster a culture requiring more than the traditional, transactional, and transformational leadership styles

(Hoggett et al., 2018). Lyubovnikova et al. (2017) posited that authentic leaders foster the development of collective self-regulation aimed toward authenticity and connection with honest intentions and values. However, despite many prominent leadership components: such as service, honesty, integrity, humility, purpose, mentoring, positive attitude, and trust, found in law enforcement organizations, there is no clear understanding of authentic leadership in a military criminal investigative organization, specifically from individuals in non-supervisory roles. Kirchner and Akdere (2017) found that extensive studies exist that explore the perceptions of leadership styles from supervisors; however, minimal studies explore leadership style perceptions from law enforcement officers who are not supervisors.

Universally, teaching various leadership styles to law enforcement officers is a mandatory requirement, but the perception of authentic leadership, and its application as a leadership style, remains to be determined (Kirchner, 2018). Ribeiro et al. (2018) suggested that awareness of how followers perceive authentic leadership can inspire followers to perform better in the organization through leading by example. However, the literature is scant regarding how authentic leadership can add value as an effective technique in military law enforcement organizations. Alvesson and Einola (2019) suggested that the authentic leadership style is a prominent yet problematic leadership style that can cause irrefutable damage and conflict to an organization. Acknowledging the problem gives superiority to pursuing information about the lived experiences that former special agents encountered with authentic leadership. A qualitative research design will contribute to an increased understanding of how special agents within a military criminal investigative organization perceive authentic leadership and how it influences investigative case management, if at all. The problem is that the perception of authentic leadership among special agents in a military criminal investigative organization is unknown.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore authentic leadership from the lived experiences and perspectives of special agents previously assigned to Army CID, a military law enforcement organization. The proposed qualitative study describes former special agents' perceptions of authentic leadership and how it contributes to the investigative processes. At this stage in the research, it is known that the lived experiences of former special agents who were one-time case agents have experienced different leadership styles while conducting investigations. The purpose of this study is suited for the qualitative approach because special agents' experiential knowledge, lived experiences, and perceptions could not be adequately or accurately captured using quantitative methods, as there is a need for more depth to occur in the proposed inquiry rather than breadth. This study will add to existing empirical studies that help explore the authentic leadership theory and provide a better understanding of the perception by which authentic leadership influences actions or inactions in the quality and conduct of criminal investigations. The theory guiding this research is Bill George's Authentic Leadership Theory, which emphasizes how strong, genuine, and self-aware leaders encourage employees to feel connected and valued by their leaders, resulting in positive, productive outcomes in the organization.

**Significance of the Study**

The practical, empirical, and theoretical significance of authentic leadership is a new concept in literature; therefore, studies on how the perception of authentic leadership affects individuals, groups, and organizations are ongoing and essential. This study's practical significance involves evidence showing how the perception of authentic leadership in a military law enforcement organization may be sufficient to create a positive and productive organization.

It seeks to provide an increased understanding of authentic leadership, a more overlooked aspect of leadership in military law enforcement. Authentic leadership development theory posits authenticity in the leader as a critical component in the success of an organization (Martino, 2019). In addition, military law enforcement leaders who are supervisors must adapt to different situations where being genuinely authentic is beneficial. This study will attempt to reinforce the importance of authenticity in a military criminal investigative organization. Moreover, the organizational benefits of employing authentic leadership characteristics. Authenticity factors into how leaders interact with followers while conducting investigative activities. Authentic leadership is the catalyst for improving productivity and job satisfaction among military law enforcement officers.

This study's empirical significance involves gathering evidence to show how the perception of authentic leadership relates to subordinates' proactive or reactiveness to organizational productivity. Liu et al. (2018) stated that authentic leadership positively correlated with positive subordinates' proactive behavior and negative subordinates' deviant behavior. An authentic leader with purpose, values, self-discipline, and a genuine heart fosters healthy relationships (Covelli & Mason, 2017, p. 2). The reciprocation of authenticity between leader and follower embodies the concept of authentic leadership. Hassan et al. (2019) suggested that a subordinate's performance enhances by empowering leadership without losing sight of critical task-oriented responsibilities.

This study's theoretical significance aims to extend the authentic leadership theory as a lens to understanding the perception of authentic leadership in a military criminal investigative organization. The current literature indicates authentic leadership is the notion of a mutually reinforcing relationship between leaders and followers in which the authenticity of the one

promotes the authenticity of the other in a process that empowers both individuals, increases

mutual trust, and fosters increasing levels of job commitment and performance (Martino, 2019).

Hence, authentic leadership also includes the perception of authentic followership, increasing

trustworthiness. This study enhances existing authentic leadership research by examining how

followers perceive authentic leadership. In addition, authentic leadership theory has been utilized

in education, healthcare, and other fields of study (Alilyyani et al., 2018; Delbert & Jacobs,

2021; Johnson, 2019). Therefore, this study aims to provide additional support for the relevance

of authenticity in leadership, coinciding with authentic leadership theory.

## Research Questions

Understanding the perception of authentic leadership provides law enforcement

organizations with an additional measure to develop ways to positively develop the subordinate-

leader relationship and enrich the investigations of serious crimes. Literature suggests that law

enforcement officers should be authentic, transparent, genuine, and consistent (Thomas &

Cangemi, 2021). Traditionally, law enforcement's most prominent leadership styles include

transformational, transactional, and authoritarian. These leadership styles often coincide with the

momentous command-and-control aspect of law enforcement that can reveal in the leader-

subordinate relationship within the organization. Nilsen et al. (2018) suggested that leading

knowledge-based investigations require particular emphasis on incorporating dynamic leadership

styles.

Nhan et al. (2019) claimed there has traditionally been a disconnect in law enforcement

concerning the leadership styles customarily taught through academia and how those styles

display in "real world" circumstances. Crawford et al. (2020), authentic leadership is filled with

ambiguity and lacks clarity on several leader-centric processes, including a "bottom-up"

influencing process. Despite the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the most prominent leadership styles, there remains an overarching lack of research into understanding how non-supervisor law enforcement officers perceive authentic leadership in a military law enforcement organization and how it may influence investigative case management. Two research questions (R.Q.s) guide this study to explore how former special agents perceived authentic leadership during their employment as special agents in a military law enforcement organization.

**Research Questions**

**RQ1:** How do former special agents of Army CID perceive authentic leadership?

The literature indicates limited research exploring perceptions of authentic leadership in law enforcement organizations (Alvarez et al., 2019). There is extensive literature on military leadership, but none that explores authentic leadership in a military law enforcement organization. In addition, no published English literature has been found that explicitly explores authentic leadership and military law enforcement. Hence, the first research question is relevant in further research into former special agents who experienced multiple levels of leadership at the echelon while in a military law enforcement organization. Gardner et al. (2021) suggested that authentic leadership's foundation derives from an individual's core values and principles. Similarly, these characteristics are essential for military members and law enforcement officers.

**RQ2:** What are former Army CID special agents' perceptions and experiences of the importance of authentic leadership in investigative case management?

The second research question explores former special agents' perceptions of how authentic leadership influenced investigative case management. Alvarez et al. (2019) posited that authentic leadership positively impacts organizational variables affecting military unit performance. Conversely, Einola and Alvesson (2021) stated there are perils of authentic

leadership, and the theory in its likeness should be determined as something other than viable or credible. Therefore, this research question seeks to clarify how authentic leadership perceptions influence investigative case management among former special agents.

**Definitions**

    1. *Leadership* **-** Leadership is defined as influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization (U.S. Army, 2019). Comparable to military leadership, a civilian business perspective on leadership is not the product of character alone but requires creating a vision, establishing strategic focus, building talent, and enforcing accountability (Leavy, 2016, p. 21).

    2. *Authenticity* – Authenticity is an essential aspect of leadership where authentic leaders demonstrate integrity while leading (Covelli & Mason, 2017). The authors further indicated that authentic leadership shares characteristics similar to transformational and other leadership theories.

    3. *Authentic Leadership* - Authentic leadership promotes healthy work environments, candid dialogue, and acts on genuine values and beliefs. Authentic leadership is a newer, more modern leadership style based on emotional intelligence used to lead individuals positively (Northouse, 2019). Authentic leadership effectively promotes positive organizational outcomes and decreases adverse organizational outcomes (Liu et al., 2017).

    4. *Transformational Leadership* - Transformational leadership involves creating personal relationships with followers that raise their motivation and morality. A transformational leader is attentive to followers' needs and strives to transform followers into leaders (Arenas et al., 2017).

5. *Army Leader* - An Army leader is anyone who, under an assumed role or assigned responsibility, inspires and influences people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization. (U.S. Army, 2019)

6. *Military Criminal Investigative Organization (MCIO)* – MCIO refers to investigative organizations, including the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, and the Air Force Office of Special Investigations. These organizations are responsible for investigating criminal offenses under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). (Department of Defense, 2017).

7. *Military Law Enforcement* - Military law enforcement refers to military law enforcement officers and agencies that are responsible for protecting and serving the military community. In military law enforcement agencies, law enforcement officers are enlisted, commissioned officers, and warrant officers who are sworn and armed, responsible for policing and investigations according to their specific purview (U.S. Army, 2020).

8. *U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division (CID)* - The U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division (CID) is the primary criminal investigative organization of the U.S. Army and the Department of Defense. The organization has many responsibilities, including conducting criminal investigations of serious crimes with an Army interest and offenses involving controlled substances in Title 21, U.S. Code. In addition to conducting investigations, any special interest investigation directed by the Chief of Staff, Army, or higher authority designates (U.S. Army, 2020).

9. *Special Agent-in-Charge (SAC)* - A Special Agent-in-Charge is an executive-level position within the CID that is responsible for the operational functions of the organization he or she is assigned. The Special Agent-in-Charge oversees and guides all investigations as the senior

subject matter expert. The SAC is the decision-maker throughout the investigation when warranted. The title of Special Agent in Charge will depend on the size of the organization and the experience level required to oversee the investigations effectively. Other special agents oversee this position at a higher operational level to ensure quality assurance of all felony-level investigations (U.S. Army, 2017).

10. *Special Agent* - A special agent is a criminal investigator for the federal government. The duty titles *of Special Agent* and *Agent* are interchangeable. In this context, a special agent conducts all felony-level investigations involving a U.S. Army nexus within their respective jurisdictions. These military law enforcement officers hold arrest authority and are authorized to carry firearms on and off duty (U.S. Army, 2017).

11. *Case Agent* - A case agent is a military law enforcement special agent who conducts felony-level investigations. These investigations include but are not limited to sexual assault, deaths, procurement fraud, armed robbery, computer crimes, and war crimes. The rank of case agents will depend on the size of the organization. In larger CID organizations, case agents may be predominantly enlisted agents, whereas, in smaller CID organizations, case agents may be lower-ranking officers. Unlike military police, special agents do not patrol or participate in 24/7 policing or investigate misdemeanor-level crimes, as do military police investigators (U.S. Army, 2017).

**Summary**

This study will explore how former special agents describe their perceptions of authentic leadership and how it contributes to the investigative processes. It seeks to understand what role, if any, leaders perceived as authentic contribute to investigative processes. Understanding the dynamics of former special agents who lived professional experiences in a military criminal

investigative organization is essential. These perceptions assist with developing changes in an

organizational culture on how leadership is perceived and influences the investigative process.

# CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

## Overview

This literature review includes studies on several aspects of leadership in the military and civilian law enforcement sectors. There is no literature specific to understanding how former special agents within a military criminal investigative organization perceive authentic leadership concerning investigative case management and conducting criminal investigations. Although authentic leadership within the military criminal investigative organizations is under-researched, much of the existing literature includes studies on military leadership, civilian leadership, and primarily civilian law enforcement leadership. In law enforcement organizations, perception is crucial to how supervisors and subordinates interact and establish appropriate leadership etiquette. Leadership is one of the most studied and debated topics within organizational management and the social sciences group of academic disciplines (Alvarez et al., 2019; Benmira & Agboola, 2021). Scholars suggest that developing a positive perception is one of the most valued assets of authentic leadership (Braun & Peus, 2018; Winn & Dykes, 2019).

Further, perception of leadership styles and techniques can create, build, or impede the foundation of trust essential in law enforcement organizations. Atwijuka and Caldwell (2017) suggested that authentic leadership relates to having a significant commitment to others while being self-aware, having relational transparency, having a moral perspective, and considering all views before decision-making. Comparably, Atwijuka and Caldwell (2017) suggest that earning followers' trust and commitment is essential to authentic leadership. Gatling et al. (2017) contended significant lack of relational transparency could generate an overall distrust between followers and leaders. Furthermore, this distrust can result in detrimental mistakes and errors that negatively impact the organization and the leader.

A comprehensive systematic literature review was conducted on authentic leadership, perception, and law enforcement to identify and understand its role in a military law enforcement organization. The study's literature search utilized Liberty University Jerry Falwell Library and Goggle Scholar online library databases to identify pertinent literature for this study. A comprehensive search conducted through the Liberty University Library accessed the following databases: EBSCOhost, Sage Publications, JSTOR, and ProQuest. The keywords used to conduct this search included: *leadership, authentic leadership, military law enforcement, military leadership, authentic leadership theory, police leadership, and perception of authentic leadership*.

Authentic leadership is an emerging leadership style in military law enforcement; however, little research exists on implementing authentic leadership in military law enforcement. The authentic leadership model differs from an official leadership style or technique prevalent in law enforcement (Alvarez et al., 2019). However, studies have shown that authentic leadership is directly connected to relational transparency and trust, which are critical in law enforcement (Gardner et al., 2005; George, 2003). Authentic leadership gained notoriety in rebuilding well-known corporations like Merrill Lynch and Enron. Recent research studying the authentic leadership style relates to organizational success, follower performance, and human behaviors (Egan et al., 2017). Joo and Jo (2017) posited that employees who develop a greater sense of importance cultivate a higher organizational commitment and motivation to perform duties. These acts directly respond to the increasingly diverse generations of organizations, including military law enforcement organizations. Droffelaar and Jacobs (2018) theorized an increase in using authentic leadership intergenerational. This claim considers the age of individuals fulfilling

a leadership role becoming younger over the years and the increasing willingness for younger leaders to direct change than preceding generations of leadership.

Law enforcement leaders must continually develop and incorporate leadership skills to serve their organization and community best. Researchers frequently posit that authentic leadership is a relatively new leadership theory that incorporates values, behavioral styles, character traits, and honesty resulting in the longevity of positive outcomes for leaders and followers within their organizations (Alvarez et al., 2019; Avolio et al., 2004). Many scholars are known for their extensive research on authentic leadership. Notwithstanding, the literature suggests the increasing popularity and use of authentic leadership in organizational management (Corriveau, 2020; Farid et al., 2020; Gill et al., 2018); however, according to Alvarez et al. (2019), its increase in utilization and research among military law enforcement accommodates diverse cultures, ages, and perspectives that represent individuals in the organization is deficient.

Wei et al. (2018) explored the relationship between authentic leadership and the level of competency seen in followers from the follower's perspective. This study used a sample of 248 subordinate-supervisor pairs from a Chinese company in Shanghai to test authentic leadership on performance through collaborative work engagement. The study determined that authentic leadership positively impacts organizational behavior; authentic leadership and organizational behavior arbitrate subordinate-supervisor interactions, and the interactive effect of authentic leadership and competency on task performance and organizational behavior are directly related. This qualitative study utilized the 16-item authentic leadership scale by Walumbwa et al. (2008) and a five-point Likert scale to gather data for analysis to develop a mediated moderation model to demonstrate how authentic leadership and competencies interact with performance through work engagement. The study by Wei et al. (2018) had three findings: There is a positive

correlation between authentic leadership, task performance, and behaviors within organizations; that leader competency regulates the connection between authentic leadership and followers; and the way followers engage in work enables the core effect of authentic leadership relating to follower's competency and duty performance.

Park and Hassan (2018) suggested that shared values and organizational culture can influence followers to adopt leadership perspectives and philosophies comparable to leadership positions. Park and Hassan collected data using three independent surveys from managers in law enforcement organizations to assess leadership practices. It is customary in the military to practice various leadership methods, techniques, and styles; however, authentic leadership is not a customary or traditional leadership practice used in military law enforcement. Farr-Wharton et al. (2021a) suggested that training officers to use authentic leadership behaviors can increase well-being and promote better relationships in the organization. Authentic leadership is often defined as a multidimensional leadership theory rooted in the positivity of a cohesive merging of the transformational, servant, and other leadership styles.

Alvesson and Einola (2019) deem authentic leadership an innovative form of transformational leadership with moral inclusion. Given the overarching fact that transformational leadership is primarily used in law enforcement, using an authentic leadership style provides a genuine approach to leadership that allows for the furtherance of those military law enforcement organizations that specialize in conducting severe, significant, and sensitive criminal investigations. Covelli and Mason (2017) rationalized that authentic leadership is a multidimensional leadership theory. The authors contended that authentic leadership incorporates many influences or attributes from theories, including but not limited to transformational leadership, servant leadership, ethical leadership, and situational leadership.

A coherent review of authentic and transformational leadership by Banks et al. (2016) indicated that authentic leadership showed dominance over the transformational leadership style. Covelli and Mason (2017) suggested that authentic leadership differs from other leadership theories since leaders strive to be primarily authentic in all aspects and actions. Also, the unique element of this difference is the absence of specific or defined traits, styles, or special skills needed for goal accomplishment. Hoggett et al. (2018) suggested that police leadership research primarily focuses on individual leadership characteristics originating from traditional leadership theories not indicated in the last decade of leadership research and theory. Specifically, police leadership research focuses on the leader and follower transaction and individual characteristics that enable leaders to impact organizations and groups. Caulfield and Senger (2017) found a positive relationship between transformational leadership and follower performance. Studies found both authentic and transformational leadership to be vastly interrelated (Duncan et al., 2017). Conversely, the review by Banks et al. (2016) suggests the necessity to conduct additional research regarding authentic leadership to make a better, more precise determination of the relationship between transformational leadership and authentic leadership.

A literature review found little research on the relationship between the perception of authentic leadership and the effect on the investigative process. Additionally, experimental studies have yet to investigate the effect of individual behavior concerning authentic leadership from perception (Droffelaar & Jacobs, 2018). Nevertheless, perceptions of behavior and mental dispositions are essential realities in the military, law enforcement, and law enforcement organizations (Alvarez et al., 2019; Martin et al., 2017; Nilsen et al., 2018). Therefore, these and perception are principal factors to consider while conducting investigations—a greater

understanding of the leader and follower relationship in military law enforcement practices is paramount.

At its core, all law enforcement is the same, and all investigations have the same objective. Notwithstanding, the profession of law enforcement in the military sector and civilian law enforcement sectors has many similarities and differences regarding jurisdictions, laws, and overall functionality. Similar to civilian law enforcement, each U.S. military service has its individual law enforcement division that is responsible for enforcing the law and safety of the citizens who reside on military property, commonly known as bases or installations. The significant difference between military law enforcement and civilian law enforcement is the primary duties of enforcing military laws and regulations in addition to civilian laws while fulfilling the inherent responsibilities of being a soldier, including being deployed into combat. In addition, military law enforcement jurisdiction may extend to the location of the military personnel, whereas geographical borders solely define civilian law enforcement jurisdiction. The Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) outlines military law enforcement authorities. It includes crimes punishable under civilian law and those rules that affect order and discipline in the military.

