

## Chapter 16

# Authentic Leadership Development

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In times of swirling negativity, as has occurred in recent years with the dot-bombs, September 11 terrorism, gyrating stock values, and the meltdown of corporate ethics, society in general and organizations in particular turn to leaders for optimism and direction. Through the ages, especially in times of crisis and extreme turmoil, historical figures such as Alexander the Great, Washington, Gandhi, Churchill, Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt, Mandela, and Rudy Guiliani have risen to the occasion to provide the positive leadership to move forward to address the problems confronting their communities and societies. This need for positive leadership is not restricted to the societal/political level. With ever-advancing technology, growing round-the-clock global competitive pressures, and a very uncertain economic and ethical climate, leaders at all levels and types of organizations are facing the challenge of declining hope and confidence in themselves and their associates. Yet the understanding, developmental process, and implementation of needed positive leadership still remains largely underresearched by both the leadership and recently emerging positive psychology fields. Indeed, this is the only chapter in this book on positive organizational scholarship (POS) that deals directly with leadership, and there are no entries in the recently published *Handbook of Positive Psychology* (Snyder & Lopez, 2002).

Faced with this perceived void from both of our primary academic backgrounds (organizational behavior and leadership) and using our recent leadership and positive psychology work as a point of departure (e.g., see Avolio, 1999, 2002, on transformational/full-range leadership development, and Luthans, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, on positive organizational behavior), we joined forces to develop a positive approach to leadership and its development that we call authentic leadership. In this chapter, we first define what is meant by authentic leadership and why it is so important in today's dynamically changing environment. We then present a specific theoretically driven process model for developing authentic leadership and leaders.

## WHAT IS AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP?

The history of authenticity can be traced back to ancient Greek philosophy (“To thine own self be true”), through twentieth-century modernism (with its ideals of self-direction, trustworthiness, and consistency), and then to the postmodernistic questioning of whether authenticity can even exist in the current era of multiple selves (see a historical review in Harter, 2002). Similar to other psychological constructs, most attention has been devoted to the lack of authentic self-behavior (e.g., being deceitful, dishonest, manipulative, phony, and conniving). As a positive construct, descriptive words include *genuine*, *reliable*, *trustworthy*, *real*, and *veritable*. Positive psychologists conceive this authenticity as both *owning* one's personal experiences (thoughts, emotions, or beliefs, “the real me inside”) and *acting* in accord with the true self (behaving and expressing what you really think and believe) (Harter, 2002).

We propose that the above meaning of authenticity best depicts the type of positive leadership needed in contemporary times, where the environment is dramatically changing, where the rules that have guided how we operate no longer work, and where the best leaders will be transparent with their intentions, having a seamless link between their espoused values, actions, and behaviors. Theoretically, Mischel (1973) referred to such dynamic situations as representing a “weak context,” since there are no clear set of guidelines, rules, or directions for action. In such contexts, new rules are created to address the ambiguities and lack of clarity confronting a work unit, organization, community, or entire society. In weak contexts, people are more vulnerable, as they are unsure what direction to pursue, and it is in these situations that the most profoundly positive *and*, unfortunately, negative (Conger, 1990; Luthans, Peterson, & Ibrayeva, 1998) leadership takes root.

Without authentic leadership, the rules that are created by what Howell (1992) referred to as personalized charismatic leaders in weak situations,

run the risk of being self-centered, and destructive to one group to the benefit of another. Indeed, throughout history and up to present times (e.g., Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, Papa Doc Duvalier, Milosevic, or Saddam Hussein), such inauthentic leaders have taken advantage of crises for their own self-gain (Howell & Avolio, 1992).

We suggest that authentic leadership best represents the confluence of positive organizational behavior (POB) (Luthans, 2002a, 2002b), transformational/full-range leadership (FRL), or the high-end of FRL (Avolio, 1999, 2002), and work on ethical and moral perspective-taking capacity and development (Schulman, 2002), which is at the core of what drives transformational leadership (Avolio & Gibbons, 1988; Kegan, 1982; Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). Specifically, we define authentic leadership in organizations as a process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development. The authentic leader is confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, transparent, moral/ethical, future-oriented, and gives priority to developing associates to be leaders. The authentic leader is true to him/herself and the exhibited behavior positively transforms or develops associates into leaders themselves. The authentic leader does not try to coerce or even rationally persuade associates, but rather the leader's authentic values, beliefs, and behaviors serve to model the development of associates.

We and others have already noted the importance of positive (Luthans, Luthans, Hodgetts, & Luthans, 2002), transformational (Avolio, 1999, in press), and moral/ethical leadership (e.g., Burns, 1978; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1998; Turner, Barling, Epitropaki, et al., 2002) in trying to better cope with the new, turbulent environment, but eclectically integrating these various fields into a broader framework of authentic leadership has not yet occurred. The confluence and synergy of all three approaches through authentic leadership may best meet what most informed observers agree is a turning point, a paradigm shift, in the way societies and organizations must be led in order to survive, let alone thrive and gain competitive advantage. For example, every leader on earth is challenged today to be transparent when information is freely accessible, or be discovered as not being authentic. One leader after another has made the mistake of saying one thing in public, only to then be contradicted in "private." In the world of leadership, there is very little that is "private" anymore, and this lack of privacy has appropriately raised the bar for being authentic (Avolio, Kahai, & Dodge, 2000). Authentic leadership in all organizations (business, government, education, health, religious, or military), must rise to the challenge to address these unprecedented changes.

Instead of a negative, gloom-and-doom perspective of today's situation, authentic leaders must exhibit resiliency and be transparent and beyond reproach in their moral/ethical conduct and decisionmaking. They must be confident, hopeful, and optimistic about the future, and give priority not only to modeling self-behavior, but also to developing in their associates and organizations the capacity to do the same. Ideally, authentic leadership behavior should cascade from the very top of organizations down to the newest employee. Such diffusion will only become a reality based on the character, actions, and behaviors of the leaders. They will be watched very closely, both internally and externally, for their authenticity. To the degree that this cascading process is reinforced and rooted in the culture of the organization, the organization will become what the Gallup Corporation calls a strength-based organization (see Buckingham & Coffman, 1999; Buckingham & Clifton, 2001; Coffman & Gonzalez-Molina, 2002; and Chapter 8 in this book).

Instead of just editorializing and making normative statements about needed positive, authentic leadership, we feel there is now a need for a theory-driven model identifying the specific construct variables and relationships that can guide authentic leader development and suggest researchable propositions.

## **THEORETICAL FOUNDATION FOR THE AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP PROCESS**

As indicated, we draw from POB, transformational/FRL, and ethical leadership theories in building our process model of authentic leadership.

