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# **BACHELOR THESIS**

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**Health in the Workplace Environment: Positive Psychology in Organizational Leadership as a Means of Improvement of Employees' Workplace Well-Being**

**2017-2018**



# **BACHELOR THESIS**

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## **Health in the Workplace Environment: Positive Psychology in Organizational Leadership as a Means of Improvement of Employees' Workplace Well-Being**

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# **BACHELORARBEIT**

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## **DIE WACHSENDE BEDEUTUNG DES THEMAS ‚GESUNDHEIT AM ARBEITSPLATZ‘ – POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGIE IN DER FÜHRUNG ALS MITTEL ZUR VERBESSERUNG DER WOHLBEFINDENS DER MITARBEITER**

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## **Abstract**

The subject of the following paper is the mental well-being of employees at their work and how the leader can improve this well-being using positive psychology. The paper is compilatory in nature because it uses research and literature of experts to analyse how employee mental well-being can be further stimulated. The expert literature is used to present tools, but also to demonstrate the effectiveness of these tools through real-life case studies and evidence. The paper wishes to inform persons, leaders, and entire organizations how positive psychology can be beneficial to organizational members' well-being in the long term. Using a compilation of positive psychology literature and real-life case studies' analysis, the informative purpose of the thesis can be achieved.

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## **Abbreviation Glossary**

COR model = conservation of resources model

DCM model = demands-control model

JD-R model = job-demands-resources model

POS = Positive Organizational Scholarship

POB = Positive Organizational Behavior

POP = Positive Organizational Psychology

OCB = Organizational Citizenship Behavior

AI = Appreciative Inquiry

ALD = Authentic Leadership Development

PDL = Positively Deviant Leadership

VIA = Values in Action

SBU = Strategic Business Unit

SWI = Sovereign Well-Being Index

ESS = European Social Survey

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# 1 Introduction

Earlier this year, the New York Times published an article called “How to Build Resilience in Midlife” by Tara Parker-Pope<sup>1</sup>. It was about people who have been in the work-force for about 15 to 20 years, who need to build resilience, especially at a later age, to deal with workplace stressors. The article inspired this paper, because it was about building mental, long-term resources. Parker-Pope compares the accumulation of valuable, long-term resources to the training of the physical body. After training the body for a longer period of time, the exercise also has beneficial effects in the long run. Just as the physical body benefits from long-term exercise and muscle strengthening, the brain benefits from building resources over time. Parker-Pope incites readers to think of the brain as a muscle that needs to be exercised, trained, and nurtured<sup>2</sup>.

## 1.1.1 Changing Approach to the Workplace in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

One of the primary motivators behind this thesis is the fact that the workplace has changed drastically over the course of human history: since people began to shape the earliest kinds of communities. The concept of work itself has also changed. For a large part of human history, people’s time was taken up by the basic needs of survival, such as food and water, a safe place to raise children, and adequate shelter<sup>3</sup>. Work used to be almost exclusively physical, and constituted survival methods. Work also used to be a strong part of a person’s identity, in that their work contributed to the rest of the community’s well-being, and not solely their own<sup>4</sup>. Today, however, work has taken on a completely new meaning. The tangible products have been removed from the work environment and a job is no longer about survival. Simultaneously, this environment has become much more complex and most jobs much more specialized<sup>5</sup>. Despite this intense specialization, encouraged by the rapid industrialization of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, purpose and meaning of work are no longer the only things that define an individual. In the current day and age, the meaning of work has diminished, while dissatisfied and depressed workers become more numerous<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, the workers of today are more

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<sup>1</sup> Parker-Pope, T. New York Times, August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Parker-Pope, T. New York Times, August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Steger/Dik 2013, 131

<sup>4</sup> Note: such as the Baker that baked, the Miller that milled, etc.

<sup>5</sup> Steger/Dik 2013, 131

<sup>6</sup> Steger/Dik 2013, 134

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susceptible to mental disorders and weaknesses such as depression, which is why the realm of positive organizational psychology is gaining territory and credibility each year.

### **1.1.2 Goal of the Paper**

In this fast-paced, ever-changing world of work, providing additional as well as better resources for employees's mental well-being in the organizational setting is the main goal of this paper. "Positive Psychology in an Organization's Leadership as a Means to Improve Workers' Well-Being" is the research question of the thesis. As a caution, it is necessary to remind the reader, that the thesis will focus on mental well-being, and not physical well-being. 'Organizational' is a word that refers to the workplace setting or environment: such as inside of a for-profit company. The paper will use positive organizational psychology as a framework for a worker's potential resources. The perspective of the leader in the workplace is chosen as the organizational member with the power and responsibility to instill positive change to improve their workers' well-being. The organizational leader not only possesses the responsibility, but also the means to take action, using the ensuing constructs and ideas.

### **1.1.3 Structure of the Paper**

First, the field 'Positive Psychology' is defined as the overarching, scientific framework, followed by leadership in the context of positive psychology, as well as the concepts of engagement and performance. After the definitions, the tools a leader can use to improve the mental well-being of the workers are presented. These tools are constructs and active methods that exist within the field of positive organizational psychology; be it in the sub-field of positive organizational behavior or of positive organizational scholarship. Subsequently support and validation for these tools is provided through real-life case studies: the purpose of these sample studies is to prove the effectiveness of building and accumulating mental resources for workers. The case studies are followed by the closing remarks.

## 2 Definitions

The paper shall attempt to approach every element of the framework with caution and criticism, so as not to give an overly beatific description analysis of POP and its sub-disciplines. The framework for this improvement of mental well-being of workers is important since psychology has many different branches. Therefore, the framework of positive psychology in an organization will be clearly defined, along with the concept of leadership, including their respective limitations. Subsequently, two concepts concerning the human resource departments of today are engagement and performance of workers and how these two values can be influenced. Lastly in this section, a differentiation between two sub-fields of positive psychology will be presented. Since the following tools are many, it is helpful to be able to organize them in categories, for example: positive organizational scholarship or positive organizational behavior.

### 2.1 Framework: Positive Psychology

It is important to define the limitations and extents of the realm in which the paper is being written. In this case, the subject falls under the dominion of Positive Psychology. Sarah Lewis (2011) differentiates two fields which are often confused: positive psychology and positive thinking. Anthropologists recognize positive thinking as sympathetic magic: this kind of magic is prevalent in unscientific or native cultures. Shamanistic cultures are known to propagate positive thinking as part of cultural rituals, for example<sup>7</sup>. Positive thinking deals more with “the realm of anecdote and exhortation”<sup>8</sup>.

Positive psychologists have also had to fight to prove that this field does conform to the rigors of scientific research and academia<sup>9</sup>, unlike that of positive thinking. Lewis (2011) declares the most important distinction between the two is that positive psychology accommodates the concept of negativity and acknowledges its necessity to the human condition and well-being<sup>10</sup>.

Experts in the field of positive psychology can agree on a general beginning of the movement. It was in the year 2000 when Martin Seligman was the president of the American Psychological Association. A further distinction appeared soon after, which is critical for

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<sup>7</sup> Lewis 2011, 2

<sup>8</sup> Lewis 2011, 3

<sup>9</sup> Lewis 2011, 3

<sup>10</sup> Lewis 2011, 3

the basis of this paper: positive psychology in an organization. Soon enough, organizations and companies began to recognize the validity of the positive psychology movement and wanted to incorporate POP<sup>11</sup> principles into their systems, as a means to take better care of their workforces and turn a larger profit.

Certain dangers do exist in POP. While positive psychology has its base in academia, it has not prevented popular culture from taking ideas from this movement. Expert on positive organizational scholarship, Cameron, cites in his monography from 2012 that there are more than 70.000 books on the market about positive leadership. Therein lies one of the dangers for organizations trying to improve their leadership strategies: determining which methods are research and fact-based. Thankfully, positive psychologists are constantly trying to better themselves and further their research. Therefore, it is important to discuss some limitations that experts have recognized.

One criticism that positive psychologists recognize themselves is that their field has tended to focus on the individual person, rather than a group of people, however small or large. This criticism is widely acknowledged throughout many of the paper's bibliographical sources and has in turn led experts to focus their research away from the individual and towards the group setting. A shift that proves to be advantageous to this paper's focus, which is organizational.<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately, a fundamental challenge that positive psychologists face is that, from an evolutionary perspective, humans have always leaned toward a negative approach. Paying attention to the 'negative' is adaptive – if one didn't look out for negative signs or threats, there could be deadly consequences<sup>13</sup>. The 21<sup>st</sup> century has shed some light on an alternative: "abundance" approach. This is an alternative to the "deficit", survival-oriented approach<sup>14</sup>.

POP faces another significant challenge in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: the ever-evolving, quick-paced change of organizations. There is agreement in the newer literature, for example Mackie 2017, that positive psychology "is slow to develop"<sup>15</sup>. Positive psychology has to

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<sup>11</sup> Positive Organizational Psychology – is abbreviated POP

<sup>12</sup> Diener 2011, 9

<sup>13</sup> Linley/Harrington/Garcia 2013, 5

<sup>14</sup> Linley/Harrington/Garcia 2013, 5

<sup>15</sup> Mackie 2017, 300

move quickly to keep up pace with the mercurial world market and its ever-growing organizations. POP needs to adapt if it wants to keep up with the global fluctuations of organizational life and of employment conditions<sup>16</sup>.

A problematic situation concerning the research is that a large portion of it in the organizational setting is reliant on self-report of participants and does not respect the component of the passage of time: in other words, a lot of the data is also cross-sectional<sup>17</sup>. This does not make for reliable or valid data for the general population, be it academic or organizational. Despite organizations' urgent need for this research, it is unhelpful that organizations *purchase* the service of experts to do research<sup>18</sup>, let alone publish research that is favorable to their image. It puts the ethical background of positive psychology in question.

Positive psychology is the overarching framework for the paper; leadership is the stance from which the paper will be written.

## 2.2 Framework: Leadership in the context of the paper

As we have now defined the framework for positive psychology in the organization, the door opens further to include the aspect of leadership in the organization. Positive psychology in an organization can be observed from many different angles, for example from the angle of the leader. It is important to note that this paper shall, for instance, NOT observe from the angle 'change in the framework of an organization'. The research in the branch of organizational change or 'change management' is extensive and well-explored. However, it is too extensive to include in this paper.

One must define the limits of leadership, especially if one wants to encourage the effects of positive psychology in an organization. Psychopathic leaders, for example, are not favorable to a sustainable work environment. These can be people with narcissistic or psychopathic personalities<sup>19</sup>. These personality types and disorders are noxious to any organization, because they make for extremely counterproductive situations, thanks to personality deficits on the leader's part.

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<sup>16</sup> Linley/Harrington/Garcia 2013, 5

<sup>17</sup> Mills/Fleck/Kozikowski 2013

<sup>18</sup> Diener 2011, 6

<sup>19</sup> Lewis 2011, 107

Some leaders have trouble accepting their own strengths. And even if they are accepted, Clifton/Nelson (1992)<sup>20</sup> declare that it is not enough to simply know one's own strengths. A leader must be capable of acknowledging their weaknesses. Morris/Garrett (2010) go so far as to prove how damaging weaknesses are, if gone unacknowledged<sup>21</sup>. They call them fatal flaws, and they can be career-damaging. These are strengths, which over-compensate for weaknesses. A leader with weaknesses is unacceptable in a conventional organization, which is why the leader then overplays his or her strengths. These fatal flaws (or overplayed strengths) can be attributed to a lack of confidence or some kind of residual deficit from childhood.<sup>22</sup> The definition of 'fatal flaws' provides a sharper image of what a leader should not have if he or she wants to improve the well-being of his or her workers.

Another limitation worth mentioning is leadership in the cultural context. Which cultures will accept this form of leadership best? The effects of authentic leadership may be stronger and more influential in some societies more than others: specifically, egalitarian societies; such as the United States. Non-egalitarian governments and their cultures, on the other hand, exhibit a much larger power distance between any kind of leader and the worker.<sup>23</sup> Associated with the cultural challenges of bringing in a new kind of leader, are the difficulties concerning transparency for example, in a collectivistic society, where group harmony is the biggest concern. Ignoring the importance of transparency in the relationship between leader and worker would be contradictory to one of the core principles of authentic leadership. Therefore, this paper exists within the framework of such an egalitarian and democratic society.

An aspect of leadership approached in this paper is the concept of "authentic leadership". The innovator in this field, Bruce J. Avolio, began the research on authentic leadership by trying to establish whether good leaders are born or made. The hypothesis was tested by doing research on twins<sup>24</sup>. This research led to 'authentic leadership'. This kind of authenticity is defined as accepting one's true self, without fighting parts of one's personality. These leaders exhibit hope, resilience and other qualities which will be discussed in further detail in the tool section of this paper<sup>25</sup>. The reason for defining this

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<sup>20</sup> Clifton/Nelson 1992

<sup>21</sup> Morris/Garrett 2010

<sup>22</sup> Lewis 2011, 118

<sup>23</sup> Triandis 1995, 30

<sup>24</sup> Note: "Using twins is a standard research method (...) to resolve 'nature versus nurture' debates. (...) [E]mergence of people into leadership roles is due approximately two-thirds to life experience and one third to heritability." Lewis 2011, 102 & Avolio/Griffith/Wernsing/Walumbwa 2013, 40

<sup>25</sup> Lewis 2011, 102

concept in depth is because it has reciprocal effects on the workers in an organization, therefore making it a powerful tool in the framework of this paper. Authentic leadership is also important because it is closely related to several other concepts, all in the sub-field of 'positive organizational behavior', or POB. Now that the framework of leadership, its social context, and its limitations have been established, it is safe to move on to define the limits of 'work engagement'.

## 2.3 Definition: Work Engagement

An aspect that leaders should be concerned with in an organization is work engagement. Companies are starting to gain more understanding about the values of engaged employees and are focusing some of their human resource activity on this engagement<sup>26</sup>. There is accumulating evidence that if more energy and time is invested in the workers already present in an organization, companies will get a larger return on their workforce investment. Not only are the benefits financial, the benefits include increased effectiveness and productivity on the part of these workers. These benefits extend to the long-term. Some long-term benefits include employee retention and faithfulness, which lead to larger shareholder returns.

