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POINT/ COUNTERPOINT

The "Point" of Positive Organizational Behavior

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Abstract Perhaps the most important "Point" we would like to make in this "Point-Counterpoint" on positive organizational behavior is the role that research must play in this evolving area of study. We follow this point on the importance of research by drawing from recent findings that indicate in discussions such as this point and counterpoint, that taking a positive approach leads to more in-depth inquiry, whereas a negative perspective leads to advocacy and in our view less learning potential. Thus, the positive perspective we take in this "Point" piece is to identify and make a deep inquiry into the major issues and questions surrounding positive organizational behavior (POB). We consciously try to avoid taking an advocacy position. Specifically, after first setting the stage with the background and status of POB, we draw from the lessons that can be learned from positive psychology and then make an inquiry into "Why POB?" and exactly "What is POB?" The article concludes with further inquiry into the role the negative does and can play, and finally how POB relates to our recent work in authentic leadership development.

Introduction

There are interesting points of demarcation in all scientific fields of inquiry where looking back indicates a transformative change has actually occurred. Such major changes include the conceptual models guiding research, the methods used, and even the statistics used in analysis that become the norm rather than the exception. Invariably, these points of demarcation are characterized by the question: What is different, and if different, what is added value to the domain of study? For example, in the field of leadership Burns (1978) introduced the concept of transforming leadership. This led to a 30-year run so far of researchers focusing on inquiring what makes leaders transformational and how do they differ from other leaders. Yet, in the beginning, many leadership scholars wondered what was really different and, if it was different, was it important and relevant.

In terms of methods, the introduction of meta-analysis into the medical and psychology literature has dramatically changed how we in the organizational behavior and leadership fields interpret research findings across studies. Meta-analysis now commonly allows us to make conclusions from a body of knowledge that is quantitatively versus qualitatively analyzed. Indeed, one is hard pressed to

pick up our top journals today and not find at least one meta-analysis summarizing some particular area of research interest.

As for statistics, we have witnessed a dramatic shift in terms of how data is analyzed with the introduction of structural equation modeling analysis and hierarchical linear modeling. Today, we give much more attention to simultaneously examining multiple constructs/variables, at multiple levels of analysis, while including mediators and moderators that were often ignored or at least neglected in prior research.

These examples indicate there seems to be times of punctuated equilibrium in a field like organizational behavior that may send researchers in uniquely different directions. By the same token, there are also times where the focus "appears" to be different or unique, but after deliberation, if not outright criticism and rejection, the majority of experts conclude that we have again been fooled by that "old wine in new bottles" illusion.

These observations seem relevant to this stage of development of positive organizational behavior. We need to inquire whether positive organizational behavior is simply old wine in a new bottle? We will make an attempt to answer this inquiry in this "point" article, but want to emphasize up front, the mere labeling of an area as something interesting and different, may be in itself, an important way of bringing together scholarly interest in a topic that remained strewn across the literature. Again using an example from leadership, this was in many ways true of the work on charismatic leadership. At least in part, Burns' "new" work on transformational leadership, a component of which was charismatic (very old wine), served the purpose of integrating the field's interest in this type of leadership style.

Positive organizational behavior (or we will simply use POB throughout) as a guiding term was first introduced 6 years ago into the literature (Luthans, 2002a, 2002b). The purpose at the time that POB was introduced was to raise the organizational behavior field's awareness of the just emerging positive psychology movement (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Although positive psychology was principally focused on clinical applications, we felt it was important to show how such a positive focus could be applied to the work setting. Over these last 6 years, there have been, and we believe will (and should) continue to be, a number of questions that must be addressed as we move forward with theory- building and research in POB. These include the following:

1. Exactly what is POB and what is it not?
2. What role, if any, did positive psychology play in establishing POB?
3. How does POB differ from OB in general?
4. How does POB differ from other current positive approaches such as strength-based management and positive organizational scholarship (POS)?
5. Given limited resources, if we focus on POB, what role does the negative play?
6. How does POB contribute to advancing the science and practice of what we know about related fields such as leadership?

These specific questions serve as the guideposts for this article on the "point" of POB. After first setting the stage with the general background and current status of POB, we draw from some of the specific lessons that can be learned from how positive psychology has progressed over the past several years. Then we take a positive inquiry mode revolving around the above questions. This inquiry approach involves seeking information by questioning and probing. The reason we emphasize that we are taking such an inquiry perspective (as opposed to the more usual advocacy approach found in point- counterpoint discussions) stems from research findings that positivity leads to deeper inquiry, while negativity leads to advocacy where one position is emphasized over another without necessarily any efforts to attain integration (see Fredrickson & Losada, 2005; Losada, 1999; Losada & Heaphy, 2004). Thus, we thought it only fitting that in this "Point" of POB article we follow positivity research and take an inquiry rather than an advocacy perspective.