### **Positive Organizational Behavior**

#### **Based on Positive Psychology**

Led by well-known research psychologist Martin Seligman and a few others (e.g., see Seligman, 1998a, 1999, 2002; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Sheldon & King, 2001; Snyder & Lopez, 2002), positive psychology has recently emerged as a reaction to the preoccupation with what is wrong with people and their weaknesses instead of what is right with people and building on their strengths. Positive psychologists charge that psychology has almost solely concentrated on frailties and pathologies rather than vitality and health. For example, a recent search over the past thirty years found about 50,000 articles on depression but only 400 on joy (Meyers, 2000). Although not diminishing the importance of researching and curing mental illness and solving people's problems, the positive psychology movement is

challenging the field to rediscover and offer renewed emphasis to its original mission, which included making the lives of people more productive and fulfilling through identifying and developing positive capabilities. In a very specific way, they are asking for at least a balance that brings to the foreground emphasizing people's strengths, building on them, and reinforcing them over time. As Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000: 6) note: "It is about identifying and nurturing their strongest qualities, what they own and are best at, and helping them find niches in which they can best live out these strengths."

Several organizations, like the Gallup Corporation, have been focusing on positive psychology's application to the workplace by identifying and fitting employee talents and strengths into the right jobs (see Chapter 8). To date, much of Gallup's research has focused on demonstrating how getting the right people into jobs that capitalize on their strengths can create positive employee engagement at work (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999), which in turn significantly relates to desired organizational outcomes such as productivity, profit, customer service, safety, and retention (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002). This research by Gallup is some of the first to demonstrate the practical application that positive psychology can have in the workplace (also see Turner, Barling, & Zacharatos, 2002).

## Meaning of Positive Organizational Behavior

Recently, a series of articles has drawn positive psychology into the field of organizational behavior (e.g., see Luthans, 2002a, 2002b, 2000c). Positive organizational behavior is defined as the study and application of positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement in today's workplace (Luthans, 2002b: 59).

The key conceptual differentiation from positive psychology per se and even most of the more macrolevel positive organizational scholarship of this book is that POB as defined here focuses more on the micro level and focuses on the statelike, open to development psychological capacities. These states of POB are in contrast to the more traitlike dispositional characteristics given emphasis in positive psychology (e.g., see Sandage & Hill, 2001; Seligman, 1999; Snyder & Lopez, 2002), and other positively oriented concepts recognized in the organizational behavior field, such as the "Big Five" personality traits, especially conscientiousness (Barrick & Mount, 1991), positive core self-evaluation traits (Judge & Bono, 2001; Judge, Erez, & Bono, 1998), the hard-wired positive emotions now being discussed in evolutionary psychology and neuropsychology (e.g., see Nichol森, 1998; Pierce & White, 1999), as well as Gallup's emphasis on

identifying people's natural talents (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999; Coffman & Gonzalez-Molina, 2002). These correlates are more concerned with the dispositional, traitlike positive characteristics, virtues, talents, and emotions of people in contrast to the more situational, statelike positive capacities of POB.

### Importance of Statelike Capacities Open to Development

There has been continuing debate in psychology over the state-trait distinction, which some theorists argue as being arbitrary (e.g., see Allen & Potkay, 1981). We take the position that most of the important psychological constructs fall along a continuum rather than being clear traits or states. This distinction is critical with respect to forming the theoretical grounding for our proposed process model for authentic leadership. This is because of the developmental assumption we make about authentic leadership, that core attributes of such leaders can be developed, including moral reasoning capacity, confidence, hope, optimism, resiliency, and future-orientation.

We would argue that progress in the study of leadership development has been traditionally hampered by the continuing search for leadership characteristics and traits (even now the positive ones) that don't tend to lend themselves to leadership development. Moreover, to the extent that people believe leaders are mostly born, as opposed to made, there is a self-fulfilling prophecy set in motion to deter both researchers and leaders from focusing on ways to develop leadership. In the spirit of positive psychology, we are confident and optimistic that a greater share of the variance in leadership development is due to statelike characteristics *and* the context, versus traits. Starting with this state/context assumption provides us with a theoretical base to explore ways to combine POB and leadership theory and research to maximize authentic leadership development. This developmental criterion is where the statelike POB capacities such as confidence, hope, optimism, and resiliency (see Luthans, 2002a, 2002b; Luthans & Jensen, 2002) provide positive psychological antecedents in the proposed process model of authentic leadership.

### Transformational/Full-Range Leadership

Whereas POB provides a positive perspective and specific theoretically grounded individual-level psychological states as antecedents to the proposed development model for authentic leadership, work on transformational/FRL provides the context, leader characteristics, and ethical/moral theoretical foundation (Avolio, 1999, forthcoming, 2004). Thus authentic leadership includes, but, with the addition of the positive psychological ca-

capacities discussed above, goes beyond transformational leadership. Moreover, a core aspect of transformational leadership rooted in Burns's initial conceptualization (1978) was that transforming leadership was about causing fundamental change in followers, organizations, communities, and societies. Bass (1985) highlighted the importance of charisma as being an essential if not dominant quality of transformational leadership. An important difference is that although authentic leadership can encompass change, it is not essential to its operational definition. Also, leaders can be highly authentic and not charismatic at all.

### Lifespan Perspective

There is a recent call to examine exemplary leadership development from a lifespan perspective (Avolio, 2003). This perspective incorporates critical events, or what can be called “triggers” that stimulate positive growth in leaders. Traditionally, trigger events in life have been associated with negative events and crises (e.g., a severe illness or losing a large business deal). Although these “negative” triggers certainly can contribute significantly to leadership development, we also believe that positive events can trigger leadership development. Such positive trigger events might include: a voluntary choice to change careers; a new project that has never been done before; meeting a significant other in one's life who has an entirely different worldview; traveling to a distinctly different culture; working with a new associate who brings a new direction to your work; and reading a profoundly important book, whose philosophy questions the very way you did business.

At the higher end of the FRL model, such leaders are described as being first and foremost concerned for the needs of others, over their own self-interests. This raises the question: How does such concern and willingness to sacrifice for the good of the group come about, and what events trigger such growth in leaders? In his early conceptualization of transformational leadership, Burns (1978) addressed this question quite directly: “The ultimate test of moral leadership is its capacity to transcend the claims of multiplicity of everyday wants and needs and expectations, to respond to the higher levels of moral development, and to relate leadership behavior—its roles, choices, style, commitments—to a set of reasoned, relatively explicit, conscious values” (p. 46). Burns discussed the importance of end-values as the base of exemplary (i.e., authentic) leadership and how such end-values provided guidance to leaders to willingly sacrifice for the collective good of their work unit, organization, community, or entire society.

Authentic leaders transcend their self-interest because they are guided by something more important than self-interest, which is to be consistent

with their high-end values, which were shaped and developed across a leader's lifespan. Such development centers in part on building the moral capacity of leaders to be able to make "selfless" judgments. By saying capacity, we mean a state that can be enhanced by development. A certain minimum level of moral maturity is needed for both leaders and followers to come to the conclusion, "What is good for our community?" and "What is good for each of us?" Unfortunately, in today's complex world, the common good is not a simple summation of follower and leader self-interest. The fact that profoundly important decisions are not made through such simple summations makes authentic leadership all the more relevant to the type of leaders required for today's organizations. Building and aligning the positive collective identification with an organization's mission and values is one of the most important responsibilities of authentic leadership. Such leadership helps to address and resolve the most difficult decisions, while also moving forward from a position of strength, rather than divisive conflict (Kark & Shamir, 2002).