Conversely, military law does not apply to civilians and cannot be enforced by military law enforcement whether or not they are on a military installation. Superficial similarities include rank structure and uniform indicative of an ornate, professional appearance; however, Criminal Investigation Department (CID) special agents are not referred to by their military rank during the conduct of investigations. In doing so, this action draws on a level of authenticity (Davis, C., 2020). Authentic leadership is positively correlative to military and civilian law enforcement because each component comprises servant leaders who place others before

themselves in the most dynamic and dangerous environments, which relates to authentic leadership in action. Similarly, servant leaders and authentic leadership, in both military and civilian law enforcement organizations, establish guiding values and principles that officers impart their personal beliefs to make the best values-based decisions consistent with the basis of authentic leadership.

While limited research exists on leadership styles used while conducting criminal investigations in military law enforcement, research primarily focuses on other well-established leadership styles used in civilian law enforcement. However, military and law enforcement share the same fundamental basis, and all investigations have the same end state. Therefore, the strength of law enforcement organizations is reflective of their leadership. According to Hoggett et al. (2018), extensive research exists on police leadership's communications between leaders and followers and how charisma impacts organizations. However, there is no mention of military police or special agents' perception of leadership. Caulfield and Senger (2017) suggested that regular communication between leaders and followers increases leaders' awareness of perceptions and behaviors of various leadership styles. Furthermore, wide-ranging research is available on leadership in the military and leadership in law enforcement as a general category (Kirchner, 2018; Kirchner & Akdere, 2017). Park and Hassan (2018) hypothesized that relationships might develop due to occupational influences in culture, values, and norms prevalent in most [military] and police organizations.

**Theoretical Framework**

This research study will focus on understanding the perception of authentic leadership in former special agents once assigned to the CID, a military criminal investigative organization. The theoretical framework establishes the foundation for building and supporting the study.

Grant and Osanloo (2014) stated that the theoretical framework provides methods to define how the researcher will approach the study: philosophically, methodologically, analytically, or epistemologically. The theoretical framework for this study is based on the authentic leadership theory created and pioneered by George (2003), who pioneered the phenomenon. This theoretical framework will provide a foundation for understanding the perception of authentic leadership within a military criminal investigative organization, an understudied organization within the law enforcement community.

Authentic leadership and authentic leaders are aspects of leadership that the foundational work by George (2003) and subsequent seminal studies by Avolio et al. (2004), Shamir & Eilam (2005), George & Sims (2007), and Walumbwa et al. (2008) define and explore. Specifically, law enforcement leadership research is contextually interconnected with and shares the broader leadership theory and concepts (Northouse, 2016). A qualitative explorative study by Filstad and Karp (2021) suggests that police leadership is a professional practice that directly correlates with leadership practices and follower expectations. The study utilized collected data from 27 Norwegian police leaders, in a quasi-military organization, through formal interviews and informal conversations with police leadership and subordinates to analyze leadership as practice. The perceived characteristic of authentic leadership is that leaders who lead with passion and compassion in value-based organizations develop positive and increased productivity, directly contributing to leader-follower relationships (Alvarez et al., 2019; Walumbwa, 2008).

The theoretical approach to authentic leadership identifies the component required to develop authentic leadership and the psychological attributes that influence authentic leadership (Avolio & Luthans, 2003). Translating theory into practice is critical to law enforcement organizations' evolution and leadership. Authentic leadership and leadership theory were chosen

as the theoretical lenses because this study explores former special agents' perceptions of

authentic leadership based on their professional experiences. Researchers have discussed

authentic leadership and leadership theory when explaining leadership in the social, academic,

public, and private sectors. Understanding these attributes aims to increase understanding of how

followers (former special agents) perceive attributes of effective leadership, whether self-

categorized as authentic or inauthentic.

<div align="center">**Related Literature**</div>

George (2003) declared authenticity the fundamental aspect of effective leadership,

irrespective of any rudimentary leadership style. Northouse (2016) rationalized that the central

phenomenon of leadership consists of four main concepts: processes, influence; group dynamics;

and common goals. As an illustration, special agents in military criminal investigative

organizations are exposed to and must abide by standards from different leaders and leadership

styles. Historically, extensive research and literature exist on leadership styles and models used

in organizations worldwide. Several existing organizations are founded on the belief that great

leaders can shape history (Spector, 2016). Likewise, several theories and leadership styles can

contribute to developing those great leaders. The theoretical framework of leadership comprises

a synthesis of leadership theories and styles. The main theories that coincide with the authentic

leadership theory as instrumental influencers in developing great leaders include the behavioral

theory, the trait theory, the transactional theory, the transformational theory, the situational

theory, the trait theory, and the great man theory (Hoch et al., 2018; Pyle & Cangemi, 2019;

Thomas & Cangemi, 2021).

Leadership styles encompass the characteristics and values of the individual leader. The

main traditional leadership styles and practices include Authoritarian (autocratic), participative

(democratic), delegative (laissez-faire), transactional, and transformational leadership styles (Bass, 1985; Moreno et al., 2021; Thomas & Cangemi, 2021). Primarily, the Great Man theory, established in 1841 by Thomas Carlyle, suggests that great men can be made into leaders of their times; however, leaders are born and cannot be made or trained (Benmira & Agbola, 2021; Mouton, 2019). However, many theories on leadership are founded on assumptions derived from postulations about how leaders should act based on their assigned roles within an organization. Conversely, law enforcement and organizational culture and the predominant leadership style represented therein often dictate the leadership style implemented by the leaders within the organization. Tourish (2018) opined that theorists frequently need to correct a mistake by categorizing "leader" and "leadership" as synonymous terms when they should be separate and distinctive terms.

As organizations become more complex, especially in law enforcement, the demands require leaders to employ several situations-appropriate leadership styles to become most effective. Respective of authentic leadership as an effective leadership style, Corriveau (2020) suggested that developing authentic leadership can garner responsible leaders in organizations. Wei et al. (2018) indicated that practitioners and researchers must establish other critical elements of leadership, including self-awareness, authenticity, and self-regulation. Likewise, incorporating critical elements of leadership complements the sentiment that current leaders anticipate and often requires methods to be more dynamic than in years past (Gill et al., 2018). Being more dynamic involves leaders leading with trust, objectivity, integrity, and values (Gill et al., 2018). Objectivity, integrity, and values are conducive characteristics that foster a positive organizational environment consistent with authentic leadership. George (2003) contributes characteristics as those actions authentic leaders decide to take than traits they inherently acquire.

As the societal climate continues to be inundated with ethical and moral dilemmas, it is necessary to develop a leadership approach dedicated to principles, values, and ethics as characterized by authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner et al., 2021). Authentic leadership is an essential factor for organizations (Avolio et al., 2004; Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Cooper et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008), especially when the view of leadership is a critical success factor in knowledge management. Knowledge management in law enforcement and the criminal investigative process is a critical aptitude required to accomplish many missions. Leaders are the primary conductors of organizational performance and foster effective strategy implementation, while teamwork requires transparent communication, knowledge sharing, and authenticity (Lisbona et al., 2021). In addition, authentic leadership is directly related to positive organizational behavior based on authenticity and trust, supporting practicing knowledge management (Gill et al., 2018; Tourish, 2018).

As one of the newest leadership styles to gain researchers' interest, authentic leadership lacks research compared to most traditional forms of leadership. (Duncan et al., 2017; Ribeiro et al., 2018). Nevertheless, the interest and amount of research on authentic leadership have increased in recent years. The differentiation between authentic leadership and other forms of leadership compares to the leader's ability to fluctuate at the authentic level while continuing to share attributes seen in the oldest, most used leadership styles. Authentic leadership and authentic leadership theory may be used with any variation of leadership styles to impact an organization or workplace (George, 2003; Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Leadership is an indispensable aspect of daily operations among the military law enforcement population. The U.S. Army defines leadership as "influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization (U.S. Army, 2019)."

Although teaching several leadership styles in the military is routine, most are interchangeable in use and application.

According to Army doctrine by name, the authentic leadership style is not traditionally taught as a military leadership style; however, there is a resemblance with the servant leadership style. For example, Martin et al. (2017) explained that effective police leadership, including military law enforcement, must embrace the servant leader attributes in conjunction with experiential knowledge to motivate and inspire followers. Similarly, Wei et al. (2018) found that authentic and servant leadership styles are often used to receive information relating to work engagement; work engagement is a state of mind that reflects enthusiasm. Conversely, Davis and Bailey (2017) argued that focusing on people is an essential resource in modern-day policing and investigations; however, being people-focused is often overshadowed by difficulties in leadership that frequently involve discourse between managerial and command personnel. Also, Indriati (2021) contended that the pursuit of authenticity in law enforcement organizations establishes a concern and mindful self-awareness among leaders to foster positive and significant relationships between leaders and followers in an organization.

Martin et al. (2017) used these Seven Principles of public life to describe leadership concepts and how they contribute to practical leadership proficiencies: accountability, fairness, honesty, integrity, objectivity, openness, respect, and selflessness. Similarly, the U.S. Army, including military law enforcement organizations, must adhere to the distinctive Seven Army Values: loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage (U.S. Army, 2019). Traditionally, the Army values and leadership establish the fundamental principles in military law enforcement and criminal investigations. The same collective values influence leaders and followers in military law enforcement organizations. Indriati (2021) and Wei et al.

(2018) claimed that a trust and respect relationship between authentic leaders and their followers could mature rapidly.

Furthermore, authentic leaders who are self-aware of their values and beliefs often inadvertently incorporate variations of the Seven Principles of Public Life and the Seven Army Values into their authentic leadership style. Droffelaar and Jacobs (2018) described authentic leaders as individuals who are "self-confident, genuine, reliable, and trustworthy, take care of the development of their followers, enlarge their scope of interest, and establish an engaging, positive organizational climate (p. 8)." Studies exploring special agents lived professional experiences for those who conducted felony crime investigations as case agents in a military criminal investigative organization are nonexistent. Consequently, no known studies on authentic leadership theory's existence, usage, or application are based on special agents' professional experience.

**Military Leadership**

Military law enforcement leadership is traditionally command-led (Davis & Bailey, 2017). Military leadership has been studied by world-renowned authors and philosophers, including Aristotle, Sun Tzu, and Machiavelli. Consequently, military leadership's inherently traditional aspects are deeply rooted in military law enforcement's structure, customs, and courtesies. Kirshner and Akdere (2017) discussed how traditional leadership development programs in the military provide critical skills, adaptive behaviors, skills, and abilities to leaders across their respective organizations. Although noteworthy similarities exist, military leadership and law enforcement adhere to classifiable structures with clear distinctions between their leadership and subordinate roles and responsibilities. Army regulations specify how a leader is to interact with a subordinate. Different hierarchy levels in the military transcend the law

enforcement aspect that inserts duty position and authority into the leadership dynamic. According to Alvarez et al. (2019), organizational health, behavior, and followers are the responsibility of military leaders. Undeniably, military law enforcement contains the same rank structure found in the military with an assortment of additional titles, duty descriptions, and authorities applicable to their specific roles designated within the law enforcement organization. Davis, C. (2020) suggests that simply removing the barrier of rank in law enforcement creates a unified tone symbolic of authenticity, accessibility, and inclusivity.

Research about authentic leadership theory and models being applied to the military law enforcement or, more broadly, the Armed Forces is lacking (Alvarez et al., 2019). Authentic leadership includes creating a leader-follower relationship by incorporating the necessary standards involved in leadership to motivate followers. The leader-member exchange theory in the 1970s broadened the understanding of leadership by investigating the relationship between a leader and the follower while further rejecting the assumption that leadership styles should be adapted utilizing the situational approach (Clark & Harrison, 2018). Jefferies (2017) suggests that an individual can learn to become an independent and effective leader; the military strives to teach these qualities and implement the same. Military law enforcement leadership is traditionally command-led. According to Alvarez et al. (2019), in military organizations where performance results from collaborative efforts, one individual's engagement may positively influence others to increase organizational effectiveness. Comparably, Zhao et al. (2019) contended that support and encouragement are essential components that contribute to a follower's perception of their value. This assertion creates an environment that motivates followers to identify and take ownership of the organization's values.

Resembling corporations, leadership in the military is the focal point of all operations regardless of job, title, or rank. An essential task and priority for management in many organizations is developing and maintaining great leaders, a mutual goal in the military (Kirchner & Akdere, 2017). Many organizations continue to function under the premise that great leaders can shape history (Spector, 2016). The military is a primary proponent of this premise and emphasizes leadership methods by utilizing formal education, self-development, and establishing job positions contingent on work performance. There is an existing practice of using unconventional methods to teach leadership less structured than a classroom environment. There is an overarching belief that leadership "cannot be taught"; either someone is a leader, or they are not. Farr-Wharton et al. (2021b) concluded that authentic leadership positively relates to followers' task performance and work engagement.

Furthermore, leader competency dictates the relationship between authentic leadership and organizational behavior. In the military, the theory is that everyone is a leader or can develop into a leader over time. Therefore, military leadership focuses on the idea that the characteristics of great leaders can be emulated through teaching, training, and mentoring. Alvarez et al. (2019) explained and agreed that authentic leadership incorporates the personal standards of the leader with the inspiration of followers to attain authenticity through the establishment of beneficial leader-follower relationships equally.

Characteristically, the military differs from most civilian organizations in that leadership is fostered and developed during the earlier career stages. In contrast to military employees, civilian employees may never be able to lead others. The military is diverse, and across the globe, leadership standards remain the same; however, the leadership culture is continuing to evolve—the rapidly evolutional aspect of leadership and changing climate in the military

accounts for those inevitable changes. Similarly, Filstad and Karp (2021) surmised that law enforcement culture, its relationship to leadership, and the perception of leadership continue to evolve. Authentic leadership characteristics encourage leaders to foster an understanding between themselves and an environment that allows for a coherent message consistent with organizational values (Alvarez et al., 2019). The need to embrace an authentic leadership style is due to the specificity and extensive length of time required to complete criminal investigations creating an intimate connection, unlike basic policing. This aspect affects the way military law enforcement professionals conduct policing and investigations.

Policing and conducting investigations require the completion of critical tasks. Accomplishing these tasks requires a collective leadership approach to implement the leadership style to maneuver from one situation to another effectively. During the early 1900s, research-led scholars were on a quest to understand what differentiates a leader from a follower and everyone else. Further, scholars sought to explain why specific individuals were more effective as leaders, garnering support for the trait theory on leadership (Benmira & Agbola, 2021) that focuses on natural-born leaders and identifying characteristics and traits of influential leaders. Scholars can see the trait method as a reasonable progression from the Great Man Theory and the predominant military leadership model applied before World War II (Mouton, 2019). Clark and Harrison (2018) described the Great Man theory as a leadership style with a principal distinction being the transference from a concentration on impactful leaders to the leadership traits of those same leaders. Walumbwa (2008) argued that leadership traits developed by an individual differ considerably from those actions or traits chosen because of one's behavior.

Tropman and Blackburn (2018) argued with the perception that there needs to be an all-encompassing list of traits and contend that there are indisputably only four traits necessary for

exemplary managerial leadership: integrity, empathy, genuineness, and humility. These tasks

require many leadership styles to maneuver from one situation to another. Critical tasks include

inherent complexities among leaders and subordinates. Managing tasks effectively while

navigating challenges requires considering perspective and experience (Kirchner & Akdere,

2017). A task-oriented approach to leadership is beneficial in a military law enforcement

organization. Davis and Bailey (2017) used multiple citations to capture the association between

the rank structure and a task-oriented approach to leadership while suggesting that authority in

leadership and management is critical in law enforcement organizations. However, there is a lack

of understanding of leadership separate from the managerial and command dialogues. This

method aimed to explain the militaristic implications of leadership that exist in police officers

(Davis & Bailey, 2017). This implication incorporates those police actively working in military

law enforcement organizations. Kolditz and Brazil (2005) applied the construct of Authentic

Leadership to the military setting by identifying a correlation between leadership experience and

thoughts of hope, resiliency, and optimism. Authentic leadership provides the technical

sophistication of leadership in military law enforcement organizations where policing and

investigations are primary tasks.

**Leadership**

A considerable quantity of literature exists on leadership and leadership theories. In the

past few decades, literature research has developed to integrate leadership with an organization's

ability to thrive in productivity, competition, and growth. Khan et al. (2016) suggested that due

to an increase in literature, substantial categories and theories have been created to expound on

leadership, often with the latest theory elaborating on the initial concepts. Studies on leadership

are historically and frequently from the perspective of the leader rather than the follower. While

according to Ribeiro et al. (2018), followers want to feel a sense of belonging to their organization. The authentic leadership style encourages followers to excel in performance, which reaps benefits within the organization. Military law enforcement leadership styles are also regularly studied from the leader or executive level perspective rather than the follower. There is extensive research on the policing aspect of law enforcement and minimal research on leadership styles used in military law enforcement during investigations (Hassan et al., 2019; Martin et al., 2017; Nilsen et al., 2018). Measuring the effectiveness and quality of criminal investigations must be determined by gathering data from the non-supervisory followers' perspective to clarify, increase understanding and determine the efficacy of authentic leadership. Of significance, perspectives vary from leader to follower, which may create difficulty in clarifying specifics about authentic leadership in organizations (Alvesson & Einola, 2019).

Leadership establishes the foundation of military law enforcement (Hertling, 2020; Kirchner, 2018). Understanding how authentic leadership is vital in military law enforcement requires a poignant discussion about military leadership. Military leadership is forthright and undeviating (Hertling, 2020; U.S. Army, 2019). In Army leadership, four core competencies indicate a leader's actions to prepare their followers: prepare oneself, create a positive environment, develop others, and be active stewards of the profession (U.S. Army, 2019). Park and Hassan (2018) suggested that senior law enforcement leaders only indirectly influence followers' behavior by influencing the perceptions and behaviors of their direct subordinate leadership. Hattke and Hattke (2019) concluded that authentic leaders influence follower behaviors in significant and substantial ways. Additionally, follower perceptions are essential and can contribute to assessing leader authenticity in organizations. Leadership and the military

share core values that exist in many leadership theories. Overlapping ideas, concepts, and commonalities exist among leadership, the military, and law enforcement.

Beddoes-Jones and Swailes (2015) opined that if organizations encourage authenticity, it must be permissible for leaders to be authentic to replicate their self-truth best. Traditional civilian law enforcement organizations or agencies have used militaristic formations and modeling as a leadership strategy within their departments for decades. These leadership strategies represent a method that directs and control individual behaviors (Martin et al., 2017). In the leadership category, civilian law enforcement counterparts lack the leadership and management skills required for many leadership positions, unlike individuals in military law enforcement organizations (Nhan et al., 2019). Authentic leadership can blend multiple leadership styles, including transformational, charismatic, and servant leadership. It is typical for fundamental aspects of several leadership styles to compare authentic leadership to the more conventionally researched leadership styles.