We start our inquiry with the question, "what is really new here"? Next, we carefully define exactly what we mean by POB and how it differs from positive psychology, past positively oriented organizational behavior constructs and approaches, and positive organizational scholarship (POS). Importantly, we recognize that because of the newness of POB, and like other domains of study in the entire behavioral sciences, there are other definitions and meanings of POB, including those used in the articles in this special issue. However, from the beginning, we have always carefully defined what we meant by the term and the inclusion criteria. This is all we can do at this early stage of the development of POB. Finally, we will inquire about the role of negatively oriented constructs and how the POB lens relates to other relevant initiatives such as authentic leadership development.

Setting the Stage

Not surprising, positive psychology has been confronted with most of the same questions as above (e.g., see Held, 2004 and a special issue of *Psychological Inquiry* 14(2), 2003). The same was true when transformational leadership was introduced into the mainstream leadership literature by Bass (1985) and more recently authentic leadership development that we will discuss at the end in this article (Avolio & Luthans, 2006; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). In setting the stage for our inquiry of POB, we believe the reader will find it quite interesting to review the special issue of *Psychological Inquiry* to see how positive psychology has been challenged in terms of what is different and relevant and how the leaders in the field have addressed these and other questions.

Besides the insights that can be gained from looking back and learning from the emerging discussions regarding positive psychology, some insights into answering some of the questions about POB may also be gleaned from the Luthans and Youssef (2007) recent comprehensive review article on "Emerging Positive Organizational Behavior." This article begins to anticipate and address some of the above questions. Another comprehensive source where we extend the work on POB to some potentially new domains of inquiry is our book entitled *Psychological Capital* (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007). In these and other recent publications, we attempted to establish the main premise of introducing POB to the OB literature, while also drilling down into some of the positive constructs that have generally not received attention in the OB literature. We labeled some of these constructs psychological capital and they included well researched constructs from positive psychology such as optimism, hope, efficacy, and resiliency.

In the 2007 review article, we started the introductory section by addressing two questions: "Why POB? vs. Why Not?" We then provided a comprehensive literature review of selected representative positive traits commonly found in the organizational behavior literature (e.g., Big Five personality, core self-evaluations, and character strengths and virtues), but then added to that review what we have called positive "state-like" (as opposed to relatively fixed, "trait-like") psychological resource capacities open to development (e.g., efficacy, hope, optimism, resiliency, which made up a higher order construct labeled psychological capital). We also included positive behaviors (e.g., organizational citizenship and courageous principled action) and positive organizations (largely drawn from the work in positive organizational scholarship). We concluded that although these positive constructs have certainly been discussed in prior OB literature, our state-like psychological resource capacities have been underrepresented and the others have not been presented as a whole in terms of positive organizational behavior.

In our recently published book, we devoted an entire chapter to each of the major components of what we have labeled psychological capital or PsyCap (efficacy, hope, optimism, and resiliency),

as well as alerting researchers to "potential pitfalls" that one oftentimes confronts when traversing through a demarcation point in an emerging research literature. We attempted to highlight in two additional chapters what we deemed were positive constructs in OB (e.g., creativity, wisdom, wellbeing, flow, humor, gratitude, forgiveness, emotional intelligence, spirituality, authenticity, and courage) that had not yet received considerable attention in the OB literature, but we believed were worthy of more attention.

The concluding chapter in our recent book was on the extensive work we have undertaken to offer basic construct validation evidence for a measure of psychological capital containing the four targeted positive constructs, (see Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007) and an experimental development model (a short training intervention that has been conceptually, see Luthans, Avey, Avolio, Norman, & Combs, 2006 and empirically supported, see Luthans, Avey, & Patera, 2008). We offered the measures and methods specifically to facilitate further research inquiry in the work context on what we considered important "positively oriented" work related constructs. In this special issue we also introduce another key positive construct referred to as psychological ownership (Avey, Avolio, Crossley, & Luthans, 2009, this issue). Again, although not new, we believe there has been relatively little attention to this important POB construct in psychology as well as the OB literature. Indeed, although there are some important exceptions, much of the focus on ownership has come from economics, not psychology or organizational behavior.

We also need to emphasize in setting the stage that we are by no means the only ones focusing on this potential point of demarcation in the OB literature. Indeed, there are a number of other comprehensive sources already published such as the landmark book on *Positive Organizational Scholarship* (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003), the first edited volume on POB (Nelson & Cooper, 2007), the *Handbook of Positive Psychology* (Snyder & Lopez, 2002), and a newly edited book on *Exploring Positive Relationships at Work* (Dutton & Ragins, 2007). In addition, there are a growing number of theory-building and empirical articles published in OB and human resource management journals, and, of course, the articles in this special issue that are providing a spotlight on positive constructs in OB.

Our primary motivation for raising the profile of POB is partly drawn from the great founders philosophy of science and "positivism," such as Auguste Comte, who said that "their faith in science was not as a viable livelihood, intellectual pursuit or amusing endeavor, but as the best way toward knowledge that would improve the human condition" (Bailey & Eastman, 1994, p. 515). This is a good representation that captures our faith in what involves the engagement of the scientific process very, very broadly defined. Hence, we start with what are some lessons learned from the emergence of positive psychology. We take this as our point of departure because what has been called the positive psychology movement was in large part the impetus for drawing the OB field's attention to POB.