### The Positive Profile of Authentic Leadership

There are several proactive positive characteristics of the profile of authentic leadership. First, authentic leaders are guided by a set of end-values that represent an orientation toward doing what's right for their constituency. Central to these end-values is a belief that each individual has something positive to contribute to their group. One of the authentic leader's core challenges is to identify these strengths and help direct and build them appropriately. Second, authentic leaders try to operate with no gap (or at least try to constantly narrow the gap) between their espoused values (i.e., their true self) and values in use or actions. This requires that they deepen their understanding of their own core values, enabling leaders to project them with consistency to their follower or broader constituency. Third, authentic leaders remain cognizant of their own vulnerabilities and openly discuss them with associates, so the leader can be questioned to ensure that the direction he or she is heading in is the "right" direction (Avolio, 1999). They turn transparency regarding their vulnerabilities into a strength, whereby associates can complement the leader in terms of the strengths they bring to their collective challenges. Too often leaders present an image of invulnerability (Gardner & Avolio, 1998), which lures associates into thinking that leaders have the right strategy, which cannot be "questioned." No leader is invulnerable, as history has proven time and again.

Fourth, authentic leaders lead from the front, going in advance of others when there is a risk in doing so. They model confidence, hope, optimism, and resiliency, which inspire others to action. Such "walking the talk" has



been shown to be much more effective in influencing others than coercing or persuading (Quinn, Spreitzer, & Brown, 2000). Fifth, when asked about their role in leading associates, they view the task being accomplished and developing associates to lead, over time, as having equal importance. They constantly think about developing their associates, building on each psychological capacity and strength. This means that they also constantly work on developing themselves so that the emphasis on follower development is seen as being genuine, or something they expect of themselves.

Finally, authentic leaders have developed the moral capacity to judge issues and dilemmas that are characterized by “shades of gray.” They have the credibility to explore such dilemmas from all angles, and to seek alternative ways of approaching them without being perceived as disingenuous or shifting with popular opinion. They can change their mind and be seen to be acting consistent with their end-values and therefore authentic.

## The Scenarios of Leadership Development

Analogous to our theoretical support for the positive psychological capacities being statelike and thus open for development, the question must also be asked: Where do the above authentic leadership characteristics come from in individuals, groups, organizations, and ultimately societies? Are leaders born to be authentic? Our developmental perspective and theoretical foundation (from POB and transformational/FRL) is that there are trigger events that shape leaders’ perspectives, values, and behaviors. The statelike positive psychological capacities and the premise of learned capacities of leaders is a central construct of authentic leadership, but we would also suggest that this development builds on and shapes innate capacities the individual was endowed with from birth.

At one extreme of development, without any proactive attempt to develop leadership, leadership can develop based on the combination of events that shape an individual’s portfolio of innate abilities and experiences. Indeed, leadership development can be left to some random sequence of life events that “happen” to trigger an individual’s positive perspective on influencing others, or, unfortunately, events that trigger negative approaches. Such trigger events are often seen as negative, where the leader heroically emerges from some crisis as a “better person.” These crises may be as extreme as a life-threatening event, the loss of a loved one, and the loss of one’s job, or significant dilemmas or choice points in life, that created a challenge to the leader’s perspective of him- or herself, which changed “who they were.”

The alternative is a proactive, interventionist strategy where *planned* trigger events are designed in such a way that the individual is developed or

“trained” to be an authentic leader. This proactive strategy starts with the assumption that an individual’s life context or construct shapes how that individual develops, and by altering the life construct one alters the course of development. Now, imagine the most munificent environment for authentic leadership development and assume that from birth to adulthood we could manipulate that environment in such a way as to optimize the development of constructs that result in authentic leadership. In this idealized environment, we would have control over trigger events and their timing such that the challenges presented to the individual would be exactly as needed to optimize development. The choice of these events and sequencing would maximize positive awareness of areas needing further development. If we relax this idealized model, we realize that not all trigger events can be controlled, and therefore our goal is to design significant trigger events that can shape authentic leadership, while utilizing unplanned events to reflect and understand “why it happened” and how understanding the event can enhance authentic leadership. In this scenario, the positive psychology and POB approach become critical in taking unavoidable negative events, even catastrophic ones, and finding a way to use those events to strengthen a leader’s authenticity through learned capacities such as confidence, hope, optimism, and resiliency.

How do we know we can achieve the desired second scenario involving the use of both planned and unplanned trigger events to develop a deeper and more positive sense of *self-awareness*, resulting in change through *self-regulation*, which ultimately builds greater leadership capacity (labeled *self-development*)? We know this can be done, because it happens all the time in life’s leadership development program, but unfortunately not often enough to create a sufficient number of authentic leaders to address today’s organizational needs and challenges.

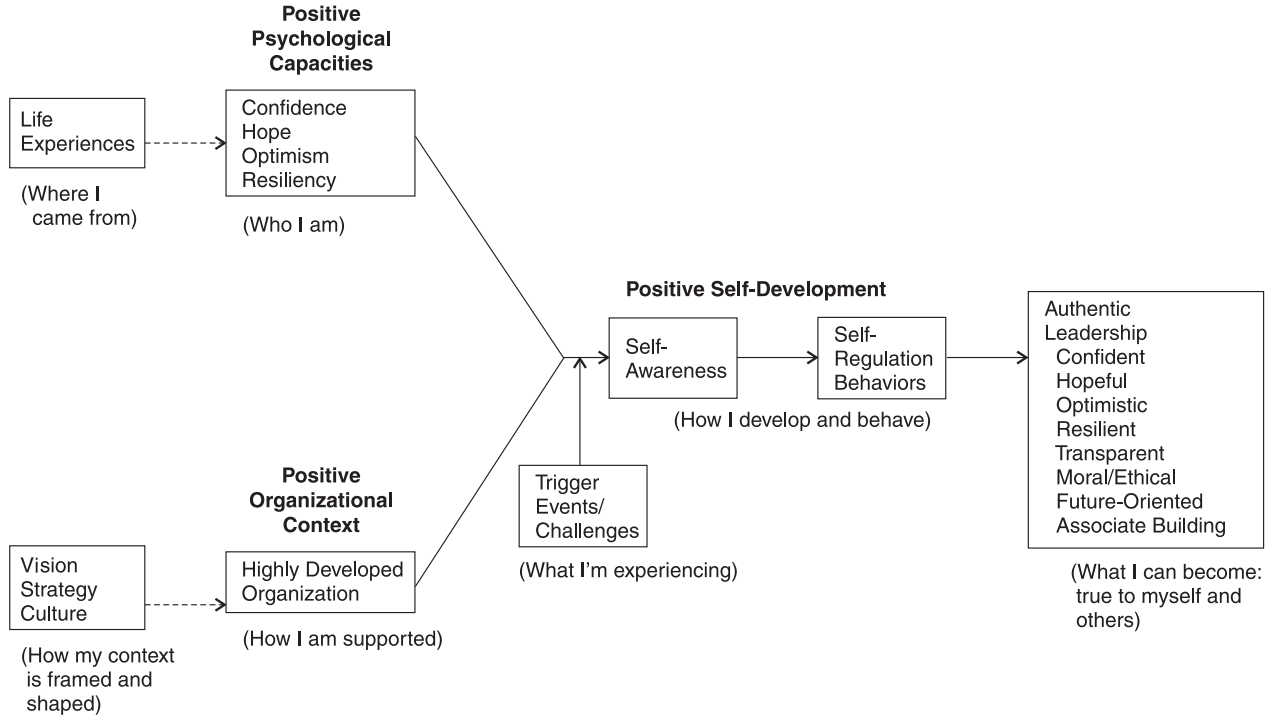
## THE AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Based on the POB and transformational/FRL theory summarized above, we propose the developmental process model for authentic leadership shown in Figure 16.1. The following discussion briefly summarizes the variables in this process model.