Defining what increases and diminishes engagement in workers is crucial. Often, positive psychology scholars debate focusing more on "abundance" and less on fixing problems, i.e. on "deficits". In other words,

"there is becoming a recognized need to go beyond managing for deficits only, beyond just managing to avoid employee burnout, and move to the opposite, positive end of the spectrum (...) enabling engagement in the workplace"<sup>27</sup>.

It would be inaccurate to mention only one definition of engagement, since the concept of engagement is not only based on different models, but has also evolved over the past decades. The first definition is from the 1990's by Kahn, and describes engagement as how the employees present themselves when absorbed in a task or outside of a work task; Kahn (1990) focuses on the psychological experience of the employees when inside their work role<sup>28</sup>. However, because research in this area has evolved significantly since then, the 90's definition is no longer singularly valid. Kahn's definition focuses on

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<sup>26</sup> Lewis 2011, 41

<sup>27</sup> Sweetman/Luthans 2010, 55

<sup>28</sup> Note: Kahn's perspective on work engagement is to use one's "preferred self" in connecting with the task and others, and being personally present and fully active in performance of the role". Kahn 1990

*role engagement*, and the more recent definitions focus on *work engagement*, which is closer to the focus of this paper, such as the JD-R model.

### 2.3.1 JD-R Model

A model was developed in the first decade of the 2000's, called the job-demands-resources model (the "JD-R" model). The model was founded upon the 70's Karasek model, called the demands-control-model (abbreviated DCM). The DCM is appealing because it is simple: it relies on one type of job demand<sup>29</sup> and one type of job resource. Bakker/Schaufeli (2004) found the weakness of DCM to be its simplicity, but also their greatest source of inspiration. The JD-R model takes the static DCM demand and DCM resource and makes them dynamic. The model becomes heuristic<sup>30</sup>, hence job resources and job demands become living and ever-changing conditions. Because of its heuristic nature, empirically the JD-R model has a strong research base. Thanks to this research-based foundation, the JD-R model's creators worked to prove that, "job resources" have the greatest and most positive impact on work engagement. According to the JD-R model: job demands and resources share an inverse relationship: when job demands are high, then job resources sink because they are in use. Therefore, JD-R proposes that, sooner or later, job demands that are too high lead to burnout, or at the very least reduced work engagement. if the resources are used up too quickly, or not replenished on time, job resources sink<sup>31</sup>.

### 2.3.2 JD-R Model's Factors of Engagement

Sweetman/Luthans (2010) establish a connection between work engagement to psychological capital (PsyCap), making it an important addition to the POB-school of thought. According to the JD-R model, work engagement consists of three key components; three interrelated, human-characteristic concepts: vigor, dedication, and absorption<sup>32</sup>. Chapter 5 in the Bakker/Leiter anthology (2010) goes on to provide thorough definitions for each of these.

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<sup>29</sup> The demand being 'psychological workload' & the resource being 'job control'

<sup>30</sup> Note: Heuristic definition: of, relating to, or based on experimentation, evaluation, or trial-and-error methods. Dictionary.com, <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/heuristic?s=t>, [Accessed Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017]

<sup>31</sup> Schaufeli/Bakker 2004

<sup>32</sup> Schaufeli/Bakker/Salanova 2006

1. **Vigor** is defined as the strength of one's will to devote energy into the task at hand, which goes hand in hand with the mental resilience necessary to push forward in the task, even if there are obstacles in the way.
2. **Dedication** measures the passionate involvement in one's work, while one experiences a strong sense of meaning and pride and challenge, while completing the task at hand.
3. **Absorption** describes a state of being when one is fully engrossed in the task at hand: when the concentration on that task is almost complete.<sup>33</sup>

The four constructs which make up psychological capital can be bound to the three, above-defined work engagement concepts, which will be covered later, in the tool section. This is important and relevant because psychological capital is one of the tools recommended for improving employee health in the tool section of this paper. Sweetman/Luthans (2010) go so far as to provide a graphical aid to connect PsyCap and Work Engagement and how the two interrelate. Since work engagement has been defined as a key source for motivating workers positively, performance can be described as a way of measuring workers' paid or unpaid, workplace activities.

## 2.4 Definition: Performance

According to many case studies done in the past quarter century since the advent of positive psychology, performance can be measured. In the proof section, the paper will demonstrate one of the many ways in which performance can be measured. First, the definition section will provide an overview of the concept of performance. Subsequently, the conservation of resources model (abbreviated COR) will be presented as a framework for a better understanding of the paper. Along with the COR model, another definition will be provided for organizational citizenship behavior (abbreviated OCB). As with work engagement, the definition of performance has gained complexity over the past few decades. Useful dyads exist which can help filter and organize the many-faced definition of performance.

1. First, one should differentiate between 'process' performance and 'outcome' performance; the former concerning itself with the behaviors people use to perform, and the latter with a finished product coming out at the end.
2. Secondly, performance can occur at the individual level, or at the unit level.

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<sup>33</sup> These three definitions originate from the same source: Schaufeli/Bakker/Salanova 2006

3. Thirdly, performance is either 'in-role' or 'out-role'. In-role performance concerns itself directly with the goals of the organization: what the employee does (in exchange for compensation) to directly benefit his organization. Out-role (also called "extra-role") performance is every activity that is *not* directly related to organizational goals, but consists of beneficial types of behavior which influence the employee's productivity. Organizational citizenship behavior (abbreviated OCB) falls under out-role performance.

### 2.4.1 COR Model

In the late eighties, Hobfoll (1989) offered the COR model as a method for dealing with stressors<sup>34</sup>; an alternative to the plethora of 'deficit' approaches. The model was adapted to workplace health and even to trauma coping<sup>35</sup>. It was modified to the organizational setting by including the concept of burnout on a spectrum with well-being and burnout at opposite ends. COR is also currently relevant, because it connects the constructs of work engagement and performance, since both use burnout as a measurement factor of well-being. Burnout is also used as a predictor of performance, since the nineties, when Wright/Bonett (1997a) and Wright/Cropanzano (1998)<sup>36</sup>, established it as a far superior predictor to job satisfaction.

Despite the older age of this model, COR will be described in some detail. COR posits the accumulation of resources as essential to the motivation of employees in an organization and an important antidote to stress: the accumulation of resources is a crucial theme in this paper, which will reappear frequently. Hobfoll (1989) proposed this model as an alternative to many negative approaches to stress, because stress prevents an individual from building resources, or causes that individual to use up stored resources<sup>37</sup>. The COR model assumes two things about these resources when a person is dealing with stress.

1. The first is that employees have to invest resources to deal with stressful work situations and to protect themselves from the negative outcomes<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> Hobfoll, 1989

<sup>35</sup> Footnote: victims of environment disasters, soldiers coming home from war...

<sup>36</sup> Wright/Bonett 1997a and Wright/Cropanzano 1998

<sup>37</sup> Bakker/Xanthopoulou/Schaufeli/Salanova 2010, 120

<sup>38</sup> Bakker/Xanthopoulou/Schaufeli/Salanova 2010, 120

2. The second assumption declares that workers must invest resources in order to protect against their loss in the future, and to subsequently restore these resources<sup>39</sup>.

The COR model explains that an accumulation of resources not only allows for better preparedness in stress situations, but also leads to a cycle that aggregates those resources, which Hobfoll calls “gain spirals”<sup>40</sup>.

However, COR does possess some limitations. According to Demerouti/Cropanzano (2010), COR placed little emphasis on the psychological mechanisms behind burnout and engagement. Because of this particular pitfall, COR is not the only construct mentioned to measure work engagement and performance: the job-demands-resources (JD-R) model makes up for some of those pitfalls. Although COR was an important step in the right direction for positive psychology, it is not a fixed framework for defining performance in this paper. JD-R is a more thorough and developed model, which is why it was defined in detail in the previous definition of ‘work engagement’. In any case, both COR and JD-R, place value on the importance of burnout in their constructs.

## 2.4.2 Burnout as a Measurement

A correlation exists between burnout and performance. Demerouti/Cropanzano (2010) mention a parallel between this correlation, and the one between engagement and performance.

1. Burnout and performance share an inverse relationship. If performance goes up, the chance of burnout sinks.
2. The correlation between engagement and performance goes in the same direction. In other words, if engagement increases, performance increases as well.

As previously mentioned in the definition of the COR model, burnout is not only relevant to work engagement, but imperative to measuring performance. Both performance and work engagement use burnout as a measurement of well-being. Burnout’s definition has

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<sup>39</sup> Bakker/Xanthopoulou/Schaufeli/Salanova 2010, 120

<sup>40</sup> Hobfoll, 1989

also evolved over the decades. In the 1980's, based on the COR model, burnout consisted of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment. The 1990's then eliminated the two latter factors, depersonalization and diminished personal accomplishment<sup>41</sup>, and replaced them with 'disengagement'; making the new constellation, emotional exhaustion + disengagement. Measuring burnout eventually moved into the new millennium to include a further aspect of measuring worker well-being: organizational citizenship behavior.

### 2.4.3 Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Organizational citizenship behavior is a counteracting reagent to exhaustion or disengagement. As mentioned in the differentiation between types of performance, OCB falls under 'extra-role' behavior. Employees exhibiting OCB bring something different to the job; it is less about putting in *more* hours into the job<sup>42</sup>. OCB is categorized under behaviors that do not go directly towards the profits of the organization; the behaviors are 'extra'. Despite this out-role characteristic, these behaviors benefit the workers by creating more personal resources and more resources for the organization, in that the workers' performance is increased.

The COR model evolved over time and eventually posited two types of OCB: (OCB-O (OCB directed towards the organization) & OCB-I (OCB directed toward individuals)<sup>43</sup> to determine performance, along with 'emotional exhaustion'. These components make up the equation "performance = emotional exhaustion + OCB-I + OCB-O". This extra-role behavior, either directed towards people or towards the greater body, adds a level of complexity to the COR model, which is why it was included in the definition of performance.

Performance is important because it has been researched by many experts cited in this paper, such as the 'work engagement' researchers: David Sweetman, Evangelia Demerouti, and Arnold B. Bakker; as well as the 'broaden-&-build' innovator Barbara Fredrickson. For example, one quickly recognizes the similarities between Fredrickson's model and Hobfoll's COR research and their championing of the accumulation of mental

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<sup>41</sup> Note: they turned out to be insignificant predictors. Wright/Bonett 1997a

<sup>42</sup> Demerouti/Cropanzano 2010, 148

<sup>43</sup> Halbesleben/Bowler 2005

resources. Research expertise is often welded together to create more empirical evidence in the field of POP. Performance is also a crucial form of measurement in one of the real-life studies by Heaphy/Losada (2004) in the proof section of this paper. This interrelated research proves that POP is an advantageous and future-oriented tool for the modern workplace. Now that the framework has taken shape, two important sub-fields of positive psychology can be explored in more detail, which will be useful for the later, tool section of the paper.

## 2.5 POS vs POB

Essential to a better understanding of this paper is the differentiation between two schools of thought inside of the positive psychology realm. One is Positive Organizational Scholarship (abbreviated POS) and the other is Positive Organizational Behavior (abbreviated POB). The field of positive psychology in the workplace has developed so far as to branch out into two different directions in their taxonomy<sup>44</sup>. It is imperative to distinguish these two sub-fields to better understand the connection between the tools chosen to support the paper's strategy. Another reason for the distinction is for the bibliographical sources of the paper. Certain experts and their models lie succinctly in the POB field, while other prominent psychologists work within the POS field.

### 2.5.1 POS: Positive Organizational Scholarship

Positive Organizational Scholarship is "an alternative to the problem-solving approach for understanding the behavior of organizations and its members"<sup>45</sup>. This school of thought underlines the importance of recognizing what is good in an organization, channeling it, and making sure it can sustain and nourish the positive workplace over an extended period of time. The primary emphasis of POS has been on a macro scale, specifically the analysis and understanding of what makes up the best-possible organizational states.<sup>46</sup> This understanding has been headed primarily by one expert, who will be cited several times in this paper: Kim Cameron from the University of Michigan. Therefore, POS is located at a macro-level or at the organizational level, whereas the POB school of thought has focused on the micro- or individual level.

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<sup>44</sup> MacKie 2017, 299

<sup>45</sup> Cameron/Lavine 2006

<sup>46</sup> Cameron/Bright/Caza 2004

## 2.5.2 POB: Positive Organizational Behavior

POB focuses on the analysis and practical use of positive human resources, since they can be used and managed to improve performance in organizations today<sup>47</sup>. Luthans (2002b), one of the innovators in the POB field, acknowledged that, despite the effective measures in POB, experts had - up until recently - failed to place these tools in the setting of the workplace. This statement was discovered in the Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology, published in 2011. Since then, this micro-specialized field has expanded. This is advantageous, since the focus of this paper is in the workplace. Emphasized in a couple of different sources is the fact that POB is *research-based* and must have a valid form of measurement.<sup>4849</sup> Instead of listing each of the constructs lying in the two sub-fields, the table at the end of this definition section serves to visually distinguish between the two fields.

## 2.5.3 State versus Trait

While in this 'distinguishing vein' of thought, it is important to differentiate between psychological states and psychological traits. As mentioned previously, POS tends to focus on more "trait-like" qualities. A trait is "permanent and stable" and makes up an individual's personality<sup>50</sup>. A trait cannot be changed, which is the essential difference to a 'state'. Psychological traits are made up of a combination of personal experience and genetics, and tend to be unchangeable by the time a person reaches adulthood<sup>51</sup>. Thinking of workers as having only traits orchestrates the entire sub-field of POS, because the experts research and *work around* the unchangeable personalities. For example, a certain worker will be chosen for a particular job, because he already possesses the traits required to endure and thrive in that job. The thought in POS is that if one works against their fixed traits, they are working against their natural inclinations. This 'going against nature' is a harbinger for unsatisfactory work environments. Psychological states are defined as moods or feelings and can be changed. They come and go, and in the vein of POB, they can be further developed or induced. By accepting this transient nature of

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<sup>47</sup> Luthans 2002b, 59

<sup>48</sup> Note: "The POB approach has supported the development of research on positive psychological state, such as 'PsyCap' where positive states like confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience are seen as essential prerequisites to developing a positive leadership style". Avolio/Luthans 2006

<sup>49</sup> Note: "POB is construed as a research-based, measurable, and state-like approach". Luthans/Youssef 2007

<sup>50</sup> Lewis 2011, 140

<sup>51</sup> Lewis 2011, 141

'states', workers can be influenced for a period of time to increase their abilities<sup>52</sup>. Whereas constructs that are trait-based, such as intelligence, are considered stable and very difficult to change, state-based constructs, such as trust, are more malleable and can be developed<sup>53</sup>. It can be thought of as injecting the worker with a metaphorical drug, which wears off after a period of time, after the situation no longer requires that particular induced 'state'. Now that each important concept has been defined and fitted into the positive psychology framework, it is safe to move on to the actual tools an organizational leader can use in his or her organization.

