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The need for and meaning of positive organizational behavior

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Abstract

This essay draws from the emerging positive psychology movement and the author's recent articles on the need for and meaning of a positive approach to organizational behavior. Specifically, the argument is made that at this time, the OB field needs a proactive, positive approach emphasizing strengths, rather than continuing in the downward spiral of negativity trying to fix weaknesses. However, to avoid the surface positivity represented by the non-sustainable best-sellers, the case is made for positive organizational behavior (POB) to take advantage of the OB field's strength of being theory and research driven. Additional criteria for this version of POB are to identify unique, state-like psychological capacities that can not only be validly measured, but also be open to development and performance management. Confidence, hope, and resiliency are offered as meeting such POB inclusion criteria. The overall intent of the essay is to generate some positive thinking and excitement for the OB field and 'hopefully' stimulate some new theory building, research, and effective application.

Introduction

Being a member of the first generation of organizational behavior scholars, I have watched in awe and pride over the years as our field has become increasingly sophisticated in terms of research methodology and analysis. At the same time, however, I am amazed at the dearth of new core concepts or new perspectives/approaches to the

old concepts. Notice that I said core concepts (e.g., work motivation, job attitudes, or organizational leadership), because there are obviously a number of exciting new OB-related variables being researched (e.g., see articles in JOB).

As an example of the concern for the lack of development of core concepts, Steers (2002, p. 146) recently noted that 'by the early 1990s, intellectual interest in the development of work motivation theories—at least as measured by journal publications—has seemed to decline precipitously.' Yet, I am even more disturbed by the wildly enthusiastic reception that first Ken Blanchard's One Minute Manager, then Steven Covey's Seven Habits, and now Spencer Johnson's Who Moved My Cheese, all dealing with OB topics, but with no theoretical development or any research back-up, has received from practicing professional managers. In the mean time, the chasm between OB theory and research and real-world application seems to be ever widening.

Although I am sure not everyone agrees with this negative assessment of the OB field and important exceptions can be readily pointed out, I for one did become upset with how things were going and the lack of progress being made. Then swirling in my own negativity, I became aware of the emerging positive psychology movement. I became aware of this development in academic psychology from my association (as a senior research scientist) with the Gallup Organization (the well-known polling firm that now has over 90 per cent of its world-wide business in management consulting and workplace development). The Gallup consulting practice is based on identifying and managing employee strengths (see the empirically based professional books by Gallup practice leaders Buckingham and Coffman (1999) and Buckingham and Clifton (2001)). Importantly, Gallup also sponsored the first Positive Psychology Conference three years ago. The papers presented at this and the subsequent academic conferences under the general leadership of internationally recognized research psychologists Martin Seligman and Ed Diener, provided a 'eureka' for me of how this positive approach could be taken to organizational behavior. This is what I had been searching for—a theory and research-driven new perspective and approach to our old OB concepts and some new and exciting core concepts such as confidence, hope, optimism, happiness, and resiliency. This positive psychology movement seemed to have considerable relevance to the workplace and potentially may have the type of commonsense appeal that the best sellers were having in

the professional management marketplace of ideas and possible solutions to current challenges.

Besides providing this brief background on my perceived need for a new, positive approach to OB, the purpose of this essay is to give a brief overview of the positive psychology movement in general and the meaning of at least my version of positive organizational behavior. Finally, I will attempt to chart where we need to go from here in terms of theory-building and research that will lead to effectively implementing positive organizational behavior in today's workplace.

The Positive Psychology Movement

Seligman (1998a, 1998c, 1999; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) is generally recognized to be the main proselytizer—the spearhead of today's positive psychology movement. Like most psychologists, he had spent his career researching and being concerned with what is wrong with people, human frailties and weaknesses (e.g., his famous studies on learned helplessness). Shortly after being elected president of the American Psychological Association a few years ago, he claims an epiphany occurred when his young daughter said to him: 'When I turned five, I decided not to whine anymore. That was the hardest thing I've ever done. And if I can stop whining, you can stop being such a grouch' (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 6). Seligman suddenly realized that raising children, or studying people in general, is much more than just concentrating on and trying to fix what is wrong with them (i.e., his daughter's whining or people's pathologies and dysfunctions). Instead, 'it is about identifying and nurturing their strongest qualities, what they own and are best at, and helping them find niches in which they can best live out these strengths' (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 6).