### The Positive Psychological Antecedents

As shown in the model, the proposed personal psychological antecedents to self-awareness start with the role of life experiences (i.e., where I came from). In other words, by including life experiences in the process, we rec-

**Figure 16.1**  
**Authentic Leadership Development Model**



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ognize that authentic leadership development is a dynamic lifespan process, whereby trigger events at various points in the life stream are shaping development over time. The key positive psychological antecedents we suggest, however, come from the POB states shown in the model and described below.

## Confidence

Self-efficacy, or what POB simply refers to as confidence, arguably has the most extensive theoretical and research support (see Bandura, 1986, 1997, 1999, 2000; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998a, 1998b). Although recognized in the positive psychology movement (e.g., see Bandura, 2002; Maddux, 2002), it is given less attention than other constructs because self-efficacy (not general efficacy) based on social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986, 1997) is the best example of a state, and positive psychology at the individual level is mostly concerned with dispositional, traitlike characteristics and virtues (e.g., Peterson, 2000; Seligman, 1999; Snyder & Lopez, 2002).

Confidence is defined in POB as “one’s belief about his or her ability to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action necessary to execute a specific task within a given context” (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998b: 66). Self-efficacy is largely derived and supported by the self-regulation and, specifically, forethought dimension of Bandura’s social cognitive theory (1986, 1997). Bandura has clearly been able to demonstrate that the more efficacious the individual: (a) the more likely the choice will be made to really get into the task and welcome the challenge; (b) the more effort and motivation will be given to successfully accomplish the task; and (c) the more persistence there will be when obstacles are encountered. This would seem to be an ideal profile of an effective leader and high performer. In fact, a meta-analysis reported a 0.38 weighted average correlation between self-efficacy and work-related performance (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998a).

Although the importance of confidence has been mentioned in the leadership literature over the years (e.g., see Bennis & Nanus, 1985; House & Shamir, 1993), there have been only a very few attempts to conceptualize (Luthans, Luthans, Hodgetts, & Luthans, 2002; McCormick, 2001) or do research (Chemers, Watson, & May, 2000) directly on leadership efficacy. We would argue that confidence (self-efficacy), because it is clearly supported by theory and research (Bandura, 1997) to be a state open to development, also has considerable theoretical support for making it an input into the self-regulation shown in our model. Since confidence has also been shown to have a demonstrated impact on work-related performance, it can play a significant role as a positive psychological antecedent in developing

authentic leadership in the organizational context (Bandura, 2000; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998a, 1998b; Wood & Bandura, 1989).

## Hope

Unlike confidence (efficacy), to date hope has had little application to the workplace or the leadership field. Yet it is common in the popular literature to refer to inspiring and charismatic leaders as providing hope for organizations and society. Although “hope” is commonly used in everyday language and has a long tradition in clinical psychology (e.g., Erickson, Post, & Paige, 1975), as recognized in positive psychology, hope is precisely defined as “a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (1) agency (goal-directed energy) and (2) pathways (planning to meet goals)” (Snyder, Irving, & Anderson, 1991: 287; also see Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002). This bi-dimensional *willpower* (agency) and *waypower* (pathways) are interrelated and operate in a combined, iterative manner to generate hope.

Importantly, although on the surface hope appears to be conceptually similar to the other positive capacities such as efficacy (confidence), optimism, or resiliency, Snyder (2000; Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002) and others (e.g., Magaletta & Oliver, 1999) have clearly established its conceptual independence and measurement discriminant validity. For example, Snyder, Rand, and Sigmon (2002: 260–261) recently concluded after a thorough comparative analysis of optimism, efficacy, and hope, that there are some conceptual similarities to support each being part of the positive psychology group (i.e., convergent validity), but also sufficient conceptual and measurement differences so as not to be merely a proxy for one another (i.e., discriminant validity).

Hope does have support for being dispositional and traitlike, but important to the use of it in the proposed authentic leadership developmental process, hope is also supported both theoretically and psychometrically as being situational and statelike (Snyder, 2000; Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002; Snyder Harris, & Anderson et al., 1991; Snyder et al., 1996). There is a validated “State Hope Scale” (Snyder et al., 1996) and substantial research evidence that training interventions, to date mostly in clinical and athletic applications, have successfully enhanced hope levels (see Snyder et al., 2000 for a detailed review). How hope specifically helps a leader translate a challenging life (trigger) event into positive leadership development remains an area for future research to explore.

Although generally ignored in the academic study of leadership, the force multiplier throughout history has oftentimes been attributed to the leader’s ability to generate hope. Joan of Arc to the French was the nontra-

ditional leader who provided them with hope they could defeat the English; Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela were two South African leaders who provided a sense of hope for their nation that apartheid could be defeated; Herb Kelleher provided a sense of hope to a budding airline called Southwest, which sustained his organization in a ten-year legal and market-share battle with one of the largest airlines of the time, Braniff. There is also beginning research evidence that high-hope leaders have higher-performing business units and more satisfied associates with lower levels of turnover (Peterson & Luthans, 2002). In total, hope seems to be an overlooked positive psychological capacity that can make an important impact on the developmental process of authentic leadership.

## Optimism

Largely because of the seminal work of Seligman, optimism is perhaps more closely associated with the positive psychology movement than any of the other capacities (see Gillham, 2000). Seligman (1998b) draws from attribution theory in defining optimism as a cognitive process involving positive outcome expectancies and causal attributions that are external, temporary, and specific in interpreting bad or negative events and internal, stable, and global for good or positive events. However, as Peterson (2000: 45) points out, “optimism is not simply cold cognition, and if we forget the emotional flavor that pervades optimism, we can make little sense of the fact that optimism is both motivated and motivating.” From this meaning it follows that optimists are easily motivated to work harder; are more satisfied and have high morale; have high levels of motivational aspiration and set stretch goals; persevere in the face of obstacles and difficulties; analyze personal failures and setbacks as temporary, if not learning experiences, versus being the result of personal inadequacy, and view them as a one-time, unique circumstance; and tend to feel upbeat and invigorated both physically and mentally (Luthans, 2003). In other words, with the added proviso of being realistic, this optimism makes an obvious contribution to authentic leadership.

Like hope, optimism is supported theoretically and psychometrically as being traitlike (e.g., Scheier & Carver, 1992), but also like hope, because of attributions such as temporariness and specificity and the recognition of learned optimism and flexibility, optimism is theoretically and empirically supported for being statelike (Gillham, 2000; Schneider, 2001; Seligman, 1998b, 2002). With this statelike property and beginning research evidence of the relationship between optimism and effective leadership (e.g., Wunderley, Reddy, & Dember, 1998) and work-related performance (Gillham, 2000; Peterson, 2000; Schneider, 2001; Schulman, 1999; Seligman,

1998b; Wanberg, 1997), optimism would seem to be an important ingredient in the development of authentic leaders. Again, like hope, there is hardly an inspirational leader throughout history who made a positive difference in his or her organization or community, who has not been labeled “optimistic.”