POS	POB
Positive Organizational Scholarship	Positive Organizational Behavior
Kim Cameron cites that POS: "emphasizes understanding the positive enablers of extraordinary successes in organizations and how these dynamics can be sustained". Wooten/Cameron 2013, 53	"Specifically, we define POB 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
Leadership strategies that enable positive deviance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• positive communication</li> <li>• positive meaning</li> <li>• positive climate</li> <li>• positive relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authentic Leadership</li> <li>• ALD</li> <li>• Authentic Followership</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive deviance</li> <li>• Positively deviant leaders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychological Capital (PsyCap)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• POS focuses on positive institutions. MacKie 2017, 299</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broaden -&amp;-Build Model</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affirmative Bias</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appreciative Inquiry</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Virtuous Acts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive Leadership Development</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assumes trait-like qualities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses state-like qualities</li> </ul>

Table 1: POS v. POB Comparison

<sup>52</sup> Lewis 2011, 140-141

<sup>53</sup> Avolio/Griffith/Wernsing/Walumbwa 2013, 43

### **3 Tools for Leaders' Improvement of Workers' Mental Well-Being**

After having provided the positive, organizational, leader-perspective framework, the positive organizational tools can now be approached in further detail. It will begin with a large-scale tool suggestion: appreciative inquiry, then move onto three tools operating mostly within the POB field: broaden-&-build, psychological capital, and authentic leadership. Afterwards, the concept of meaningful work will be covered, as well as the positive effects of POB constructs on employees through engaged followership. The POS field will be covered using positively deviant leadership. After these constructs, which have a strong theoretical base, are proposed, several quickly-implementable methods are offered, mostly in the format of questionnaires. The purpose of these questionnaires is informational.

As an introductory remark, one of the advantages of these tools is that they are often interrelated to other tools. These frequent juxtapositions mean that organizational leaders are not limited to using a single tool: they can choose to incorporate a range of tools to influence their workers. These interrelations will be mentioned and alluded to more than once in each section of this chapter.

#### **3.1 Tool: Appreciative Inquiry**

The first tool relevant to the topic of positive psychology in a leadership position is Appreciative Inquiry (can be abbreviated with "AI"). One danger of this tool, solely in relation to this paper, is that it is popular for instituting organizational change, which as mentioned in the "Leadership" definition, is not a topic in this paper. This section will describe the guiding principles of Appreciative Inquiry, followed by the standard process it uses in real-life situations. The 'father' of Appreciative Inquiry is David L. Cooperrider. His methodology helps organizations identify what causes success in that particular organization. AI is a tool that has been used by companies to reevaluate their priorities.

Because AI can also function as a "large-scale meeting process", it enables companies to bring together most of their workforce, if so needed. During these large-scale meetings, the focus is always redirected towards the priorities of the organization. A.I. desires to create positive emotion. Positive emotion lets people take a step back and see the big picture: therein allowing them to consider all aspects of a situation and choose appropriate behaviors. Because of this positive effect: an individual's thought process is more

thorough and dynamic<sup>54</sup>. As the positive core of an individual – or of an organization – becomes more visible, the positive emotion within the organization becomes more powerful, rendering the negative elements or conflicts more and more insignificant<sup>55</sup>.

AI steers the organizations and its members to see and believe in these good elements. The AI mediators do not tell the members 'how' to be positive: the members will recognize the positive for themselves.

### 3.1.1 A.I. Guiding Principles

1. **The anticipatory principle** is about the power of visualization. The power of imagination allows a person, or a group of people to visualize a positive picture in their heads. A picture full of hope, dreams, aspirations, and good energy is what will guide and inspire the workers in an organization to look to the future with positivity and a proactive attitude.
2. The eponymous **positive principle** describes the power of positive emotion in a group. Increasing amounts of research have been able to prove that along with positive emotion, comes an expansion of the emotional spectrum. This is true for groups as well as for individuals.
3. **The constructionist principle** is based on the creation of meaning. Not up to a single person, a team effort is required to create shared meaning for the organization. This collective effort ensures that all workers are 'on the same page' as to what the organization is all about.
4. **The simultaneity principle** describes the phenomenon that things *can* happen at the same time. If a pattern is changed, more than one person is affected. This principle acknowledges the fact that AI sees organizations as 'living things' and not as a machine or as a computer. Organizations are organisms that can be influenced, but not completely controlled in the way that a computer can. This bridges the gap to the poetic principle that respects the organization as a living thing, where money and profit is not the central focus and influencer, but communication is.

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<sup>54</sup> Lewis 2011, 88-89

<sup>55</sup> Lewis 2011, 34

Now that the ground rules have been established, the AI process can be presented.

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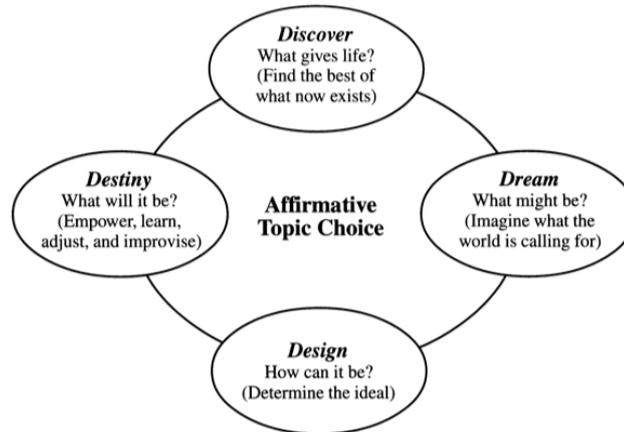


Figure 2. The 4-D Model of Appreciative Inquiry

Figure 1: The 4-D Model of Appreciative Inquiry<sup>56</sup>

### 3.1.2 A.I. 4-Day Process

According to an article describing how the AI Summit works in detail, each phase takes one day. They are called the '4 D's'. The four-day process guides the participants through the AI 4-D process, which is made up of discovery, dream, design, and destiny<sup>57</sup>.

1. **Day 1 – Discovery:** the first day focuses on discovering the many aspects of the organization's positive core<sup>58</sup>. The very first step is to set the goals of the summit/or four-day meeting. Interviews are done: 'appreciative interviews' to talk about the constructive topics of the four-day meeting. The mediators ask the workers to visualize themselves inside of their organization *at their best*. The workers are asked to identify *good* things or features, which have held up the organization up until now: to identify the positive from the very beginning.
2. **Day 2 – Dream:** the members of the organization are asked to envision the organization at *its best*. What the organization can do not only to improve itself, but to have a positive impact on the world around it. The members are asked to

<sup>56</sup> Bright/Cooperrider/Galloway 2006, 291

<sup>57</sup> Cooperrider/Whitney 1998, 19

<sup>58</sup> Cooperrider/Whitney 1998, 19

give specific examples of these improvements, of these dreams. Afterwards, the members are asked to act out the dream visions to the large group.

3. **Day 3 – Design:** The workers are asked to concretely draw up plans to incorporate the positive philosophies and dreams into *every single* process of the organization. Small groups draft challenging propositions and then incorporate them into the processes of the organization<sup>59</sup>.
4. **Day 4 – Delivery:** Following the process of visualizing and drawing and designing, it is possible to move to action. Task groups can be formed to plan the next concrete steps within the organization. And then the meeting can be closed.

The purpose of such an AI summit, according to its creator, is to “ensure resonance and feedback among the organization’s participants<sup>60</sup>. Leaders of an organization should practice resonance daily by being a positive and empowering influence on their workers. In a more recent AI-case study of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (E.P.A.), Bright/Cooperrider/Galloway (2006) acknowledge that leaders should possess the capacity to detect their workers’ strengths<sup>61</sup>, give them resonance and feedback, and build in those worker-strengths into the organizational processes. AI allows workers to accumulate valuable and positive resources by building more connections through AI-summits, for example, benefitting them in the long-term. Simultaneously, AI allows organizational leaders to give and receive resonance and see their employees’ strengths on an entirely new level, so that they can encourage the accumulation of resources. The concept of building resources is an important thread for the entire paper and will reappear in more detail, in the next tool.

### 3.2 Tool: Broaden-&-Build

After having defined the appreciative inquiry methodology as a tool for the organizational leader, it is appropriate to mention the tools under the Positive Organizational Behavior umbrella, beginning with the broaden-&-build method.

Barbara L. Fredrickson is the attributed creator of the broaden-&-build theory. It first appeared in the late 90’s. Fredrickson/Sekerka (2013) proposes that “negative emotions narrow one’s thought-action repertoire”: this narrowing allows an individual to perform

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<sup>59</sup> Cooperrider/Whitney 1998, 20

<sup>60</sup> Cooperrider/Whitney 1998, 20

<sup>61</sup> Bright/Cooperrider/Galloway 2006, 303

only several specific actions in a 'dangerous', survival-oriented situation<sup>62</sup>. Negative emotions basically do the opposite for a human being of what positive emotions do: to broaden the repertoire. Fredrickson helped connect positive emotions with increased achievement in a workplace environment<sup>63</sup>.

Fredrickson/Sekerka (2013) proposes that positive emotion *broadens* a person's emotional spectrum. Secondly, over time, the continued benefits of positive emotion cause that person to *build* social, intellectual, and physical resources, hence the name "broaden and build"<sup>64</sup>.

### 3.2.1 "Broaden" explained

Positive emotions allow people to 'broaden' their emotional repertoire. One can think of it as a toolbox to carry around: a toolbox for human growth. Positive emotions allow an individual to add more tools to the box, which become useful for future situations. There exists a parallel between types of emotions and their range of focus: positive emotions function at the global level, giving a person a view of the 'big picture'. Whereas negative emotions function at a narrower level in that a person will focus more on details. Waugh/Fredrickson backs this statement with a 2006 study of participants' eye movements, and how the positively-stimulated persons had a broader visual search pattern than the others<sup>65</sup>. Another way of characterizing the 'broaden' aspect, is by observing how an individual distinguishes between self and other. Within a negative, stressful, or dangerous situation, the concept of self becomes tantamount, and takes no other beings into account, making the concept of 'self' a very rigid one. On the other hand, people experiencing more positive emotions experience more overlap between their sense of self and the sense of other<sup>66</sup>. In other words, they are able to 'expand' their sense of self.

### 3.2.2 "Build" explained

Thanks to positive emotions, the range of focus of a person (in stress situations or other) is 'broadened'. But even though the experience of a positive emotion is transient, the fact

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<sup>62</sup> Sekerka/Fredrickson 2013, 83

<sup>63</sup> Staw/Sutton/Pelled 1994

<sup>64</sup> Sekerka/Fredrickson 2013, 83

<sup>65</sup> Cohn/Fredrickson 2011, 15

<sup>66</sup> Waugh/Fredrickson 2006

that they existed in the first place encourages the building of resources over time<sup>67</sup>. For an organization or individual to be productive, some degree of negativity must be present to function in the organizational reality. The existence of this negativity is the incentive for workers to build resources over extended periods of time to be able to cope with stress in their organizations.

A study was done which monitored college students after the 9/11 tragedy<sup>68</sup>. None of the participants were completely devoid of negative emotion. Rather some participants seemed to have pockets of positive emotion that would occasionally appear, despite the fear and grief experienced during the traumatic event. Those who occasionally tended towards the positive were labeled as resilient, i.e. their 'toolboxes' seemed to be better equipped than others.

A study mentioned in Cohn/Fredrickson (2011) was done on working adults to allow them to experience their daily positive emotions, but to an enhanced degree. The emotions of love and compassion were generated via a short meditation process. The study went over a period of two months with regular meditation practice. The results demonstrated that, thanks to the deliberately channeled emotions in the meditation sessions, the adults experienced regular positive emotion. Through this 'regular dose', the participants began to assess their own lives as more fulfilling and more satisfying. It can be deduced that the meditation increased the number of tools in the 'toolbox' of these participants, allowing them to build resilience for their lives in the long-term<sup>69</sup>.

### **3.2.3 Broaden-&-Build and Work Engagement**

The broaden-&-build theory can also be examined in relation to work engagement. In the Bakker "Work Engagement" book, Demerouti/Cropanzano (2010) add another degree of credibility to the broaden-&-build model. Thanks to many different studies, Cohn/Fredrickson's (2011) model demonstrates that positive emotions such as joy, interest, and contentment do more than just create a happy worker. These emotions encourage employee development: for example, a person experiencing joy will experience the urge to play and be creative. When experiencing interest, the brain consecutively creates the desire to explore. Curious and creative workers are a boon to managers in this new millennium. This type of worker is eager to learn new skills and will develop

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<sup>67</sup> Cohn/Fredrickson 2011, 17

<sup>68</sup> Fredrickson/Tugade/Waugh/Larkin 2003

<sup>69</sup> Cohn/Fredrickson 2011, 17-18

closer interpersonal relationships. This employee will even be able to reduce the amount of conflict situations in their workplace. Demerouti/Cropanzano (2010) continue by stating that there are cumulative benefits of positive emotions<sup>70</sup>, just as Bakker states how crucial Fredrickson's research is to work engagement in the introduction to his book. Broaden-&-build goes beyond positive emotions just being a creator of pleasant feelings: these emotions are capable of changing the cognitive processes in the brain to stimulate a person's growth. The cognitive processes do this by opening doors to new possibilities in the brain: new ways of going about situations. Stressed persons tend to overlook new pathways when under pressure, hence their cognitive processes are narrowed<sup>71</sup>.

### 3.2.4 Broaden-&-Build and Leadership

Leaders should be encouraged to implement techniques to allow their workers to create more cognitive processes. If leaders can find a way to implement the broaden-and-build theory, their workers will build resources, thereby expanding their toolboxes, and becoming less susceptible to stressors<sup>72</sup>. By providing situations or environments in which workers can experience positive emotions, the leaders are permitting their workers to build resources. Regularly-experienced positive emotions not only counteract negativity, but also accumulate personal resources, encouraging and developing resiliency in times of difficulty<sup>73</sup>.