"Real leadership is hard. It [cannot] be 'turned on' when you think [it is] needed because it comes from who you are, not the position you hold. No character, empathy, values, or connection to those you serve = no leadership" (Hertling, M., 2020). Demonstrating empathy as a leader is one of the most significant characteristics that define the care, respect, and concern the public expects from military law enforcement (Martin et al., 2017). Conversely, Qu et al. (2019) asserted that unauthentic leaders lack dreams or visions that empathize, motivate, invigorate, and encourage people. They may lack concern or devotion to their conventional values and beliefs. Army Doctrine Publication 6-22 *Army Leadership* identifies empathy as a meaningful characteristic of leadership and a beneficial tool to gain the support of a populace, including followers (U.S. Army, 2019). Military leadership is known for being a task-oriented, task-based

concept. Similarly, the investigative process in law enforcement is task-based—investigative plans to develop a methodological strategy with viable leads that will lead to solving crimes. Using investigative plans is imperative to guide the course of investigations; however, an essential element in leadership and management. Nilsen et al. (2018) suggested that the ability to solve problems, develop a shared vision, and attain organizational success are fundamental elements of leadership.

Davis and Bailey (2017) suggested that while managing bureaucratic expectations from leadership at higher echelons within an organization, an authentic leadership style is beneficial to maneuver from the operational to the technical aspect of investigations. Hoggett et al. (2018) suggested that previous research identified that [special agents] place great value on being led by someone who has experience being a [special agent]. The uniqueness of a case agent is that this type of non-supervisory special agent represents "police and military." Klein et al. (2015) opined that the police and military relationship increases rapport-building, creates trust, supports mission accomplishment, and expands organizational coherence. A quantitative study by Indriati (2021) conducted with 220 investigators of the CID Denpasar City Police, Indonesia, determined that authentic leadership positively influences investigators' engagement and ability to communicate regarding a case. However, the study determined a more significant influence on investigators' engagement in job characteristics and extrinsic compensation (Indriati, 2021).

The idea for leaders to present authenticity to leadership styles is a concept introduced previously. Covelli and Mason (2017) found that various studies have determined that authentic leadership directly correlates with significant improvements in outcomes associated with leader, follower, and organizational effectiveness. Conversely, studies such as those by Alvesson and Einola (2019) proposed that authentic leadership reinforces narcissism and creates a false reality

about leadership, ideals, and behaviors. Nevertheless, the core aspects of leadership significantly evolve around fundamental values established throughout a lifetime, contributing to authenticity. According to Covelli and Mason (2017), authentic leadership and "authentic leadership development" are interchangeable, as there is a relationship between the leader and follower and how the leader influences the characteristics and values of the follower. Epitropaki et al. (2017) established that literature in leadership primarily focuses on the leader and follower relationship, varying from distinctiveness to relational development subtleties. Braun and Peus (2018) explained that the leader-follower relationship impacts authentic leadership by allowing leaders to develop a balance between professional and personal lives, contributing to job satisfaction and a positive work-life balance. Equally important, many components of authentic leadership derive from core values developed over time.

**Authentic Leadership**

An authentic leadership style is a holistic approach to leadership (Covelli & Mason, 2017; Liu et al., 2018; Martin, 2019). Due to varying definitions of authentic leadership, it is often difficult to accurately identify an authentic leader. Furthermore, the characteristics of an authentic leader are understood to be developmental by nature, creating more perplexity in identification and complete understanding. The complexity of understanding or identifying what "authentic" means is a clear understanding of authenticity, authentic leaders, authentic leadership, and authentic leadership development at the initial stages of theory development (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Atwijuka and Caldwell (2017) proposed that a significant focus of authentic leadership is pure dedication to fostering self-development in leaders, followers, and others. Comparably, leadership perspectives include self-development and follower development. Both perspectives

capitulate positive moral perspectives, performance expectations, organizational context, and self-regulation by the leader and the follower (Egan et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2018). Creating a pattern of consistent behavioral patterns has the propensity to promote positive climates conducive to formulating the basis for authenticity in leadership. Landesz (2018) posited a difference between authentic and pseudo-authentic leaders with an epicenter concentrating on the fundamental difference in the consistent leader behaviors that their genuine self should channel as an authentic leader opposite of when performing in a pseudo-authentic manner.

Allen (2018) found that existing research in behavior leadership theory attributed to wide-ranging literature on the individualities of influential leaders, including characteristics, habits, and emotional intelligence attributes. Additionally, Allen (2018) contended that no distinctive leadership characteristics are identified in behavior leadership research that proves effective in every plausible situation. Alvesson and Einola (2019) surmised that recent studies on leadership focus on trends and popular ideologies rather than theoretical discoveries. Conversely, Einola and Alvesson (2021) contended that authenticity is a staple of being true to oneself, reinforced by a developmental process that is continually advancing. Epitropaki et al. (2017) posited that authentic leadership is founded on the concept that leaders possess a deep sense of knowing who they are and remain anchored in their core beliefs.

Crawford et al. (2020) stated that authentic leadership is a leadership style less frequently used or recognized than other leadership styles. In recent years, there has been a re-emergence of interest in authenticity and its impact on leadership (Droffelaar & Jacobs, 2018; Petersen & Youssef-Morgan, 2018; Ribeiro et al., 2018; Wei et al., 2018). This re-emergence is primarily seen across corporations and businesses but excludes law enforcement agencies, including military law enforcement agencies and organizations. Although authenticity is an essential factor

in leadership, minimal research exists on the relationship between authenticity and military law enforcement.

Nilsen et al. (2018) stated that there is a familiar disconnect between teaching and learning about leadership; however, it is essential to address the need to balance different leadership styles to promote effectiveness. Covelli and Mason (2017) determined that focusing on authentic leadership will create a more significant and positive long-term outcome for leaders, followers, and organizations. In military law enforcement organizations, "perception is reality" is a widely known and utilized phrase. Perceptions about leadership frequently develop from leadership competencies and proficiency in interpersonal skills (Kirchner & Akdere, 2017). Therefore, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and developmental perspectives are viewpoints from which authentic leadership can be analyzed (Gardner et al., 2021; Northouse, 2016). Additionally, competence is a vital characteristic sought after by leadership and observed by followers.

There are different leadership styles and their applicability to a specific management style. Organizations must focus on the subordinate's perception of leadership to understand the leader and manager relationship. Specifically relating to this study, investigative competence and management are more often prioritized over implementing and enforcing effective leadership through authenticity. Petersen and Youssef-Morgan (2018) suggested that organizations wanting to increase authentic leadership among leaders should develop character traits such as resilience, optimism, efficacy, and hope. Understanding how followers perceive authentic leadership can add value to current policies and procedures in military law enforcement organizations. Scholars argue that authentic leadership can be defined or better understood from intrapersonal,

interpersonal, and developmental perspectives (Qu et al., 2019; Qureshi & Hassan, 2019; Wei et al., 2018).

### Intrapersonal perspective

The intrapersonal perspective of authentic leadership relates to the leader exhibiting genuine leadership traits indicative of leading from originality and actual life experiences. Wei et al. (2018) explained that the intrapersonal perspective or viewpoint assesses authentic leadership according to how a leader internalizes self-conceptualization, sustains self-knowledge and uses self-regulation. Gill et al. (2018) suggested that authentic leadership is an integral component of effective leadership that molds the leader's intrapersonal qualities with the preexisting relationship between leaders and followers. Life experiences also provide insight to followers to assess leader attributes and level of authenticity (Wei et al., 2018).

### Interpersonal perspective

Scholars contend that the interpersonal perspective of authentic leadership is relational, describing it as a reciprocal process between leaders and followers resulting from their daily interactions within the organization (Qu et al., 2019). An interpersonal perspective develops when leaders and followers have a consistent, honest relationship. Cultivating an interpersonal perspective of authentic leadership requires frequent dialogue and constant interactions between the leader and follower to evaluate the effectiveness of the leadership approach.

### Developmental perspective

The developmental perspective of authentic leadership relates to the concept that authentic leadership develops over a lifetime and can be molded by significant life events (Qureshi & Hassan, 2019). The developmental perspective is the most popular viewpoint when discussing authentic leadership since it focuses on the individual characteristics a leader develops

throughout a lifetime. The developmental perspective also focuses on creating a holistic view and applying authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Wei et al., 2018). Further, scholars conclude that this developmental perspective of authentic leadership is a behavior pattern that emphasizes positive characteristics and an ethical climate that organizations can develop and encourage in individuals (Qu et al., 2019).

**Authenticity in Leadership**

Qureshi & Hassan (2019) suggested that the most prevalent leadership model is Bill George's authentic leadership theory from the organizational perspective. George's authentic leadership theory (2003) identifies five rudimentary characteristics of an authentic leader: understanding their purpose, establishing values concerning what is right, garnering trusting relationships, standing by personal values, and demonstrating unfaltering discipline. Lastly, an authentic leader should be passionate about the mission (George, 2003; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

George (2003) defined authentic leadership theory as a complex theory that combines authenticity with the humanistic aspect of self-knowing to garner positive results. Similarly, Benmira and Agboola (2021) described leadership as a notably complex and multidimensional phenomenon. Walumbwa (2008) contended that authentic leadership results from a positive pattern of leadership behaviors combined with uncompromising ethics. Contributing and attributing to the humanistic theory and perspective, scholars have heavily linked authentic leadership theory to the influences of Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs (George, 2003; Maslow, 2018). An authentic leader is a self-aware person who listens to others, expresses genuine appreciation for others, supports others in the organization, and asserts genuine values without wavering. Covelli and Mason (2017) referred to these personality traits as examples of personal characteristics, values, and motives that allow leaders and followers to relate to each

other and create a balanced relationship of equal respect, shared emotions, and transparency. Likewise, George and Sims (2007) suggested that authentic leaders must have strong values, self-discipline, purpose, and compassion. These traits correspond with the four primary components of authentic leadership, including self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing (Corriveau, 2020; Liu et al., 2018; Northouse, 2016). Avolio, Gardner, and Walumbwa et al. (2008) developed a 16-item Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) questionnaire, which focused on the four primary factors to establish a standardized method for evaluating authentic leadership. Ribeiro et al. (2018) used the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire as a tool to self-measure and assess the perception of authentic leadership within the four scopes:

(1) self-awareness (e.g., "[…] seeks feedback to improve interactions with others");

(2) relational transparency (e.g., "[…] is willing to admit mistakes when they are made");

(3) internalized moral perspective (e.g., "[…] makes decisions based on his/her core beliefs"); and

(4) balanced processing of information (e.g., "[…] listens carefully to different points of view before coming to conclusions")

The ALQ is an instrument utilized to assess the perception of authentic leadership. However, the challenge remains to identify an accurate method to determine an accurate measurement system to fully understand authentic leadership and its impact on followers' perceptions (Alvesson & Einola, 2019; Walumbwa et al., 2008). The ALQ questionnaire measures the perception of authentic leadership. The measurement of authentic leadership is difficult to describe entirely using a quantitative assessment as the use of ALQ questionnaires seeks to establish statistical relationships between authentic leadership and other leadership criteria. The 16-item

questionnaire includes a five-point Likert scale that measures four components of leadership, often combined with quantitative and qualitative data collection (Corriveau, 2020). This proposed study is primarily qualitative in nature. It aims to provide a better understanding of the perception of authentic leadership that delves beyond mere associations, self-rated and follower-rated authentic leadership, and connecting external contextual factors with authentic leadership; therefore, the ALQ questionnaire will not be used. Notwithstanding, a future study may contain a mixed-method approach to ascertain a more holistic understanding of authentic leadership utilizing the ALQ questionnaire.

Furthermore, these traits and scope complement and coincide with Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs: the primary human goals of self-actualization, esteem, belongingness, and the need for love, safety needs, and essential physiologic needs (Maslow, 2018). An authentic leadership style is homogeneous to "one's true self." Droffelaar and Jacobs (2018) identified that leadership scholars consistently criticize whether authentic leadership is the center of a leader's "true self." George and Sims (2007) suggested that a person's "vision" is the quintessential element of authentic leadership that emphasizes the significance of self-awareness. There are many leadership styles, but authentic leadership may closely represent who the leader is as a person, distinct from the law enforcement persona.

Beddoes-Jones and Swailes (2015) encapsulated a new factor model of authentic leadership that involves three pillars: self-awareness, ethics, and self-regulation. The premise of the three pillars is that authentic leadership is inherently relational and establishes trust (Leroy et al., 2015; Lieu et al., 2015). Iszatt-White and Kampster (2019) argued that authentic leadership is 'fashionable,' and creating a practice-based understanding of authenticity in leadership and sharing how using it to enhance organizations would be beneficial. Also, studies by Braun and

Peus (2018) explained the importance of understanding authentic leadership as a precursor to vigorous and constructive work environments within organizations.

Bakari et al. (2017) described the leader-follower relationship dynamics to determine how authentic leadership influences their perceptions during organizational change. They suggested that understanding how followers perceive authentic leaders will improve their professional and personal quality of life. Further, authentic leadership shapes leaders' and followers' well-being, productivity, and organizational work relationships. Egan et al. (2017) suggested that a leader-follower relationship and leader effectiveness contribute to the evolution of leadership theories that are fundamental aspects to influence positive organizational outcomes. For example, in military law enforcement, as Liu et al. (2018) proposed, trust and true self are attributes of authentic leadership that encourage this leadership style. Klein et al. (2015) and Gill et al. (2018) argued and agreed that trust is imperative for forming and sustaining significant organizational relationships.

Due to the dynamic nature of the law enforcement profession, it is not simple or easy to maintain authentic leadership in military law enforcement. According to Crawford et al. (2020), "an individual can have high degrees of authenticity, without necessarily having leadership capabilities," a unique relationship between authentic leaders and authentic followers that is congruent and interdependent. Leaders must adjust behaviors and styles more regularly due to constant interaction with people with different personality types. Authenticity is essential in leadership, and remaining adaptive during fluctuating situations is imperative in military law enforcement. Similarly, Davis and Bailey (2017) described existing variances between the "managerial cops" and "street cops," often attributed to varying leadership styles and practices. The perception of leadership can contribute to the separation between rank and file. Leroy et al.

(2015) suggested that "authentic followers" are those who internalize their current professional

role and allow it to manifest into a means to achieve the basic need for satisfaction.

**Authentic Leadership in Law Enforcement and Investigations**

While there is some research about authentic leadership in law enforcement, Do Monte

(2017) found a substantial discrepancy between enacting authentic leadership in the private and

public sectors. Northouse (2016) acknowledged that authentic leadership significantly impacts

the public sector following perceived confidence and trust in leadership—for example, law

enforcement agencies, organizations, and officers. Schein and Schein (2018) identified that

authentic leadership functions as one of the quintessential aspects of organizational management

that maximizes efficiency and encourages attaining goals and objectives established by the

organization. This leadership style is often used to manage the investigation of crimes against

persons appropriately and to ensure the special agents conducting the investigations are correctly

guided as they navigate through inherent personal and professional challenges associated with

this facet of military law enforcement (Hassan et al., 2019; Martin et al., 2017; Nilsen et al.,

2018). One aspect of authentic leadership in law enforcement involves the need for resilience, a

principal characteristic widely sought after within the military law enforcement community

(Gaddy & Gonzalez, 2021). Winn and Dykes (2019) describe resilience as positive and negative

reactions to personal and organizational conflicts. A positive reference toward resilience

regarding authentic leadership is when leaders can remain flexible in styles and techniques when

dealing with individuals during dynamic situations (Gaddy & Gonzales, 2021; Gill et al., 2018).

A Special Agent in Charge sets the climate for special agents during investigation and

daily organizational functions. A Special Agent in Charge is equivalent to an executive-level

supervisor in a civilian federal law enforcement agency. As the senior special agent, competence

is essential because of the bureaucratic construct of the military law enforcement organization and the operational standards mandated in investigations. Technical competence is essential for the Special Agent in Charge and the special agents because of the three investigative standards: timeliness, thoroughness, and timely investigation reporting. Covelli & Mason (2017) opined that leadership is a cultural construct. Leadership's meaning is contingent on numerous cultures as determined by the region from which leaders lead; therefore, the local society determines the leaders' expectations. Landesz (2018) found that authenticity stipulates leadership qualities, including validating trustworthiness and authenticity.

Research by Egan et al. (2017) identified how perceptions of experiences with leaders and organizational leaders relating to the effect on professional desire and performance are inadequate; this can relate to the special agents' perspective towards authentic leadership. Equally important, it is crucial to understand how leadership can dictate individuals' career paths in law enforcement and other professions. Most careers, including special agent, begin with observational leadership. Over time and through adaptive leadership, a special agent can be trained to become an independent leader that may or may not directly correlate to investigative skills and capabilities (Jefferies, 2017). This training includes working alongside senior, accredited agents who teach and assist the junior apprentice agents until attainment of accreditation status. Leadership builds cohesion and trust, thus improving the quality of investigations and the individual special agent's productivity (Indriati, 2021). According to Banks et al. (2016), "achievement of elevated levels of leadership effectiveness and follower performance may explain the strong relationships with job satisfaction and follower satisfaction" (p. 643).

In the CID, the Special Agent-in-Charge, including most senior agents and leaders with a supervisory role, must use transparency and employ an authentic leadership style to connect with case agents effectively. Kempster et al. (2019) coined relational transparency as one of authentic leadership theory's most acknowledged and utilized aspects. Relational transparency allows authentic leaders to allow followers to see good and bad personality traits without filters (Petersen & Youssef-Morgan, 2018). Conversely, Kempster et al. (2019) discussed the potential for conflict in organizations when a leader attempts to promote relational transparency suggesting inconsistency in the criteria for leaders to be authentic and transparent. Also, an expectation exists for leaders to limit expressing emotion to encourage the follower and organizational expectation of all-encompassing leadership. There remains a stigma associated with being emotionally vulnerable while leading in law enforcement; however, Indriati (2021) posited that emotional engagement is directly associated with individual performance and positive personal and professional engagements. Moreover, an authentic leadership style is beneficial when maneuvering interchangeably between roles from the operational aspect of investigations to the technical aspect of investigations, all while managing bureaucratic expectations from leadership at the higher headquarters of the organization (Davis & Bailey, 2017; McComas, 2019).

Available literature suggests that leaders in private and public sectors universally require strong leadership skills. Einola and Alvesson (2021) argued that with the growth in disseminating authentic leadership theory, challenges may arise for public sector organizations if the foundational education on leadership used for corporate organizations is adopted and implemented "to solve real problems." Leaders from both sectors are expected to calculate risks and make decisions while staying true to their declared values and beliefs from the perspective of

others. Hoggett et al. (2018) suggest that previous research identified that [special agents] place great value on being led by someone who has experience being a [special agent]. It is frequently challenging for a Special Agent in Charge to provide the command-based leadership required and authentic leadership style while holding many roles (Alvarez et al., 2019; Kirchner, 2018; Kirchner & Akdere, 2017). Similarly, Hoggett et al. (2018) used quantitative and qualitative data collected from police officers in England and Wales to understand the challenges for police leadership, including identity, experience, legitimacy, and how each interconnect to various aspects of police leadership. The uniqueness of a special agent is that this person represents the "police and military." Klein et al. (2015) opined that the police and military relationship increases rapport-building, creates trust, supports mission accomplishment, and expands organizational coherence.