## Resiliency

Especially relevant to the recent emerging environment, where most organizations and their managers have experienced economic and moral/ethical setbacks, resiliency as a positive psychological capacity takes on added importance. Defined as the ability or capacity to rebound or bounce back from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure, or even positive change, progress, and increased responsibility, the concept mostly comes out of child psychopathology (e.g., Huey & Weisz, 1997; Hunter & Chandler, 1999; Stewart, Reid, & Mangham, 1997). Now it is recognized in the positive psychology movement (Masten, 2001; Masten & Reed, 2002), POB (Luthans, 2002a), Chapter 7 of this book, and even the popular management literature (Coutu, 2002).

Like hope and optimism, resiliency has conceptual support for being dispositional, traitlike and situational, and statelike open to development (Egeland, Carlson, & Stroufe, 1993; Stewart, Reid, & Mangham, 1997). For example, Masten and Reed (2002: 84–85) provide three resiliency development strategies: (1) risk-focused (prevent/reduce risk and stressors in the context); (2) asset-focused (improving the quantity and quality of support resources or social capital); and (3) process-focused (mobilizing the power of psychological adaptation systems such as coping and efficacy).

At first, resiliency was portrayed as a rare gift that only a few people possessed, similar to the way charisma was isolated in the leadership literature. Now, based on increasing research evidence, resiliency is recognized to come from what Masten (2001: 235) calls “the everyday magic of ordinary, normative human resources.” Although to date the resiliency capacity has been limited in workplace applications to the study of stress resistance (Lazarus, 1999; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Rutter, 1987) and surface attempts on how organizations should bounce back from hard times (e.g., Doe, 1994; Horne & Orr, 1998; Mallak, 1998), the application to leadership has been largely ignored. However, a recent comprehensive review of the theories indicates three common themes of the resiliency capacity that have important relevance for authentic leaders: (1) a staunch acceptance of reality; (2) a deep belief, often buttressed by strongly held values, that life is meaningful; and (3) an uncanny ability to improvise and adapt to significant change (Coutu, 2002: 48). Along with confidence,

hope, and optimism, this resilience capacity seems vital to developing authentic leaders.

## The Positive Organizational Context

In recent years, a great deal of discussion on leadership theory and research has centered on the importance of including the context in leadership models. For example, House and Aditya (1997) raised this point in their review of the leadership literature, arguing that models of leadership needed to do a much better job of integrating the context into predictions of leadership. Day (2000) and London (2002) have also emphasized the importance of examining the context in which leader development takes place. Most recently, it has been argued that all leadership development occurs in a dynamically emerging context, and therefore it is important that the context, like the individual, be readied in order for leadership development to take hold and have a positive effect on associates (Avolio, 2003).

Bass and Avolio (1994) suggested that like the leaders themselves, organizations can also be characterized as exhibiting qualities of transformational leadership. In transformational cultures, leader and associate development could be optimized, as the culture would itself be transparent, energizing, intellectually stimulating, and supportive of developing leaders and followers to their full potential. In such a positive organizational context, we would expect leadership development to have a much better chance of “sticking” versus a culture where cynicism and political maneuvering are normative. Indeed, Atwater, Waldman, Atwater, and Cartier (2000) reported that the benefits of multi-source, 360-feedback on leadership development were diminished to the extent that leaders had a cynical view of their organization.

Bass and Avolio (1994) referred to the most developed, mature organizational culture as one where leaders care about the development of others, similar to their caring about getting tasks successfully accomplished. This contextual or cultural maturity is similar to the moral maturity and reasoning that individuals demonstrate as authentic leaders. In other words, the construct of authentic leadership can be taken to the cultural level, indicating that the type of culture that would be most conducive to motivating and supporting optimal leadership development is one that is authentic, mature, and highly developed.

As shown in Figure 16.1, an organizational context or culture that is highly developed will be supportive of the type of self-regulation required of leaders and associates to develop to higher levels of authentic leadership potential. The development of the individual at one level toward authenticity must coincide with the development of the individual’s positive psy-



psychological capacities *and* a positive, highly developed organizational context and culture for leadership development. Besides the vision, strategy, and culture, the organizational context also includes the workgroup and the next higher level of leaders in which that individual is embedded. Each of these contextual components (and in synergistic combination) play an important role in authentic leader development. In particular, highly developed organizational cultures will promote trigger events that appropriately challenge emerging authentic leaders to achieve their full potential.

## The Role of Self-Awareness and Self-Regulation

As shown in Figure 16.1, one of the core elements of the model is self-awareness, which we posit is a key for change in leadership development. If the target leader for development is not aware of areas she or he can self-reinforce and strengthen, then little or no energy will be allocated to the task of development. For example, a leader may have a very strong set of core values that are in the leader's view highly ethical. However, as that leader begins to work across very different cultures, some of the values that were appropriate for the leader's indigenous culture may be in conflict with values in the new culture (Lopez et al., 2002). Creating a sense of self-awareness, that one can be ethical relying upon different core values, may regulate the target leader's attention to putting energy into operating differently in different cultures. Now the leader must learn to make the expanded set of values part of his or her self-awareness and resulting self-regulation. To accomplish a change in one's working self-concept necessitates the leader to continuously expand self-awareness and in turn regulate her or his way of thinking and behaving.

## CONCLUSION AND THE FUTURE

We have shown in this chapter the importance of integrating positive organizational behavior (which includes statelike capacities open to development) and transformational/full-range leadership (which includes ethical and moral perspective-taking and development capacity) in the synergistic development of authentic leaders. The core processes in our proposed model of authentic leadership development include: (1) positive psychological antecedents; (2) organizational context antecedents; and (3) self-development; but also, (4) the positive psychological capabilities need to be examined within the larger life context of the leader; (5) the organizational context needs to be framed through vision, strategy, and culture; and finally (6) how both planned and unplanned trigger events moderate and shape the authentic leader's development. Our underlying theoretical

premise is that leadership development is to a large extent state-based, and that by enhancing the positive psychological capacities and organizational context, the working self-concept of the leader can be changed and developed to include and enhance the identified core construct variables underlying authentic leadership. To create authentic leadership requires development of the individual and the context in which he or she is embedded over time.

Our goal now is to design field interventions that can accelerate the development of authentic leadership, since waiting for life to unfold its events has not historically provided a sufficient number of authentic leaders. In this time between times, the need to develop authentic leadership has never been greater, nor have the opportunities ever been more available to do so. In this chapter, we have only begun by building awareness of what constitutes authentic leadership and the process variables for its development. The next step is to use this theoretical model as a point of departure to do the necessary research to evaluate specific ways to proactively develop practicing authentic leaders now and for the future. Part of a comprehensive proactive strategy needs to include building taxonomies of trigger events that would be expected to promote positive leadership development. Until we fully understand the constructs and events that positively shape leadership development, we will remain subject to “life” as our best alternative to producing the next generation of authentic leaders.