Not only is the broaden-&-build theory applicable to the organizational setting, it also seems to address a problem within the POB sub-field: that POB is more focused on the 'micro' aspect of the work environment. According to Fredrickson/Tugade/Waugh/Larkin (2003), the fact that positive emotions and its ramifications manifest in individual persons does not exempt it from spreading to and 'contaminating' others. Because of this so-called 'contagion effect', better performance can then manifest in organizational outcomes too<sup>74</sup>. The contagion effect is an example of one of the interrelating concepts in these POP tools. Broaden-&-build is not the only tool that can be contagious: psychological capital also has broad, promising ramifications.

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<sup>70</sup> Demerouti/Cropanzano 2010, 154-156

<sup>71</sup> Bakker/Leiter 2010, 4

<sup>72</sup> Hobfoll 2002

<sup>73</sup> Fredrickson/Tugade/Waugh/Larkin 2003

<sup>74</sup> Sekerka/Fredrickson 2013, 84

### 3.3 Tool: Psychological Capital

Psychological Capital (abbreviated PsyCap) is a tool useful to workers and to their organization alike. PsyCap is a person's state of development which is defined by possessing the confidence to take on a challenge, using an optimistic approach to succeed in the present and in the future, while pushing through obstacles, and bouncing back from negative events<sup>75</sup>.

This tool lies in the POB sub-field. Certain theories and empirically-tested hypotheses, whether in POB or POS schools of thought, are either 'trait-like' or 'state-like'<sup>76</sup>. PsyCap defines and describes 'state-like' capacities, which are open to change, unlike traits. A second notable feature of this construct is that it is a 'second-order construct', which means that the PsyCap concept draws from *within* and *across* each of its four pillars<sup>77</sup>, making the construct doubly legitimate<sup>78</sup>.

Despite the advantage of flexibility surrounding PsyCap, there are one or two challenges worth mentioning. The first challenge is also in regard to the 'state-like' quality of the PsyCap capacities. While 'state-like' allows for flexibility and openness, it also makes the capacities harder to pin down: a certain degree of stability is missing. Innovators such as Fred Luthans advocate that PsyCap is better applied to long-term work environment situations. However, the component of time is unclear in Luthans' definition of PsyCap, which uses 'state-like' qualities. Typically, 'trait-like' constructs are the constructs that are described as 'long-term' because traits are not changeable. 'State-like' qualities are malleable and can change over time. A second challenge to acknowledge has already been mentioned in the 'POB vs. POS' section: PsyCap research began with a primary emphasis on the individual level, while POS tended towards organizational level.

PsyCap has four parts: self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resiliency, which will be discussed in detail later in this section. Many different characteristics were tested, but the four capacities are the ones that fit best empirically and theoretically<sup>79</sup>.

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<sup>75</sup> Luthans/Youssef/Avolio 2007b, 3

<sup>76</sup> See Chapter comparing POB to POS - in Section 2.5 and Section 2.5.3

<sup>77</sup> The pillars being self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resiliency. Luthans/Youssef/Avolio 2007b, 3

<sup>78</sup> Luthans/Youssef/Avolio 2007b

<sup>79</sup> Sweetman/Luthans 2010, 56

As mentioned in the 'Engagement' definition, some positive psychology experts believe that engagement and PsyCap share a direct relationship<sup>80</sup>. Sweetman/Luthans (2010) claim that developing PsyCap is the same as developing work engagement – and vice versa. The authors see the four PsyCap capacities as building upon each other to create something called 'upward spirals': the opposite of a negative and damaging 'downward spiral'. These upward spirals are made up of capacities built up over a period of time, and result in employee engagement. This harkens back to Fredrickson's broaden-&-build theory, in which positive emotions can create resources<sup>81</sup> that become better and better equipped over a period of time<sup>82</sup>.

Sweetman/Luthans' chapter (2010) on PsyCap and work engagement provides insight of PsyCap, mostly on an individual level. However, the authors do not let readers forget that there are also *interpersonal* consequences of this construct: one being the contagion effect, as mentioned in the previous broaden-&-build tool. Sweetman/Luthans (2010) describe a study in the "practical suggestions" appendix of their article, about the effects of PsyCap in a large organization. Thanks to the positive resources of an engaged worker, the motivation and positive resources resulted in heightened work engagement in the entire company<sup>83</sup>. The repeated mention of the contagion effect demonstrates the multi-lateral connections of certain constructs throughout the paper.

### 3.3.1 The Four Parts of Psychological Capital

The four pillars of PsyCap will be defined. Not only this, but they will also be explained in relation to one or more of work engagement's pillars: vigor, dedication, and/or absorption. Following the four constructs' definitions is a graphical representation useful for visualizing the connection between work engagement and PsyCap.

1. **Self-efficacy:** can be defined as the amount of confidence necessary to mobilize the cognitive resources, to 'think up' courses of action, to complete a certain task<sup>84</sup>. Self-efficacious workers look forward and accept new challenges in order to gain experience<sup>85</sup>. Efficacy is said to come from one of four different sources:

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<sup>80</sup> See graph at the end of this section 3.3

<sup>81</sup> Note: metaphor for accumulation of resources being the 'toolbox'

<sup>82</sup> Note: The 'upward spirals' also remind readers of what Hobfoll named 'gain spirals'.

<sup>83</sup> Bakker/Van Emmerik/Euwema 2006b

<sup>84</sup> Sweetman/Luthans 2010, 58-59

<sup>85</sup> Lewis 2011, 143

the first being task-mastery, the second vicarious learning, the third social persuasion, the fourth emotional or physical arousal. Vicarious learning refers to the efficacious employee modeling his or her work patterns on another worker's behaviors, either because that worker is similar or relevant to them, personally. If a worker decides to emulate a colleague using vicarious learning, this indicates high levels of the engagement factor, 'dedication'<sup>86</sup>. Emotional or physical arousal heightens efficacy, thereby leading to increased vigor<sup>87</sup>. An employee with high levels of efficacy will also exhibit high levels of tenacity and perseverance, thereby counteracting the negative effects of burnout. This tenacity refers to a person becoming absorbed in their work, connecting the 'absorption' engagement factor to the PsyCap pillar of self-efficacy<sup>88</sup>.

2. **Optimism:** functions within an 'expectancy' framework. Just as the generic literature defines it: the optimist will expect positive outcomes to a certain situation, whereas the pessimist will expect bad things to happen. What is important in the context of positive psychology is that optimism is a highly individual characteristic. No two people will exhibit the same levels of optimism, thereby making this capacity difficult to apply to outcomes at an organizational level. Typical of an optimist worker is to view adversity as a challenge. That same worker will also be more likely to volunteer to complete a task, simply because his or her expectation of the outcome is positive. This volunteering attitude is indicative of 'absorption' in the workplace. Optimism is seen as having the ability to explain why a situation did not turn out the way it should have. This optimistic explanatory style allows the worker to gain a certain degree of control over an adverse situation. Said worker thereby exhibits a higher level of engagement, specifically of dedication to the (stressful) task at hand.<sup>89</sup>
3. **Hope:** is the pillar that concerns willpower and way finding<sup>90</sup>. Hope is goal-directed and goal-seeking, meaning if an employee wants to achieve a goal, they will plan and design more than one pathway of achieving that goal. The 'willpower' motivates the search for new paths, and subsequently the discovery of new paths heightens the motivation to go on<sup>91</sup>. On the flipside, lack of hope denotes the presence of *burnout* (which is, in certain models, seen as the antipode of engagement). When one is without hope, one lacks the willpower to take on

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<sup>86</sup> Sweetman/Luthans 2010, 59

<sup>87</sup> Bandura 1997

<sup>88</sup> Sweetman/Luthans 2010, 58-59

<sup>89</sup> Sweetman/Luthans 2010, 59-60

<sup>90</sup> Lewis 2011, 150

<sup>91</sup> Lewis 2011, 150

new challenges. Hope is thought to be a psychological predecessor to vigor<sup>92</sup>. Hope also designates increased motivation and persistence. Sweetman/Luthans (2010) claim that increased motivation and persistence are associated with work engagement's experts' construct of dedication. Therefore, hope directly influences high levels of dedication<sup>93</sup>.

4. **Resiliency:** central to this capacity is the ability to *positively* adapt. It is the ability to *rebound* from a negative situation. Resiliency is resounding evidence that positive emotions cannot exist without the presence of some degree of negativity. In situations of uncertainty, adversity, conflict, failure, etc. if the employee bounces back quickly, this worker possesses a buffer and is exhibiting resiliency. In line with the 'toolbox' metaphor, Sweetman/Luthans (2010) present empirical evidence that this buffer does have to be reloaded once in a while, so that it can remain effective. Not only is the restorative power of resiliency recognized, there is confirmation that resiliency can undo the effects of past stress. This undoing of negative effects happens when a worker broadens and builds their repertoire<sup>94</sup>. Thanks to resiliency's power of eradication of negative, this last pillar relates directly to all three components of engagement: vigor, dedication, and absorption<sup>95</sup>. While working under the POB umbrella, the paper will continue with the definition of the next tool: authentic leadership, which draws, in part, on PsyCap and other POB constructs.

POB's PsyCap has most often focused on individual, mental well-being, but does have the potential to be expanded to the organizational level, thanks to the support of an authentic leader. Authentic leaders will recognize the importance of each and everyone their workers' need to possess and adequately-equipped, PsyCap-filled, emotional-resource toolbox.

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<sup>92</sup> Sweetman/Luthans 2010, 60

<sup>93</sup> Sweetman/Luthans 2010, 60-61

<sup>94</sup> Sweetman/Luthans 2010, 62

<sup>95</sup> Sweetman/Luthans 2010, 61-62

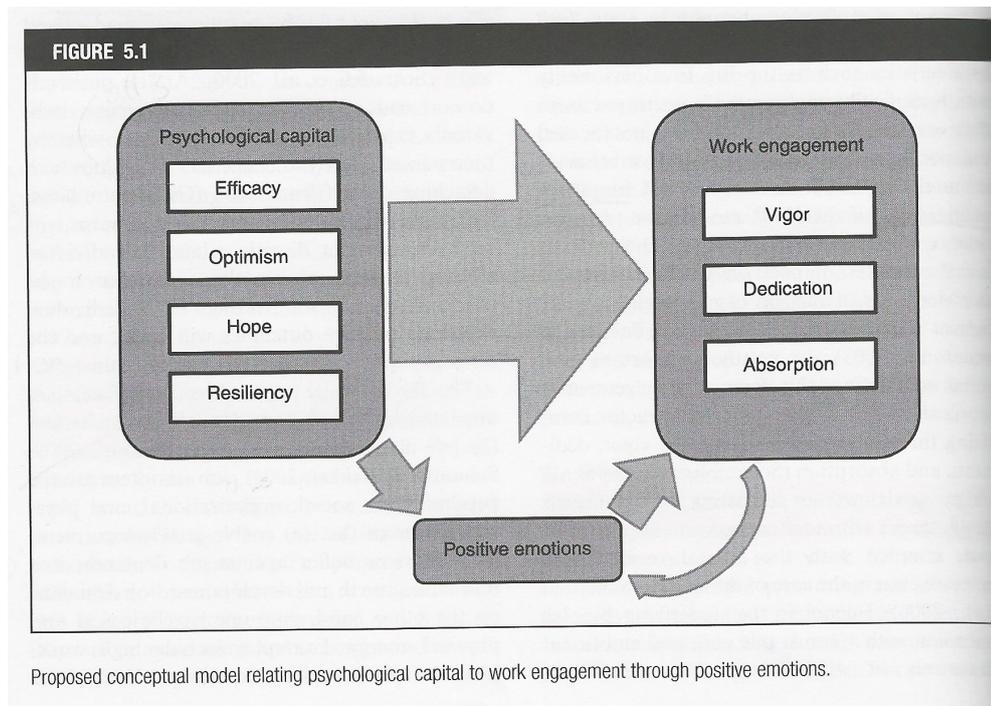


Figure 2: Conceptual Model Relating PsyCap to Work Engagement Through Positive Emotions<sup>96</sup>

### 3.4 Tool: Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership can be thought of as a set of guidelines, closely tied to other key POB concepts, such as PsyCap and broaden-and-build. Leaders, in this case organizational leaders, can use the guidelines to see where they are lagging behind and where they are successful in the qualifications. These guidelines also serve to measure whether a leader is being true to themselves or not. Firstly, a definition is helpful to understand this tool. Authentic leaders are deeply aware of their behavior and the perception others have of them. They are aware of their own moral values and strengths, but also of the morals and strengths of others<sup>97</sup>. The four core components of authentic leadership will also be defined.

#### 3.4.1 The Four Components of Authentic Leadership

1. **Relational transparency:** if a leader practices self-awareness, they can practice relational transparency. If a person is self-aware, they have taken the time

<sup>96</sup> Sweetman/Luthans 2010, 58

<sup>97</sup> Avolio/Gardner/Walumbwa/Luthans/May 2004

to understand themselves. While remaining careful not to invest too much time in this activity, authentic leaders will invest energy in learning their own biases and strengths. Through this deeper self-knowledge, these leaders can view and assess situations more clearly<sup>98</sup>. A leader should be transparent in his or her relationships. The relationships are not one-sided, as an authoritarian leader-employee relation might be. Relational transparency is about self-disclosure and self-management. The leader gains trust with workers by revealing personal details about themselves, and by expressing truthful thoughts and feelings. Simultaneously, that same leader is not encouraging inappropriate displays of emotion<sup>99</sup>. By giving a small insight into themselves, the leader gains trust and forms a more meaningful relationship with his or her employees.