Lessons From Positive Psychology

In providing advice and lessons to be learned from positive psychology for positive organizational studies, Peterson and Seligman (2003, p. 17) first and foremost note that we should "appreciate that positive social science is an easy sell to the general public and a hard sell to the academic community." So far, this observation does tend to reflect our own experience. In particular, we have had enthusiastic responses from our students, but especially from our work with managers from all functions, levels, industries and now across vastly different cultures, for example, Europe to Asia Pacific to the Middle East to North and South America.

Through our Leadership Institute at the University of Nebraska, we are involved with not only a number of POB and PsyCap basic research studies, but also large scale applications in education, correctional services, military, health care, retail, aerospace, manufacturing, insurance, banking, and international business. Many of these applications represent field experiments where we are testing the conceptual models put forth by ourselves and our colleagues. However, we hasten to add that like positive psychology, there is obviously skepticism about POB, which we believe is an appropriate stage in the research inquiry process where any new wine or old wine in new bottles are introduced into the literature (e.g., see Fineman, 2006; George, 2004).

Another lesson coming from positive psychologists Peterson and Seligman (2003, p. 8) includes countering cynical colleagues' accusation of "the study of fluff" and "the inability of people to report on it with fidelity" by pointing out to them that social desirability issues are in their words "hardly a nuisance variable when one studies what is socially desirable." They also say to remind skeptical colleagues that positive social science is still science and they therefore should not have a problem with the scientific method, which is foundational to how we define what constitutes POB (we will go into our precise meanings of POB and PsyCap below).

Peterson and Seligman (2003, p. 27) conclude their lessons learned in building the positive approach in organizational behavior with the caveat to be sure to "have fun in the process." Like these positive psychologists, we are truly being inspired by discovering through science the power that positive constructs seem to have on outcomes in the workplace and especially how they apply to our emerging work in the area of authentic leadership and its development (Avolio & Luthans, 2006). Although we expect colleagues to be questioning or even critical of "something new," or at least "something with a new label," we advocate following the core proposition in Fredrickson's (2001) "broaden and build theory." She suggests that maintaining a more positive to negative ratio, in terms of how we critique work, as we indicated earlier will lead to greater inquiry versus advocacy, thus broadening and building. We again emphasize this inquiry mode coming from a positive perspective is the approach we have chosen in this point-counterpoint discussion with the hope of expanding knowledge (i.e., broaden and build) on positive organizational behavior.

Old Wine, Old Bottles but Perhaps a New Restaurant

One of the most interesting and informative point-counterpoint exchanges in recent years in all of psychology was when Lazarus (2003a), widely recognized as one of the most influential psychologists in the history of the field, wrote as his last article a scathing criticism of the emerging field of positive psychology. Most of the recognized scholars in the field of positive psychology then responded to Lazarus' target article in point-counterpoint fashion. Although critical on almost every dimension, Lazarus started by declaring that positive psychology makes "the spurious claim of being new, but, in reality, in one form or another, it is thousands of years old" (Lazarus, 2003a, p. 94).

The positive psychologists did not challenge the notion of being thousands of years old, but they did challenge the notion that they had failed to recognize that from the outset. Specifically, in their seminal article Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000, p. 13) clearly stated, "We well recognize that positive psychology is not a new idea. It has many distinguished ancestors, and we make no claim of originality." Then in subsequent writings in the ensuing years, many of today's positive psychologists have dutifully noted not only the ancient philosophers, but also pioneering psychologists such as William James on the importance of "healthy mindedness" over a hundred years ago, Allport's call to investigate positive characteristics such as courage and wisdom over 50 years ago, Maslow's advocacy

for the "direct study of healthy rather than sick people" and prophetically the chapter in his 1954 classic book on *Motivation and Personality* titled "Toward a Positive Psychology."

In addition to the early positive contributions, the present scholarly leaders' own research goes back many years (e.g., Diener has over 20 years of work on happiness, Scheier and Carver over 20 years on optimism, Csikszentmihalyi over 15 years on flow, and Snyder over 10 years on hope). In other words, positive psychology has never claimed to be new or ignore its history. However, as Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000, p. 13) also said from the beginning when referring to the many distinguished ancestors, they "somehow failed to attract a cumulative, empirical body of research to ground their ideas" and Peterson and Park (2003, p. 144) declared that, "Positive psychology has a unique identity and makes novel contributions that go beyond its ancestry distant and immediate."

This concern for "what's new" as far as POB is concerned is probably even more pronounced than what is found in positive psychology, and we would add, justifiably so. Why? There is little argument that since its inception, the field of organizational behavior has been more positive than psychology in general, and, of course, for sure clinical psychology where most of the concern for too much negativity has been focused. Although a 16 negative to 1 positive ratio has been found for articles published in the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007), we would take the position that as a field of inquiry, OB tends to be more positive than negative. This position would be supported by the fact that the founding fathers such as Maslow or McGregor tended to be very positively and humanistically oriented in theory, research and practice. Moreover, many of the personality, motivation, attitude, and leadership constructs that dominate the OB field in terms of research interest and application are mostly positive. For example, Fineman's (2006, p. 272) critical review of positive organizational studies notes that "current renditions of positiveness reinvent many of the spokes of the traditional positive wheel."

