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"This Is How Worklife Should Be": Quality Connections, Positive Relationships, and Positive Organizational Climate

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By

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DISSERTATION

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Dedication

To my mother and father, Rita and Joseph Scheller, for whom life is an adventure with boundless opportunities for learning. You were right Dad. And you said it much more succinctly. The magic formula is: cooperation (dialogue) plus trust equals progress.

To my professional mentors, Al, Dick, and now Pam and Vicki, thank you for inspiring me to explore the communication of high quality relationships at work. Because of your example, I "know it when I see it."

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores positive communication in the workplace; namely, that communication which constitutes quality connections and positive relationships associated with positive organizational climate. High quality connections and positive relationships are some of the most important dynamics in work life and key to developing a respectful, affirming work climate. By coding their communicative elements, this study develops a new communicative model of positive relationships and quality connections at work which synthesizes contemporary models from the fields of organizational behavior, psychology, and organizational communication. It demonstrates the applicability of this new model with empirical evidence from working professionals' stories and establishes the model's link to organizational climate.

Using an interpretive approach, I conducted 21 interviews with a diverse group of working adults about their best-work experiences. At the time of their best work experiences, working professionals ranged in age from 17 to 57, were employed in 11 different countries, and worked in nine industry sectors; 60 percent were managers. Qualitative content data

analysis was utilized to analyze participants' interviews. Findings provide convincing empirical evidence supporting the initial five proposed dimensions from past models and suggest two other dimensions absent from past models, positive spiral and adventure. These dimensions are key to quality connections and positive relationships at work. Thus, I propose the following dimensions for a new communicative model of positive relationships and quality connections at work: *inclusion, instrumental, sensemaking, positive spiral, transparency, generative emotional resources, and adventure.*

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Organizational communication generally focuses on problems and challenges in the workplace. Concentrating on what is going well is still unusual. In terms of positivity, relationships can be one of the most important dynamics of work life and specifically of work climate. Positive organizational scholarship (POS) provides a number of models of positive relationships and quality connections in the workplace, but this approach offers very little cross-dialogue between models. These conceptual representations (models) include elements that are similar and disparate, overlap, and appear tangential. Rarely is there any synthesis of these models or analysis of commonalities or incongruences in terms of the necessary elements for building positive climate and positive relational communication at work. There are legitimate reasons for this lack of synthesis including disciplinary commitments and paradigmatic differences. Still, what current scholarship lacks is an overarching model that incorporates the various communicative dimensions of positive relationships and quality connections. Additionally, although past research has proposed theoretical explanations and illustrations, there has been very little empirical application of these models. Application would provide support for these theoretical propositions and offer a picture of how the models function in everyday work life.

Positive relationships and meaningful connections can improve work climate; what we do at work, how we feel at work and how we feel outside of work. Although the expansion of POS examined positive relational communication at work, rarely does dialogue exist across models and perspectives nor is there a strong linkage to climate. If someone were to look for models, they would find them, but none seem to consider all of the possible elements and outcomes. In this dissertation, I will examine various models of quality

connections and positive relationships, specifically in terms of the communicative elements in the models and the link to organizational climate. I will construct a meta-model of quality connections and positive relationships in the workplace using past research. I will then analyze interviews of best-work experiences of a diverse group of working adults to see if the model is applicable. On the basis of past models and in-depth interview data, I will construct a communicative model of positive relationships.

The proposed study answers the following questions:

RQ1: What are the dimensions involved in a climate of positive relationships and quality connections at work?

RQ2: What evidence do working adults' present in their accounts of best-work experiences that illustrates quality connections and positive relationships?

RQ3: What are the implications of this evidence for a new communicative model of positive relationships and quality connections at work?

To answer these research questions, I begin with a review of the literature about organizational climate and dimensions of the Organizational Climate Measure (OCM) (Patterson et al., 2005). I establish a link between the organizational climate dimensions and workplace connections and relationships. I examine the literature on nine models of connection and relationship. From this literature, I propose dimensions for a new model of quality connections and positive relationships. I then explain the methods I use in this dissertation. Following the chapter on methods, I present the findings and analyze the participant interviews that demonstrate the proposed dimensions of inclusion, instrumental, sensemaking, transparency, and generative emotional resources, and the new dimensions of positive spiral and adventure. Finally, in the discussion chapter, I provide a rationale for the

meta-model of quality connections and positive relationships. Most significantly, I connect the empirical evidence with the models of quality connections and positive relationships and organizational climate through the seven dimensions of the new model of quality connections and positive relationships.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Organizational Climate

Organizational climate as a field of study in communication has been relegated to a lesser position in recent years. Therefore, I begin this section with a short review of organizational climate scholarship and the variety of definitions it has engendered. I then provide the definition of organizational climate that will be used for this study. Finally, I review the dimensions of climate expressed in the Organizational Climate Measure (OCM) (Patterson, et al., 2005), specifically identifying and making explicit the inherent relevance of relationships and connections to the OCM organizational climate dimensions.