Fifty years ago, psychology's recognized mission was not only to help the mentally ill, but also make the lives of people more productive and fulfilling and to identify and nurture talented, gifted people (e.g., the widely known early work of Terman, Jung, & Maslow). However, after World War II, mainly driven by employment opportunities in clinical psychology for treating the mentally ill and funding for experimental psychologists from the National Institute of Mental Health (that Seligman suggests should be renamed the National Institute of

Mental Illness), the field almost totally shifted to a negative approach. Clinical psychologists gave almost all of their attention to the diagnosis and treatment of pathologies, and social psychology became preoccupied with biases, delusions, deficiencies and dysfunctions of human behavior. For example, a search of contemporary literature in psychology as a whole found approximately 200 000 published articles on the treatment of mental illness; 80 000 on depression; 65 000 on anxiety; 20 000 on fear; and 10 000 on anger; but only about 1000 on positive concepts and capabilities of people. Even the training and perspective of psychologists in modern times has been based on a reductionist epistemological tradition. Over the years the tendency has been to view positivity with doubt and suspicion—a product of wishful thinking, denial, or even 'hucksterism' (Sheldon & King, 2001, p. 216).

Led by Seligman and a core group of other well known research-oriented positive psychologists such as Ed Diener (2000), Christopher Peterson (2000), and Rick Snyder (2000), the aim of positive psychology is to shift the emphasis away from what is wrong with people to what is right with people— to focus on strengths (as opposed to weaknesses), to be interested in resilience (as opposed to vulnerability), and to be concerned with enhancing and developing wellness, prosperity and the good life (as opposed to the remediation of pathology). Unlike the popular 'feel good' positive approaches of the past, such as Norman Vincent Peale's famous message of the 'power of positive thinking', or the recent best-sellers by Covey and Spencer Johnson, positive psychology follows its heritage of insisting on sound theory and research before moving on to application and practice. The levels of analysis have been summarized by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) to be at the subjective level (i.e., positive subjective experience such as well being and contentment with the past, flow and happiness in the present, and hope and optimism into the future); the micro, individual level (i.e., positive traits such as the capacity for love, courage, aesthetic sensibility, perseverance, forgiveness, spirituality, high talent, and wisdom); and the macro group and institutional level (i.e., positive civic virtues and the institutions that move individuals toward better citizenship such as responsibility, altruism, civility, moderation, tolerance, and a strong work ethic).

The reception to this positive approach to psychology, especially post 11 September 2001, by both academics and knowledgeable others has been spectacular. For example, there have been unprecedented

back-to-back year's special issues devoted to positive psychology in the *American Psychologist* (January 2000, March 2001) and also the Winter 2001 *Journal of Humanistic Psychology.* Gallup's consulting business, based on the positive psychology ideals of identifying and managing employee strengths (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001), and also including the demand for solid research backup (e.g., see Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002), is booming, even in the economic downturn of the past couple of years.

As a long time researcher and writer, and my association with Gallup, I have found in the positive psychology movement what I was looking for to get me out of my own negativity with the OB field. In the remainder of this essay I will try to articulate this new-found enthusiasm, my positivity if you will, about the impact that positive psychology can have for the OB field and its application to develop and improve leadership effectiveness and employee performance.