2. **Internal morality** refers to the fact that an authentic leader possesses a moral compass. This strong sense of morality becomes especially important in times of crisis in an organization. Lewis cites a case study in her 2011 monography about airline companies and their reactions in the market after 9/11. Several airlines – anticipating the alarming drop in stock prices and massive losses – started making large personnel cuts, while other airlines sat tight. The internal morality of those leaders who ‘sat tight’ did not allow them to leave their employees hanging; while the leaders with a less accurate moral compass used *force majeure* and let workers go without severance pay. Those who did not react fearfully and rashly in the face of the market after 9/11 gained the trust and faith of their employees. The employers who did everything in their power to retain their workers despite the large profit loss, were also the ones who recovered and returned the most rapidly to profitability<sup>100</sup>. Hence the advantage of possessing a characteristic such as internal morality.
3. **Adaptive self-reflection** refers to a process a leader uses to look inward and critically examine their own behaviors, to examine their own beliefs. In doing so, the leader can change and ‘adapt’ to new situations. A characteristic useful to this core component is curiosity. Curiosity also implies a willingness to learn and be flexible, which implies having openness to new situations.<sup>101</sup>
4. **Balanced processing** is a leader’s ability to process information with a reduced amount of perspective distortions and exaggerations<sup>102</sup>. This is important for a leader’s decision-making processes. Despite the human imperfection of always

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<sup>98</sup> Avolio/Griffith/Wernsing/Walumbwa 2013, 41

<sup>99</sup> Lewis 2011, 103

<sup>100</sup> Lewis 2011, 106

<sup>101</sup> Avolio/Griffith/Wernsing/Walumbwa 2013, 41 & Lewis 2011, 110

<sup>102</sup> Lewis 2011, 115

possessing some kind of bias, the authentic leader will do everything in his or her power to make a decision by carefully weighing every side of an argument. Complete objectivity is not possible for humans, but the authentic leader will be aware of the distortions he or she may have when making a decision.<sup>103</sup>

### 3.4.2 Authentic Leadership and PsyCap

A connection is present between PsyCap and authentic leadership. Authentic leaders wish to encourage the presence of hope, optimism, and trust in their workers<sup>104</sup>. PsyCap is the part of authentic leadership that is concerned with the accumulation of positive resources.

Higher levels of positivity have been recognized to benefit authentic leadership as a whole. These leaders recognize the necessity of positivity in the workplace. They also recognize that the need for constructs such as optimism or hope can increase performance. PsyCap is a direct influence on authentic leadership development (ALD) which will be defined subsequently. PsyCap acts as a source *and* a product of ALD, because a leader creates opportunities for developing PsyCap in the employees, and in turn, is developing their own leader 'toolbox'<sup>105</sup>. Now that a connection has been established between these two POB tools, another decisive component of authentic leadership – developmental readiness – can be defined.

### 3.4.3 Developmental Readiness

Developmental readiness is another core component of authentic leadership. This core component assumes that readiness is state-like, and not trait-like, meaning it is a malleable quality which can be influenced<sup>106</sup>. Developmental readiness refers to a leader's ability to sense which developmental opportunities are available in their current environment<sup>107</sup>. Leaders exhibiting high levels of developmental readiness acknowledge and seek out something called 'trigger events', which, if used correctly, can be turned into positive learning experiences for leaders and their workers alike<sup>108</sup>. Particularly, if a

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<sup>103</sup> Lewis 2011, 115

<sup>104</sup> Hernandez/Eberly/Avolio/Johnson 2011

<sup>105</sup> Luthans/Avolio 2003

<sup>106</sup> MacKie 2017, 301

<sup>107</sup> Avolio/Griffith/Wernsing/Walumbwa 2013, 42

<sup>108</sup> Avolio/Griffith/Wernsing/Walumbwa 2013, 42

leader tries to evolve, if he or she is willing to try new ways of looking at situations, and if he or she sees particular events as constructive, new energy flows into the organization.

Without this component, it is difficult for an organization and its members to evolve. This capacity is not just for a leader to tell the workers to evolve, the evolution must come from every party involved. Individuals who are unwilling to develop are less flexible, and therefore more fearful and discounting of any kind of change<sup>109</sup>. If a worker is willing to evolve and grow, and fill their 'toolbox', their mindset broadens through these learning processes. In understanding developmental readiness, authentic leadership development can now be clarified.

### 3.4.4 Authentic Leadership Development

Authentic Leadership Development (abbreviated ALD) is another idea in the field of 'psychological resources' research. ALD is the extension of authentic leadership and developmental readiness, and even that of PsyCap: it puts all of these things together to foster continuous self-development and positive behaviors. Through this nurtured self-development and development of followers, increased performance can be sustained over an extended period of time<sup>110</sup>.

There is a danger in ignoring the constructs and pillars of authentic leadership. Avolio/Griffith/Wernsing/Walumbwa (2013) claim that when these constructs are ignored, workplace morale decreases. Not only is morale low, but the capacity for development – for the leader as well as for the employees – is diminished, creating a stagnant work environment<sup>111</sup>. Therefore, it would behoove organizational leaders to consider incorporating authentic leadership measures into their workplace.

## 3.5 Tool: Meaningful Work

After having covered authentic leaders and their possible resources, the meaning of work as a tool can be examined as another valuable resource for an organizational leader. Michael F. Steger and Bryan J. Dik are pioneers of the meaningfulness of work. Their

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<sup>109</sup> Avolio/Griffith/Wernsing/Walumbwa 2013, 42

<sup>110</sup> Avolio/Luthans 2006, 2

<sup>111</sup> Avolio/Griffith/Wernsing/Walumbwa 2013, 43

research covers what motivates a person to work, a question that goes back to the beginning of human cultures. The concept of work has evolved dramatically over the course of time. Work used to define manual tasks, which provided concrete benefits for a community, thereby ensuring the survival of the community to which one belonged. Now that work in the Western, highly-industrialized world has evolved to provide the population with abstract products and services, so too has the meaning of work. Steger/Dik (2013) felt the need to define meaning at work<sup>112</sup>.

Meaning is comprised of two things: comprehension and purpose. Comprehension is twofold. One must understand the difference between meaningfulness 'at' work and meaningfulness in work. Meaningfulness 'at' work means that the worker in question understands his or her fit within the organization, and has more to do with the relationships one forms in the workplace. Meaningfulness 'in' work refers to the sense of meaning people get from doing their specific tasks. Meaning in work also requires self-understanding and has to do with the identity of the worker. Now that comprehension has been defined, purpose can be explained.

Purpose has to do with an individual's overarching goals. Purpose is the bridge between where one is in the *present* and where one aspires to be in the *future*. Purpose defines people's recognition, intent of pursuit, and pursuit of their higher, long-term life goals<sup>113</sup>. Through increased purpose, an employee can begin to forge connections with more people within their organization. An increased number of human connections refers back to the Aron/Aron/Tudor/Nelson (1991) paper on the inclusion of others in one's sense of self<sup>114</sup>: the more mature a person is, the stronger their ability is to forge connections with other individuals. By including other beings in their sense of self, people create a shared experience and identity with these 'others'<sup>115</sup>. Workers can then create broader social contexts and a broader sense of purpose for themselves<sup>116</sup>.

Steger/Dik (2013) take purpose and comprehension one step further. When workers deepen their appreciation for their work, they develop a purpose. Through this developed purpose they begin to feel something called transcendence. Subsequently, this transcendence, crafted from the comprehension-purpose potion, strengthens the worker's

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<sup>112</sup> Steger/Dik 2013, 131

<sup>113</sup> Damon/Menon/Bronk 2003 & Reker/Wong 1998

<sup>114</sup> Aron/Aron/Tudor/Nelson 1991

<sup>115</sup> Aron/Aron/Tudor/Nelson 1991

<sup>116</sup> Note: i.e. a bigger and better-equipped toolbox

identification with his or her organization and upgrades his or her purpose to 'organizational purpose'. Thanks to transcendence and broadened social contexts (shared identity), the chances that an employee of an organization will develop a desire to have his or her work serve the greater good increase.

Steger publishes a later piece of work in 2017 backing up the Steger/Dik (2013) research from the Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology and Work. He confirms that people who experience meaningful work are invaluable resources to an organization. They have better day-to-day behavior than other workers. These invaluable workers exhibit less hostility toward peers, have better team working skills and are evaluated with higher marks in a team constellation by their superiors<sup>117</sup>. Michael Steger supports the claims by citing numerous studies that demonstrate that meaningful work indeed does correlate with several positive work-related features. Such factors include higher life satisfaction and a better image of oneself. Steger (2017) cites Tummers/Knies' (2013) study in the *Public Administrative Review* demonstrating that meaningful work even improves the quality of a worker's home life<sup>118</sup>.

It is understandable, therefore, why creating meaning in the workplace could be useful for organizational leaders. Leaders have a strong potential asset if they decide to strengthen the 'meaning' for their workers through a well-comprehended mission and clear vision. The leader benefits from convincing other organizational members to commit to the mission, because it can result in higher productivity, increased OCB, and increased performance, among other things<sup>119</sup>. Meaning and purpose at work as defined by Steger/Dik (2013) is a valuable tool for an organizational leader to consider to mentally strengthen the will of his or her workers.

### 3.6 Tool: Positively Deviant Leadership

Many constructs have been put forth, all to help improve a worker's mental state with the help of a leader. These supportive constructs have mostly operated in the POB school of thought. To strengthen the relevance of this paper, the POS school of thought will be covered. Specifically, to balance out the authentic leadership construct of POB, positively deviant leadership (abbreviated PDL) under POS will now be presented. POS wishes to counteract the notion that the leader of an organization is the 'hero' of the organization.

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<sup>117</sup> Steger 2017, 69

<sup>118</sup> Tummers/Knies 2013

<sup>119</sup> Steger/Dik 2013, 137

This is a dangerous notion, because a company CEO can be the hero just as much as they can be the initiator of all failures. This 'hero or scapegoat' image is dangerous and counterproductive to bringing any kind of positive influence to an organization. "[L]eaders can play an important role in enabling extraordinary performance through positively deviant behavior"<sup>120</sup>. POS does not discount the fact that leaders play a crucial role in the fate of an organization, but it does change the role from a figurehead to a person who promotes flourishing in their workers<sup>121</sup>.

Cameron (2012) also describes the presence of what is called 'abundance culture' as opposed to the presence of a 'deficit' mentality. A leader can choose between an abundance bridge or a deficit gap approach. If the leader believes that a negative situation will open different doors, as opposed to closing them, he or she has chosen to use the abundance bridge approach, rather than the deficit gap approach. The abundance bridge is closely associated with the POS concept of affirmative bias.

### **3.6.1 Affirmative Bias**

Negativity is important for growth – at all levels in an organization. But it is also a choice, hence the importance of affirmative bias. Affirmative bias is the choice to see the good, rather than the bad. Organizations that exhibit affirmative bias choose to focus on strengths and possibilities, rather than problems, dangers, or weaknesses"<sup>122</sup>. Affirmative bias is closely associated with the presence of virtuous behavior.

### **3.6.2 Virtuous Behavior**

An essential component in the abundance-bridge-deficit-gap choice is the presence of copious amounts of virtuous behavior, such as being helpful to one's peers, exhibiting generosity, etc.<sup>123</sup>.

Virtuous behavior is also associated with forgiveness of those who make mistakes. Such abilities allow workers to be themselves, and not have a constant need to defend themselves, whether it be against unjust accusations, or having to defend the mistakes they

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<sup>120</sup> Wooten/Cameron 2013, 54

<sup>121</sup> Wooten/Cameron 2013, 54

<sup>122</sup> Lewis 2011, 17

<sup>123</sup> Lewis 2011, 16

made.<sup>124</sup> The essence behind virtuous actions is that they happen without expecting *reciprocity*. They are done out of the goodness of one's heart. Increasingly, there is evidence that these virtuous acts have a positive effect on a person's physical health. Cameron (2012) goes into detail about this health benefit, by analysing the dynamics of a virtuous act. The study analyzes the presence of depression in working persons: symptoms of depression were much less likely to appear later in a person's life if they had acted virtuously. *Specifically*, these virtuous acts were associated with *giving* behaviors, *not* being on the receiving end of the act. The act of giving is positively correlated with the absence of depression: 'giving' also increases the level of commitment of the worker to his or her organization. Virtuous behavior is also productive because, not only does it encourage health-promoting giving behaviors, it also helps create social capital<sup>125</sup>.

### 3.6.3 Social Capital

Social capital refers to "the value within the social networks of the organization"<sup>126</sup>. It indicates the building of trust between members inside an organization. Trust, according to Lewis (2011), is becoming rarer and very undervalued. When trust exists, a platform exists allowing for communication between members through non-conventional channels, which in turn makes communication faster and more efficient.

Thanks to social capital and stronger interpersonal relationships, organizational resilience and solidarity appear. Resilience on the organizational level creates a buffer against negative trauma, as discussed in the chapter about PsyCap. Social capital has an effect on individuals, as well as on organizations: it protects individuals against psychological disturbance, and secures the connectivity, optimism and proactiveness of groups on the organizational level<sup>127</sup>. Social capital helps reinforce the notion that what happens to the organization is everyone's concern, and not just a figurehead leader's problem to solve. Therefore, everyone in the organization is faced with the choice between taking the abundance bridge, or falling into the deficit gap.

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<sup>124</sup> Lewis 2011, 16

<sup>125</sup> Lewis 2011, 20

<sup>126</sup> Lewis 2011, 21

<sup>127</sup> Lewis 2011, 21

Below, Lewis (2011) illustrates the difference between choosing to take the abundance bridge, by using its tools —affirmative bias, virtuous behavior, and positive deviance— or choosing to drop into the deficit gap.