## Part 3

# POSITIVE MEANINGS AND POSITIVE CONNECTIONS

The chapters in this part offer an important window into how positive connections with others and how positive meaning engage processes and produce outcomes that help to explain extraordinary experience and performance in organizations. As we look across these six chapters, we see several important generative ideas that offer important insights for researchers interested in positive organizational scholarship.

First, several chapters invite inquiry into understanding how energy and vitality are created and spread in organizations. The authors use energy both to register the life and vitality in the system and to explain the causal dynamics that undergird different kinds of extraordinary performance. They imply that this vitality is a type of variable and renewable resource that contributes to understanding why and how people and groups thrive. Baker, Cross, and Wooten, as well as Dutton and Heaphy use energy to characterize differences in how people feel when in relationship with others at work. They argue that these experienced differences of energy in relationship are consequential for individuals, groups, and organizations as a whole. Feldman and Khademanian use energy or vitality to describe differences in both individual and organizational capacities to expand, grow, and develop.

Second, these chapters reveal how organizational conditions create information and opportunities, and engage people in ways that facilitate the construction of positive meaning and the coordination of work in ways that contribute to vital individual and group functioning. They help us to see that organizational conditions alter the micro-contexts in which people function and the meaning that people make of their own experience. These different meanings in turn, increase or decrease the type and level of resources available to individuals, as well as activate processes and structures that people find enabling or disabling. Wrzesniewski as well as Pratt and Ashforth both view organizational practices as consequential in providing motivation and freedom for individuals to construct the meaning of jobs in ways that are consequential. Gittell highlights how communication patterns and the quality of connection between people in a context enable or disable the execution of coordination in highly interdependent work. Feldman and Khademian reveal how empowerment enables capacity-building by allowing individuals to utilize connections and information as resources. Rather than seeing context as fixed, several of the authors describe how context enables action, but is also transformed by action, contributing to positive dynamics in organizational systems.

Third, the chapters uncover new ways of characterizing the connections between people that help to explain their power in fostering different forms of extraordinariness. They infuse connection with physiological significance—when in different forms of connection, people feel and are more alive (e.g., Dutton and Heaphy). They infuse connection with emotional significance by highlighting how connection relates to experienced vitality and engagement (Baker, Cross, and Wooten; Feldman and Khademian). They infuse connections with existential significance, emphasizing that different connections facilitate the crafting of different identities (Pratt and Ashforth; Wrzesniewski). Finally, they infuse connections with material significance in reminding organizational researchers that in different connections, people have access to different information, which endows them with differing amounts of power and differing choice points for action.

Fourth, the authors construe organizational members as active creators of their own fate and the fate of organizations by how they construe the meaning of work, how they cultivate energy-enhancing connections between people, as well as how they share and use power. The agentic construal of individuals in organizations helps to uncover how contexts enable flourishing and positive deviance through how they unlock individuals' capacities to act, and endow them with resources (like understanding, connections, information, energy) that are used to accomplish work (e.g., coordination, Gittell; planning, Feldman and Khademian), shape jobs

(Wrzesniewski; Pratt and Ashforth), and perform more generally (Baker, Cross, and Wooten; Dutton and Heaphy).

The chapters invite organizational scholars to engage a number of important questions that help to explain positively deviant processes and outcomes in organizations. How do positive, energy-creating connections with other people contribute to extraordinary performance? What are the underlying mechanisms? How do conditions in organizations (e.g., strategy, culture, design) enable or disable the creation of these energy-generating connections? Similarly, what are the underlying mechanisms through which the construal of positive meaning about work affects individuals' beliefs, emotions, and behaviors? How does the cultivation of positive meaning contribute to extraordinary behavior for individuals, groups, units, and the organization as a whole? Why and how do features of organizations and features of organizational environments shape the construction of positive meaning about work, about self, and about the organization? How do organizational features enable the enhancement of capabilities and resources that individuals can use to empower others inside and outside the organization? New domains of inquiry and insight in organizational studies are opened through active pursuit of these questions.

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# The Power of High-Quality Connections

Jane E. Dutton and Emily D. Heaphy

Human connections in organizations are vital. Whether they form as part of long-term relationships or brief encounters, all connections leave indelible traces. Organizations depend on individuals to interact and form connections to accomplish the work of the organization. Connections formed in work contexts, therefore, have a significant effect on people just by virtue of the time spent there (Hochschild, 1997). The quality of the connections, in turn, impacts how organizations function. Theories of human behavior in organizations need to take seriously the quality of connections between people to understand why people flourish or flounder and to unpack how they affect organizational functioning. In this chapter we respond to positive organizational scholarship's call to better understand how to build contexts that enable human flourishing by understanding the power of high-quality connections.

We define the quality of the connection in terms of whether the connective tissue between individuals is life-giving or life-depleting. Like a healthy blood vessel that connects parts of our body, a high-quality connection between two people allows the transfer of vital nutrients; it is flexible, strong, and resilient. In a low-quality connection, a tie exists (people communicate, they interact, and they may even be involved in interdependent work), but the connective tissue is damaged. With a low-quality connection, there is a little death in every interaction (Dutton, 2003).

In this chapter, we develop this definition and unpack the theoretical bases for the power of high-quality connections (HQC) in work organizations in three steps. In the first step, we define HQCs. In the second step, we describe four theoretical lenses for seeing how HQCs affect people at work. Finally, we develop a research agenda for organizational studies that puts understanding the power of HQCs as a keystone for positive organizational scholarship.

## HIGH-QUALITY CONNECTIONS

When people are at work, connections with others compose the fabric of daily life. A connection is the dynamic, living tissue (Berscheid & Lopes, 1997) that exists between two people when there is some contact between them involving mutual awareness and social interaction. The existence of some interaction means that individuals have affected one another in some way, giving connections a temporal as well as an emotional dimension. Connections can occur as a result of a momentary encounter, and can also develop and change over a longer time period (Gabarro, 1987). Other scholars have called this relationship feature the bond (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995) or “space between” (Josselson, 1996) two individuals. In our definition, connection does not imply an enduring (Reis, 2001) or recurring (Gutek, 1995) bond, nor does it assume intimacy or closeness.<sup>1</sup>

Understanding the quality of the connection is critical to understanding why and how people thrive at work. Hallowell (1999), for example, describes the power of a connection created in a matter of minutes:

A five-minute conversation can make all the difference in the world if the parties participate actively. To make it work, you have to set aside what you’re doing, put down the memo you were reading, disengage from your laptop, abandon your daydream and bring your attention to bear upon the person you are with. Usually, when you do this, the other person (or people) will feel the energy and respond in kind, naturally. (p. 126)

Gersick, Bartunek, and Dutton (2000) describe one person’s expression of the power of a more long-lasting work-based connection:

I haven’t chosen this relationship to be important to me. It just—is. She is always there in the back (of my mind). . . . She has had such an impact on how I should run my life—how I should be a female faculty member. (p. 1025)



In both examples, the power of high-quality connections is felt and sensed, with lasting implications for the individual, and often for the organization.