Implications for Organizational Behavior

I have recently in other articles made the case for and suggested the implications of positive psychology for organizational behavior (Luthans, 2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2003; Luthans & Jensen, 2002a, 2002b) and leadership (Luthans, Luthans, Hodgetts, & Luthans, 2002; Luthans & Stajkovic, 2003). I have taken a micro-level of analysis concentrating on state-like strengths and positive capacities that can be developed and managed for performance improvement in the workplace. Other emerging positive approaches are at the trait-like positive personality level of analysis (e.g., Judge, Erez, & Bono, 1998; Judge & Bono, 2001) and more macro level of analysis (e.g., see the University of Michigan's positive organization scholarship group's focus on strength-building elements in organization such as compassion, forgiveness, dignity, respectful encounters, integrity and virtue—see their website: www.bus.umich.edu/positiveorganizationalscholarship and their upcoming book—Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003).

There has been an implicit truism in the organizational behavior field through the years of the relationship between positive feelings of employees and their performance (e.g., Staw, 1986) with some research back up (Staw, Sutton, & Pelled, 1994; Wright & Staw, 1999). Also, specific attention has been given to the value of constructs such

as positive reinforcement, positive affect and emotion, and even humor. However, similar to the field of psychology, I would argue that the general perspective and relative attention in OB has been characterized more by negativity than by positivity. For example, more attention has been given to negative as opposed to positive affectivity, stress and burnout as opposed to eustress, resistance to change as opposed to acceptance/celebration of change, and the deficiencies, problems and dysfunctions of managers and employees rather than their strengths and psychological capacities for development and performance improvement. For example, Robinson and Bennett (1995) developed a typology of deviant work-place behaviors. I would argue in light of today's turbulent environment characterized by economic uncertainty, heightened geopolitical unrest and threats, globalized, 24/7 competition, and never-ending advanced technology, the time has come to follow the lead of psychology and take a proactive positive organizational behavior approach.

Positive Organizational Behavior (POB)

I have defined micro-level, state-like 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, 2002a, p. 59). This definition deliberately includes criteria of being measurable and making a contribution to performance improvement in the workplace. Following the positive psychology movement, the measurement criterion requires POB to have theory and research back-up and thus differentiates it from the surface positivity found in the popular ideas of Peale, Covey or Johnson. The criterion of being related to performance improvement in the workplace differentiates POB from being the simple personal development idea found in the best-sellers and also much of the Michigan group's positive organizational scholarship (POS) which focuses primarily on constructs such as compassion, virtue, and forgiveness as ends in themselves for today's organizations.

The open-to-development criterion of POB is conceptually perhaps the most critical differentiator with positive psychology per se and the other positively oriented concepts of organizational behavior. Specifically, POB as defined here, includes state-like concepts rather than the dispositional, trait-like taxonomy of character or virtues called

for in positive psychology (e.g., see Sandage & Hill, 2001; Seligman, 1999). The development criterion is differentiated in organizational behavior from positively oriented Big Five personality traits, especially conscientiousness (Barrick & Mount, 1991), or the positive core self-evaluation traits of self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control and emotional stability (Judge & Bono, 2001), even though these OB concepts have been demonstrated to be linked to job-performance. Furthermore, the state-like POB is differentiated from the 'hardwired' positive emotions coming from evolutionary and neuropsychology (e.g., see Nicholsen, 1998; Pierce & White, 1999) and the strength-based consulting firm Gallup's overriding concern for natural talent (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999).

Although there is a controversial and perhaps somewhat arbitrary distinction between states and traits (e.g., see Allen & Potkay, 1981) and some psychological constructs (including those in POB) have been shown to be both conceptually and psychometrically state-like and trait-like (Luthans, 2002a), I feel that for application and relevancy to leadership effectiveness and employee performance, POB must go beyond mere employee selection as is offered by the positive traits. As defined here, the POB capabilities are states and thus open to learning, development, change, and management in the workplace. The POB states can be developed through training programs, managed/led on-the-job, or self-developed.

In addition to these definitional criteria of being measurable, open to development (i.e., state-like), and being related to performance improvement in the workplace, I feel to get around the charge of simply pouring old wine into a new POB bottle, the concepts in POB should also be relatively unique to the OB field. Then the question becomes, what psychological capabilities meet such POB criteria?