It is important to note that the first article introducing POB did acknowledge that OB has had positive constructs since the beginning (e.g., the first sentence in the 2002 article states: "Since the very beginning of the academic field of organizational behavior (OB) at the Hawthorne Works of the Western Electric Company, a clear relationship between positive feelings of employees and their performance has been recognized," Luthans, 2002b, p. 57). In other words, even though POB in some ways is either "old wine in old bottles or old wine in newer bottles," we would argue that POB is still being examined today in what may be called a "new restaurant." What we mean by this metaphor is that even though workplace positive notions are certainly not new, the environmental context and positive constructs in POB are generally quite different from the past and that in and of itself warrants inquiry (not advocacy).

Clearly, few would argue that the days of the Hawthorne studies or when Maslow and McGregor developed their positive approaches in the 1950s and 1960s was similar to what we are embedded in today in terms of organizational environments. One simply has to consider the impact of "global context," "virtual interactions" and the flexibility associated with where and how one works. Yet, this is also not to say there are still factories that look just like the old Western Electric plant in the U.S. and the rest of the world and unfortunately are producing much of the same pollution and difficult conditions for employee motivation and development.

Perhaps Roberts (2006, pp. 292–293) stated our view best when she said that POB and POS "categorizes previous research and provides an organizing frame for current and future research on positive states, outcomes, and generative mechanisms." She also goes on to say that this represents a paradigm shift in the field of inquiry, which we believe still remains very open to dialogue and future theory-building and research. We would suggest that the reader consider that POB may be a type of "new restaurant with perhaps a familiar menu." It can accommodate not only old positive wine, but also contemporary positive constructs as well. From the introduction of POB on, we have always recog-

nized the value of traditional positive "constructs such as positive reinforcement, positive affect and emotion, and even humor" (Luthans, 2002a, p. 698), but also the need to address underrepresented positive constructs in the OB field such as hope, optimism, and resiliency.

We believe it is important to aggressively pursue research on positive constructs, because like it or not, the practitioners are doing so and too often are advocating concepts, methods and interventions with no proven validity. As scientist-practitioners, we believe we can add considerably to the practice community's discussion of these important positive constructs as well as their effective application. In doing so, we may be able to add to just the practitioner label, the perception and reality of becoming practitioner-scientists. This could be done by showing practitioners how to interpret validation work, and then how to appropriately test these constructs in the work place. We may have a unique opportunity to not only consolidate the focus of the OB field on POB as an important area of inquiry, but also to get the practice communities' attention as well.

Another feature of our POB restaurant metaphor, besides the new context and serving underrepresented positive constructs, is that POB is accommodating and attracting many related, but still underutilized disciplinary foci in OB research. Indeed, POB is providing the stimulus for a more multidisciplinary approach to both research and practice. For example, both POB and POS are attracting research and application, not only from positive psychology (Luthans & Youssef, 2009; Peterson & Seligman, 2003), but also "medical research (health building and wellness), social work (community asset building), political science (peace building), and education (character building)" (Roberts, 2006, p. 293). As a specific example, the editors of this special issue drew a lot of their own work in POB from the health field (e.g., see Quick, Gavin, Cooper, & Quick, 2004; Quick, Macik-Frey, & Cooper, 2007; Wright, Cropanzano, Bonett, & Diamond, 2009, this issue). Consequently, another value added dimension of integrating the work around POB is that it spans across a wide range of multidisciplinary contexts.

In total, without wearing the metaphors too thin, we feel that POB does recognize and account for previous positivity in OB, but again taking the lead from the research by Fredrickson (2001), we also believe this current positive approach simply "broadens and builds" OB. It does not in any way intend to replace OB or diminish the importance of previous positive, or past or current negatively oriented, work in the field. After now setting the stage, we need to step back and take a look at how POB was introduced to our literature.

First-Hand Account of How POB Came About

Again, recognizing there are many separate streams converging into what could be called positive organizational behavior or positive organizational scholarship (e.g., see Bernstein, 2003 for first hand accounts from some of the recognized founders of POS), to inquire about the "what" and especially the "why" of POB, we share a first hand account that the first author Luthans experienced several years ago:

> As indicated, I first used the term positive organizational behavior (Luthans, 2002a, 2002b) to simply introduce and carry-over to our field what had recently emerged as positive psychology (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). At that time, to my knowledge, this term positive organizational behavior or POB to represent a framework or an approach to the field had not been used in the published literature. At about the same time these articles on POB came out, one of the 55 chapters (Turner, Barling, & Zachartos, 2002) in the *Handbook of Positive Psychology* (Snyder & Lopez, 2002) was on "Positive Psychology at Work" and a year later Cameron, Dutton, and Quinn (2003) introduced pos-

itive organizational scholarship (POS) and Wright (2003) declared that POB was indeed "An idea whose time has truly come."