In contrast, low-quality connections leave damage in their wake. As one manager explained, “Corrosive connections are like black holes: they absorb all of the light in the system and give back nothing in return” (Dutton, 2003: 15). Studies of work incivility (Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2000) and minority employees (Blake, 1999) document the long-lasting damage done by corrosive connections at work. A low-quality, toxic connection depletes and degrades (Frost, 2003). It imposes a damaging emotional and physiological toll on individuals in work organizations (Williams & Dutton, 1999). Incidents like the one below, in which an executive sales consultant explains why he left a high-status job after eighteen months, happen frequently in all kinds of work contexts.

The day he hired on, his assigned mentor showed him his new office and walked away without a word—no tour of the office, no introductions to co-workers, “in short, no information,” the consultant says. Later, in a meeting, a partner treated him like a piece of furniture. Pointing him out as a new hire, the partner said, “I don’t know if he’s any good. Somebody try him out and let me know,” he recalls. (Shellenbarger, 2000: B1)

Despite its importance organizational, researchers have not consistently defined connection quality. Some imply quality is relationship strength (Mills & Clark, 1982). Others define connection strength (and by implication, quality) in terms of the emotional weight of the attachment (Kahn, 1998) or by emotional weight coupled with reciprocity and frequency of communication (Granovetter, 1973). Researchers focusing on leader-member exchange relationships treat the quality of connection using a broad array of definitions (e.g., Schriesheim, Castro, & Cogliser, 1999). Mentoring researchers often gauge connection quality by relationship satisfaction (e.g., Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000). Other times, they use a broader definition, including emotional affect, reciprocity, mutuality, interdependence, and mutual motivation to be responsive (e.g., Higgins & Kram, 2001). Many imply connection quality is important, but leave the construct undefined (e.g., Uzzi, 1997). All in all, the concept of connection quality needs work (Berscheid & Lopes, 1997).

We define and gauge the quality of connection between people by three clusters of indicators. One cluster directly focuses on features of the actual connection between two people. Two clusters tap the experience of each individual in the connection. While we represent the quality of a connection using a static picture of the life-giving features of the tie, in reality

quality is dynamic and processual, and is affected by changes in the individual and the social context.

## Features of the Tie in a High-Quality Connection

To distill high-quality connections we focus on the features of the connection between two people, though connections occur in larger groups. We have identified three defining characteristics of the connection itself when it is defined as high quality.

First, HQCs have greater strength as indicated by *higher emotional carrying capacity*. Greater emotional carrying capacity of a connection is evidenced by both the expression of more emotion when in the connection and the expression of both positive and negative emotions. Connections with higher quality have capacity to withstand the expression of more absolute emotion and more emotion of varying kinds. We know we are in an HQC by the safety we feel in displaying different emotions:

I can say anything to Art and he will be understanding. I am able to get frustration and anger out in a more constructive fashion with him. We do that for each other. (Kram & Isabella, 1985: 121)

The *tensility* of the tie is related to the capacity of the connection to bend and withstand strain and to function in a variety of circumstances. It is the feature of the connection that indicates its resilience or the capacity to bounce back after setbacks. Work in psychology (Reis, 2001; Gottman, 2001) has shown that meaningful connections are indicated by how the connection responds to conflict. In a connection with greater tensility, the connection alters form (while maintaining strength) to accommodate changes in the conditions of either individual, or conflict and tensions in the joint circumstances of the dyad.

The third characteristic of the tie, the *degree of connectivity*, developed by team researchers working from complex adaptive systems theory (Losada, 1999), is a measure of a relationship's generativity and openness to new ideas and influences, and its ability to deflect behaviors that will shut down generative processes. These researchers found that teams with a high degree of connectivity display an atmosphere of buoyancy, creating expansive emotional spaces that open possibilities for action and creativity. Stated in terms of complex adaptive systems, an HQC has the ability to dissolve attractors that close possibilities and evolve attractors that open possibilities (Losada, 1999: 190).

## Subjective Experience of a High-Quality Connection

We propose that people in HQCs share three subjective experiences.<sup>2</sup> First, HQCs are sensed by *feelings of vitality and aliveness*. People in HQCs are more likely to feel positive arousal and a heightened sense of positive energy (Quinn & Dutton, 2002). The subjective experience of vitality is of interest to psychologists who study well-being and health (Nix, Ryan, Maly, & Deci, 1999; Ryan & Frederick, 1997). It has been documented by researchers who study networks and energy at work (Baker, Cross, & Wooten, 2003).

Second, being in an HQC is also felt through a heightened sense of *positive regard* (Rogers, 1951). People in HQCs experience a feeling of being known or being loved. This sense can be instantaneous. It does not imply romantic attachment, nor does it imply a relationship of long duration. Sandelands (2002: 250) calls this the first moment of social life and describes it as the feeling of “living presence, a state of pure being, in which isolating worries, vanities and desires vanish within a single vital organism.” Quinn calls the subjective experience of deep connection “profound contact” (Quinn & Quinn, 2002). Kahn (1998) uses emotional weight to indicate this kind of attachment. At the physiological level it is a form of unconscious resonance of neural engrams between two people (Lewis, Amini, & Lannan, 2000).

Finally, the subjective experience of being in an HQC is marked by felt *mutuality*. Mutuality captures the sense that both people in a connection are engaged and actively participating. Miller and Stiver describe mutuality as “a way of relating, a shared activity in which each (or all) of the people involved are participating as fully as possible” (1997: 43). While positive regard captures a “momentary feeling” of love at rest, mutuality captures the feeling of potential movement in the connection (Miller & Stiver, 1997) born from mutual vulnerability and mutual responsiveness. Miller and Stiver distinguish felt reciprocity from mutuality by the presence of mutual empathy. All three subjective experiences are important barometers of the quality of connection between people.

## Physiological Experience of a High-Quality Connection

Physiological indicators mark a high-quality connection and positive interactions (Reis & Gable, 2003). However, most studies connecting high-quality connections and physiology are not designed to capture instantaneous correlates of the quality of connections. Instead, research has been

focused on longer-term effects. There is diverse evidence that having high-quality relationships with others is central to optimal living (Ryff & Singer, 1998) and associated with well-being in higher social animals (Mendoza, 1991) and humans (Uvnäs-Moberg, 1997).

First, people with more positive connections in their life have a lower allostatic load (Seeman et al., 1997) or a lower physiologic to responses to environmental stressors (Adler, 2002). Allostatic load refers to the cumulative effects of activation of physical systems in responding to environmental demands (McEwen, 1998). Second, HQCs are associated with a longer life-span (House, Landis, & Umberson, 1988) and lower risk of death (Seeman, 1996). Third, HQCs are associated with a stronger immune system (Cohen, 2001; Ornish, 1998) and lower blood pressure (Uchino, Cacioppo, & Kiecolt-Glaser, 1996), helping people cope more effectively with stress. Thus the cumulative effects of being in HQCs are clearly positive and life-enhancing.