In a previous article, where I first laid out my version of POB (Luthans, 2002a), confidence (or self-efficacy), hope, optimism, subjective well-being (or happiness), and emotional intelligence (i.e., the acronym CHOSE) were presented as meeting the definitional criteria. With colleagues, I either have or am in the process of developing conference papers, articles and research studies on these POB concepts. Here, I would like to single out the most established, but I believe highest impact, confidence (or self-efficacy); the most unique, but potentially having great impact, hope; and finally a positive psychological capacity that meets the criteria, but I have not yet presented as a POB construct, resiliency.

Confidence as the Best Fit POB Capacity

Bandura's (1997) positive concept of self-efficacy, or I simply choose to call confidence for the purpose of POB, is probably the best known and arguably has the most extensive theoretical foundation and research support, yet is seldom included in discussions of positive psychology. A major reason for this omission is that self-efficacy (not general efficacy) is known as being a state, while as I said before, those in the vanguard of the positive psychology movement are most concerned with dispositional, trait-like characteristics and virtues (e.g., Peterson, 2000; Seligman, 1999), and even evolutionary, genetically encoded 'hard wiring' of enduring personal resources such as positive emotions (e.g., see Fredrickson, 2001). However, it is this state-like nature of self-efficacy that makes such a good fit with my definition of POB. In addition, although not as unique to OB as some of the other concepts such as hope or resiliency, I would argue self-efficacy also best meets the criteria of theory, research and demonstrated impact on leadership effectiveness and employee performance in the workplace (see Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998a, 1998b).

The definition of self-efficacy that is most widely used comes from Bandura's early statement concerning an individual's perceptual judgment or belief of 'how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations' (Bandura, 1982, p. 122). More applicable to POB is our broader definition: 'Self-efficacy refers to an individual's conviction (or confidence) about his or her abilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to successfully execute a specific task within a given context' (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998b, p. 66). Again, the key to this definition is the task and context specificity, or as Bandura declares, 'an efficacy belief is not a decontextualized trait' (Bandura, 1997, p. 42). In other words, confidence can be developed in leaders and employees for specific tasks in given situations.

Like Seligman, Bandura (2002) has recently reacted to the 'mainstream of negativity' in psychology over the years and the attempts to 'biologize psychology' in his call for the 'humanizing of psychology' and 'psychologizing biology' through a positive approach. I would contend that Bandura's extensive work on self-efficacy is such a positive approach. Especially relevant to my prescribed criteria for POB, confidence is not only open to development, but Bandura's (1986, 1997)

rich theory and considerable research support clearly indicates that the more confident the individual:

- The more likely the choice will be made to really get into the task and welcome the challenge;

- The more effort and motivation will be given to successfully accomplish the task; and

- The more persistence there will be when obstacles are encountered or even when there is initial failure.

This profile of a highly confident leader or employee seems ideal for effectiveness and high performance in today's workplace. Indeed, our (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998a) meta-analysis of 114 studies found a stronger relationship between efficacy and work-related performance than other popular OB concepts such as goal setting (Wood, Mento, & Locke, 1987); feedback (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996); job satisfaction (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001); the Big Five personality traits, including conscientiousness (Barrick & Mount, 1991); and my own OB Mod. (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1997).

In addition to performance outcomes, confidence has been shown to positively affect goal aspirations and attainment (Bandura, 2000; Locke & Latham, 1990). This strength and positive psychological capacity has also been shown to have an impact on strategy formulation, entrepreneurial start-ups and managing very difficult situations such as in transitionary economies in post-communist countries (Luthans, Stajkovic, & Ibrayeva, 2000; Peng, 2001).