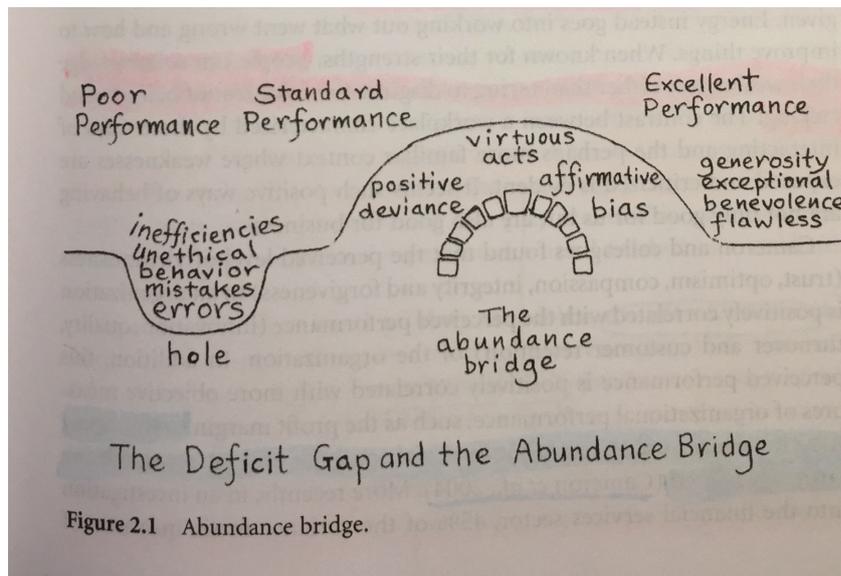


Figure 3: The Deficit Gap and the Abundance Bridge<sup>128</sup>

### 3.6.4 Positively Deviant Leadership and its Effects

Now that all of the elements have been defined, one can understand, with the help of the aforementioned components, what a leader can use to behave as a positively deviant leader. One of Cameron's research partners, Lynn P. Wooten, wrote an independent article, much more recently in 2016, about the kind of leader who diverges from the typical alpha-male position that is associated with many company-CEO's today. Wooten (2016) claims that leadership is not about flying solo: it is about transcending from a sense of 'me' to a sense of 'we'<sup>129</sup>. This sense of 'we' is much like what Aron/Aron/Tudor/Nelson's (1991) study describes about including other people into one's sense of self. Including more and more people into that sense of self is an indication of a mature personality. The leader is no longer 'self'-focused, but moves his or her sense of being

<sup>128</sup> Lewis 2011, 15

<sup>129</sup> Wooten 2016, 42

to that of the entire organization. It is the leader's responsibility to exhibit a honed awareness of all of the workers, and subsequently empower those workers.

After leaders have reached this degree of selflessness, and moved from the organizational 'me' to the organizational 'we', one begins to notice some of the side effects of this positively deviant leadership. When leadership becomes something that is not exclusively in the organizational leader's possession, the other organizational members begin to behave in a way that is beneficial to that organization and consistently produce better results<sup>130</sup>. For example, certain organizational workers exhibiting virtuous behaviors begin to unconsciously form a network around themselves, creating unofficial beacons within the organization, and thereby increasing social capital.

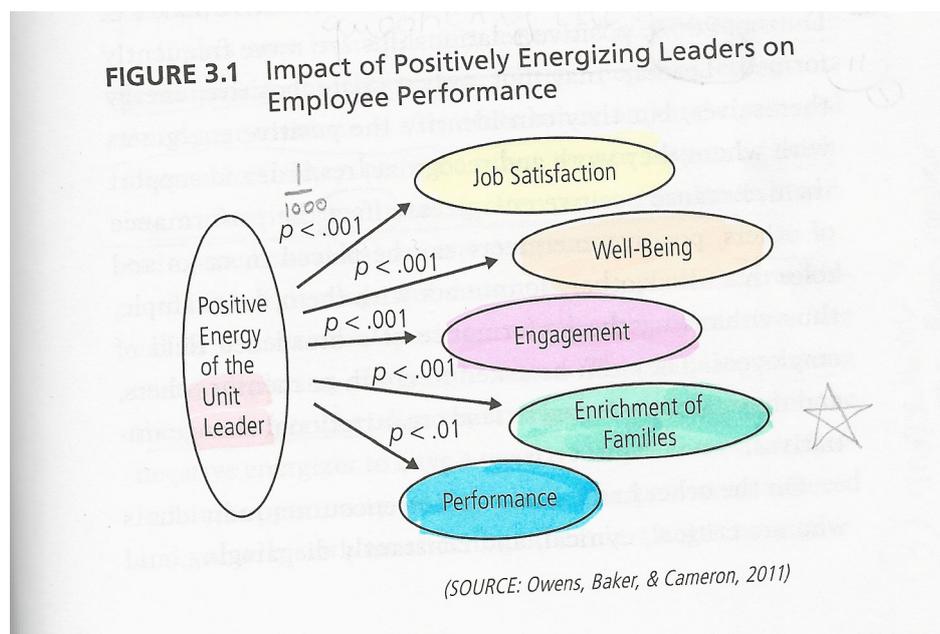


Figure 4: Impact of Positively Deviant Leaders<sup>131</sup>

Virtuous actors and their positive energy attract what one would call 'followers'. The next tool will go into detail about the importance and influence of the concept of positively energized followers.

<sup>130</sup> Wooten 2016, 42

<sup>131</sup> Owens/Baker/Cameron 2011

### 3.7 Tool: Engaged Followers

Since leadership techniques have been covered, the positive counter-effects of these kinds of leadership can also be presented. If a leader does certain things correctly, they can trigger actions in their 'followers'. For the purpose of this tool, workers will be called 'followers' sometimes, to achieve a better understanding of the dynamic relationship between workers and their leader.

Spreitzer/Lam/Fritz (2010) wrote an article concerning engagement and thriving. It examines the benefits of an engaged leader, but also the reciprocal effects of the leader on his or her followers. Leaders have the luxury, or the responsibility, of choosing and creating a certain type of work environment for their followers.

Spreitzer/Lam/Fritz (2010) mention the difference between fostering a learning-orientation or a performance-orientation in workers. Workers with a performance-orientation tend to want to demonstrate what they can do, through task performance. This kind of orientation fosters a self-involved attitude in the worker, who will be constantly thinking about how he or she has been evaluated, which is dangerous in terms of energy depletion. If, however, a leader decides to create a learning-oriented environment for his or her followers, these will have the tendency to develop curiosity and will seek out challenges.

Leaders can assume further responsibility for their followers by creating the right kind of job demands. Sometimes it is unclear what job demands apply to a certain position in an organization. This 'role ambiguity' can be very dangerous, also in terms of energy depletion. When workers do not know what is expected of them, they can spend an inordinate amount of energy thinking about this. Leaders can change this by clearing up exactly what an employee's role is, making his or her boundaries and accountability distinct and straightforward<sup>132</sup>.

Leaders can provide something called psychological safety for their followers. This kind of safety is associated with a safe space to make mistakes without being criticized, or without being embarrassed. If a worker feels safe, he or she will take more interpersonal risks; in other words, venture out into 'unknown territory' to achieve better results in his or her tasks. This kind of risk will not exist if the followers are constantly worried about

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<sup>132</sup> Spreitzer/Lam/Fritz 2010, 140

how to avoid mistakes – a source of energy depletion. Leaders who care about their followers will make an effort to create and nurture this psychologically safe environment.

The concept of emulation is also mentioned in Spreitzer/Lam/Fritz (2010). Similar to the aforementioned virtuous behavior in positively deviant leaders, good leaders are often emulated. Just as virtuous acts attract positive behaviors and new networks of trust, if leaders do not take risks or try new things, then their followers will not be attracted to the idea of taking risks<sup>133</sup>. Leaders need to be the 'first' brave ones, to test the limits and show their followers that: 1) it is appropriate to take risks, and 2) it is acceptable to make mistakes. By doing this, they show their followers that they are in a psychologically safe space, and that their environment does indeed encourage learning.

In sync with the concept of emulation, authentic followership can be defined. Authentic followership was conceived by the fathers of authentic leadership, and shares a parallel with the concept of engaged followers. Authentic followers "display the parallel qualities of their leaders"<sup>134</sup>. The leader can influence the workers by reassuring them and keeping them from fearing the outcome, similar to the concept of psychological safety; while the leader can learn from their workers. If an authentic leader creates a learning-oriented space for their workers, the new knowledge generates positive emotions in the workers. These positive emotions create upward spirals, also called 'gain spirals', according to Hobfoll (1989)<sup>135</sup>, which exert a direct influence on organizational learning from the employer as well as the employee perspective<sup>136</sup>. Therefore, a reciprocal relationship exists between authentic followers and leaders.

The aforementioned areas for potential betterment are for the leader to support the creation of job resources, to balance out the burden of job demands. The pioneers of the JD-R model emphasized the importance of the balance between job demands and resources as a primary factor in preventing burnout in workers<sup>137</sup>. If demands outweigh the

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<sup>133</sup> Spreitzer/Lam/Fritz 2010, 139

<sup>134</sup> Avolio/Griffith/Wernsing/Walumbwa 2013, 44

<sup>135</sup> Note: Fredrickson's broaden-and-build model supports the concept of authentic followership and is mentioned in the Avolio/Griffith/Wernsing/Walumbwa (2013) article. One will notice the similarities between Fredrickson's theory and what creating a learning environment will do to an authentic leader's followers: create resources.

<sup>136</sup> Avolio/Griffith/Wernsing/Walumbwa 2013, 45

<sup>137</sup> Note: see JD-R model in "work engagement" definition.

resources in a particular environment, it creates ideal breeding ground for burnout candidates. One way for a leader to hinder burnout environments, would be to inform themselves on the current state of the work environment – for example, with a questionnaire.

## 3.8 Questionnaires

Organizational leaders can choose to inform themselves about the psychological states of their workforce. For this, a logical starting point this paper wishes to offer is a survey. There are many types of surveys that both the POB and POS scholars developed as an extension to the research of their particular, attributed constructs. One survey gauges which trait-like strengths a worker possesses. Another measures the presence of PsyCap (or lack thereof), while a third measures the authenticity of the organizational leader. In addition, the paper wishes to present an active measure for workers called the PsyCap micro-intervention. It is a compact training method to attempt to incorporate higher levels of PsyCap in workers.

### 3.8.1 V.I.A Questionnaire

Values in Action (VIA) and its questionnaire see good character as a cluster of attributes, in varying degrees. An individual can possess more or less of these attributes: when they have higher levels of an attribute, then that attribute constitutes one of their strengths<sup>138</sup>. Katherina Dahlsgaard/Peterson/Seligman (2005) read texts from literatures all around the world and gathered virtues which were considered positive and important in almost every single (literate) culture on the globe. These virtues included wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence<sup>139</sup>. The 24 VIA character strengths are all categorized under each of these six broadly-defined virtues. Seligman and colleagues also crafted ways of measuring the VIA strengths, including a self-reporting questionnaire. It is valuable to be able to measure the VIA strengths because they tend to positively predict happiness and life satisfaction in persons to a certain degree.

This questionnaire was used in a real-life study to gauge how accurate the fit between character strengths and a person's occupation is. It is important to mention that the VIA

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<sup>138</sup> Peterson/Stephens/Park/Lee/Seligman 2013, 222

<sup>139</sup> Dahlsgaard/Peterson/Seligman 2005

questionnaire sees character strengths as traits (and NOT as states), meaning they are unchangeable, and therefore a job must fit the person according to their strengths<sup>140</sup>.

### 3.8.2 PsyCap Questionnaire

The paper went into extensive detail to explain what PsyCap is and how it can be used in a real-life situation, specifically in a real-life work environment. PsyCap can also be measured, for example using the 'PsyCap Questionnaire'. It is a 24-part questionnaire, specifically, each of the four PsyCap constructs is assigned 6 questions. Initial research by Luthans/Youssef (2011) has demonstrated that it is a valid form of evaluation.<sup>141</sup>

### 3.8.3 PsyCap Micro-Intervention

PsyCap can also be used in a compact format—in the form of a micro-intervention—as will be demonstrated in one of the following studies, in the proof section of the paper. The setting is a one- to three-hour intense and hyper-focused training period where the workers' hope and goal setting is developed, next to an optimistic explanatory style of events. Risk management strategies for resilience, as well as mastery and vicarious learning for self-efficacy are pushed. The efficacy of this kind of intervention was actually tested on another group of engineering managers in a company in 2009, along with an unchanged control group. The experiment yielded positive results. Specifically, a return on investment within a one-year period was calculated at 270% - almost \$74,000 per manager with a cost for the actual intervention at \$20,000.<sup>142</sup>

### 3.8.4 Authentic Leadership Questionnaire

Authentic leadership, as covered in the tool section, is comprised of four overarching factors: relational transparency, internal morality, adaptive self-reflection, and balanced processing. After identifying the components which make up the construct of authentic leadership, 35 items were theoretically extracted from the components. Those 35 items were then reduced to 22 items, which were thought to best encapsulate the essence of

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<sup>140</sup> Peterson/Stephens/Park/Lee/Seligman 2013

<sup>141</sup> Luthans/Youssef 2011, 583

<sup>142</sup> Luthans/Youssef 2011, 583-584

authentic leadership<sup>143</sup>. The 22 items were later filtered and reduced to 16 items: 3 items for balanced processing, 4 for internal morality, 5 for relational transparency, and 4 corresponding to self-awareness (adaptive self-reflection). These items would then make up the ALQ – the authentic leadership questionnaire. It is important to mention that the creators of authentic leadership created it as a second-order construct, just like PsyCap. This means that the factors that make up this kind of innovative leadership draw from within and across each of the four capacities to define authentic leadership. Because of this second-order hierarchy, the 16 items listed in the questionnaire are highly reliable in nature. The questionnaire is meant to be a predictor of OCB, through self-evaluation of one's organizational commitment, OCB<sup>144</sup>, and more.

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<sup>143</sup> Avolio/Griffith/Wernsing/Walumbwa 2013, 47

<sup>144</sup> Avolio/Griffith/Wernsing/Walumbwa 2013, 47

## 4 Proof Section

The methods and tools discussed in this paper are still considered revolutionary. A different mentality (and reality) still dominates the workforce of the Western civilization. POP challenges some of the 20th-century mentalities, which are described in detail in the tools above. Leaders should be concerned with creating a learning-oriented environment, where employees can easily build resources<sup>145</sup>. The tools can now be examined in action in the proof section with the support of several real-life studies. One of the main economic concerns of organizations is addressed in a study done on personnel's absenteeism rates, followed by a compilatory analysis of sales workforces. Both employee-focused studies test the effectiveness of PsyCap in organizations. Following is a study of group performance based on levels of connectivity, as well as a study done on human flourishing. The latter analyzes which social aspects of life encourage positive behaviors and promote flourishing behaviors. The studies all serve to support the validity of POP constructs, and prove that they do work in the real world.

### 4.1 Proof: PsyCap & Absenteeism

A study by Avey/Patera/West (2006) examined the implications of positive psychological capital on employee absenteeism. The scientists behind the 2006 study had determined that research on absenteeism from the workplace had been too dependent on 'attitudinal' variables, one example of such variables being 'job satisfaction'. Up until now, most of the research has focused on using a single outcome theory, where all absenteeism behaviors are clustered together under one umbrella, or most of the research has focused on the kind of absenteeism which is easier to control: voluntary absenteeism<sup>146</sup>. The authors criticize the construct of absenteeism in previous research as being too generalized, and too focused on a single outcome. A further criticism of Avey et al. (2006) is that most of the research on absenteeism in the workplace has focused on voluntary absenteeism, because it is easier to control than the involuntary kind.