Going beyond these longer-term effects, research suggests that people are instantaneously more alive and healthy in HQCs and that this state is indicated by three sets of physiological changes. First, in HQCs there is a *release of oxytocin*, which reduces anxiety and increases activity of the sympathetic nervous system (Altemus et al., 1997), at the same time that it fuels further affiliative behavior (Taylor, Dickerson, & Klein, 2002: 561). Second, HQCs are associated with a *release of endogenous opiate peptides*, which down-regulate the sympathetic and hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenocortical (HPA) response to stress. Previous studies have shown that their release is associated with positive social contact (Taylor, Dickerson, & Klein, 2002). Third, an instantaneous effect of being in a high-quality connection is *reduced systolic blood pressure*. In one experimental study that demonstrated this effect, people's cardiovascular reaction was assessed under three conditions that varied in terms of the strength of social support present when participants had to give a six-minute speech. When HQCs were present, there was an attenuated blood pressure and heart response, suggesting immediate cardiovascular effects of being in an HQC (Lepore, Mata-Allen, & Evans, 1993).

## FOUR THEORETICAL LENSES ON THE POWER OF HIGH-QUALITY CONNECTIONS

Four rich veins of theory inform how HQCs leave their imprint on people at work. The theories are interrelated and the boundaries blurred, but for now we will present them as four separate lenses: exchange, identity, growth, and knowledge. The exchange lens argues that HQCs matter by endowing individuals with resources that are useful and valuable. The

identity perspective highlights the role that HQCs play in co-creating the meaning that employees can and do make of themselves and of the organization. A growth perspective showcases how relationships with others literally develop employees in the direction of their potentiality and health as human beings. Finally, a learning perspective focuses on relationships as micro-contexts for knowing. By putting these theoretical explanations and research communities side by side, we can better see the generative capacity of HQCs at work.

## An Exchange Lens

An important way that organizational scholars explain the effects of HQCs is through a social exchange lens. In this perspective, work connections are vehicles for resource and reward exchanges. Rooted in sociology (e.g., Blau, 1964; Homans, 1974) and social psychology (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), social exchange theory suggests that social relations involve the exchange of valued commodities between people. These commodities include money, advice, political opportunities, trust, social support, and even positive feelings (e.g., Lawler & Yoon, 1998). If people in a social relation acquire valuable resources, then that relationship is likely to endure and be strengthened (Emerson, 1976).

There are numerous examples within this paradigm for how HQCs enliven. We sample two. First, network theory asserts that relationships exist, survive, and thrive when ties in the network gain utility from their connection (Baker, 2000). For example, studies of power in organizations typically use an exchange logic to explain what gives and what sustains power. For example, Brass (1984) found that employees acquired influence in the eyes of supervisors and nonsupervisors through their relative position in a social network. Different positions gave people access to resources that other people value, increasing interdependence and influence. These studies emphasize that organizational structures shape the connecting potential between people at work, and if people are in HQCs they may benefit from access and flows of valued resources, which in turn create and strengthen power.

Leader-member exchange theory illustrates how HQCs between leaders and their subordinates create value through how they deliver valued goods to both parties. The theory assumes that the dyadic linkage between leaders and subordinates is negotiated through a series of interactions over time in which both people exchange resources (Graen & Scandura, 1987). In a high-quality connection, a member may receive discretion and development from a leader, and in return, a leader may receive strong commitment and high effort from the subordinate. The leader-member exchange

paradigm uses the exchange of valued resources and the building of trust to show how these relationships develop over time (Bauer & Green, 1996). The building of HQCs improves the flow and rate of valued resource exchange, which further cements and deepens the dyadic connection.

Through an exchange lens, we see how HQCs enliven through the mutual passing of valued resources. We see how repeated interactions create new and valued resources (such as trust and power or influence), which shape patterns of future exchange. This perspective stands in stark contrast to an identity lens on HQCs.

## An Identity Lens

Other people are active players in the co-creation of who we are at work. Our work identities, and selves more generally, are created, deployed, and altered in social interactions with others (Potter & Wetherell, 1998; Prus, 1996; Reicher, 1995; Sampson, 1993; Schlenker, 1985; Swann, 1987). Cooley's idea of the looking-glass self (1902) and symbolic interactionists' claims that self-reflections from others compose the self (Blumer, 1966; Mead, 1934) undergird the idea that the quality of connections matters to the content and evaluation of the identity that employees form, claim, and express at work.

High-quality connections with others allow for the co-constructions of identities that are valued by organizational members themselves. High-quality connections afford the opportunity and the psychological safety (Kahn, 1990) to explore alternative identities, to make claims, and to craft an identity that a person feels is worthwhile and that fits who employees are or who they wish to become. In addition, HQCs help to make employees intelligible to themselves and to others through talk and through storytelling (Gergen, 1994).

Ibarra (1999, 2003) has written about the process that individuals deploy to reinvent their career and to craft a viable and desired work identity. Her stories of how individuals invent themselves as a work in progress highlight the role that HQCs play. Other people encourage actions that are the seed corn for revising one's identity in the direction of a desired and valued possible self. Thus June, the literature professor who becomes a broker in Ibarra's book, relies on HQCs to give her feedback, to help her experiment and transition, and to affirm her new work identity (Ibarra, 2003). Through relationships with others she enters a type of holding environment for playing with elements of the new identity, and she acquires real information that helps her to understand and legitimately claim this new self. She imagines new possibilities for herself, which then motivates action consistent with this new self (Markus, 1977).

HQCs help employees create valued identities by helping people derive positive meaning about what they are doing. For example, we found that coworkers and supervisors play pivotal roles in helping temporary workers see their value:

The boss I had was extraordinary at taking me under his wing. He did things for me as a temp that I wasn't used to. It was as if the minute I walked through the door I was you know, I . . . was a permanent employee, even if I really wasn't. He took me to lunch the first day. I mean he went over everything [the company] did in detail, he brought out all the materials, and he even talked about the political relationships of everyone in the department—his allies, management, this person and that person. This was the most delightful experience I've ever had. (Bartel & Dutton, 2001: 126)

Thus, HQCs with others can make positive aspects of one's current identity salient (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). They can play a significant role in converting ambivalence into positive meaning that helps people make positive sense of who they are and what they are doing at work (Pratt, 2000).

In certain cases, HQCs facilitate the expression of identities that are more authentic and genuine, at the same time that identity expression mobilizes change. Creed and Scully (2000) describe how gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered (GLBT) employees deploy their identities in ways that allow them to contribute more fully to their work organization. At the same time, this form of identity claiming facilitates a self-narration that is in greater alignment with how someone sees themselves. High-quality connections enable this process by providing subtle and not so subtle support for marginal identity displays. One lesbian speaker talked about the effect this way:

That right there is your validation. Among these friends are people that make the workplace a safe environment. They've been the driving force behind this network. I think a lot of it is [that for] a lot of gay and lesbian employees, there is still some fear to be out there in the front and to be a friend and supporter, though that takes a lot of risk too. So many of them have just been right out there. (Creed & Scully, 2000: 403)

Through an identity lens, we see that HQCs enliven people at work by facilitating employees' experimentation with new possible selves, by helping employees construct positive meaning about the current work that they do, and by creating support and possibility for identity displays at work.

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â€œAuthentic leadership for me encompasses the whole leader and a leader cannot be authentic just some of the time or when times  
are buoyant. It is about showing the behaviours of an authentic leader all of the time and not just â€˜in pocketsâ€™™. An authentic leader  
demonstrates their ability to exhibit the right behaviours especially when needed in times of change and challenge.