A quantitative study by Park & Hassan (2018) observed that "law enforcement managers are more likely to engage in empowering leadership practices with their subordinates when they feel empowered" (p. 219). The study included data collected through three independent surveys from 101 law enforcement managers, from sergeants to police chiefs employed in various law enforcement organizations in Ohio, and 507 of their direct reports to identify leadership practices. Research indicates the importance of leadership and its effect on organizations in many studies (Hassan et al., 2019; Joo & Jo, 2017; Park & Hassan, 2018; Ribeiro et al., 2018). Martin et al. (2017) noted that the [follower] and the "leader" could function as a team to offer a dynamic and proficient leadership style. The U.S. Army defines a leader as "anyone who, under assumed role or assigned responsibility, inspires and influences people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization" (p. 1-13). Perceptions of the leadership of criminal investigations among case agents may derive from the

leadership style of the Special Agent in Charge. Comprehensive studies on leadership explicitly related to military organizations dominate the social sciences (Alvarez et al., 2019; Kirchner, 2018; Kirchner & Akdere, 2017; Klein et al., 2015). This study will examine the literature to better understand authentic leadership from the follower's perspective. Similarly, some authentic followers are growth-oriented individuals who thrive on challenge and satisfaction (Leroy et al., 2015). Special agents can easily be described as "authentic followers" in their own right.

The idea of leaders presenting authenticity to leadership styles has been introduced previously. Covelli & Mason (2017) found that various studies have determined that authentic leadership directly correlates with significant improvements in outcomes associated with leaders, followers, and organizations. It is an existing part of human nature that creates value for genuine individuals and demonstrates positive behaviors. Studies, such as those conducted by Alvesson & Einola (2019), proposed that authentic leadership reinforces narcissism and creates a false reality about leadership, ideals, and behaviors. Nevertheless, the core aspects of leadership evolve around fundamental values that everyone has established throughout their lifetime, which build on the foundation of authenticity. Specific core values from childhood remain the same, but those values cultivate individual attributes that become the leadership framework during growth and development. In the U.S. Army, values are a compass always pointing toward what the Nation demands from leadership. The concept of authentic leadership has significantly developed over time. According to Covelli & Mason (2017), authentic leadership and "authentic leadership development" are interchangeably used as there is a relationship between the leader and follower and how the leader influences the characteristics and values of the follower. Many components of authentic leadership are derivatives of those core values developed over time. Leroy et al. (2015) found that "follower self-determined work motivation is not solely a function

of the authentic functioning of either the leader or the follower" (p. 1694). The authentic leader

and the follower must work together to create or enhance leader satisfaction.

**Transformational Leadership**

Banks et al. (2016) found a connection between authentic and transformational

leadership. Tourish (2018) asserted that transformational leadership theory primarily focused on

individual leaders rather than the development of those leaders. Puni, Mohammed and Asamoah

(2018) concluded that transformational leadership focuses on producing an innovative change in

institutions by willingly getting followers to commit to the organization's vision and long-term

goals. Notwithstanding, Banks et al. (2016) contended that transformational leadership is one of

the most dominant leadership styles and is categorized into four groupings: idealized influence,

inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual stimulation. Kwan (2019)

asserted that transformational leadership centers around the internal organization, including

personnel, performance, and goals, while using motivation and encouragement to foster a

positive organization. Additionally, Kwan (2019) and Qu et al. (2019) identified that

transformational leaders thrive on their ability to motivate followers who sincerely aspire to

perform and envelop the organization's mission, vision, and goals.

Positive transformational leaders have some resemblances to authentic leadership and

authentic leadership theory. The varying dynamics necessary during criminal investigations

require a leadership style that incorporates emotional intelligence factors such as those found in

authentic leadership. Leroy et al. (2015) suggested that authentic leadership reflects a work-

related and leader manifestation of authentic functioning. Although authentic leadership may be

an integral part of conducting investigations, the law enforcement profession requires some

aspects of transformational leadership to exist to satisfy mission requirements. As an illustration,

Jensen et al. (2019) argued that transformational leadership inspires followers to transcend their self-regard in the interest of the organization's goals and interests.

A criminal investigation is a classification of policing that highly values leadership and investigative competence. Many facets of leadership are required, including aspects of management and supervision. Studies by Wei et al. (2018) examined whether the competency level of supervisors enhanced or attenuated the relationship between authentic leadership and followers' performance. The research indicated that the effect of authentic leadership on followers' performance could result from the behaviors and predictivity of the leader themselves (Wei et al., 2018). Authentic followers, the case agents, are primarily highly proficient military law enforcement officers who take personal responsibility for their behavior and are usually adaptive to the demands of conducting complex investigations (Leroy et al., 2015).

Authenticity includes a level of emotional intelligence that requires leaders and followers to be mindful of their emotions and what affects their decision-making processes (Duncan, 2017; Joo & Jo, 2017). Emotional intelligence and trust are instinctive components necessary in law enforcement organizations and are a fundamental cornerstone of authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Farid et al., 2020). In the International Personality Item Pool Big-Five Factor Markers, the personality trait of emotional stability is present (Droffelaar & Jacobs, 2018). The additional four personality traits are extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. It is often required for leaders to compartmentalize internal emotional conflicts from work-related responsibilities. As a special agent, this aspect becomes more challenging to maintain over extended periods in the military law enforcement profession. Additionally, investigating includes copious amounts of time special agents dedicated to a criminal complaint, which creates an inadvertent relationship with the propensity to affect a

special agent's performance (Indriati, 2021). The unique intricacies involved in conducting criminal investigations require an authentic leadership style.

**Summary**

Throughout the literature, transactional and transformational leadership styles frequently describe military and law enforcement leaders. Conversely, authentic leadership includes a moral and ethical perspective that moves beyond the transactional and transformational leadership styles often necessary in law enforcement (Duncan et al., 2017). Notwithstanding, transactional and transformational leadership styles are evident in the policing category of law enforcement but not leadership styles that are unequivocal appropriate or suitable for the investigative category in law enforcement. Traditional law enforcement leadership focuses primarily on the individual leader rather than leader-follower relationships or the perception of leadership practices, including authentic leadership (Filstad & Karp, 2021). Leadership and leadership styles are topics of debate within the military and military law enforcement organization community. There is an overarching focus on leadership effectiveness from the leader's perspective; however, minimal qualitative studies exploring the perception of authentic leadership in a military law enforcement organization exist.

Literature suggests authentic leadership leads to positive outcomes (Alvesson & Einola, 2019). Research suggests a clear, effective way to measure authentic leadership from the follower's perspective using quantitative tools. The Leader's Authenticity and Job Satisfaction scale usage validate how followers perceive leadership (Braun & Peus, 2018; Egan et al., 2017; Wei et al., 2018). The Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) is another tool used to measure the effectiveness of authentic leadership. Both identification tools are useful while not adequately capturing the narrative or necessary substantial qualitative data to garner a

wholesome understanding of the research topic. Copes et al. (2016) suggested there is much difficulty in publishing qualitative research using qualitative methods. However, Bogna et al. (2020) proposed that understanding the perception of authentic leadership requires a qualitative assessment. Using a qualitative method in research postulates the additional exploration of narratives and observations, resulting in a better understanding of causality. However, there is a significant gap in qualitative data concerning the perceptions of authentic leadership among special agents in a military law enforcement organization. This research aims to address the gap in the existing literature.

**CHAPTER THREE: METHODS**

**Overview**

This qualitative study was to explore the lived authentic leadership experiences of former special agents previously assigned to the CID, a military law enforcement organization. A hermeneutic phenomenological research design was appropriate for this proposed study because it aimed to describe former special agents' lived experiences of a shared phenomenon. This chapter describes the research design used for this study and the sampling strategy employed. The data collection process, data analysis approach, and the researcher's role are also addressed in this chapter. Additionally, a description of the trustworthiness of the proposed study and the ethical considerations are specified.

**Design**

This study utilized a qualitative approach in the form of a hermeneutic phenomenological design to understand special agents' perceptions of authentic leadership. The concept of conducting a qualitative study is an ever-evolving field in research that focuses on capturing the participants' lived experiences in an explanatory, representational, and all-inclusive approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative research explores answers to any specified question while cultivating flexibility and creativity (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Glesne (2016) asserted that qualitative research is the core of philosophical and theoretical foundations. Qualitative research is scientific and systematic; it collects evidence and produces findings that answer the original questions. According to Baquero et al. (2019), studies have previously explored authentic leadership, job performance, quality, and satisfaction from generalized assessments. However, additional research to better understand the perceptions of authentic leadership remains necessary. A qualitative study provides meaning to individuals or groups, attributing to problems

through an interpretive or theoretical framework while providing explanations and depth of the participant's experiences of a shared phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Qualitative research provides a systematic research design approach that exposes the behaviors and perceptions of a target audience within specified context issues. A quantitative approach was not appropriate for this study, as a quantitative research design develops meaning through numbers that do not coincide with this study's objective, which is to make meaning through narrative and descriptions ascertained during interviews. Exclusively, collecting and analyzing numbers does not capture the participants' experience, meaning, and perspective necessary concerning this topic of study as would a qualitative method. Berkovich (2018) suggested the existence of an ongoing discourse in the scholarly community regarding the dissimilarity between qualitative and quantitative approaches to research. A qualitative methodology and analysis generated textual data that captured experiences, opinions, and perceptions when answering the research questions, which could have been lost if a quantitative method had been employed. Qualitative approaches adequately capture human interactions and experiences that shape their worldview, ultimately defining their perspectives of the world surrounding them (van Manen, 2014). The philosophical assumptions and lens typically used in quantitative analyses were not conducive to adequately exploring the research questions in this study. The lived experiences of special agents and the perception of authentic leadership could not be answered with numerical data, a modest "yes" or "no" response from participants, or by using a psychometric scale commonly used in quantitative research.

A phenomenological design was chosen for this study to generate a deeper understanding of authentic leadership from participants' lived experiences, including the differences and commonalities each shared with a phenomenon. Qualitative research adds significant value to

understanding an individual's lived experience. Glesne (2016) stated that qualitative researchers, like most researchers, rely comprehensively on theory by raising questions, describing the research population, selecting methods, developing a timeline, and collecting and analyzing data into an understandable outcome. Qualitative research is deemed one of the most flexible research types, widely receptive to the field of social science (Bouncken et al., 2021). It is an effective and reliable research method, especially in gathering specific information concerning different characteristics of a population. Specifically, a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological approach employs observation and reason to increase understanding of human behavior in a designated environment focused on life interpretations and lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Peoples, 2021; Rodriguez & Smith, 2018). Frequently referred to as descriptive or interpretive phenomenology, it delves into individual experiences through understanding the essence of experiences (Rodriguez & Smith, 2018; Suddick, 2020; van Manen, 2014). Butler (2016) posits that a phenomenology-based research method allows one to observe individual and personal epistemological realities arising from unique "perceptions."

Phenomenology research methodology has two main categories: hermeneutic and transcendental (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The hermeneutic phenomenology research design was used in this study to take an unbiased, interpretative approach to describe and analyze the participants' experiences based on their direct accounts (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Peoples, 2021). A transcendental methodology takes a descriptive approach that requires analysis from a fresh perspective (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Since the researcher is a special agent with an array of experience in different positions within the occupation, a transcendental methodology was not appropriate for this study to reduce bias and subjectivity, often seen in this approach. Bracketing was used in this phenomenological study to demonstrate the validity and understand the

participants' experiences (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). The theoretical justification for using a qualitative study was to provide valuable means to better understand authentic leadership from the special agent's perspective.

## Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide this hermeneutic phenomenological study:

**RQ1:** How do former special agents of Army CID perceive authentic leadership?

**RQ2:** What are former Army CID special agents' perceptions and experiences of the importance of authentic leadership in investigative case management?

## Setting

The setting for the proposed study was based on the location of the participants who are no longer employed with the law enforcement agency associated with this study. The research activities for this study were conducted telephonically due to the geographical distribution of the participants. This location was chosen for convenience and to provide participant privacy as they controlled and determined the site most conducive to participating in the study. The researcher currently works for the organization and utilizes personal and professional networks to solicit participants. The contextual setting of the study was a Military Criminal Investigative Organization (MCIO), a law enforcement agency headquartered in the Eastern United States. For this study, participants were recruited/solicited from across the entire continental United States or abroad due to the homogenous sampling and snowball sampling techniques used to solicit participants based on their former affiliation with the organization. Participants shared experiences with authentic leadership during their tenure at multiple Army CID offices worldwide. Since the study will focus on authentic leadership rather than specific persons or

locations, there is no consideration for anonymity as it is irrelevant to this study. However,

individual participants were assigned pseudonyms only readily identifiable to the researcher.

## Participants

The study participants include former special agents previously employed with Army

CID. Participation was voluntary. The researcher used a combination of purposive and snowball

sampling to recruit participants for this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Snowball sampling is a

form of purposive sampling (Creswell, 2013). Purposive sampling is an appropriate strategy for

qualitative research to identify and select information-rich cases related to the phenomenon being

studied (Bansal, 2018; Kalu, 2019). Creswell & Poth (2018) proposed three criteria to consider

when using the purposive sampling approach: 1) whom to select as participants or sites, 2) the

sampling strategy, and 3) the sample size. The purposive sampling strategy is beneficial in

qualitative research when the participants are knowledgeable about the phenomenon (Kalu,

2019). In addition, the purposive sampling strategy is appropriate to identify participants who

share and "lived" the experiences of the phenomenon of the study and meet criteria deemed

applicable to learn or understand the central phenomenon centered around the study (Creswell,

2013; Kalu, 2019; van Manen, 2014).

An aspect of criterion sampling applied to this study because the participants were

required to meet specific eligibility criteria established through the initial recruitment phase. To

participate, each participant had to be a former Army CID special agent, not currently employed

with CID in any capacity, and not actively serving in any branch of military service.

Demographic data on each participant was collected and documented, though there were no

restrictions on race, age, or the number of years previously served in the position for this study.

Snowball sampling was appropriate for the study because the referral technique assisted in

identifying additional participants who had experienced the same phenomenon (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). The sample size for this study was 10 participants, which was within the recommended sample size suggested for phenomenological studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Guest et al., 2020; Patton, 2015). The decision to use former special agents rather than current special agents increased individual willingness to participate, decreased the possibility of negative impacts on the organization, did not require site authorization, and minimized the possibility of researcher influence (Rau, 2020).

## Procedures

An application was submitted to Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), and approval was granted before any data was collected (see Appendix A). Upon IRB approval, the recruiting participants began using a recruitment email (see Appendix B). The researcher personally contacted eligible former special agents via email or telephone utilizing the recruitment email to discuss the details of the study and requested participation. Snowball sampling ensured the required number of participants was available or until the researcher reached data saturation (Guest et al., 2020; Sechelski & Onwuegbuzie, 2019). Once potential participants were identified and selected, the researcher coordinated a convenient time and date to conduct the interview. The participants received notification reminders of the interview before the scheduled date to remain flexible for any schedule changes. A recruitment information email (see Appendix B) was verbally shared or emailed directly to each referral to solicit participation in the study. The recruitment email described the voluntary nature of the proposed study, and that written consent would be obtained before conducting the interview. If sent via email, each email was transmitted individually to maintain confidentiality. Based on the chosen recruitment strategy, a screening survey was unnecessary for this study; upon initial contact, the researcher

confirmed each participant's eligibility. This study's primary data collection methods were surveys, interviews, and reflexive memos (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Once eligibility was confirmed, a consent form containing additional information about the study was sent to the participants, who were asked to sign the form using digital or ink signatures (see Appendix C). After the participants signed the consent form, the researcher forwarded the online SurveyMonkey® link via email for completion (see Appendix D). The first six questions on the survey related to demographic information, while the remaining four questions solicited information used in the data analysis portion of the study. After the participants completed the survey, each participant was contacted to schedule a mutually convenient time for an interview. All participants were interviewed using the same semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix E). All telephonic interviews were recorded using a Sony ICD-PX370 digital voice recorder for subsequent transcription and data analysis. After each interview, the researcher transcribed the digital recordings using Otter.ai, a speech-to-text software. A copy of the transcript was sent to each participant to ensure the accuracy, make corrections, or modify the information as deemed necessary (Patton, 2015). As appropriate, memoing was conducted after each interview. Once the data collection phase was completed, the data analysis process began. Data collected from the interviews were analyzed manually and then using NVivo 2020, a qualitative data analysis software.

### The Researcher's Role

In a qualitative study, the researcher serves as the primary human instrument responsible for objectively collecting quality data and upholding ethical standards in a qualitative study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 2014). As the human instrument, the researcher independently collects data, takes notes, asks interview questions, and interprets the participants'

responses (Patton, 2015). In hermeneutic phenomenology, there is an emphasis on understanding meanings through a circle that challenges the researcher's expectations or prejudices, allowing for a contextual understanding of the text (Suddick et al., 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) advised researchers to be cognizant of their biases concerning their role in the study. Therefore, the researcher employed the bracketing technique to reduce any risk of self-biases influencing the study and to ensure awareness of biases (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015).

The researcher is a United States Army officer and a special agent with the United States Army Criminal Investigation Division (CID) with over 15 years of military service, having served in various positions and multiple assignments. In the researcher's experience as a special agent assigned to CID for over 15 years, caution was exercised while conducting semi-structured interviews not to incorporate personal or professional experiences into the participants' unique epistemologies. During these years, the researcher served in many positions that allowed the development of professional relationships with many former special agents. Therefore, it was possible that participants would include former special agents that the researcher may have interacted with in one of the many positions or locations served over the years. The researcher acknowledged that assumptions and biases about the study might exist; however, this study focused on the subject matter rather than any specific individual who served in any leadership position. The bracketing method was used to filter personal experiences; however, data interpretation required interpretation during the study. Participants' perceptions were based on their individual experiences with leadership throughout their careers while special agents. Specifically, this study focused on participants' collective experiences with authentic leadership rather than any specific leader that may have contributed to the perception of the phenomenon, further minimizing any opportunity for researcher bias.

**Data Collection**

Qualitative research often utilizes multiple data-gather methods to fully understand the meaning of a phenomenon being studied (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher used purposive or purposeful sampling and a snowball sampling approach to determine voluntary participants who contributed to this study by providing substantial insight into the research topic based on their lived experience and knowledge of the phenomenon beneficial for data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Sutton & Austin, 2015). Collecting data from three different approaches is a triangulation method (Mood, 2019). Data triangulation is a strategy used in qualitative research involving multiple methods or data sources to develop an accurate, holistic understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study employed a survey containing open-ended questions, semi-structured interviews, and reflexive memos to gather data and achieve triangulation.