This study wants to focus on the *positive* antecedents of absenteeism. The first thing Avey/Patera/West (2006) decide to do is to clarify the difference between voluntary and involuntary absenteeism. Voluntary absenteeism includes such things as vacation time, whereas the involuntary variant defines sick leave or a death in the family. Therefore,

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<sup>145</sup> Note: such as Broaden-and-Build and Appreciative Inquiry

<sup>146</sup> Scott/Markham 1982

they posit voluntary versus involuntary absenteeism, and even a third kind: 'less-voluntary'.

Using a sample of 105 engineers – some electrical, some mechanical – inside of a large 'Fortune 100' company specializing in high tech manufacturing, Avey et al. (2006) measured PsyCap, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment using a survey. The absenteeism data of each participant within the last 12 months was gathered thanks to their own human resources department. Following the logical separation, the scientists did divide the collected data into involuntary and voluntary absences.

1. **Less-voluntary absenteeism:** Involuntary absenteeism has focused on physical sickness and hindrance over the last few years. This physical focus has led to certain organizations incorporating 'fitness programs' into their employee incentive programs. The fact that employees can benefit their health by participating in company fitness programs means that their physical health can be influenced, making sickness in this category "less-voluntary". However, physical health is not the focus of this paper or of Avey et al.'s (2006) study. The researchers behind the study claim that methods to improve *psychologically*-focused absenteeism numbers have been inadequate. Because of the inadequacy, Avey/Patera/West (2006) turn to PsyCap and its constructs for help.
2. **PsyCap and involuntary absence:** Avey/Patera/West (2006) first focus on the relationship between PsyCap and involuntary (psychologically-focused) absenteeism. They list the advantages of workers who possess any of the four PsyCap constructs. For example, they compare what an optimistic, or hopeful, or resilient worker would do in the face of resistance or challenge. An optimistic person, for example, is less likely to get sick, thanks to better healthcare behaviors, since they give more importance to taking care of themselves whether they are sick or not<sup>147</sup>. Resilient workers exhibit a strong negative correlation to depression<sup>148</sup>, and self-efficacious workers view stressors in the work environment as challenges they can master. PsyCap as a whole<sup>149</sup> turned out to be a better predictor of involuntary (sick leave and family obligations, etc.) absenteeism than organizational commitment and job satisfaction, confirming Avey et al.'s (2006) statement at the beginning of their study that attitudinal variables are inaccurate predictors of workplace absenteeism.

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<sup>147</sup> Avey/Patera/West 2006, 47

<sup>148</sup> Masten/Reed, 2002

<sup>149</sup> Note: meaning: hope, resiliency, self-efficacy, and optimism, all together.

3. **PsyCap and voluntary absenteeism:** The study goes on to analyze the relationship between PsyCap and voluntary absenteeism. One example is the PsyCap's hope and its effect on voluntary absenteeism. Workers high in hope do not let the failure of a project result in deviant absenteeism behavior, or increased time-off tendencies, which is a potential danger if a worker does not want to be seen at the 'scene of the failure'<sup>150</sup>. Avey et al. (2006) predicted negative relationships between voluntary absenteeism and hope, voluntary absenteeism and optimism, voluntary absenteeism and resilience, and voluntary absenteeism and self-efficacy. These four hypotheses turned out to be fully supported.
4. **PsyCap and both kinds of absenteeism:** Avey/Patera/West (2006) also predicted a negative relationship between PsyCap *as a whole* and involuntary *and* voluntary absenteeism. PsyCap outpredicted the individual pillars of resilience, self-efficacy, and optimism<sup>151</sup>, but not hope. Hope turned out to be an exception because it is the best predictor of *voluntary* absenteeism out of all five.

To end their study, Avey/Patera/West (2006) suggest that organizations can use PsyCap as a testing factor when filtering and searching for job applicants, as a preventive measure for high absenteeism rates and costs. Resources such as hope, resiliency, self-efficacy, and optimism can be valuable for controlling absenteeism in the workplace environment.

The innovators of PsyCap also came up with a compressed form of PsyCap called a 'micro intervention'<sup>152</sup>. Unlike organizational commitment and job satisfaction, which need extensive amounts of time to develop, PsyCap can be implemented as a micro intervention. This is because the constructs<sup>153</sup> are state-based and are malleable and changeable. Avey et al. (2006) suggest the PsyCap micro-intervention as a means to lower absenteeism rates.

Thanks to this study by Avey et al. (2006), PsyCap proves to be a real-life, valuable tool for managers to implement in the workplace to support the development and mental health of their employees. Next, PsyCap will be examined in a more recent study, because some noticeable trends have developed in this particular field of POB.

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<sup>150</sup> Avey/Patera/West 2006, 48

<sup>151</sup> Avey/Patera/West 2006, 52

<sup>152</sup> See Tool Section: 'PsyCap Microintervention'

<sup>153</sup> Note: the four constructs being hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience.

## 4.2 Proof: PsyCap Integrated in Sales

A study integrating PsyCap into a real-life setting has already been presented. However, positive psychology is constantly evolving, which is why it would be beneficial to mention a more recent study. The chosen study from 2016 is called “Positive Psychology in Sales: Integrating Psychological Capital”. This study is not purely empirical, it is also compilatory. It is empirical in that it wishes to posit methods for how to integrate PsyCap as a whole (as opposed to singling out its four individual constructs) in sales departments in organizations. But it also offers an overview of studies done on PsyCap over the past ten to fifteen years. The study includes an overview on the most relevant empirical PsyCap research, as well as a second overview of the PsyCap components found in sales contexts.

The compilatory nature of this 2016 study is interesting because PsyCap research in sales has, since the early nineties, chosen to focus on single PsyCap constructs rather than PsyCap as a whole. Seventy percent of this single-construct-focused research has concentrated on the ‘efficacy’ construct.

Friend/Johnson/Luthans/Sohi (2016) suggest that sales departments should focus on PsyCap as a whole instead, to get maximum results out of sales personnel. In fact, the single most important idea that appears throughout the whole study, is that PsyCap should be taken as a whole and not for its individual parts. When taken together, the four pillars of PsyCap encourage extra effort in salespeople, help generate multiple solutions to dilemmas, etc<sup>154</sup>. Essentially, when put all together, the four pillars produce every one of the four kinds of positive effects of PsyCap simultaneously. This quote describes what each of the constructs achieves in the sales people, and that these four resources make for higher performance when they are integrated into an organization *together*.

Once psychological resources have been acquired, it is in the interest of every single sales worker to preserve their PsyCap resources, akin to another concept previously analyzed in the context of this paper: the COR model. The COR model clarifies “how salespeople are motivated to acquire, maintain, and foster the necessary resources found in PsyCap to attain successful performance outcomes”<sup>155</sup>. The COR model<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Friend/Johnson/Luthans/Sohi 2016, 314

<sup>155</sup> Peterson/Luthans/Avolio/Walumbwa/Zhang 2011

<sup>156</sup> Note: COR was illustrated in the definition of performance, in the definition section, of this paper

helps to stress the importance of storing away some of these (PsyCap) resources when the stressors of the workplace are high.

Friend/Johnson/Luthans/Sohi's (2016) study focuses on PsyCap improving sales performance at three levels: 1) the individual level 2) the intra-organizational level and 3) the outer-organizational level. The latter two are important because they have not been researched as much as the individual level. At both intra- and outer-organizational levels, PsyCap is not isolated to individual workers, but can spread, as positively-oriented behaviors tend to do. A concept crucial to improvement of sales personnel performance is the contagion effect, already mentioned in the tool section of this paper. The contagion effect explains how PsyCap can be transferred within an organization to expedite positive downstream effects<sup>157</sup>. Leaders in an organization using PsyCap have a positive and contagious impact on their followers<sup>158</sup>. The concept of the trickle-down effect from leader to worker has already been discussed multiple times in previous sections of the paper, strengthening its validity and reliability as a real-life, useful construct. The contagion effect for example facilitates what Friend/Johnson/Luthans/Sohi's (2016) study calls collective PsyCap. This concept has been established as beneficial to all organization members and their partners. Companies and organizations using collective PsyCap possess valuable tools. Resources that come with collective PsyCap include common goal direction, common belief in the paths that can be walked down together to achieve organizational goals, and the fair crediting of positive events to one's own company and peers<sup>159</sup>.

Common goal direction is an important POP concept. It is also a useful segue into the next real-life study about the necessity of good communication and positive connectivity, which can be used to align organizational goals with individual employee goals.

### **4.3 Proof: Connectivity as a Measurement of Performance**

Marcial Losada and Emily Heaphy released a study in 2004 called "The Role of Positivity and Connectivity in the Performance of Business Teams". This study was included because it was mentioned at least once by every major contributor to positive psychology

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<sup>157</sup> Story/Youssef/Luthans/Barbutto/Bovaird 2013

<sup>158</sup> Story/Youssef/Luthans/Barbutto/Bovaird 2013

<sup>159</sup> McKenny/Short/Payne 2012

in their bibliographies, or included in their narratives in this paper's bibliographical sources. Kim Cameron (2012), POS innovator, dedicates most of his chapter on "Positive Relationships" to the Losada/Heaphy (2004) study, which is why a graphical representation from his book is used as a reference and an overview to this study.

Communication, or as they call it in the study, connectivity, is a primary resource and factor of performance. Connectivity describes the phenomenon that group performance can equal more than just the sum of its parts. Connectivity "is a concept that explains how group performance can be more than a sum of the parts. This refers to the fact that a team is not just about the people in the group, but about the kinds of connections those people form inside of the group"<sup>160</sup>. Losada/Heaphy (2004) also mention something called 'non-linear dynamics' which support the concept that communication is a living, evolving phenomenon. The authors claim that teams (on a small scale) and organizations (on a large scale) are nonlinear feedback networks, which are constantly fluctuating in processes of positive and negative feedback<sup>161</sup>. Linearity is an inaccurate way of portraying communication, because there is no regard for the difference in interpretation of the receiver and the sender. Linearity implies that the sum of the parts is equal to the whole<sup>162</sup>, and this is what Lewis (2011) wants to disprove in her definition of connectivity. Feedback is the channel workers use for communication within the organization. Losada/Heaphy (2004) want to prove that the more positive the feedback inside of a group of people, the better the performance *of the entire organization*.

Losada/Heaphy (2004) analyzed the verbal communication patterns within 60 groups, called 'strategic business units' (SBU), each composed of 8 people. The verbal communication was coded according to three dimensions, three 'ratios': positivity/negativity, inquiry/advocacy, and other/self. Positivity/negativity referred to the positive and supportive versus the negative, disapproving, sarcastic, or cynical comments within the SBU's speech acts. Inquiry/advocacy referred to questions posed out of curiosity or exploration versus 'advocating' in favor of the speaker's point of view, making it closer to 'arguing'. Other/self were either people or groups *outside* the company, versus 'self' which referred to the person speaking, or to the whole group *inside* of the lab. SBU's develop emotional spaces thanks to these ratios. High ratios symbolize the presence of large emotional spaces, while low ratios restrict the size of emotional spaces<sup>163</sup>. The

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<sup>160</sup> Lewis 2011, 74

<sup>161</sup> Heaphy/Losada 2004, 741

<sup>162</sup> Heaphy/Losada 2004, 741

<sup>163</sup> Losada 1999

SBU's were observed in a lab discussing their annual strategic business plans. The companies were selected for the study based on the condition that they would provide their entire performance records in advance, so that the past data and company performance could be analyzed. Subsequently, after retrieval of the company performance records, the groups were divided. The division was based on three crucial factors: the SBU's profit and loss records, customer satisfaction reviews and surveys, and 360-degree evaluations from all sides in the organization. According to these three factors, the SBU's could then be categorized into: low-performing, medium-performing, and high-performing teams<sup>164</sup>. The following table is a visual organization and aid by Cameron (2012) of the three measured ratios and connectivity averages of the Losada/Heaphy (2004) study. The table also organizes the SBU's scores into the three performance-level categories.

	TEAM PERFORMANCE		
	High	Medium	Low
Positive Statement Ratio	5.6 to 1	1.8 to 1	0.36 to 1
(supportive, encouraging, appreciation versus critical, disapproval, contradictory)			
Inquiry/Advocacy Ratio	1.1 to 1	0.67 to 1	0.05 to 1
(questioning versus asserting)			
Others/Self Ratio	0.94 to 1	0.62 to 1	0.03 to 1
(external versus internal focus)			
Connectivity Average	32	22	18
(mutual influence, assistance, interaction)			
<i>Source: Losada &amp; Heaphy, 2004</i>			

Table 2 :Communication in Teams According to Heaphy/Losada 2004<sup>165</sup>

<sup>164</sup> Note: "A team was assigned to the high-performance category if it achieved high ratings in all three measures". The same thought process applies to low-performing teams. Heaphy/Losada 2004, 746.

<sup>165</sup> Reconstructed in Cameron 2012, 67

The prevalence of connectivity, and through it the degree of performance, can be measured thanks to 'nexi'<sup>166</sup>. Nexi are defined as "strong and sustained patterns of interlocked behaviors among team members that lasted during the entire meeting and are indicative of a process of mutual influence"<sup>167</sup>. Losada/Heaphy (2004) indicate a strong correlation between the number of nexi and the degree of performance. The measure is based on profitability, customer satisfaction, and 360° assessments. It reveals a high number of nexi inside of the SBU, indicative of strong connectivity between members. Next to the quantitative results of the nexi-analysis, the authors were able to make some qualitative observations about the SBU's. The researchers observed certain general, qualitative trends in the groups, among the high-performance teams. The high-performance SBU's exhibited vocal appreciation and encouragement for their fellow members, which in turn, encouraged the presence of qualities such as creativity<sup>168</sup>.

As opposed to the openness of the high-performance SBU's, low-performance groups were defined by 'point attractors', which limited their emotional spaces. Certain types of behaviors gravitate to something called 'attractors'<sup>169</sup>. There are different shades of attractors moving between rigid and flexible: the most rigid being point attractors<sup>170</sup>. High-performance SBU's did not have problems with limiting attractors because their attractors transcended and evolved into something called complexors. Complexors come into being because of dynamic, flexible, and creative behaviors<sup>171</sup>. How do they do this? Through meta-learning. Marcial Losada is the innovator behind meta-learning, defined as the ability of SBU's to counteract attractors, which encourage bad behaviors within the group. That same SBU can also mold other attractors and transform them into new possibilities, allowing the attractors to become complexors, which are directly associated to high-performance groups in this study.