My intent was certainly not to claim discovery of the importance of positivity in the workplace in general or the field of organizational behavior in particular. Rather, the spark that lit my passion for writing those initial articles on POB had come from my attending the first Positive Psychology Summit held in Lincoln, Nebraska in 1999. I was there because of my association with the Gallup Organization, which has promoted strength-based consulting for many years, and had hosted this first Summit. I heard first hand Marty Seligman, Ed Diener, Mike Csikszentmihalyi (where I was told to pronounce his name "cheeks sent me high") and a few others through a series of papers and discussions outline the beginning of positive psychology. I realized at the time they were primarily concerned about the predominant negativity associated with the mental health field (or as they said should be rightly labeled the mental illness field) in their call for a new (or at least a renewed) focus on what was right with people in terms of their character strengths and traits that make life not only worth living, but also allow people to thrive and flourish. Diener related his long time research on subjective well-being (a.k.a. happiness), Csikszentmihalyi introduced me to his considerable work on flow, and Seligman forcefully reissued his charge he made the year before at his APA presidential address for the need for a positive psychology. I was not part of this group, but because of my past work and strong belief in the power of positive reinforcement and at the time self-efficacy, I grasped the relevance and importance of what I was hearing about for the first time (remember this was a year before positive psychology was introduced in the literature in the 2000 *American Psychologist* special issue).

This inaugural (and subsequent) Positive Psychology Summit was held at Gallup largely because of Don Clifton. Although now deceased, Don at that time headed the firm best known for its polls, but well over 90 percent of its business involves management consulting and workplace development. A former professor at Nebraska (before my time), Don has been recognized (formerly by an APA Presidential commendation) as the father of strength-based psychology, thus the natural connection of sponsoring the Positive Psychology Summits. However, despite this context of a management consulting firm, the presentations and reported research findings at this first meeting had virtually nothing to do with the workplace. They made no attempt (except for a few passing comments to keep the Gallup folks involved) to make the transfer or explicitly state the implications that positive psychology had for the workplace. These were experimental, social, developmental, and clinical (i.e., not organizational) research psychologists. However, I clearly saw the implications for the workplace and the important role that basic research must play. I left the conference excited and determined to carry the message of positive psychology to the OB field—thus, positive organizational behavior and my intent of writing the two articles that came out in 2002.

Our Meaning of POB

We hope that this brief historical digression will shed some light on where at least our meaning of positive organizational behavior is coming from and that the roots are embedded in positive psychology. Thus, in the initial article POB is carefully defined as "the study and application of positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement in today's workplace" (Luthans, 2002b, p. 59). The very next sentence following this definition recognizes that such a definition seems to incorporate "many existing concepts from the domains of attitudes, personality, motivation, and leadership" (Luthans, 2002b, p. 59). But then this article and the closely followed JOB article (Luthans, 2002a) spells

out the specific criteria that makes POB different from traditional positively oriented OB, positive psychology, and the positive popular self-help, personal development literature. Again, our specific inclusion criteria for POB are the following:

1. Must be based on theory, research, and valid measurement;
2. Must be "state-like" (as opposed to more fixed "trait-like") and thus be open to development; and
3. Must have performance impact.

Of course, one might argue that each of the above criteria can apply to many general OB constructs. We would not necessarily disagree with that premise. However, our goal was to bring constructs that had either been overlooked or not well researched into the focal vision of the OB field, and felt we had the opportunity to state the best conditions for doing so from the outset. These POB "must have" criteria are featured in all our research and writings in terms of articulating exactly what we mean by POB and thus how it is differentiated from other positive constructs and approaches.

Briefly, the first criterion was chosen in part to differentiate POB from the popular positively oriented self-help, personal development literature (i.e., Norman Vincent Peale's power of positive thinking, Covey's seven habits, or Tony Robbin's positive message on a TV infomercial). This vital scientific criterion comes from both positive psychology and the hallowed traditions in the study of OB. Without the scientific criterion we would have no sustainability and credibility for POB as an academic pursuit or for evidence-based practice.

The second criterion of "state-like" development is the one most often forgotten, ignored or misrepresented in discussions and criticism of at least our version of POB. The mission of our Leadership Institute at the University of Nebraska is evidence-based leadership development (by the way this includes leaders, followers, peers, teams, organizations, communities, and even societies). This state-like criterion was also a way of differentiating our work in POB from what the Gallup Organization was doing with largely fixed strengths and talents, the positive psychologists major concern with character virtues and traits, and traditional OB's positive constructs being mostly trait- like personality, self-evaluations, affect, and motives.

Now, 6 years later, we are more convinced than ever that the state-like nature of the positive constructs we study is not only a vital differentiating criterion, but also offers the biggest challenge to our theory-building and research methods. Why? In part, the challenge is defining what constitutes a state, what is state-like, what is trait-like but not an immutable trait, and how do each differ in terms of operationally defining, construct validating and measuring? Moreover, if one accepts that there has not been sufficient attention accorded to studying the criteria-meeting POB constructs, the situation is even worse for trying to intervene and manipulate them, which is why we felt it was important to emphasize states that can be changed and developed in terms of our research stream focus. What ultimately matters to the practitioner, or hopefully practitioner-scientist, is whether we can change these state-like positive psychological resources to improve the human and organizational condition. This challenge represents a very important dimension of our passion for exploring POB.