**Survey**

Survey research in qualitative data collection is a supplementary method to complement semi-structured interviews and reflexive memos (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Open-ended questions used in surveys allowed respondents to provide their answers. Conversely, close-ended questions would not provide a precise answer from the respondent to adequately answer the research questions; therefore, they were only used to obtain participants' backgrounds and demographics (Maxfield & Babbie, 2018). The 10-question survey used in this study consisted of six close-ended and four open-ended questions, which took approximately 10 minutes to complete. Survey use is a reasonably simple and informal data collection method (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). The first six closed-ended questions solicited participants' backgrounds and demographics. NVivo 2020 case classification feature was used to create participant attributes

from the background and demographics data. The remaining four open-ended questions allowed the participants to provide ancillary thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and experiences that contributed to theme identification and to answer the researcher's questions (Ponto, 2015). NVivo 2020 was used to assist with creating codes from the data obtained through the open-ended questions. To address content validity and external validity, committee members reviewed the survey. Through multiple data sources and asking open-ended questions, the triangulation processes established trustworthiness in the data collected (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Glesne, 2016; Yin, 2018).

**Interviews**

The primary and most common form of data collection in qualitative research is conducting interviews (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018; Constantinou et al., 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Richards et al. (2019) found that using a semi-structured interview, coding, and research analysis can increase participants' perspectives. Using interviews to obtain detailed descriptions of textual data adds value to the research study by allowing the researcher to study themes that materialize in the interview (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). Semi-structured interviews in this study formed the basis for the data collection of the perceptions of authentic leadership from participants during their careers as special agents. Interviews facilitated the collection of detailed information concerning participants' perceptions and experiences with authentic leadership and how it relates to the criminal investigative process. Conducting interviews is a form of data collection in qualitative research that produces many advantages, including but not limited to the following: Personalized interviews that allow for unrestricted and detailed responses, provide flexibility and adaptability, and allow the researcher to understand the individual's point of view

using a systematic and comprehensive approach (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018; Constantinou et al., 2017).

Semi-structured interviews, coupled with using an interview guide, enable a concentrated exploration of a particular subject (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Although researchers are at liberty to employ different types of interviews, including natural conversation, open interviews, informal open-ended interviews, or formal semi-structured interviews, to collect qualitative data, semi-structured interviews were used for this study (Bhattacharya, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Researchers who use semi-structured interviews follow a standard protocol (see Table 1); they also authorize unforeseen directions in the interview once they are identified as germane to the research topic (Bhattacharya, 2017). Similarly, phenomenological research traditionally involves using open-ended questions during interviews to aid in garnering participants' experiences through narrative reflection (Klinke & Fernandez, 2022; Suddick et al., 2020). Therefore, this study used semi-structured, open-ended interview questions to understand the participants' perceptions of authentic leadership.

**Table 1**

*Semi-Structured Interview Questions*

| Interview Questions | Research Question |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Please introduce yourself and share your overall experience with leadership as a special agent. | |
| 2. How would you describe your perception of authenticity? | RQ1 |
| 3. What is your understanding of authentic leadership? | RQ1 |
| 4. How would you describe an authentic leader and what he/she is responsible for in an organization? | RQ1 |
| 5. Describe your professional experience with authentic leadership while investigating cases as a special agent in CID. | RQ2 |
| 6. According to you, what effects does authentic leadership have on how investigations are supervised and conducted? | RQ2 |
| 7. Describe your experiences concerning how authentic leadership was commonly demonstrated in CID? | RQ1 |
| 8. Describe your thoughts on authentic leadership being critical to conducting timely and thorough investigations? | RQ1 |
| 9. Can you give an example of how authentic leadership influenced any aspect of an investigation? | RQ2 |
| 10. How might the culture of CID and law enforcement contribute to an acceptance or rejection of authentic leadership | RQ1 |
| 11. According to you, what effects does authentic leadership have on a case agent's ability to effectively investigate crime? | RQ2 |
| 12. Is there any additional information you would like to share about the perception of authentic leadership in CID that we have not discussed today? | |
| 13. This concludes the interview. Do you have any questions? | |

Although face-to-face interviews are traditionally standard in qualitative research, this study's primary data collection method was telephonic interviews (Novick, 2008). The effectiveness of a telephonic interview is often discussed when chosen as a data collection method in research; however, this method has increased in use in recent years (Lobe et al., 2020; Roberts et al., 2021; Self, 2021). The researcher conducted individual, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 10 participants in various geographical locations. The researcher elected to conduct interviews telephonically for several reasons: to create a considerable reduction of time, alleviate travel expenditures, allow the researcher to gain access to participants regardless of location, increase flexibility and convenience for participants, and to be mindful of the health and safety concerns during the COVID-19 ongoing public health pandemic (Roberts et al., 2021; Teti, 2020; Novick, 2008). Participants in this study appreciated the extra layer of confidentiality provided by telephone conversations (Self, 2021; Teti, 2020). Additionally, participants in this study were assigned pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality of identity. Acknowledging the challenges with interviewing in person due to the continuing public health pandemic and the relational worry of face-to-face interactions, including video chat apprehension, is imperative (Curran & Seiter, 2021; Gray et al., 2020). Subsidiary data is absent regarding the advantages or disadvantages of telephonic interviews as opposed to traditional, "face-to-face" interviews (Farooq & Villiers, 2017; Novick, 2008). Nonetheless, telephonic interviews were used to collect data for this study. The telephonic interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed.

The interviews were conducted using a self-authored interview guide. Question one was developed to gather background information about the participant and build rapport between the researcher and the participant. (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Question one also focuses on the participant's overall experiences relating to the phenomenon, creating comfort between the

interviewer and participant and establishing a basis for the remaining questions (Patton, 2015).

Questions two through four were related to the participant's perception and personal meaning of authentic leadership.

Bill George's Authentic Leadership Theory is based on an individual's thoughts, perceptions, and experiences with leadership (George, 2003; George & Sims, 2007; Gill & Caza, 2018). Gardner et al. (2021) indicated significant value in assessing authenticity and authentic leadership perceptions as these measures correlate to other leader and follower attributes within any organization. Questions five through eleven elicited information on the participants' perceptions and experiences with the study's phenomenon, a prerequisite for phenomenological interviews (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018; Braun, 2018; Caulfield & Senger, 2017). Questions five through eleven established information explicitly grounded in Bill George's Authentic Leadership Theory. These questions aimed to discover a deeper understanding of the participant's perception of authentic leadership. Lastly, questions 12 through 13 were closing questions. These questions encouraged participants to provide additional insights and information on the topic not covered during the interview (Patton, 2015).

**Reflexive Memos**

Reflexive memos is a data collection and analysis method that contributes to theory development (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher used recorded memos after interviews to document personal and functional reflexivity and conduct a reflexive thematic analysis of the data collected. These memos provided an in-depth insight and understanding of the information generated from survey responses and interviews. Reflexive memos captured any subjective perspectives or ideas encountered during the study's data collection and data analysis phases. Davis (2020) stated that reflexivity facilitates a collective understanding of the phenomenon and

the research process that can be beneficial during and after the study. Reflexive memos are an effective bracketing method and tool to analyze decision-making, determine clusters within coding themes, and recognize biases (Shufutinsky, 2020). This method is critical for the researcher to be open and transparent about the relationship between themselves and the study (Davis, 2020).

Reflexive memos in qualitative research contribute to the study's rigor, ethics, credibility, and trustworthiness (Berger, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Maintaining a record of reflective memos during the data collection and analysis part of research is recognized as "memoing" (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). First, the researcher used personal reflexivity to reflect on values, experiences, and beliefs to identify how personal involvement may have impacted the research outcome (Glesne, 2016). Personal reflexivity is critically important since the researcher shared similar experiences with the phenomenon as the participants (Berger, 2015). Reflexivity in research can become challenging when balancing research and self-analysis (Davis, 2020). Second, the researcher employed functional reflexivity to examine the researcher's role in the inclusive research process (Palaganas et al., 2017). Third, functional reflexivity allowed the researcher to reflect on decisions and the rationale contributing to the chosen approach during the research. Integrating reflexive thematic analysis accounts for any subjectivities, including worldview, perspectives, and biases, to distinguish knowledge from data (Miller et al., 2018; Sutton & Austin, 2015). The reflexive thematic analysis allowed the researcher to understand the totality of the data collected, bracket the inherent biases, and embrace personal experience and values as essential components of the collective process (Byrne, 2021; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Fourth, the researcher incorporated NVivo 2020, a Qualitative Data Analysis Software (Q-DAS) owned by QSR International, to facilitate the process of data analysis and to ensure rigor, depth,

and breadth in data management, data coding, and data analysis (Allsop et al., 2022; Maher et al., 2018). Throughout the data collection and analysis, the researcher used a Sony ICD-PX370 digital voice recorder to record reflexive memos to document thoughts or ideas generated from the survey responses and semi-structured interviews conducted during the study.

## Data Analysis

Data analysis represents the most essential and demanding phase in the qualitative research process (Sechelski & Onwuegbuzie, 2019). Data analysis is accomplished through several segments: data organization, a database review, coding, theme identification, data representation, and conclusion by interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2016). In qualitative research, general data analysis processes involve several steps; the chosen methodology, research goals, and data collection method determine the type best suited for the research (Glesne, 2016). The method for organizing data included using a set of unique codes to categorize a summary of each participant's response to the research questions.

Data analysis requires the researcher to patiently reflect on the process of making sense of multiple data sources by generating categories and identifying patterns and themes (Bloomberg &Volpe, 2019). While there are many ways to approach data analysis, each shares a common goal of extracting the underlying essence of the data collected (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Therefore, data from surveys, semi-structured interviews, and reflexive memos were organized into a file naming system for quick identification and retrieval. Subsequently, the data was labeled and stored in an electronic folder, and the interview, survey, and reflexive memos data were labeled and stored in a separate electronic folder. All files are securely located on a password-protected computer. As a result, the researcher adequately addressed the research questions by using surveys, semi-structured interviews, and reflexive memos.

**Coding**

All data collected remains raw in research until it undergoes analysis and becomes meaningful to the researcher (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Glesne (2016) suggests that coding is the means to develop a way to index themes, generate support for pattern recognition, reduce information as necessary, and compare extracted information to complete an accurate analysis. The researcher transcribed the interview data using Otter.ai, a standard artificial intelligence voice recognition technology, speech-to-text software program frequently used in academia and qualitative research (Gray et al., 2020). After transcribing the interviews, the researcher reviewed the transcripts using a repetitive, line-by-line approach to ensure an initial contextual understanding of the text. During naïve reading, the researcher transitioned from a natural attitude to a phenomenological perspective, consistent with the structural analysis found in qualitative research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

After concluding member-checked data transcription and thorough naïve reading, the researcher used a Sony ICD-PX370 digital voice recorder to capture initial thoughts, initial code identification, perspectives, and additional notes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Glesne, 2016). Using reflexive memos throughout the data analysis process is an active approach for the researcher to learn from the collected data (Glense, 2016; Laverty, 2003).

**First Cycle Coding**

First-cycle coding involves *in vivo* coding to organize and analyze participants' spoken words to describe their experiences (Glesne, 2016). The researcher utilized first-cycle coding to comprehensively understand the data (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). First-cycle methods involve initial coding strategies, which intend to reacquaint the researcher with the data (Saldaña, 2016).

**Second Cycle Coding**

Second-cycle coding involved reorganizing and reanalyzing data collected and analyzed during the first coding cycle (Saldaña, 2016). The researcher used an inductive thematic analysis process specific to this research to categorize and develop themes and subthemes (Glesne, 2016; Saldaña, 2016). The hermeneutic circle is critical in understanding data, allowing the researcher to move from the experience to the complete experience fluently. It creates a back-and-forth process that includes the researcher's perspective, a factor in informing knowledge (Peoples, 2021; van Manen, 2014). Utilizing the hermeneutic circle with relevant existing literature obtained throughout the research process aided in a comprehensive interpretation and understanding of the data (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019; Saldaña, 2016; van Manen, 2014). The data analysis in this qualitative research focused on identifying themes and information to enhance the current literature.

## Trustworthiness

Trust between the researcher and the participants is essential in qualitative research. Trustworthiness is recognized as the quality of a qualitative study or the virtuousness of the results of the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The basis for establishing trustworthiness for this hermeneutic phenomenological study was understanding the research protocols and transparency of the questions. Patton (2015) argued the significance of disclosing the processes and outcomes of empirical research. Ensuring trustworthiness consists of maintaining standards through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018; Glesne, 2016). For this study, several methods were employed to attain trustworthiness that included but not limited to member checks, thick descriptions, peer/expert review, purposeful sampling, and triangulation (Patton, 2015).

**Credibility**

Credibility refers to how the findings accurately describe the participants' reality and perceptions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Credibility in this study was ensured by conducting member checks, obtaining thick descriptions, and triangulating the data. By conducting member checks, the participants validated the authenticity of the study results by reviewing a verbatim copy of their transcripts to confirm the accuracy of the interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Earnest, 2020). In addition, gathering thick descriptions from the participants assisted with garnering rich and detailed information for the readers. Finally, credibility was attained through the triangulation of multiple data sources used to research the same phenomenon and strengthen the findings. (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

**Dependability and Confirmability**

Dependability and confirmability are methods intended to evaluate and authenticate the participants' lived experiences; and validate the research findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Dependability in trustworthiness is vital to establish that the research study's findings are consistent, logically attributable, and duplicable (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Confirmability in qualitative research is how researchers correlate the data to the findings and interpretations (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data triangulation is a method that ensures dependability by articulating the relevance of each data collection method chosen for the specific research design and research questions (Earnest, 2020; Yin, 2018). Confirmability acknowledges how biases and prejudices may influence data interpretation; therefore, reflexive notes were used, when necessary, to eradicate biases and safeguard the trustworthiness of this study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018; Earnest, 2020).

**Transferability**

Transferability in qualitative research refers to whether the study's research findings are transferable between one context and setting to another. (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018; Creswell, 2013). To achieve transferability in this study, gathering thick and extensive data descriptions during interviews was essential (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Earnest, 2020). In addition, the results of this study may apply to the experiences of current or former special agents affiliated with military criminal investigative organizations in other military branches, making it possible to determine whether similar research processes will work in other settings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018).

## Ethical Considerations

Throughout the research process, researchers may encounter many ethical issues they have the moral responsibility to minimize (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Glesne, 2016). Onyalla (2018) proposed a new perspective that there is a direct correlation between authentic leadership and ethics in leadership. The first step to ensuring the participants were protected was by obtaining approval from Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Next, the researcher obtained informed consent from the participants that discussed the voluntary nature of the study, the right to withdraw from the study at any time, and the procedures in place to safeguard their confidentiality and privacy. Pseudonyms were used to refer to the participants during the data collection phase to protect their identities. All research materials and data collected throughout the study were secured using a password-protected personal laptop device. Any physical documentation associated with the research was stored in a locked desk drawer to prevent unauthorized access, use, disclosure, or violation of confidentiality (Glesne, 2016).

Glesne (2016) suggested that when participants trust the researcher, the researcher customarily receives the privilege and burden of learning complicated things. While identifying problematic information is possible, it can increase understanding of the designated research and present an ethical quandary at an unspecified point during the research. Therefore, researchers are responsible for ensuring appropriate measures are taken to minimize potential harm; however, this situation did not occur. Onyalla (2018) suggested that ethics and authenticity in leadership are both central components. Upon completion of the study, the data will be retained in secured locations for three years. As the researcher has been a current member of the organization for almost 15 years, to mitigate any potential conflicts of interest, participants with whom a direct, pre-existing personal relationship exists were not considered or eligible to participate. According to Machin and Shardlow (2018), qualitative researchers can overcome ethical issues by developing self-referent approaches to address unanticipated ethical conflicts, creating an open dialogue with others, and remaining mindful of their legal duties as a researcher.

**Summary**

This hermeneutic phenomenological study explored the perception of authentic leadership from the perspective of special agents formerly assigned to the CID, a military law enforcement organization. This chapter discussed the research design for this study and the rationale for choosing a hermeneutic phenomenological approach. Aspects regarding the settings and participants were also discussed. The various methods used in the data collection process, including semi-structured interviews, surveys containing open-ended questions, and reflexive memos, were discussed in this chapter. Additionally, the data analysis process, the trustworthiness of the study, and ethical considerations were discussed.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

## Overview

The purpose of this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study is to explore the lived authentic leadership experiences of former Army CID special agents. The focus of this chapter is to present the results of the data analysis. This study sought to answer the following questions regarding the perception of authentic leadership among former Army CID special agents:

**RQ1:** How do former special agents of Army CID perceive authentic leadership?

**RQ2:** What are former Army CID special agents' perceptions and experiences of the importance of authentic leadership in investigative case management?

This chapter briefly describes the study participants' demographic information using pseudonyms. Next, the study results are presented utilizing themes developed through data analysis. Lastly, the chapter concludes by addressing the research questions using detailed descriptions of how each participant experienced the phenomenon.

## Participants

The researcher conducted the study using ten participants who volunteered to share their perceptions of authentic leadership in Army CID, a military criminal investigative organization. Six participants were male, and four were female. Of the ten participants, the highest level of education attained by most was a master's degree. Each participant varied in age, gender, race, education, and tenure of law enforcement experience within the organization (see Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Participant Demographics*

| Participant | Age | Gender | Ethnicity | Highest Level of Education | Army CID Experience |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Karen | 45-54 | Female | White | Bachelor's | 16-20 years |
| Amelia | 35-44 | Female | Multiracial | Bachelor's | 11-15 years |
| Eddy | 25-34 | Male | White | Bachelor's | 1-5 years |
| Ginger | 35-44 | Female | White | Bachelor's | 11-15 years |
| Jackson | 25-34 | Male | White | Bachelor's | 1-5 years |
| Jennifer | 45-54 | Female | White | Master's | 16-20 years |
| Cody | 25-34 | Male | White | Bachelor's | 1-5 years |
| Leroy | 55-64 | Male | Black | Bachelor's | 11-15 years |
| Brock | 35-44 | Male | Black | Bachelor's | 11-15 years |
| Colton | 35-44 | Male | White | Bachelor's | 11-15 years |

*Note.* This table lists the participant pseudonyms and demographics.

**Karen**

Karen was a White female between the ages of 45-54 who retired from the Army after serving 18 of her 20 years in the military as a special agent in Army CID. Before her retirement, Karen started her career as a case agent, team chief, and special agent in charge at multiple CID offices throughout the United States and abroad. Karen was very forthcoming and candid when answering the interview questions describing her experiences with authentic leadership during her tenure with CID.

**Amelia**

Amelia was a multiracial female between the ages of 35-44 who retired from the Army after serving 11 of her 20 years as a special agent in Army CID. She was assigned as a case

agent, team chief, and special agent in charge at multiple small CID offices throughout the United States, including one deployment abroad before her retirement. Amelia expressed mixed satisfaction with authentic leadership during her tenure with CID. However, she was carefully articulate when describing her experiences with authentic leadership in CID.

**Eddy**

Eddy was a White male between the ages of 25-34 who reached his expiration term of service (ETS) obligation and then medically retired from the Army after serving three of the approximate ten years as a special agent in Army CID. He started and concluded his career as a case agent and served at two stateside CID offices before his ETS. Eddy's tone reflected frustration, bitterness, and resentment when articulating his past experiences in the organization.

**Ginger**

Ginger was a White female between the ages of 35-44 who retired from the Army after serving 11 of her 20 years in the military as a special agent in Army CID. She has a bachelor's degree and is self-employed in her non-law enforcement-affiliated business. Before her retirement, Ginger started her career as a case agent and held team chief positions at medium and large CID offices. Ginger was candid and openly expressed disappointing experiences with authentic leadership in CID. She shared that receiving minimal support and training and unfair treatment in CID was the primary reason for retiring.