Perhaps the closest fit of confidence as a POB concept, however, is that Bandura (1997) has specifically identified how confidence can be developed and there are a number of studies demonstrating how efficacy can be effectively trained in the workplace (Bandura, 2000; Combs & Luthans, 2001—paper presented at the Academy of Management, Washington, DC; Gist, 1989; Gist, Bavetta, & Stevens, 1990). In order of importance, confidence can be developed through:(1) mastery experiences or performance attainments; (2) vicarious learning or modelling; (3) positively oriented persuasion or feedback on progress; and (4) physiological and psychological arousal (Bandura, 1997). Each of these are fairly obvious, but they do have important subtleties that need to be recognized in building confidence. For example, it is obvious that previous success builds one's confidence. However, success

should not just be equated with future confidence. Instead, the key to subsequent confidence is how the individual interprets and processes the previous success (e.g., hard-earned through one's own efforts versus being easily handed the success). In the vicarious input, the observer must be able to relate to and identify with the successful model in order to have an impact on building one's own confidence. For example, I can build confidence in my own golf game by observing one of my similar-aged faculty colleagues experience success, but watching Tiger Woods win another Master's, I'm afraid does nothing for the confidence of my game. For both persuasion and physical/psychological arousal, if positive, this helps confidence some, but, if negative, hurts confidence a lot. For example, being physically or psychologically healthy helps one be confident in a number of areas, but being ill or burned-out can have a devastating effect on one's confidence.

In total, the intent here is not to give a comprehensive review of the role of self-efficacy and confidence in the workplace (see Bandura, 2000; Gist, 1987; Luthans, 2002a, 2002b; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998a, 1998b). Instead, I am simply trying to make the case for why confidence, which has been generally ignored by both the traditional OB field and the emerging positive psychology movement, makes such a good fit, at least with my suggested approach, to POB.

Hope as the Most Unique POB Capacity

Whereas self-efficacy/confidence has been presented in the organizational behavior literature and shown to have a strong positive relationship with work-related performance (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998a), to date hope has not. Although used in everyday language, as in 'hope for the best', hope as a positive psychology construct is precisely, operationally defined. Mainly through the theory and research of clinical, positive psychologist C. Rick Snyder, hope is defined as 'a cognitive set that is based on a reciprocally derived sense of successful: (a) agency (goal-directed determination) and (b) pathways (planning of ways to meet goals)' (Snyder et al., 1991, p. 570). It is this duality of both the willpower (agency) and way power (pathways) that sets apart hope as a positive psychological capacity from the common usage of the term and from other conceptually close positive constructs such as self-efficacy or optimism.

In particular, the willpower dimension of hope is similar to efficacy expectancies and the pathway dimension is conceptually close to efficacy outcome expectancies. The difference, however, is that Bandura (1997) would argue that the efficacy expectancies are all-important, while Snyder's (2000) hope theory treats the agency and the pathways as equally important, operating in a combined, iterative manner. The major conceptual difference between hope and optimism is that optimism expectancies are formed through others and forces outside the self (Seligman's, 1998b explanatory attribution style), while Snyder's (2000) hope is initiated and determined through the self. The same analysis can be made of other conceptually similar constructs such as goal setting or positive affectivity. These and others either emphasize the agency or the pathways, but not both equally as does hope. Studies have clearly shown that hope has discriminant validity among positive psychological constructs (Magaletta & Oliver, 1999; Scioli et al., 1997).

Besides the obvious implications that hope has in the clinical psychology and health fields, in recent years there is growing evidence of its positive impact on academic and athletic performance (Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997; Onwuegbuzie & Snyder, 2000). To date, however, hope would be the most unique POB capacity. There is evidence that an individual's level of hope is related to goal expectancies, perceived control, and positive affect (Curr et al., 1997). Also, there is initial research showing those with hope in stressful jobs such as human services do better (Kirk & Koeske, 1995; Simmons & Nelson, 2001; Spencer & Spencer, 1993; Taylor & Brown, 1988), and even a couple of workplace studies that examine the impact on performance (Adams et al., 2002; Peterson & Luthans, 2002). However, relative to the other POB concepts in the CHOSE framework (see Luthans, 2002a), hope has been given the least attention. Yet, because hope meets the POB criteria of being state-like (as well as dispositional, see Snyder, 2000) and thus open to development (see Luthans & Jensen, 2002a for specific human resource developmental guidelines), has a valid measure of 'State Hope' (Snyder et al., 1996), and at least considerable indirect and beginning direct evidence of being related to leadership effectiveness and employee performance, hope would seem to be exactly the type of positive psychological capacity for OB that is needed to be further explored and applied.