Organizational Climate Scholarship and Definitions

Organizational climate, "the psychological environment in which organizational behavior occurs" according to Cheney, Christensen, Zorn, and Ganesh (2011, p. 95), was a term prevalent in the Communication field in the 1960s through the early 1980s. Since then, organizational climate has been rarely referred to by communication scholars, except as it relates to the definition and the historical perspective of the use of the term climate (Cheney et al., 2011; Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). Instead, organizational culture has come to the forefront and subsumed organizational climate. In 1987, Falcione, Sussman and Herden posited that "if culture is the *emerging* explanation of choice for organization researchers, then climate has *historically* been the explanation of choice (p. 196).

Currently, management scholars study organizational climate, using the (predominantly quantitative) tools of social science. In general, they focus on the organizational level and aggregated studies of people's feelings about their work and workplace. Management and communication researchers alike recognize that whether at the

organizational level or individual level, employees interact with and relate to colleagues and supervisors over extended periods about various issues, all of which constitute members' perceptions of organizational climate.

Ehrhart, Schneider, and Macey (2014) make a distinction between psychological climate focusing on the individual level or micro-level and "affective individual outcomes" such as "well-being, satisfaction, stress [and] job involvement," and organizational climate focusing on the meso- or organizational level and "organizational-level outcomes" such as "accident rates [and] customer satisfaction" (p. 71). For other scholars, communication climate is the term used to identify the quality of affective attributes (Falcione et al., 1987; Putnam & Cheney, 1985).

As well, organizational climate scholars conceptualize climate as a bridge between experiences at the organizational and individual levels (Falcione et al., 1987) and portray it as organizational members' emotions and reactions to their interactions with their organizational environment. More specifically, scholars argue that organizational climate involves at least three levels: organizational, group, and individual (Falcione et al., 1987; Putnam & Cheney, 1985). Usually scholars choose to focus on one of these levels or they try to incorporate two or more levels in analysis. The most well-known of these integrated approaches is the use of the theory of structuration by Poole and McPhee (1983). Their work explains how, amidst the systems and regulations of the workplace, the individual relationships and connections between people dynamically interact and reproduce structures within the subgroup and constitute climate at the organizational level. Bastien, McPhee and Bolton (1995) extend Poole and McPhee's original thesis with a study of trust problems in an administrative reorganization. They depict organizational climate as perceptions and

reactions constructed by organizational members as a result of sensemaking, which provides meaning upon which organizational members act.

The definition that I use for organizational climate primarily focuses on the individual level. Although participants in this study did sometimes mention their organizational experience, for the most part their connections and relationships, described in their own best work experiences, were between themselves and another person or themselves and a small group of people. As such, the definition of climate used here reflects the perceptions that participants have because of individual-level interactions with people over time. For purposes of this study, organizational climate is the dynamically constructed "sense" of *how it feels* to be an organizational member, a feeling constituted through member talk and ongoing interactions, which shapes their expectations, feelings and attitudes. In other words, I conceptualize organizational climate as members' subjective, affective responses that they linked to being a member of the organization. With this definition in mind, I outline the constitutive dimensions of organizational climate from past research.

Dimensions of Climate

Measures of organizational climate are multi-dimensional and, depending on the measure, can range anywhere from three to as many as 17 dimensions. For instance, Redding's (1972) Ideal Managerial Climate (IMC) construct links communication climate to practical organizational applications. The IMC dimensions include "supportiveness; participative decision-making; trust, confidence and credibility; openness and candor; and emphasis on high performance goals" (Dillard, Wigand, & Boster, 1986, p. 86). Other measures include dimensions such as emotional support, trust, information adequacy and openness (Bastien et al., 1995; Dillard et al., 1986). Dennis's climate model (cited in Dillard

et al., 1986), which includes communication satisfaction and communication adequacy, expresses the communicative perspective of climate. Dennis's five factors include