**Jackson**

Jackson was a White male between the ages of 25-35 who reached his expiration term of service (ETS) obligation from the Army after serving five of his 12 years as a special agent in Army CID. He started his career as a case agent serving in administrative and leadership positions at many CID offices throughout the United States and abroad before his ETS. Jackson

was passionate about his career in law enforcement and looked forward to his new job with a local law enforcement agency. He was forthcoming when answering the interview questions describing his incredible experiences with authentic leadership in CID until his final assignment. Jackson described an increase in poor leadership during his last office as negatively impacting him and becoming the primary reason for his ETS.

**Jennifer**

Jennifer was a White female between the ages of 45-54 who retired from the Army after serving over 15 of her 24 years in Army CID as a special agent. She has a master's degree and is currently employed with a non-law enforcement agency. During her career, Jennifer held positions as a case agent, team chief, special agent in charge, and a supervisor at the organization's operational level in multiple CID offices throughout the United States and abroad before her retirement. Jennifer was very passionate about leadership and shared that she experienced a significant decline in good leadership, especially authentic leadership in CID, which confirmed her decision to retire.

**Cody**

Cody was a White male between the ages of 25-34 who reached his expiration term of service (ETS) obligation from the Army after serving two of his five years as a special agent in Army CID. Of the 10 participants, Cody had the fewest years and experience in the organization. Cody started and ended his career as a case agent prior to his ETS. He was straightforward when answering the interview questions but was vague and reserved when describing specific experiences with authentic leadership as a case agent. Cody stated he had no desire to continue in Army CID because of his experiences with negative organizational leadership.

**Leroy**

Leroy was a Black male between the ages of 55-65 who retired from the Army after serving 16 of his 25 active-duty years as a special agent in Army CID. Leroy started his career as a case agent but served most of his years as a protective service agent in CID. Despite having a less-than-favorable professional experience with authentic leadership, he had positive experiences with authentic leadership during his protection assignments. Leroy stated that most challenges he experienced with authentic leadership involved his direct leadership rather than those in higher-level leadership positions.

**Brock**

Brock was a Black male between the ages of 35-44 who retired from the Army after serving 14 of his 20 years as a special agent in Army CID. He has a bachelor's degree and works for a non-law enforcement government agency. Brock served four years in the Marine Corps prior to joining the Army. He started his CID career as a case agent and was reluctant to elaborate on his experiences with authentic leadership during his tenure with CID. Although he served many years in CID, he could not provide specific details concerning his perception of authentic leadership as it pertained to its role in criminal investigations.

**Colton**

Colton was a White male between the ages of 35-44 who retired from the Army after serving 13 of his 20 years as a special agent in Army CID. Colton started his career as a case agent and served in senior leadership positions at a medium-sized CID office before retirement. Colton mainly shared positive experiences with authentic leadership but believed there is room for improvement in CID regarding accepting and fostering authentic leadership.

**Results**

The data collection methods used in this hermeneutic phenomenological study were obtained through survey responses, one-on-one semi-structured interviews, and reflexive memos. The following themes were identified through data analysis and coding: 1) leader-follower relationship, 2) perceptions of authenticity, 3) factors attributing to authenticity, and 4) organizational culture influence. The information derived from these themes answers the following two research questions: How do former special agents of Army CID perceive authentic leadership? What are former Army CID special agents' perceptions and experiences of the importance of authentic leadership in investigative case management?

**Theme Development**

This study utilized three essential methods of data collection: 1) a survey, 2) interviews, and 3) reflexive memos. Interviews were the primary data collection method, and a survey was the second. As necessary, reflexive memoing was completed throughout the data collection and analysis phases. A Sony ICD-PX370 digital voice recorder was used to record the interview data. Subsequently, Otter.ai, web-based software, transcribes the interview data and reflexive memos. The transcripts from each data collection method were thoroughly read to ensure the accuracy of the participant's responses. The participants could also review and verify the transcript for accuracy through member-checking.

Interview transcripts were downloaded from Otter.ai and imported into NVivo 2020, coding with a case created for each participant—10 cases contained only the references from each transcript representing each participant's spoken words. NVivo's auto code feature was used to identify themes, sentiment, and word frequency for each case, collectively and for individual participants. It is often challenging to discern the context of a single sentence. Therefore, theme

identification and sentiment analysis at the paragraph level were conducted. Using NVivo's word frequency query, stem or similar words were included with at least four characters. The automatic feature of NVivo was also used to create nodes for common themes across participants and separately for each participant, with every node containing sub-nodes. Common words and associations were identified, which provided additional context to the node. Although NVivo identified the most coded themes in the transcripts, manual coding was critical. This data analysis software's sub-node categorization does not account for inevitable or subtle intricacies generally found during data analysis. Lastly, the categorized research data was used in the development of thematic analysis.

### *Naïve Reading*

The transcripts were read using a line-by-line approach (van Manen, 2014). The researcher transcribed each audio recording immediately after each interview and then listened to each interview while reading the transcriptions for accuracy. After corrections, the transcripts were read multiple times to better understand the data (Creswell & Poth; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). This approach coincides with the key use of the hermeneutic circle, which allows the researcher to familiarize themselves with the text to ensure understanding and a comprehensive interpretation of the data ((Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019).

### *First Cycle Coding*

First-cycle coding occurred after reading and member-checking the transcripts for accuracy. During this cycle, the researcher used *in vivo* coding to organize and analyze participants' verbatim words to describe their lived experiences and perceptions (Glesne, 2016). This coding strategy assisted with identifying initial codes and reacquainted the researcher with the data (Glesne, 2016; Saldaña, 2016).

*Second Cycle Coding*

Second-cycle coding ensued after each transcript data was read twice, reorganized, and reanalyzed from first-cycle coding (Saldaña, 2016). The researcher used an inductive thematic analysis to combine, categorize, and develop themes (Glesne, 2016; Saldaña, 2016). The pattern recognition approach in second-cycle coding is a method used to combine codes into smaller, meaningful clusters of data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018; Glesne, 2016).

*Survey*

Participants completed a survey before scheduling an interview. They responded to six closed-ended demographic questions and four open-ended questions to answer the research questions. Five participants had 11-15 years of experience as a special agent with Army CID. Three participants had 1-5 years of experience as a special agent with Army CID. Two participants had 16-20 years of experience as a special agent with Army CID. Eight participants reported that authentic leadership enhanced their ability to conduct investigations by providing mentorship, support, and confidence. The remaining two participants reported that better communication with authentic leadership enhanced their investigation ability. All 10 participants indicated that they experienced significant challenges while investigating crimes due to the perception of authentic leadership as case agents. Nine participants indicated those challenges derived from their perception that, often, leaders lacked the technical skills or experience required to provide adequate guidance during active investigations. One participant perceived Army CID's internal inspection process as challenging authentic leadership and investigating crimes. Six participants indicated that authentic leadership increased their motivation to investigate and solve crimes. Four participants indicated that their perception of authentic

leadership increased their trust in leadership when they felt solving crime was prioritized above the steps taken during the investigative process.

### Interviews

The primary source of data collection was one-on-one interviews. Through interviews, the participants provided thick, rich descriptions of their lived professional experiences with authentic leadership in Army CID.; the interviews were conducted telephonically for convenience as the participants reside in geographically disbursed areas and to ensure health and safety due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, all participants consented to audio-recorded phone interviews. The interviews ranged between 30 and 45 minutes in length, with a total of 82 raw transcript pages. All recordings were extracted from the Sony ICD-PX370 digital voice recorder and stored on a password-protected computer to maintain the participants' privacy. After transcribing the digital recordings, the content was downloaded and stored on a password-protected SanDisk 16 GB microSD card and stored in a locked desk drawer.

### Reflexive memos

The Sony ICD-PX370 was used to record the researcher's thoughts during the data collection and analysis. Transcribed audio-recorded memos using Otter.ai, a speech-to-text software, assisted the researcher in consolidating thoughts and insights about the information generated from survey responses and interviews. The researcher's subjective views and concepts were captured by using these reflexive memos. Additionally, reflexive memos recorded any concepts that would contribute to the data analysis phase of the study.

**Table 3**

*Themes and Related Sub-themes*

| Themes | Sub-themes |
|---|---|
| Leader-Follower relationship | Leading by example |
| | Teamwork |
| | Mentorship |
| | |
| Perspectives about authenticity | Being real, "not fake" |
| | Trust |
| | |
| Factors attributing to authentic leadership | Clear expectations and communication |
| | Care |
| | |
| Organizational culture influence | Micromanagement |
| | Politics |
| | Military vs. law enforcement culture |

*Note.* This table lists primary themes and sub-themes derived from research data.

### *Leader-follower relationship*

Leader-follower relationship emerged as a primary theme during the analysis. Several of the participant's interview responses presented aspects of this theme. All participants described variations of what they considered leader-follower relationship dynamics in Army CID. In addition, the participants shared their perceptions and experiences of authentic leadership with leader-follower relationships and any influence on investigative case management during their tenure with the organization. Based on the participant's responses, the leader-follower relationship is coded into three sub-themes: *leading by example, teamwork,* and *mentorship*.

**Leading by example.** Leading by example is necessary for authentic leadership. Participants described how leading by example was essential to developing their perception of authentic leadership. In this study, four participants (Karen, Jennifer, Colton, and Ginger) shared that leaders should set and follow the same standards for themselves as they expect from those they lead. Karen stated:

If I were to compare [former leaders], there were huge differences, like night and day differences. [Some] were extremely impressive and mentor-type leaders whom you could trust and would have your back and give you tools to do your job and do it well and to be able to articulate [themselves] and teach tools that you can use and show others how things are done rather than those who would make uneducated, uninformed decisions, go out and bark orders to direct people with a very angry attitude.

Jennifer shared a similar experience of leading by example and authentic leadership while investigating crimes. She stated:

One person I look to most when I think about authentic leadership in CID is Mr. [Wright]. He went out there and on the ground with us. He was dumpster diving on major cases and showing us how to do things. But he also had enough about him to let us go and do things after he showed us the way. He trusted us, so once he had taught us and felt that we had mastered what he had tried to teach us, he would stand back and let us do our thing.

Colton shared that setting an example is essential to the perception of authentic leadership. He stated:

It's one of those things as a leader, especially in the Army, that I learned, basically, never tell someone to do something you're not willing to do or haven't done it already. Setting an example is the number one thing about being an authentic leader.

Ginger shared that leading by example includes caring about the physical and mental well-being of others. She stated:

I'll use, for example, if you are protecting me and my responsibility to the investigation and the team…you're going to not just take care of our mental health and physical health,

and our emotional health, and understand that that's all part of the investigation. So, like,

it's not just the investigation but the health and well-being of the agents conducting the

investigation.

**Teamwork.** Many participants shared that they had good experiences with teamwork,

which was based on trust and honesty, which allowed them to communicate freely and share

candid opinions without fear. Six participants (Karen, Ginger, Jackson, Jennifer, Brock, and

Colton) shared experiences with teamwork that contributed to their perception of authentic

leadership. Karen stated:

One example is when I worked on a missing persons case; we all went out together as a

team. Everybody talked, communicated, you know, like one person was the person to

document stuff like the weather, the type of search we were doing, where the evidence

was, and no one moved forward until all of that got captured.

Ginger shared her perception regarding teamwork and authentic leadership. She stated,

"Authentic leaders work together to accomplish the mission. You know, if you're in charge of the

investigation, they protect you and allow you to investigate. You know, in a trusting responsible

manner".

Jackson shared his positive experience with teamwork and how it contributed to authentic

leadership and the investigative process. He stated, "We had a sexual assault investigation that

received a lot of media attention… So, I had a lot of guidance from the entire office…we worked

on that investigation from front to end as a team".

Jennifer shared her positive experiences with teamwork and how it contributed to authentic

leadership and the investigative process. She stated:

You look at your team and put the players in the positions where they're most effective. If you've got somebody you know is not good at photography, then I won't put them on photography. If I got somebody who sucks at interviews, I won't put them in the interview room. So, that's an important role in authentic leadership, to be able to utilize people in the most effective way that they are built on their strengths and teamwork.

Brock shared his positive experiences with teamwork and how it contributed to authentic leadership and the investigative process. He stated:

There was an experience on Fort [Swampy] when [someone] ended up going on a shooting rampage…and what I witnessed during that timeframe was what I believe to be categorized as authentic leadership and teamwork with multiple individuals involved in the investigative process, multiple agencies, interagency cooperation, interagency coordination, and communication. There didn't appear to be a single time in which the investigative process during that timeframe was stifled based on someone's apprehensiveness of making the decision or based on someone's indecisiveness about making a decision due to the fact that they felt that they had to refer back to leadership before making an on-the-spot decision while conducting the investigation and what unfolded after that incident.

Colton shared her positive experiences with teamwork and how it contributed to authentic leadership and the investigative process. He stated:

Working side by side with agents that you lead with no bias is like saying, "Hey, I'm not doing this, or you're not doing that, because we're on the same team. And [saying] we're going to go out, we're going to knock this case out, and we're going to do it together.

**Mentorship.** Most participants spoke about the importance of mentorship in the perception of authentic leadership. Seven participants (Karen, Amelia, Eddy, Jackson, Jennifer, Cody, and Leroy) shared their experiences. Most participants used examples of mentorship from when they first became Army CID special agents. Karen stated:

> It was my first time dealing with an EC-type crime. And so, I was doing a target analysis file on the CDC [Child Development Center], and I wasn't really sure what I was doing. [Ms. Anderson] was a really good mentor. She made it comfortable for me to talk to her about how I had shortcomings, and I didn't know what I was doing. Then, she would come to the office and keep giving me case after case, teaching me how to do things and not to make everything a priority.

Amelia shared her less-than-favorable experience regarding mentorship. She stated:

> The training and mentorship for the first year [in CID] is lacking; again, it goes back to people who are more concerned with themselves or don't have enough people to work cases. So, if everyone is overworked, with several different cases, people don't have time to train or mentor the newer agents.

Eddy shared his experience regarding mentorship. He stated, "It's almost kind of like you're an Indian spirit guide almost, for those people to help them grow, help them develop, help them better themselves, be better with investigations and the work that they're doing.

Jackson shared a similar experience regarding mentorship. He stated:

> I had a lot of mentorship and guidance [in CID]. Leadership took time to sit down with me to make sure I understood guidance and helped me improve my writing style, improve my interviews, and everything. And not only that, but the leadership, you know, cared about us as people. So, [they] made sure we weren't run into the ground. If we

worked late, you know, do a late work call if you can afford to, things like that, you

know, on top of supporting college and career development, making sure everyone got

the training they needed to be a better agent. So that's good, authentic leadership.

Jennifer shared a similar experience regarding mentorship. She stated:

In CID, an authentic leader has to be someone willing to stand beside your [agents] and

be out there. Leading by showing, leading by assisting, leading by allowing the [agents]

to do the job…Second, you have to allow them to implement what you taught them and

show they can do it. And then third, you have to be able to trust them enough to let them

roll on their own and stand back and kind of let them do their thing.

Cody shared a less-than-favorable experience regarding mentorship. He stated:

Yeah, teaching, taking a moment to teach your agents instead of being upset that they

don't know how to do something. Again, when you're speaking to someone, tell them that

they messed up instead of, you know, babying them and giving their work to another

agent and talking negatively or poorly about them two minutes later behind closed doors

with somebody else.

Leroy shared his less-than-favorable experience regarding mentorship. He stated:

If [leadership] liked you, they mentored you to be a good case agent. They mentored you

to move up through the ranks to move up to the positions and so forth. But, on the other

hand, if they were indifferent about you, you had to seek out mentorship, and if they

didn't like you, well, you know you ever left to your own demise… they wrote you off.

### *Perceptions about authenticity*

Perceptions about authenticity emerged as a second theme in this study. The participants

were asked to describe their professional experiences with authentic leadership while they were

special agents in Army CID. The participants' narrated responses addressed various characteristics of authenticity that they felt made a person an authentic leader. Participants' perception of authenticity was coded into two sub-themes: *being real, "not fake," and trust*.

**Being real "not fake**." Being "real" is a necessary character trait in authentic leadership. Five participants (Karen, Ginger, Jennifer, Cody, and Colton) reported that "being real" is fundamental to the perception of authentic leadership. For example, Karen stated, "Authentic is like being real; how real is their personality? Can it be trusted? Is it a fake phony or personality? Ginger shared a similar experience regarding how being "real" was essential to being an authentic leader. She stated:

> Authentic leadership is really being yourself. It's not being who the organization wants you to be. It's not, you know, changing who you are for other people or politics. It's not losing sight of the mission and the people that you serve. I think authentic leadership is being someone that can be trusted."

Jennifer shared a less than favorable experience regarding being "real" regarding authentic leadership. She stated:

> The biggest perception in CID is that to be a leader, you have to be part of a good old-boy club. I know that throughout my entire career, and hopefully, it's changed. I'm a pretty good judge of character. I believe that I can read people very well, and I can tell when they're being authentic and when they're just being fake. And I personally don't like fake people. So, I steer away from people that are being that way.

Cody shared his experience about being "real" regarding authentic leadership. He stated, "I mean, being authentic is obviously being yourself. Being true to your word and to be upfront and honest.

Colton shared a similar experience about being "real" regarding authentic leadership. He stated:

> Being authentic; it's something that I try to use in law enforcement just as well as in everyday life. It's to be genuine, treat others how you'd want to be treated…Being authentic as an individual is just being a productive part of society".

**Trust.** Trust toward leaders is an important characteristic of authentic leadership. Four participants (Karen, Amelia, Ginger, and Jennifer) indicated trust as the foundation that builds on the perception of authentic leadership. Of note, only the female participants mentioned trust as a characteristic that influenced their perception of authentic leadership. For example, Karen stated, "I had an experience with someone I didn't trust ever again because he would just make decisions, like uneducated, uninformed decisions, and bark orders to people with a very angry attitude."

Amelia shared her experience regarding trust in authentic leadership. She stated, "I think that, for me, is that when I don't have someone that I trust or trusts me to do my job, that creates an environment for me where I feel like I can't work. I don't want to be there; it's not enjoyable". Ginger shared a similar experience regarding trust in authentic leadership. She stated, "I would say an authentic leader is a leader that you can trust; they understand the real mission, and in CID, that is the investigations, the victims, the processes, and taking care of the other agents." Jennifer shared her less-than-favorable experience regarding trust in authentic leadership. She stated:

> The biggest issue within CID is that people don't necessarily trust their leaders. I've seen leaders that got promoted, who people talked about like they were garbage… and because they were friends with so and so, they were able to move up in leadership".

*Factors attributing to authenticity*

Factors attributing to authenticity emerged as the third theme during data analysis. This theme represents the participants' perceptions of attributes that contribute to authentic leadership. Based on the participants' responses, this theme was coded into two sub-themes: *clear expectations and communication and care*.