Finally, the performance impact criterion is used to differentiate POB from both the popular self-development literature and positive psychology itself. When taken literally, this criterion may seem too limiting for research inquiry into POB. However, the intent is to merely have the endpoint be performance impact in order to differentiate POB from becoming an end in itself (as is much of positive psychology). Yet, in addition to performance per se, there are many other antecedents, moderators, mediators, and a wide variety of dependent variables and outcomes (including negative ones that we will speak to later) that are considered within this defined domain of POB.

What Is PsyCap?

Psychological capital or simply PsyCap is an outgrowth of POB and is defined as being, "an individual's positive psychological state of development characterized by: (1) having confidence (self efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering toward goals, and when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resilience) to attain success" (Luthans, Youssef et al., 2007, p. 3). The reader will note that each of these constructs has appeared in prior psychology literature, and to some degree, especially with respect to efficacy, in the OB literature. Nevertheless, we labeled these resources psychological capital in an effort to bring more attention to these four constructs (i.e., efficacy, optimism, hope, and resiliency) that best met our criteria and we felt required much more attention in the OB or POB literature.

The concept of PsyCap has been both theoretically (Luthans, Youssef et al., 2007) and empirically demonstrated to be a measurable second-order, core construct that accounts for more variance in employee performance and satisfaction than the four positive constructs that make it up (Luthans, Avolio et al., 2007). This is an area of inquiry that has proven to be unique to both the positive psychology and POB literature. Although we subsequently found that Csikszentmihalyi (2003) used the term a couple of times in his book *Good Business* and a Google search found it embedded in an economics article on wages in 1997, to our knowledge with our colleague Carolyn Youssef we were the first to introduce PsyCap to the OB field in our 2004 articles and then the first book (Luthans, Youssef et al., 2007) and research article (Luthans, Avolio et al., 2007) in which we offered validation evidence for this higher order construct and its measure.

Our aim in labeling this "capital" was also related to the idea that there is considerable attention in workplace research being given to economic, social, human and even intellectual capital, but to our knowledge the positive resources we associate with psychological capital has not yet received considerable interest or inquiry, other than in the popular (but not theory and research based) self help literature. In labeling it PsyCap, we suggested that there was a common conceptual thread running through the four components characterized as a "positive appraisal of circumstances and probability for success based on motivated effort and perseverance" (Luthans, Avolio et al., 2007, p. 550).

The four POB criteria meeting constructs of efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience synergistically coalesce into the core factor of PsyCap that goes beyond what has been commonly portrayed in the human resources management literature as human capital (Luthans, Luthans, & Luthans, 2004; Luthans & Youssef, 2004). We then proceeded to apply the POB criteria noted above by developing a valid measure of PsyCap that could be applied to the work context (the PCQ-24, see Luthans, Avolio et al., 2007 and Luthans, Youssef et al., 2007 for the full measure), while then showing its performance impact (Luthans, Avolio et al., 2007; Luthans, Norman, Avolio, & Avey, 2008). Studies using the measure have included a very broad range of samples including virtually every level and function of employees in a wide variety of organizations as well as from cross-cultural contexts (e.g., U.S., Australia, China, India, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, and countries in Europe (e.g., see Luthans, Avey, Clapp-Smith, & Li, 2008).

PsyCap is what would be considered a distinct higher-order construct (Judge, Van Viamen, & DePater, 2004; Schwab, 1980) and has satisfied the POB criteria for not only being based on theory, research and measurement, but also being state-like. However, convincing our colleagues that PsyCap is state-like has been challenging because all four constructs that make it up have been portrayed in the positive psychology literature as being both trait-like and state-like. For example, although Bandura clearly has established self-efficacy as being a state, generalized efficacy is not. The same is true

of hope, optimism, and resilience, in that there is literature representing them as dispositional and trait- like and other literature indicating they are state-like and open to development.

The same issue has been true of the strengths and virtues literature in positive psychology. Seligman and colleagues set the criterion of inclusion of being "trait-like, an individual difference with demonstrable generality and stability" (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005, p. 411), but then emphasize the importance of learned optimism and situational happiness (Seligman, 1998, 2002). We have tried to resolve this seeming paradox through a continuum perspective of states to traits, with PsyCap being positioned as mid-range "state-like." Also, as an empirical research question, in our initial study we found PsyCap to be relatively more stable over time on test–retest reliabilities after disattenuating for internal reliability than the recognized traits of conscientiousness and core self- evaluations, but not as unstable as positive emotions (Luthans, Avolio et al., 2007). There is obviously more research needed on this stability of PsyCap over time and that is why we have issued a call for more longitudinal research in a recent article in *Journal of Organizational Behavior* (Avey, Luthans, & Mhatre, 2008).