Resiliency as a New POB Capacity

Although resiliency has been recognized in the positive psychology movement (e.g., Masten, 2001), it has not yet been included in POB. I would argue that it is very relevant to the extraorganizational and internal environment currently facing organizational leaders and employees and makes a nice fit with the criteria laid out for POB. Like the other positive psychological capacities, resiliency has deep roots in clinical work, especially child psychopathology. Early on, resiliency was thought to be an extraordinary, special gift that only a few people possessed. Now resiliency is recognized to come 'from the everyday magic of ordinary, normative human resources' and 'has profound implications for promoting competence and human capital in individuals and society' (Masten, 2001, p. 235). This 'ordinariness' of resiliency has tremendous implications for applications to today's workplace. The challenge for POB is to better understand resilience and then in a positive way unleash its considerable potential.

Once again there are many different definitions, but one that recognizes the state-like nature of resiliency is: 'the capability of individuals to cope successfully in the face of significant change, adversity, or risk. This capability changes over time and is enhanced by protective factors in the individual and environment' (Stewart, Reid & Mangham, 1997, p. 22). Resilience goes beyond simple adaptation, but does seem to include resources found in basic human adaptational systems (e.g., attachment, self-regulation, relations to competent and caring support, and motivation to be effective in the environment, Masten, 2001). In simple, but accurate terms, resiliency is the positive psychological capacity to rebound, to 'bounce back' from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure or even positive change, progress and increased responsibility.

Like confidence and hope, the word resilience is so commonly used and on the surface so similar to the other positive capacities, it needs to be conceptually differentiated. In simple terms, the main difference between self-efficacy and resiliency is that resiliency tends to have a smaller domain and is reactive rather than proactive (Huey & Weisz, 1997; Hunter & Chandler, 1999). In relation to hope (Snyder, 2000), resiliency is quite similar to the pathways component of hope, but does not include the agency dimension of hope. Resiliency, as a positive bounce-back reaction to either an adverse or eustressful event,

seems to be more closely aligned than the other POB capacities to the father of the study of stress Hans Selye's astute observation that, 'it is not what happens to you that matters, but how you take it.' I am suggesting today's leaders and employees 'by taking' today's stressful, dramatically changing environment through the positive psychological capacity of resilience, there can be resulting important implications for the workplace.

As Masten (2001) noted, this resiliency capacity is no longer felt to be that rare in people, but it is unique to the OB field. To my knowledge, to date, except in the study of stress, which has direct implications, there have been only a few surface attempts (largely at the organizational level) to directly apply resiliency to the workplace (e.g., see Doe, 1994; Horne & Orr, 1998; Mallak, 1998). Thus, in consideration for inclusion as a POB capacity, resiliency seems to nicely meet the criteria of positivity, uniqueness, and valid measurement (Block & Block, 1980; Block & Kreman, 1996) and, as conceptualized earlier (see Dyer & McGuiness, 1996; Carver, 1998; Stewart et al., 1997), being state-like and thus open to development. For example, Benard (1991, 1993) has identified attributes of resilient individuals such as social competence, problem solving skills, autonomy, and a sense of purpose and future, all of which could be learned and developed in leadership and human resource programs such as are currently being done in building efficacy (Bandura, 2000) and emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998). Yet to be demonstrated is the positive impact that the resiliency capacity of leaders and employees has on effectiveness and performance improvement. However, with the considerable evidence (e.g., Block & Kreman, 1996) that highly resilient individuals tend to be more effective in a 'fuzzier' world, as organizations now find themselves, and considerable research evidence of the strong relationship between resiliency and the ability to function effectively in a broad range of life experiences (see Coutu, 2002), the carry-over to the workplace seems assured.