**Clear expectations and communication.** The ability to establish clear expectations and communication is critical to authenticity. Six participants (Karen, Amelia, Eddy, Ginger, Brock, and Colton) reported the initial and ongoing need to establish clear expectations and communication in authentic leadership. Karen stated, "Obviously, everything can't be important, so you have to pick and choose what's most important and articulate it. Communication, even to this day, is huge for me. Being able to talk openly with people".

Amelia shared her experience regarding clear expectations and communication. She stated:

> When I was a newer agent…we had a murder on Fort [Rivers]. The person who murdered the victim lived in the same barracks building as her, but I think the SAC took charge and assigned people to their tasks. He split the whole office into different teams to handle different tasks to make everything more thorough, and we used the MPs [military police] properly. I think that was probably the best case where the SAC had a really good idea of what he was doing and how he wanted it [the investigation] to be worked.

Eddy shared a less-than-favorable experience regarding clear expectations and communication. He stated, "When I first got to Fort [Wyndam], it was, hey, welcome here, here's the duty phone. And also, here's 13 cases that have tons of corrections that need to be done…that's not the right way to do things".

Ginger shared her experience regarding clear expectations and communication. She stated:

Having an unauthentic leader or somebody who doesn't trust or micromanage you takes

away from the investigation. Like I have to manage you and your expectations and what

you want and all your, you know, all of the things you're throwing at me, and it's taking,

it's taking me away from what's important, and that's the mission, investigations.

Brock shared a similar experience with setting clear expectations and communication. He stated:

Authentic leadership is a leader or an individual with a skill set that identifies whether or

not a job needs to be done and then oversees the performance of the job. As a result, they

maximize the potential of employees they have around to make sure that job gets

accomplished satisfactorily, but not at the mercy of the people involved in the process.

Colton shared his experience regarding clear expectations and communication. He stated, "You

know, being that leader that does everything in accordance with policy and regulation, whether it

might take a little bit longer than whatever it is but doing it correctly and setting that example."

**Care.** Most participants (Karen, Amelia, Ginger, Jackson, Jennifer, Cody, Leroy, and

Colton) indicated that care is essential for authentic leadership. For example, Karen stated,

"Taking care of your people, make sure they stay fed, not expecting them to go out and process a

scene for three days straight [without] bringing them water or giving them bathroom breaks or

not checking on them.

Amelia shared her less-than-favorable experience with care in Army CID. She stated:

As far as commonality in CID, authentic leadership was not common. I know; I've had

some good leaders and ran into some bad leaders. But it's definitely not common. People

were more concerned about themselves, again, not really caring about others.

Ginger shared a similar experience with care in Army CID. She stated:

I don't think there are a lot of authentic leaders in my experience in the organization. If there were more, CID would be a way better organization. If people leaders took care of each other and trusted each other and, like, poured into each other and the soldiers or other leaders and peers, they would feel appreciated.

Jackson shared his experience with care in Army CID. He stated, "An authentic leader is not going to sacrifice their people for the sake of the case files…Taking care of people is important; their morale improves when you take care of them.

Jennifer shared a similar experience with care in Army CID. She stated:

So, for me, a good leader is somebody, or an authentic leader would be somebody that could understand that it's a team effort and that doesn't work more like a dictatorship…mentoring and taking care of your people is the main job of being a leader, not just bossing people around.

Cody shared his less-than-favorable experience with care in Army CID. He stated:

If you have an unauthentic leader or if you have that toxic workplace, that toxic environment, you're not going to want to go and spend hours at a crime scene; you're not going to want to go and spend hours at the office; you're not going to want to work for your leader, you're just not going to want to do it. Whereas if you have that authentic leader, you have someone that really takes care of you, then you're going to want to spend that time there, you're going to want to help out just as much cause obviously, you're helping out the victim subject, suspect, all of the above… So, I mean, CID, in and of itself, wants the investigation to be completed doesn't really care how it's done, or how much work or effort or energy or how many hours you work; they want the investigation done.

Leroy shared his experience with care in Army CID. He stated:

> If you're a caring person, you will care about people. At some point, the authentic
> leadership, your character reflects your authentic leadership. Either you care, or you don't
> care. Yes, I can name several cases where a person's character was reflected in the
> person's bias, which affected the investigation.

Colton shared a similar experience with care in Army CID. He stated:

> Knowing my leadership would take care of me regardless of the outcome was
> important… So, I'm a big advocate of servant leadership, basically putting your stuff
> aside, you know, whatever task it is, but basically ensuring that the person or the persons
> you're working with are taken care of before you.

### *Organizational Cultural Influences*

Organizational cultural influences emerged as the fourth theme of this study. The
participants were asked to describe their professional experiences regarding the culture of Army
CID and their perception of authentic leadership. Most participants shared experiences associated
with the requirement to follow Army regulations, CID regulations, and the inherent investigative
requirements mandated for special agents. Based on the participants' responses, this theme was
coded into three sub-themes: m*icromanagement, politics, and military vs. law enforcement
culture.*

**Micromanagement.** Four participants (Amelia, Ginger, Jackson, and Brock) reported
micromanagement as a critical aspect of their perception of authentic leadership. Amelia stated:

> That, for me, is that when I don't have someone I trust or trust me to do my job, that
> creates an environment for me where I feel like I can't work. I don't want to be there. It's
> not enjoyable. I know there will always be times when I don't love a job, but when you

have a leader who likes to micromanage everybody, for me, it makes it worse, and I don't

want to really perform or work with that person.

Ginger shared a similar perception regarding micromanagement. She stated, "I think when you

have an inauthentic leader or somebody that doesn't trust you or micromanages you, it takes

away from the investigations."

Jackson shared a similar perception regarding micromanagement. He stated:

You know, when you're fostering that agent's ability to work cases, guiding them, and

you're not, not micromanaging them, or making them do things, like making them write

the way you want them to write… at least for me, when I was given the freedom to work

cases and work leads and interview all the people I needed to interview, that's what

fostered a real good work environment.

Brock shared a similar perception of micromanagement. He stated:

My belief is that an authentic leader in CID is one that is given the tools, the resources,

and the latitude to accomplish a job and that they then, in turn, delegate that

responsibility down to the individuals that are actually required to perform the job itself

with oversight, but not a micromanagement type oversight.

**Politics.** In this study, four participants (Karen, Ginger, Leroy, and Brock) reported

promotion and politics over performance as critical aspects of their perception of authentic

leadership. Participants referred to politics as the unavoidable bureaucracy innate to military and

law enforcement organizations. Karen stated:

The higher position you hold, the more experience and education you should have…I

think that not everybody in CID wants to be doing the job. Therefore, because they were

now in positions of power, regardless how of how unqualified or inauthentic they were,

their poor behavior made up of their shortcomings was accepted because of their position.

Ginger shared her less-than-favorable experience regarding politics. She stated, "I think what

makes you inauthentic is being who people want you to be, putting on this facade that you are

something that you're not, playing into the politics of the good-old-boy system of the

organization.

Leroy shared his similar experience with politics. He stated:

> I'm going to quote this, and you can quote me on this; a person in CID rose through the
>
> ranks fairly quickly. As a policy [staff], her signature block was "changing CID one word
>
> at a time." That says a lot about your character. And that says a lot about your leadership
>
> that you're going to change it one word at a time. So, you know, we love to make things
>
> from happy to glad, but we never understand why we want them happy to glad, rather
>
> that is to, and this is the authentic leadership part, rather, that is to pass the inspection to
>
> make the report uniform for the inspection, but it's never to solve the crime.

Brock shared his similar experience with politics. He stated:

> I believe that the leadership contradicted authentic leadership more, so individuals were
>
> more worried about the regulations, and the documented guidance, if you will, versus the
>
> actual investigative procedures being implemented on the ground. My personal
>
> experience is that individuals in those leadership positions were too far or had been
>
> removed from the investigative process for too long to understand what was happening in
>
> the investigative process we were experiencing.

**Military vs. Law Enforcement.** Seven participants (Amelia, Eddy, Ginger, Jackson,

Jennifer, Leroy, and Colton) described experiences of how their perception of authentic

leadership was influenced by having to abide by disproportionately enforced military and law enforcement standards during their tenure in Army CID. Amelia stated:

There's got to be rules and standards, but sometimes how you handle it will be different from one person to another or a different group to another. In CID, that should be easier because it is a smaller section of the Army, but the Army culture carries over to that aspect where you are ranked on the officer side, and people feel they must make themselves look more important.

Eddy shared a similar experience regarding military versus law enforcement standards. He stated:

I think that goes back into the wrapping of the military culture into the investigations culture. This is how this it is in the military, we need to focus on the military…we need to focus on other training, whatever it may be, and that also brings that aspect to the military, where it's like, oh, well, you know, this is my rank, you have to listen to what I say no matter what. Whereas within CID, investigations are the focus. I think the CID culture is almost trying to exist with both.

Ginger shared a similar experience regarding military versus law enforcement standards. She stated:

As a woman in the military, it's always more difficult. But it's also more difficult in a leadership position because people are so much more; I would say, in my experience, other male leaders are more inclined to trust in another male than in a female. And so, it's like double the effort to prove yourself.

Jackson shared a similar experience regarding military versus law enforcement standards. He stated:

So, when I think of CID, authentic leadership, like good authentic leadership, was hard to come by. And I don't know if that is CID-specific. Well, there are a lot of reasons. [CID] used to just pull in people who had little years of experience, never been in charge of anyone, and after two years making them in charge of a team after never really leading anybody, they will never really care about authentic leadership or those case files.

Jennifer shared a similar experience regarding military versus law enforcement standards. She stated:

For most of my leadership in the military, CID just took up so much of my entire time in the military. It is so stringent, but that's because we're military-based. And so, the military is stringent on leadership; therefore, CID was stringent on leadership. However, there were times when we all said we were doing this just because the regulation said we had to do it, but it shouldn't dictate an investigation.

Leroy shared his experience regarding military versus law enforcement standards. He stated:

We all used to hear stories about someone throwing case files down the hallway, right? And how long did that go on? I bet you go into some of these offices, and they are still throwing case files down the hallway because that's what happened to them, because that's what happened to the person, because that's the way it was always done. We have this funny way of distinguishing between history and habit. Suppose Army CID kept taking [poor] case agents and promoting them through the ranks, promoting through the positions to these [poor] supervisors…and now. In that case, they're in a position of authority and keep producing [poor] products. It's amazing the amount of people that leave the CID unscathed.

Colton shared a similar experience regarding military versus law enforcement standards. He stated:

> We lacked a lot of authentic leadership [in CID]. Because we had specifically military police officers in the organization who cared more about their evaluation and the next assignment versus our mission on hand [solving crimes], it was more of Army driven versus criminal investigations driven… So, leadership would focus more on Army tasks rather than criminal investigations.

**Research Question Responses**

***Research Question One***

How do former special agents of Army CID perceive authentic leadership? Three themes were identified during data analysis to address this research question: 1) Leader-Follower Relationship, 2) Perceptions about Authenticity, and 3) Factors Attributing to Authenticity. Three sub-themes were identified within the leader-follower relationship theme based on the participants' lived experiences and perceptions: *leading by example, teamwork, and mentorship*. After carefully reviewing the data on perceptions about authenticity, the researcher identified two sub-themes: *being real, "not fake," and trust*. Finally, the participants' lived professional experiences involved factors attributing to authenticity. Setting clear expectations and communication and care served as sources of authenticity for the participants.

***Research Question Two***

What are former Army CID special agents' perceptions and experiences of the importance of authentic leadership in investigative case management? This research question focused on how the participants' perceptions of authentic leadership in Army CID related to investigative case management. With that in mind, although four themes were derived from the data, only one

specifically applied to the second research question: *organizational culture influence*. Finally,

the participants' lived experiences and perceptions indicated three sub-themes:

*micromanagement, politics, and military vs. law enforcement.*

## Summary

This chapter discussed the data analysis and presented the findings of the study. An

overview of the study, including a restatement of the research questions, a brief description of

the study participants, and a detailed narrative of the research findings, were presented. The

results of this study were reported through theme development and discussion of each theme and

sub-theme. Three themes were identified that addressed research question one: leader-follower

relationship, perceptions about authenticity, and factors attributing to authenticity.

Organizational cultural influence emerged as the primary theme addressing research question

two. Participants described perceptions and experiences regarding the importance of authentic

leadership in investigative case management, relying on micromanagement politics and military

versus law enforcement standards. The following chapter discusses a summary of the research

findings and implications.

**CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION**

**Overview**

This qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study explored the perception of authentic leadership in Army CID, a military criminal investigative organization. The researcher concentrated on experiences with authentic leadership from the perspectives of former special agents. This chapter summarizes the findings, followed by a discussion of these findings and the implications considering the relevant literature and theory. This chapter also presents the study's theoretical, empirical, and practical implications, delimitations, and limitations. Further, the concluding section contains recommendations for future research.

**Summary of Findings**

To explore and understand how former special agents described their perceptions and experiences of authentic leadership in Army CID, a military criminal investigative organization, two research questions guided this study:

**RQ1:** How do former special agents of Army CID perceive authentic leadership?

**RQ2:** What are former Army CID special agents' perceptions and experiences of the importance of authentic leadership in investigative case management?

Hermeneutic phenomenological studies require the researcher to search for themes and comprehensively interpret the data to understand the participants' lived experiences (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). Data collected through semi-structured interviews, surveys, and reflexive notes provided the basis for identifying and developing themes and sub-themes to address the research questions. The study addressed both research questions through textual descriptions of the participants' lived professional experiences and descriptions of how they experienced the phenomenon. The following four themes emerged from data analysis: *leader-follower*

*relationship perceptions about authenticity, factors attributing to authenticity, and organizational culture influence*. Of the four identified themes, only one, organizational culture influence, applied to RQ2.

## Research Question 1

**RQ1:** How do former special agents of Army CID perceive authentic leadership? The data analysis revealed three main themes that addressed this question: 1) Leader-Follower Relationship, 2) Perceptions about Authenticity, and 3) Factors Attributing to Authenticity. The data collected discovered three sub-themes as participants described the first theme, *the leader-follower relationship: leading by example, teamwork, and mentorship*. A data review revealed two sub-themes within the *perceptions about authenticity* theme: *being real, "not fake," and trust; In the second theme, factors attributing to authenticity*, two sub-themes were identified: *clear expectations and communication and care*.

## Research Question 2

**RQ2:** What are former Army CID special agents' perceptions and experiences of the importance of authentic leadership in investigative case management? This research question focused on how the participants' perceptions of authentic leadership in Army CID related to investigative case management. The fourth theme identified from the data analysis, *organizational culture influence*, addressed this research question. Three sub-themes were identified: *micromanagement, politics, and military vs. law enforcement*.

## Discussion

The purpose of the hermeneutic phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of former special agents who served as special agents in the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division (CID). The theoretical framework guiding this study was Bill George's

authentic leadership theory (ALT). The research design utilized for this research is hermeneutic phenomenology. Purposeful criterion and snowball sampling facilitated the recruitment of ten (10) participants for this study. The study utilized three data collection methods: 1) survey, 2) interviews, and 3) reflexive memos. This section discusses the findings of this study and the relationship between the theoretical and empirical literature. In the subsequent sections, the answer to each research question is broadened using the data presented in chapter two and analyzed through authentic leadership theory.

**Theoretical Literature**

Bill George's authentic leadership theory served as the theoretical framework for this study. The authentic leadership theory holds that authentic leadership occurs through a commitment to development by practicing values and self-principles. According to George (2003), an authentic leader has five essential characteristics: understanding their purpose, establishing values concerning what is right, garnering trusting relationships, standing by personal values, and demonstrating steadfast discipline. Moreover, an authentic leader should be passionate about the mission (George, 2003; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Moreover, the authentic leadership theory maintains that three factors influence the development of an authentic leader: positive psychologic capabilities, moral reasoning, and critical life events (George, 2003; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). The participants' experiences support the factors of how they perceive authentic leadership.

This study extended the application of George's authentic leadership theory to authentic leadership in a military criminal investigative organization. In comparison, the theory's primary utilization was in mainstream corporate organizations rather than law enforcement organizations, specifically military criminal investigative organizations (Walumbwa et al., 2008). The

participants demonstrated how leaders and certain factors inherent within a military criminal investigative organization positively and negatively influenced their perception of authentic leadership. The following themes, perspectives about authenticity, and factors attributing to authenticity provided evidence of positive and negative influences on special agents' perception of authentic leadership. Five participants reported that having a " real " leader enhanced their perspectives about authenticity. Four participants reported that having a leader they could trust enhanced their perspectives about authenticity. These two leader characteristics allowed the participants to develop their level of trust within the leader-follower relationship, which improved their work engagement. This finding corroborates previous research indicating that authentic leadership is a reciprocity-based process (Sverdrup & Stensaker, 2018).

The participants further demonstrated how leaders and certain factors inherent within a military criminal investigative organization positively and negatively influenced their perception of authentic leadership. The theme leader-follower relationship provided evidence of positive and negative influences on their perception of authentic leadership. The existing literature indicates that law enforcement leaders should focus on the leader rather than the perception of authenticity in leader-follower relationships (Filstad & Karp, 2021). Four participants reported that having a leader who leads by example in the leader-follower relationship is perceived to be authentic. Conversely, the literature suggests that understanding leadership by investigating leader-follower relationships should be utilized using a collective situation rather than an individual leader perspective (Clark & Harrison, 2018). Six participants shared their experiences with teamwork and how leaders' involvement in investigations led them to perceive those leaders as authentic. Lisbona et al. (2021) observed that teamwork requires transparent communication and knowledge sharing that encourages authenticity (Lisbona et al., 2021). Seven participants

shared that mentorship was essential in a leader-follower relationship for authenticity in leadership. Alvarez et al. (2019) posited that leader-follower relationships integrate the leader's standards with the motivation of the follower's standards which can cultivate the perception of authentic leadership. Most participants shared that leading by example, teamwork and mentorship are the cornerstone of authentic leadership. Each described negative experiences with each factor that aided in formulating their perception of authentic leadership. Zhao et al. (2019) contended that cooperation and collaboration contribute to followers' perception of their value and how they perceive authentic leadership.

**Empirical Literature**

Participants described their experience with leader-follower relationships and how those relationships formed their perceptions of authentic leadership. Throughout data collection, all participants spoke of the dynamics of a leader-follower relationship that contributed to their perceptions of authentic leadership and authenticity. Three primary factors emerged when the participants described how authentic leadership was commonly demonstrated in CID: leading by example, teamwork, and mentorship. Four participants shared that they perceived an authentic leader as having the education and technical experience to set an example for others. This finding supports Gardner et al. (2015) that influential leaders influence followers when their actions coincide with their words. Six participants shared that leaders who are present and actively engaged with investigations earn respect and are seen as authentic. Further, teamwork requires authenticity and clear communication (Lisbona et al., 2021). Additionally, the findings of Alvarez et al. (2019) were supported by the significance of leader-follower relationships that can be fostered through teaching, training, and mentorship resulting in authenticity.

Most participants detailed their perspectives on authenticity associated with investigations and investigative case management. The current study's findings indicated that being "one's real self" and trusting were the two characteristics most often discussed as precursors to authentic leadership. The findings support the results of Droffelaar and Jacobs (2018), whose research indicated that the authentic leadership style is homogeneous to "one's true self." The findings also support Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (1954), which identifies trust as necessary for self-actualization (George & Sims, 2007). Further, authentic leaders have been defined as genuine, reliable, trustworthy, and true to themselves, supporting the findings of Luthans & Avolio (2003).