Actually testing the developmental interventions geared towards changing levels of PsyCap have been both interesting and encouraging. Once again drawing from the work mainly done in clinical and development psychology on developing efficacy, hope, optimism, and resiliency, we put together a short training workshop that we labeled a micro-intervention model due to the brevity of its duration, for example, <3 hours. The model for this micro-intervention and its description was provided in a *Journal of Organizational Behavior* incubation article (see Luthans, Avey, Avolio, Norman, & Combs, 2006) and in our book (Luthans, Youssef et al., 2007) and, as mentioned earlier, has been shown to significantly increase on-line training participants' level of PsyCap compared to a randomly assigned control group that received a next best type of training exercise (Luthans, Avey, & Patera, 2008). We also have successfully demonstrated that PsyCap can be developed in face-to-face short training modules with a wide variety of samples, with subsequent performance impact (Luthans, Avey, Avolio, & Peterson, 2008).

Importantly, using actual data for the utility analysis of a 2.5 hours PsyCap training program with $100,900 average salary engineering managers yielded a 270 per cent return on investment, or what we call return on development (ROD) (see Luthans, Avey et al., 2006; Luthans, Youssef et al., 2007). Although such utility analysis may be open for criticism on the assumptions that are made (e.g., see Latham & Whyte, 2004), as are the financial calculations for any ROI, the evidence so far indicates PsyCap can be developed and there seems to be a very high return on such an investment in terms of employee performance improvement.

How Do POB and PsyCap Differ from POS?

Finally, how do POB and PsyCap as outlined above differ from positive organizational scholarship (POS, see Cameron & Caza, 2004; Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003)? POS is simply defined as "the study of that which is positive, flourishing, and life giving in organizations" (Cameron & Caza, 2004, p. 731). The criteria for inclusion in POS breaks down the acronym into the following: (1) Positive—the elevating processes and outcomes in organizations; (2) Organizational—the interpersonal and structural dynamics, the context in which the positive phenomena occur; and (3) Scholarship—the scientific, theoretically derived, and rigorous investigation of that which is positive in organizational settings (Cameron & Caza, 2004).

From this POS definition, there is obvious overlap with our scientific criterion of POB. In other words, we all agree in the positive movement that the scientific process is essential to accumulating

meaningful understanding and evidence-based practice. However, although POS gives some attention to the individual and interpersonal levels and POB is moving toward team and organizational levels, a major difference between POS and POB is that POS is more concerned with the organizational level of analysis (e.g., see Cameron & Levine, 2006), while POB is more concerned with micro and mesolevels. Also, the POB state-like and performance impact criteria are not specifically required for POS.

POB utilizes the previously discussed state-trait continuum as a central part of its conceptual framework. POS, on the other hand, features a deviance continuum (negative to normal to positive). POS departs from the tradition of bringing individuals and organizations from negative to normal and instead focuses on moving from normal to positive deviance. For example, in the field of human relations, traditionally the focus has been on bringing negatively deviant, harmful and toxic relations to normal helpfulness and support. In POS, the goal is to move from this normal level to positive deviance of caring, empathetic and even honoring human relationships. In the so called "abundance approach" in POS, rather than just solving problems and attaining goals, attention shifts to resilience, flourishing, and vitality. The goal is to "make the impossible, possible." Although not explicitly the aim of POS, Cameron and his colleagues have found a relationship between abundance scores (compassion, forgiveness, etc.) and organizational performance (Cameron & Levine, 2006).

Beyond POS, given the strict sense that we have operationally defined POB, again we fully realize there are different perspectives, approaches and constructs within what is referred to as positive organizational behavior or POB. For example, in the introduction to the first edited volume on POB, Nelson and Cooper (2007, p. 4) note they "were struck by the variance in the many perspectives and points of view, and the many agendas within the field. Some chapters use positive psychology as their point of departure; some use Luthans' perspective on POB; and still others use POS." The same is true for this current collection of articles for the special issue. As Wright and Quick (2009, this issue) point out in their introductory article, the contributors are quite varied in terms of background and perspective. Like the editors of both the POB book and this special issue, we certainly welcome this variance. In another 5 years, the what and why of POB will undoubtedly still need to be clarified, but through the common bond of theory, research and valid measurement, we are also sure that there will be better understanding and effective application of positive organizational behavior as a whole.

The Role of the Negative

Besides the FAQs concerning what is new about POB and how it differs from other positive approaches, another frequent question in our inquiry revolves around the role of the negative. As in positive psychology, there has never been any intent in POB to replace the concern or diminish the importance of the negative (or neutral) aspects of the field. Yet, like the continuing question about what is new, the questions and concerns for the role of the negative continues. As in the Lazarus (2003b, p. 173) criticism where he declares "positive psychology makes a false dichotomy out of the positive and negative rather than integrating them," similar concerns are also expressed with POB (Fineman, 2006).

Some positive psychologists have gotten into an "I said — he said" type of defensive posture and emphasize from the beginning they have taken the position that not everything worth studying should be positive. They instead argue that what is positive is as genuine as what is negative and there is simply a need for more balance in researching both the negative and the positive (e.g., Peterson & Park, 2003, 2004). They view positive psychology "merely as a normal science supplement to the hard won gains of 'negative' psychology" (Seligman & Pawelski, 2003, p. 162). We believe it is not constructive

to simply take an advocacy position on positive or negative. Again, following Fredrickson's lead, we feel such advocacy oftentimes deters deeper inquiry (see Fredrickson & Losada, 2005) as we have attempted to at least model here.