The openness of spaces is akin to a concept already visited in this paper: the broadening and building of resources. Barbara Fredrickson's work supports Losada/Heaphy's (2004)

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<sup>166</sup> Note: plural of nexus

<sup>167</sup> Losada 1999

<sup>168</sup> Heaphy/Losada 2004, 749

<sup>169</sup> Heaphy/Losada 2004, 750

<sup>170</sup> Note: Other kinds of attractors include periodic, quasi-periodic, and chaotic attractors, chaotic being the most flexible kind. Heaphy/Losada 2004, 750

<sup>171</sup> Notes: "Trajectories in a complexor never repeat themselves" Heaphy/Losada 2004, 751

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concept of bigger emotional spaces allowing for more ideas<sup>172</sup>, thanks to greater positivity<sup>173</sup>. Greater positivity and its benefits on the group dynamics is further demonstrated in the following graphical representation using 'phase space' between a y-axis (emotional space) and an x-axis (one of the 3 ratios). The top two graphs represent the phase space of high-performance groups, the middle two represent the medium-performance SBU's, while the bottom two represent the low-performance groups. High-performance groups generated much larger phase spaces than did low-performance SBU's, because the dynamics within the low-performance teams were rigid, as could be observed by the much smaller size of the phase spaces in the two bottom graphs. The authors ask the readers to observe the direct relationship between the size of the phase space and the levels of performance. Larger emotional spaces, therefore, play a critical role in differentiating the high-performing from the low-performing SBU's.

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<sup>172</sup> Note: the 'broadening' in broaden-and-build.

<sup>173</sup> Heaphy/Losada 2004, 749

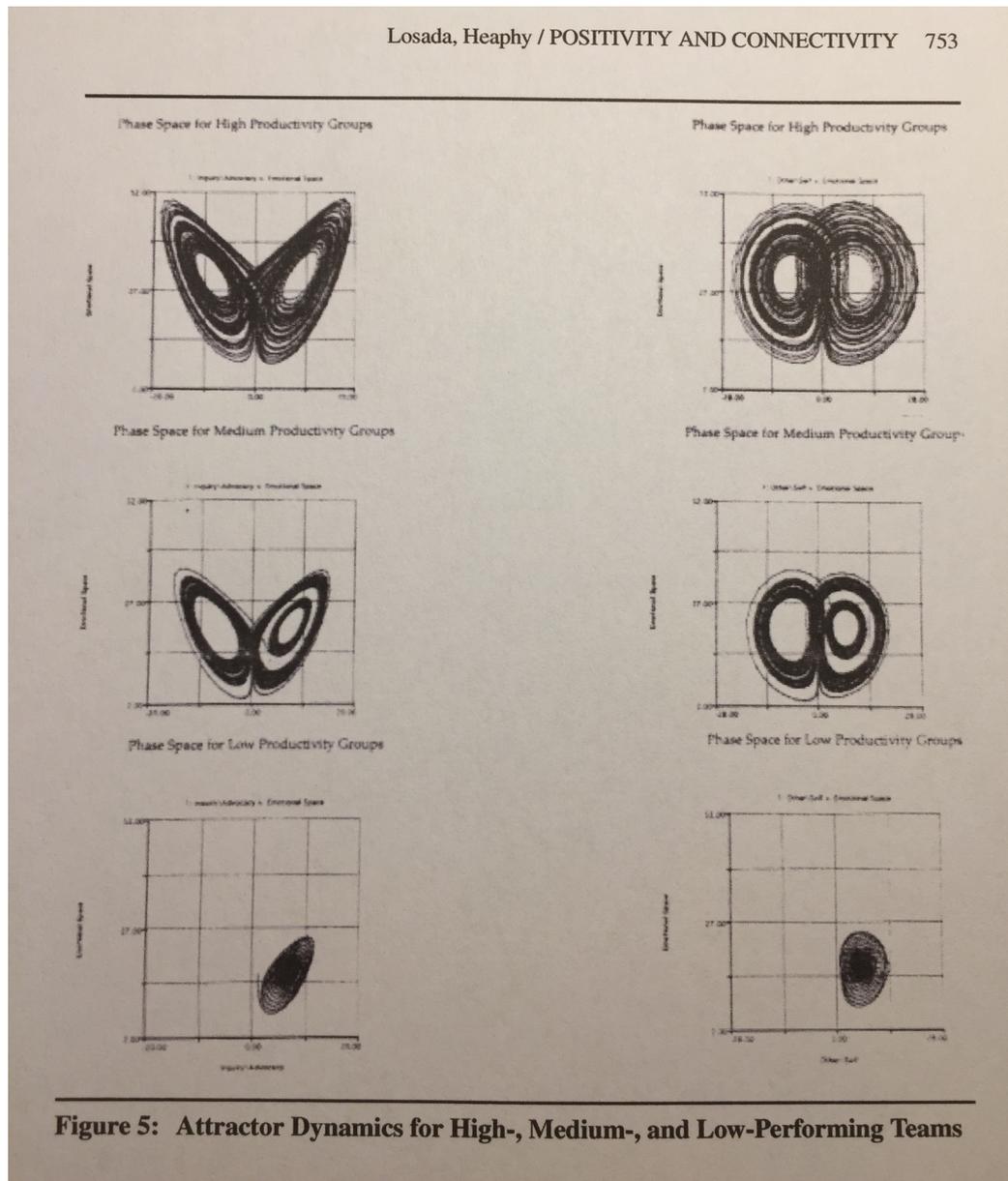


Figure 5: Phase Space for High-, Medium-, and Low-Performing Teams<sup>174</sup>

In the study's discussion, the authors claim that the ratios calculated in each of the 60 SBU's were pivotal to differentiating between high-, medium-, and low-performing groups<sup>175</sup>. They defend why they choose to use ratios as the unit of measurement in their study. Indeed, the connectivity study is the only study analyzed in this paper which uses ratios as measurement. Ratios preserve the proportion of all the components in this

<sup>174</sup> Heaphy/Losada 2004, 753

<sup>175</sup> Heaphy/Losada 2004, 760

study. Additionally, a certain degree of 'tension' is preserved between the two poles of that ratio<sup>176</sup>. This bipolar unit of measurement also allows for the respect of the presence of *negativity*. Positive psychology experts often remind their readers and students that there can be no positivity without the tension provided by negativity; just as there can be no light without darkness. This ratio measurement and presence of tension makes this study ground-breaking in the field of positive psychology and should make organizational leaders think.

Leaders may want to think about: what statements could yield productive answers at the table? Which difficult questions should the leader ask to make others members think? Which positive comments could the leader offer to bring out positive emotions in all of the people at the table? Functional and overly positive communication is beneficial to each individual in an organization: therefore, making it important to the organization as a whole.

The mental well-being of workers should also be a concern for decision-makers in an organization, and therefore a central concern for leaders. This next study focuses on a way to gauge the level of psychological well-being of a person.

#### **4.4 Proof: Measurement of Flourishing**

Certain experts would define workers who are well, as 'flourishing' workers. Hone, Jarden, and Schofield completed a study in 2013 of the adult population of New Zealand to analyze certain factors which they believed constituted well-being. The New Zealander research team first provide a framework for a definition of well-being. It begins with two different approaches from two Ancient Greek philosophers. Aristippus developed the 'hedonic' approach which defines the pursuit of happiness, pleasure, and moving away from any experiences which cause pain. The second Ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle, developed the eudaimonic approach, which went beyond the single-minded search for pleasure. Aristotle argues that well-being constitutes the actualization of a person's potentials: when a person chooses to live their life according to their 'true self'. Both of the hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives support the contemporary psychology approach that a pursuit exists for 'subjective well-being' (abbreviated SWB).

The concept of subjective well-being appeared in the 90's. In 2002, Keyes combined SWB with the concept of psychological well-being. Thanks to this combination, Keyes

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<sup>176</sup> Heaphy/Losada 2004, 760

(2002) introduced the concept of ‘flourishing’ to the field of psychology. Flourishing defines the best levels of mental health. Based on the following definition, leaders in organizations should aim to have and develop flourishing followers. Flourishing persons are faster learners, exhibit higher productivity at the workplace, possess more fulfilling social interactions, enjoy better health and life expectancy, among other things...<sup>177</sup>.

This study of the adult New Zealander population wanted to emulate one of the most thorough flourishing analyses to date: the 2009 European Social Survey (ESS), conducted every 2 years over 25 European countries. In 2009, the ESS chose to include questions measuring levels of *flourishing* in individuals<sup>178</sup>.

This New Zealand study used data from the Sovereign Well-Being Index (abbreviated SWI). The SWI study supports and strengthens the method used in the ESS as a valid way of measuring the degree of well-being of a larger population segment<sup>179</sup>. Hone/Jarden/Schofield’s (2013 study) included an eight-item flourishing scale in the 130-question survey. The 8 questions are rated using a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

1. I lead a purposeful and meaningful life
2. My social relationships are supportive and rewarding
3. I am engaged and interested in my daily activities
4. I actively contribute to the happiness and wellbeing of others
5. I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me
6. I am a good person and lead a good life
7. I am optimistic about my future
8. People respect me

An interesting fact about this scale in the SWI survey is that these questions are “phrased in a positive manner”<sup>180</sup>. These eight items also follow Aked et al.’s (2009) ‘Five Ways to Wellbeing’ which include:

1. Connect
2. Give
3. Take notice

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<sup>177</sup> Keyes 2005 & Huppert 2009

<sup>178</sup> Huppert/Marks/Clark/Siegrist/Stutzer/Vitters et al. 2009

<sup>179</sup> Note: N = around 9,600 people for this study

<sup>180</sup> Hone/Jarden/Schofield 2013, 1034

4. Keep learning
5. Be active<sup>181</sup>

These criteria were also formulated as questions and included in the SWI survey, i.e. Connect: “how often do you meet socially with friends, relatives or work colleagues?”<sup>182</sup>. The questions used a 7-point scale ranging from ‘never’ to ‘every day’ to measure the strength of each criterion<sup>183</sup>. The measurements were evaluated in the results section of this study. Those who had strong scores in Connect had a significantly higher, overall FS than those with low Connect scores<sup>184</sup>. There is a similar statement for Give and for Keep Learning. Overall, the participants in this New Zealand study who had a strong positive response to the five ways of wellbeing<sup>185</sup> had higher flourishing scores than those who did not endorse those actions, i.e. had low scores in the five categories<sup>186</sup>. This supports the statement that each of these five criteria are beneficial to flourishing behaviors which can be applied to people in the workplace, since the population sample included only adults. The results of the survey questions on the ‘Five Ways to Well-Being’ harken back to Kim Cameron’s (2012) research on positive deviance about the positive health effects of virtuous behavior<sup>187</sup>. They also harken back to Michael Steger’s research on meaningful work and increased number of connections to other members in an organization as beneficial to workplace well-being. This study offers a concrete method to measure psychological well-being. Organizational leaders might take this kind of survey into consideration, if they choose to exercise awareness in their organization, or awareness of their workers.

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<sup>181</sup> Aked/Marks/Thompson 2009

<sup>182</sup> Hone/Jarden/Schofield 2013, 1036

<sup>183</sup> Note: ‘be active’ was measured differently. Hone/Jarden/Schofield 2013, 1037

<sup>184</sup> Hone/Jarden/Schofield 2013, 1041

<sup>185</sup> Note: which include: “connecting socially with others, giving help and support, taking notice, learning new things, and being physically active”. Hone/Jarden/Schofield 2013, 1042

<sup>186</sup> Hone/Jarden/Schofield 2013, 1042

<sup>187</sup> Note: Virtuous behavior refers to ‘giving’ behaviors and its negative correlation to depression.

## 5 Thesis Conclusion

The paper compiled tools to improve workers' mental well-being in the setting of the workplace. The initial hope for the paper was to *actively* improve organizational environments for workers. This is not a goal which is quickly implemented. Therefore, the goal changed to accommodate reality better: to raise awareness about the dangers associated with today's workplace. The paper wishes to inform readers about how to improve the workplace using POP. Before informing readers of concrete measures to improve workplace well-being, first the framework of positive organizational psychology is cemented. Next, the context of leadership is solidified. Positive psychology distances itself from the typical psychological, negatively-leaning framework which has dominated the 20<sup>th</sup> century, so the framework for this paper is crucial.

The way in which the thesis chooses to raise awareness, and fulfill its informative purpose is by presenting and analyzing positive psychology tools. The tools presented identify either within the subfield of POB or POS, although despite two distinct subfields, it is frequent and normal that much of the POP research intersects and is connected. After the tools had been presented, the proof section offered concrete examples of how the POP-based tools look in a real setting. The studies are presented, so as to demonstrate that these tools can be incorporated into daily work life with positive consequences.

However, despite extensive back-up for the research done for the paper, there are certain dangers which the reader should be aware of. Such as: despite the plethora of available studies and research in positive psychology, it must not be forgotten, that companies are often the employers or purchasers of positive psychology experts' services. The companies use the data to promote their company and their vision; to publicize or advance their organization's growth.

Another note for caution is that the tools proposed require long periods of implementation, because they require a change in mentality. As previously mentioned, much of psychological research within an organization has focused on 'fixing problems' and has a distinctly negative nature. A change in mentality needs to occur, not only on the part of the leader, but also on the part of all organizational members to accommodate POP and these new tools.

### **Suggestion for further research**

POB and POS scholars should concentrate on getting their knowledge and intellect within the webs of those multinational corporations. It is suggested that Seligman, Cameron, and colleagues (the POS scholars), as well as Luthans, Bakker, Fredrickson and

their colleagues (the POB scholars) present their ideas to these corporations. The researchers will initially encounter difficulties trying to convince companies to survey their procedures and integrate POP methods. This is because for-profit companies require adequate incentives to go through long-term changes, which do not have easily foreseeable financial advantages in the short-term future. Although, if successful, through the behemoths and their influence, the experts will receive a much larger audience for their revolutionary work. Thanks to the multimedia society of today, the research will eventually trickle down into companies of all shapes and sizes.

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