Most participants detailed that expectations, clear communications, and genuine care for others significantly contribute to their perceptions of authentic leadership. The current study's findings indicated that over half of the participants required leaders to articulate expectations and communicate effectively to be considered authentic leaders. The finding supports the results of Liu et al. (2018) that leader and followers who set consistent, realistic performance expectations establishes the basis for authentic leadership. In addition, this finding supports the results of Avolio & Gardner (2005) related to the complex ongoing interaction of transparency, trust, and open communication between leaders and followers in authentic leadership. Eight participants shared that leaders must demonstrate through words and actions that they care to be perceived as authentic leaders. This finding supports the results of Droffelaar and Jacobs (2018), which indicated that authentic leaders are described as individuals who take care of the well-being and development of their followers to promote a positive organizational climate.

Participants described how the organizational cultural influences experienced while special agents in CID contributed to their perception of authentic leadership within the

organization. Many participants described how micromanagement was a leadership characteristic that created distrust in leadership and prevented restricted fluency when conducting investigations. Four participants shared a negative experience of micromanagement, specifically the bureaucracy resulting from the stringent organizational investigative requirements. This finding supports the results of Paek et al. (2020) related to micromanagement limiting an employee's ability to be productive and perform to their maximum potential. In addition, participants shared that politics in the organization factored into their perception of authentic leadership. Some participants described a negative experience with leaders who played into the "good ol' boy system" of the organization. This system was described to include leaders who put on a facade for leaders at higher levels to appease them or for personal gain. This experience is unique, as this attribute associated with the perception of authentic leadership does not appear to be supported in other literature.

Most participants share negative experiences related to the challenges associated with the military and law enforcement standards imposed by the organization. Seven participants described the challenges associated with being a law enforcement agency for the military that profoundly influenced their perception of authentic leadership. Participants shared that the requirements for the military and those required specifically for their law enforcement officer duties conflict significantly, creating their perception of more inauthentic leaders than authentic leaders in CID. The current study's findings do not support previous research that organizational culture attributes to the perception of authentic leadership. No other empirical studies have explored the perception of authentic leadership among special agents in a military criminal investigative organization.

**Implications**

This hermeneutic phenomenological study explored how former special agents in Army CID, a military criminal investigative organization, perceived authentic leadership. The findings of this study produced several implications. This section discusses the study's theoretical, empirical, and practical implications. Recommendations for the stakeholders, other military criminal investigative organizations, and students who desire to advance this research are addressed.

**Theoretical Implications**

This study explored the lived experiences of former special agents who served in Army CID, a military criminal investigative organization. Authentic leadership theory (ALT) provided the theoretical framework for the research. The current study's findings indicated that critical attributes such as confidence, trust, care, and mentorship in leader-follower relationships positively influenced the participants' perception of authentic leadership. Conversely, the lack of confidence, trust, care, and mentorship negatively influenced the participants' perception of authentic leadership. Most of the participants in this study described having a mixture of authentic and inauthentic leadership while assigned as special agents in Army CID.

Additionally, most participants shared the influence of authentic leadership in investigative case management. It was paramount to understand how these key attributes contributed to the participant's perception of authentic leadership and their desire and ability to conduct investigations. The authentic leadership theory provided a framework for former special agents to share their professional experiences in Army CID. This study may advise leaders in military criminal investigative organizations to consider applying the ALT to current leadership practices, as the perception of authentic leadership within a military criminal investigative organization is an understudied organization in the law enforcement community.

Authentic leadership theory centers around four dimensions: self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing (Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Walumbwa et al., 2008). All participants in this study described various accounts of how they perceived leaders should lead by example, engage in teamwork, provide mentorship, establish trust, and genuinely care about their followers to be authentic. Although the ALT interconnects with the broader leadership theory and concepts, more literature should be on authentic leadership within the law enforcement community (Northouse, 2016). This study brings merit to George's theory. It supports applying that theory in military criminal investigative organizations to understand better how authentic leadership facilitates collective goals, encouragement, and motivation while building organizational trust and cooperation among individuals. The findings of this research corroborate George's theory.

**Empirical Implications**

There is a gap in the literature concerning authentic leadership in federal law enforcement organizations (Alvarez et al., 2019). Moreover, no specific empirical studies utilizing the theoretical framework of authentic leadership theory in the literature explored the perception of authentic leadership among special agents in a military criminal investigative organization, such as Army CID. The first implication of this research was the perception of authentic leadership among the former special agents who participated in the study. Although not specific to military criminal investigative organizations, Filstad and Karp's (2021) qualitative study found that police leadership practices directly correlate with leadership practices and follower expectations. Most participants highlighted that positive leader-follower relationships contributed to their perception of authentic leadership that assisted them in handling serious, sensitive, and complex investigations such as murders and sexual assaults resulting in comprehensive casework and criminal convictions. Park and Hassan (2018) found that occupational influences in culture,

values, and norms in most police organizations can develop leader-follower relationships in positive or negative ways. The current study provides evidence of the exact correlation in military criminal investigative organizations.

The second empirical implication is that clear communication and expectations are factors in the perception of authentic leadership that influence special agents' ability to effectively and efficiently conduct criminal investigations. The U.S. Army is a social institution that is deeply rooted in leadership; however, the focus has and always be on the traditional leadership models that can be modified and applied to provide purpose, direction, and motivation to all soldiers irrespective of their occupation in the Army (U.S. Army, 2019). Indriati (2021) found that the ability of investigators to communicate regarding a case positively influences authentic leadership. Further, the job characteristics necessary to conduct investigations increased the influence of authentic leadership on those investigators. More than half of the participants reported needing clear communication and expectations to perceive a leader as authentic. Hoggett et al. (2018) found that police leadership's communication impacts organizations and their mission; however, they did not address how perception factors into the perception of leadership, specifically authentic leadership. The current study provides insights into this area as a factor attributing to authentic leadership.

**Practical Implications**

The first practical implication of this study is for leaders at all echelons within military criminal investigative organizations or federal law enforcement agencies. It is beneficial for organizations to understand better the qualities of authentic leaders and how to enhance leader-follower relationships through leadership development, particularly those directly involved in the investigative process. The first practical implication is for leaders in a military law enforcement organization who oversee criminal investigations. Leaders should address concerns regarding the

negative perception of authentic leadership within the organization caused by micromanagement, politics, and military culture conflicting with law enforcement culture. Traditionally, law enforcement's most prominent leadership styles include transformational, transactional, and authoritarian. These leadership styles often coincide with the momentous command-and-control aspect of law enforcement that can reveal in the leader-subordinate relationship within the organization.

Conversely, the military has evolved from the traditional authoritarian approach to embracing more effective leadership styles, including participative, servant, and transformational leadership. Military criminal investigative organizations are unique based on their command structure and mission. Leaders should address concerns regarding the perception of authentic leadership and how it contributes to the conduct and quality of criminal investigations. They can achieve this by ensuring setting clear expectations and effective communication. The participants described the decrease in motivation in work engagement when leaders do not care, communicate or establish clear expectations. Further, the absence of these attributes increased the likelihood that participants perceived those leaders as inauthentic.

Second, leaders must understand that although perception is subjective, it is formed by observing physical acts and verbal interactions. Those acts and interactions cultivate perception, and the presence of authentic leadership fosters the enrichment of positive interpersonal relationships between supervisors and subordinates that encourages work engagement. Over half of the participants in this study indicated that leaders' lack of experience and training contributed to their perception of authentic leadership. Leaders can increase understanding through leadership training and by practicing the four facets that make up authentic leadership: self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalized moral perspective

(Banks et al., 2016). They should also engage and encourage candid communication with subordinates to aid in self-development and the development of others. This study supports George's (2003) practical approach to authentic leadership, specifically relating to the five scopes of authentic leadership that leaders can self-develop: 1) Purpose: Passion, 2) Values: Behavior, 3) Heart: Compassion, 4) Relationships: Connectedness, and 5) Self- Discipline: Consistency. For military criminal investigative organizations, the study will offer insights into the perception of authentic leadership that will provide stakeholders at all echelons with information to improve leadership training and investigative case management.

## Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations are characteristics that define the boundaries of a study (Patton, 2015). By exploring how former special agents of Army CID perceived authentic leadership, the participants met specific criteria: 1) be a former Army CID special agent, 2) no longer actively serving in any branch of military service, and 3) not currently employed by the organization in any capacity.

The first criterion ensured that each participant was no longer a special agent in the organization. The second and third criteria precluded researching a protected population, such as Department of Defense personnel, as prohibited according to federal laws. Army CID comprises active-duty military and civilian special agents who meet this criterion. Therefore, criterion three ensured that each participant had no affiliation with the organization. Hence, this criterion was also essential to recruit volunteers willing to provide genuine experiences regarding their perception of authentic leadership and mitigate any real or perceived negative impact on the organization for participating in this research.

Limitations are factors beyond the researcher's control that restrict the scope of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). One limitation of this study was demographic representation. The chosen recruitment method resulted in the inability to ensure diversity in the targeted population. The researcher utilized purposeful and snowball sampling, concentrating on recruiting participants who experienced the phenomena and could speak to the research questions rather than aiming to ascertain diversity within any given population (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Of the 10 participants in this study, four were female—eight of the 10 participants identified as White. Despite the lack of diversity in gender and ethnicity, the study's population does correlate to the military and federal law enforcement demographics related to race, gender, and a predominantly White male population. In FY 2020, military members who reported themselves as White made up the highest percentage of members (54%), with more than half (84.4%) being male (U.S. Army, 2022). Comparably, in FY 2020, federal law enforcement officers who report themselves as White made up the highest percentage of officers (61%), with more than half (75%) being male (U.S. Department of Justice, 2022). Furthermore, the geographical disbursement of the participants and the restrictions of COVID-19 limited social interactions, which only permitted telephone interviews.

## Recommendations for Future Research

The findings and limitations of this study create a foundation for scholars to conduct future research. The first recommendation is to replicate this study utilizing participants from other military criminal investigative organizations. For instance, this study solely represented former special agents from Army CID; however, including only active or active and former special agents from Army CID, Office of Special Investigations (OSI), and Naval Criminal Investigative Services (NCIS) would create diversity in the study population. Moreover,

including various military criminal organizations and law enforcement personnel in future research would be advantageous to determine if the results are unique to the community in the study or are relevant to multiple settings.

A second recommendation is to research the perception of authentic leadership of solely female special agents. This demographic is underrepresented in military law enforcement, highlighting the need to conduct research that focuses entirely on their experiences. Four participants in this study were female. Of the ten participants, the female participants were the only ones who described experiences identifying care as a factor attributing to authentic leadership. This recommendation for research would explore how gender affects experiences associated with authentic leadership.

A third recommendation is to conduct quantitative research exploring the perception of authentic leadership utilizing the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire as a survey instrument for the study. The ALQ is a questionnaire designed around the four dimensions of authentic leadership: 1) Self-awareness, 2) Transparency, 3) Ethics, and 4) Balanced processing (Walumbwa et al., 2008). This recommendation for research would incorporate a tested and theory-based measure of authentic leadership to understand better the multi-dimensional construct of authentic leadership in a military criminal investigative organization.

**Summary**

This qualitative study aimed to explore the perception of authentic leadership from the perspective of special agents formerly assigned to the Army CID, a military criminal investigative organization. A hermeneutic phenomenological research design explored and described the lived professional experiences of the participants. In addition, George's Authentic Leadership Theory was used to explore the perceptions of authentic leadership in investigative

case management. The study addressed two research questions: 1) How do former special agents of Army CID perceive authentic leadership? 2) What are former Army CID special agents' perceptions and experiences of the importance of authentic leadership in investigative case management?

Four main themes emerged from the results of this study: 1) Leader-Follower Relationship, 2) Perceptions about Authenticity, 3) Factors Attributing to Authenticity, and Organizational Culture Influence. Additional sub-themes within Leader-Follower Relationship (*leading by example, teamwork, and mentorship*), *Perceptions about authenticity* (being real, "not fake" and trust), *Factors attributing to authenticity* (clear expectations and communication and care), and *Organizational culture influence* (micromanagement, politics, and military vs. law enforcement) emerged. Through an inquiry of participants' experiences and perceptions, it is evident that the leader-follower relationship was imperative to their perception of authentic leadership. The results also indicated that the participants" professional experiences in Army CID involved their perceptions and factors attributing to authenticity contradicting the reported organization culture.

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# APPENDIX A: IRB Approval Letter

## LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
### INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

January 26, 2023

Precious Jeanbatiste
John Bentley

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-524 LEADERSHIP IN A MILITARY CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIVE ORGANIZATION: PERCEPTIONS OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP AMONG SPECIAL AGENTS

Dear Precious Jeanbatiste, John Bentley,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

**Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB.** Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,
**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**
*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*
**Research Ethics Office**

**APPENDIX B: Recruitment Letter**

Dear Sir or Madam,

As a graduate student in the Helms School of Government at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. in Criminal Justice. The purpose of my research is to explore authentic leadership from the lived experiences and perspectives of former special agents previously assigned to Army CID, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be former Army CID special agents with no current affiliation with the organization or the Department of Defense. Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete the procedures listed:

1. Complete a survey, via email, with demographic questions and open-ended questions related to the research topic. The survey should take no more than 15 minutes to complete.
2. Complete an audio-recorded interview conducted via telephone. The interview is scheduled to last approximately 30-45 minutes. After the data has been analyzed, participants will be given an opportunity to review the findings to verify accuracy.

Names and other identifying information may be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please click the survey questionnaire link here:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6TMJRZ7

A consent document is attached to this email.  The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me before or at the time of the interview. Clicking the link to proceed to the survey will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the study.

You may contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Precious JeanBatiste
Ph.D. Student
███████████

**APPENDIX C: Informed Consent**
**CONSENT FORM**
LEADERSHIP IN A MILITARY CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIVE ORGANIZATION:
PERCEPTIONS OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP AMONG SPECIAL AGENTS
Precious JeanBatiste
Liberty University
Helms School of Government

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a former Army CID special agent who is not currently employed by the organization or actively serving in any branch of military service. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

Precious JeanBatiste, a doctoral candidate in Helms School of Government at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

**Background Information:** The purpose of the study is to explore authentic leadership from the lived experiences and perspectives of former special agents previously assigned to Army CID.

**Procedures:** If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

3. Complete a survey, via email, with demographic questions and open-ended questions related to the research topic. The survey should take no more than 15 minutes to complete.
4. Complete an audio-recorded interview conducted via telephone. The interview is scheduled to last approximately 30-45 minutes. After the data has been analyzed, participants will be given an opportunity to review the findings to verify accuracy.

**Risks:** The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

**Benefits:** Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include a better understanding of how authentic leadership is perceived by special agents in a military criminal investigative organization.

**Compensation/Incentives:** Participants will not receive compensation for participation in this study.

**Confidentiality:** The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.

- Survey answers will be sent to a link at SurveyMonkey.com, where data will be stored in a password-protected electronic format. Survey Monkey does not collect identifying information such as your name, email address, or IP address. Therefore, your responses will remain anonymous. No one will be able to identify you or your answers, and no one will know whether or not you participated in the study.
- Data will be stored on a password-protected personal laptop computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password protected laptop computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:** Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**How to Withdraw from the Study:** If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

**Contacts and Questions:** The researcher conducting this study is Precious JeanBatiste. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ and/or ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. John Bentley at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher[s], you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

***Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.***

**Statement of Consent:** I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____

Signature of Participant                                                    Date

_____

Signature of Investigator                                                   Date

**APPENDIX D: Survey**

1. What is your age?
   a. 18-24
   b. 25-34
   c. 35-44
   d. 45-54
   e. 55-64
   f. Over 65

2. What is your gender?
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Other (specify): _____
   d. Prefer not to answer

3. What is your ethnicity? (Select all that apply)
   a. White / Caucasian
   b. Hispanic / Latino
   c. Black / African American
   d. Native American / American Indian
   e. Asian / Pacific Islander
   f.  Other (specify): _____
   g. Prefer not to answer

4. Where are you located?

5. What is the highest level of education you achieved?
   a. Less than a high school diploma
   b. High school degree or equivalent
   c. Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)
   d. Master's degree (e.g. MA, MS, Med)
   e. Doctorate (e.g. PhD, EdD)
   f.  Other (specify): _____

6. Years of law enforcement experience as a Special Agent in Army CID?
   a. 0-5 years
   b. 6-10 years
   c. 11-15 years
   d. 16-20 years
   e. 21-25 years
   f. 26-30 years

g. 31-35 years
h. More than 35 years

7. What were some of the ways, if any, authentic leadership enhanced your ability to conduct investigations? (Please respond in 250 characters or less, including spaces)

_____
_____
_____

8. Describe any challenges you may have faced due to your perception of authentic leadership while investigating crimes as a case agent. (Please respond in 250 characters or less, including spaces)

_____
_____
_____

9. How did authentic leadership affect how you investigated crime or solved a case?
(Please respond in 250 characters or less, including spaces)

_____
_____
_____

10. Given your experience as a case agent, how would you describe the investigative process with and without authentic leadership? (Please respond in 250 characters or less, including spaces)

_____
_____
_____

**APPENDIX E: Interview Guide**

1. Please tell me about yourself.

2. How would you describe your perception of authenticity?

3. What is your understanding of authentic leadership?

4. How would you describe an authentic leader and what he/she is responsible for in a military criminal investigative organization (MCIO)?

5. Describe your professional experience with authentic leadership while investigating cases as a special agent in CID.

> *Sub-question* – Can you tell me about a specific instance when the presence or absence of authentic leadership was critical to the handling or outcome of an investigation?

6. According to you, what effects does authentic leadership have on how investigations are supervised and conducted?

7. Describe your experiences concerning how authentic leadership was commonly demonstrated in an CID?

8. Describe your thoughts on authentic leadership being critical to conducting timely and thorough investigations?

9. Can you give an example of how authentic leadership influenced any aspect of an investigation?

10. How might the culture of CID and law enforcement contribute to an acceptance or rejection of authentic leadership?

11. According to you, what effects does authentic leadership have on a case agent's ability to effectively investigate crime?

> *Sub-question* – How does the perception of authentic leadership differ from case agent to other positions that can be held as a special agent in CID?

12. Is there any additional information you would like to share about the perception of authentic leadership in CID that we have not discussed today?

13. This concludes the interview. Do you have any questions?

Probing Questions

- Continuation probe – "Uh-huh, go on…"

- Elaboration probe – "Tell me more about that…"

- Attention probe – "Ok, I understand."

- Clarification probe – "Can you explain this to me in more detail…"

- Steering probe – "Could you go back and tell me about…"

**Vita**

Precious JeanBatiste is a doctoral candidate with the Helms School of Government, pursuing a Ph.D. in Criminal Justice – Leadership. She received an associate degree in liberal arts from St. Leo University, a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from St. Leo University, a master's degree in criminal justice with a specialization in forensic science from St. Leo University, and a master's degree in forensic science from George Mason University. After graduating from, Precious will continue to serve with the U.S. Army.