We think it is important to recognize from theory and research that a focus on the negative will not by default take care of the positive (or importantly vice versa). For example, there is evidence that positive affect and negative affect are largely independent of one another (Watson, Clark, & Carey, 1988) and although optimism and pessimism may be semantic opposites, they have been found to not always be psychological opposites (Chang, D'Zurilla, & Maydeu-Olivares, 1994). In other words, if the negatives (the deficits) are absent or fixed, this does not automatically lead to the positives (or in POS terms, positive deviance and abundance).

Fredrickson's (2003) research demonstrates that positivity (e.g., feeling good), does far more than just signal the absence of the negative (e.g., fear or threats). She concludes from basic research studies that positivity "can transform people for the better, making them more optimistic, resilient and socially connected" and positivity may even undo the lingering effects of the negative (Fredrickson, 2003, p. 334).

Relation to Authentic Leadership

In our first joint article as authors (Luthans & Avolio, 2003) in the edited book on POS (Cameron et al., 2003) we attempted to establish early linkages between research that was emerging in POB and PsyCap and what we referred to as authentic leadership development. As indicated in our introductory comments, much of the work in leadership, as the work in OB in general, focused on positive and negative constructs. However, both leadership scholars and consultants largely examined how to develop ways to fix leaders as opposed to positively accelerate development. The field of leadership development was commonly focusing on negative events and life experiences (e.g., losing a job, having a heart attack) and how these had forged individuals somehow into leaders (Avolio, 2005). Although we certainly thought this work was important, there was relatively little work on the less dramatic and especially the positive events/experiences that perhaps also "genuinely" shaped leadership development.

As we were doing with the positive approach in OB, our goal in this initiative was to bring into focus what constituted authentic leadership development. We made the call for a renewed focus on what positively accelerated leadership development, not unlike what the human relations movement had called for nearly 50 years ago. We deliberately used terms like "authentic" because we were interested in discovering the very basic, genuine elements of positive leadership development. Indeed, we called authentic leadership a positive root construct in an attempt to signal to the field that this was the core that constituted the basis for positive forms of leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), and proposed that POB constructs were both an input and an outcome of authentic leadership development (Luthans & Avolio, 2003).

Paralleling the emergence of POB, in 2004 we held a summit for leadership scholars in Nebraska through our Leadership Institute to focus on what constituted authentic leadership and its development. Like the positive psychology summits, this was done in conjunction with the Gallup Organization given its emerging interest in our POB and leadership work. In the summary session ending the first leadership summit, the second author Avolio observed that the focus on authentic leadership was perhaps the oldest wine of all, again even in an old bottle called leadership. However, the context in which we were now investigating authentic leadership and its development had certainly changed. The goal of the authentic leadership initiative was to understand what truly shaped positive develop-

ment in leaders and also followers, teams, organizations, communities and entire societies. This summit produced two integrative summaries of this work in the form of an edited volume as well as a special issue of *The Leadership Quarterly* (see Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2005).

Over the course of the last few years, new theoretical models have emerged focusing on what constituted authentic leadership and its development. Paralleling the research on PsyCap, a recently published investigation offers substantial empirical evidence that authentic leadership also represents a higher-order construct comprised of the following four component constructs: self awareness, balanced decision-making, transparency and ethical moral reasoning that can be validly measured (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008). This series of studies have indicated that there was convergent validity with similar constructs such as transformational and ethical leadership, yet the authentic leadership construct was also discriminantly valid or unique in terms of its relationship with other constructs and with respect to predicting performance.

The point of bringing in this brief background on our work with authentic leadership development is to show how the perspective and findings of POB may be related to other relevant work. Specifically, we now are working to bring these two research streams together with the goal of exploring how we can tie POB constructs and positive orientations towards leadership to accelerating the development of leadership for higher performance impact in organizations (e.g., see Norman, Avolio, & Luthans, in press). We believe that joining these two areas of inquiry together has resulted in a very unique initiative, which had not emerged in either the OB or leadership fields.

Summary and Conclusion

We appreciate the opportunity to make an inquiry into some major questions about positive organizational behavior at this early stage of its development. Following the scientific findings of positivity, we have tried to take a more effective inquiry rather than advocacy approach throughout the discussion. Hopefully we have raised some of the more important questions that need to be further examined, reviewed the lessons that have been learned from the progress in positive psychology, and have inquired about what has been new about POB and how it differs from other positive approaches. We also have tried to show the role of the negative and how POB links to the emerging work in authentic leadership development.

In conclusion, as we indicated at the start, we feel that this inquiry mode of viewing a positive demarcation in the field of organizational behavior has not only addressed some of the FAQs, but also contributed to better understanding of what POB is and the contributions it may make. The aspirational goal of our field of OB, as well as now POB, is bettering the human condition in order to thrive and grow as well as making individuals, groups, organizations, and societies more effective.

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