Where Do We Go from Here

Organizational behavior has certainly not been as negatively oriented as psychology. For example, I have personally been advocating 'catch employees doing something right to reinforce them, rather

than catching them doing something wrong to punish them' in my writing, talks and consulting work for over 30 years. There are many, if not most, organizational behavior concepts that are certainly positively oriented. Examples would include positive reinforcement and positive emotions, expectancies, and affect. However, similar to psychology, I would argue our field in its problem solving orientation, approach to formulating and answering research questions, and general overall perspective is more negative than positive. We have been more concerned with what is wrong with organizations, teams, leaders and employees than what is right with them. I would also argue, and there is plenty of evidence in panel discussions on the status of OB at conferences such as the Academy of Management and SIOP, that there is a need for new core concepts and approaches.

At this moment in time in our history, both in the overall environment and in the academic discipline of organizational behavior, I feel we can learn much and follow the lead of the positive psychology movement. Obviously, this can, and already is, taking a number of different forms. I applaud different positive approaches and the more positive concepts the better, as long as they are based on sound theory, supported by sophisticated research, and can be effectively applied to the workplace. This imposed requirement of theory and research takes advantage of the strength of the OB field and separates us from the popular 'feel good' books and positive approaches with no really meaningful or sustainable knowledge and application. The application to the workplace requirement separates a positive approach to OB from more basic positive psychology per se. The platform for positive organizational behavior (POB) that I have drawn from my recent articles and presented here sets down the criteria not only of positivity, but also uniqueness, measurement, open to development, and application for leader effectiveness and employee performance improvement. I made the case for confidence, hope and resiliency as meeting my inclusion criteria for POB. In my previous articles, I have also included optimism and emotional intelligence, and in subsequent work I hope to add to the list. Probably the key difference to what I am proposing and other positive approaches in OB is the state-like requirement that lends itself to leadership and employee development and performance management. Others starting to take a positive approach in the OB field are either working more at the trait-like positive personality level of analysis (e.g., Judge et al., 1998; Judge & Bono, 2001)

or at a more macro level of analysis (e.g., the Michigan group—Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003).

For the future, to follow my own mandate, there is need for considerably more theory-building and research. For example, there is need to examine the relative strengths of positive capacities, identification of moderators, and theory development that combines positivity into core leadership or motivation concepts. We have recently completed such a theory-based paper (Stajkovic & Luthans, 2002, unpublished paper) containing propositions that are being tested by second-order confirmatory factor analysis using a co-variance structure analysis. The POB concepts need to be, and currently are being empirically analyzed in workplace settings (e.g., Peterson & Luthans, 2002) and other applications such as cross-culturally, in entrepreneurship (Jensen & Luthans, 2002, unpublished paper), and human resource development (Luthans & Jensen, 2002a). We are also drawing from Gallup's extensive data-bases for empirical analyses of the POB concepts. Finally, in addition to theory and research, especially post-11 September, I believe we need a positive search for and understanding of the good in people, not only at work, but also in life. Positive organizational behavior seems a step in the direction of not only new and exciting things to study and apply, but also the right way to move our field ahead in these unprecedented times in which we work and live.

Author biography

Fred Luthans is University Professor and the George Holmes Distinguished Professor of Management at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. A past president of the Academy of Management, winner of the Academy's Distinguished Educator Award in 1997, inaugural member of the Academy's Hall of Fame, and Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Iowa, he has been active in the management field for over 35 years. Currently, he is co-editor-in-chief of the Journal of World Business, editor of Organizational Dynamics, and co-editor of Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies, and the author of numerous books. His book Organizational Behavior is now in its ninth edition and International Management is in its 5th edition, both published by McGraw-Hill/Irwin. He is one of a very few management scholars who is a Fellow of the Academy of Management, the

Decision Sciences Institute, and the Pan Pacific Business Association. He has been involved with a number of basic research streams over the years. In particular, his studies include reinforcement theory and application, self-efficacy and now positive organizational behavior theory, research and applications. In addition to his university position, he is a Senior Research Scientist for Gallup Inc. and does consulting and training locally, nationally, and internationally.

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