> Factor I: Supervisor-subordinate communication, particularly the supportiveness and openness from a supervisor as perceived by a subordinate.
>
> Factor II: Perceived quality and accuracy of downward communication.
>
> Factor III: Supervisor's perception of communication relationships with subordinates, especially the affective aspects of those relationships (such as perceived openness and empathy)
>
> Factor IV: Perceived upward communication opportunities, and perceived upward-directed influence.
>
> Factor V: Perceived reliability of information from subordinates and colleagues. (Dillard et al., 1986, p. 87)

Although Dennis's (Dillard et al., 1986) climate framework is aligned with ideas in the communication field and is, in fact, a framework for *communication climate,* Patterson et al.'s framework for *organizational climate* (Organizational Climate Measure, OCM) (Patterson, et al., 2005) is more inclusive and incorporates a variety of organizational dimensions that affect communication climate that are part of the lived and perceived experience of organizational life. Their comprehensive model provides a broader perspective, one that incorporates the organizational-, group-, and individual-level dynamics. Although my study examines how individual organizational members describe their best-work experiences in terms of relationships and connections, a micro- or individual-level perspective, dynamics beyond the micro-level affect members' perceptions of climate. As such, I use Patterson et al.'s model to present a more comprehensive discussion of climate and its dimensions. The relevance of climate dimensions and the role that member interaction plays in how people feel about being an organizational member, as expressed through various

dimensions, provide the context within which positive connections and relationships take place.

The following section discusses the links between connections and relationships and the dimensions in Patterson et al.'s measure. It is the most extensive measure and includes the dimensions in other measures, which is why I use it to explain climate and its constitutive parts. Usually, researchers use subsets of the 17 dimensions, depending on the researchers' focus. Here I use the measure as an inventory to explain the dimensions and their associated "areas of organizational functioning" or "quadrants" (Patterson, et al., 2005, p. 395) and identify how the dimensions relate to interpersonal connections and relationships. Although statements in the OCM are negative and positive, I focus on those that evoke the features of POS, by rater levels of agreement-disagreement with the OCM survey statements. The four quadrants are human relations, open systems, rational goal, and internal process. (Appendix A summarizes the 17 dimensions, 4 quadrants, and related items in the OCM measure.)

Human relations. This dimension is more tightly coupled with communication than any of the other quadrants in the OCM**.** Human Relations includes the dimensions of autonomy, involvement, supervisory support, integration, welfare, training, and effort, each of which explicitly denotes connections and relationships among organizational members. *Autonomy* means that organizational members have control over their work processes and/or schedules and this communicates supervisory trust in the employee. For example, the dimension of autonomy includes the statement "Managers trust people to make work-related decisions without getting permission first" (Patterson, et al., 2005, p. 405). The relationship of trust is associated with independence and independence is associated with an increased feeling of trust (Dutton, 2003; Krone, 1994).

Involvement includes these statements: "Management involve people when decisions are made that affect them"; and "Information is widely shared" (Patterson, et al., 2005, p. 406). Similar to Redding's (1972) and Dennis' (Dillard et al., 1986) models, the OCM dimension suggests that supervisor-supervisee relationships fostering joint decision-making contribute to positive climate (Baker & Dutton, 2007; Douglas, 2006; Keyton & Beck, 2008). Access to information is also an indicator of being part of the group or team. In general, when there is a climate of inclusion and collaboration in the relationship between management and employees, benefits to the individual and the organization are reported (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004; Kahn, 1990; Kolodinsky, Giacalone, & Jurkiewicz, 2008; Lutgen-Sandvik, Riforgiate, & Fletcher, 2011; Roberson, 2006; Sass, 2000).

Supervisory Support includes a number of statements that demonstrate employees' feeling that they are emotional supported by their managers, such as "Supervisors here are really good at understanding peoples' problems"; and "Supervisors show an understanding of the people who work for them" (Patterson, et al., 2005, p. 406). The literature supports the connection between organizational climate, as I define it, and employees feeling understood by supervisors. In other words, relationships between supervisors and employees are extremely important to organizational climate. Supervisors who provide emotional support and create positive interactions with employees make a lasting positive impression. This positive energy may in turn be shared by employees with others (Dutton, 2003; Garland, Gaylord, & Fredrickson, 2011; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2011; Quinn, 2007). As well, supervisors who show compassion with a kind comment by paying attention to their employees and by being approachable for discussions, positively impact employees' sense of feeling appreciated and recognized (Ashforth, Kulik, & Tomiuk, 2008; Madlock & Kennedy-

Lightsey, 2010; Martin, Rich, & Gayle, 2004; Mirivel & Tracy, 2005; Sias, 2005; Snyder, 2009).

Integration contains statements, such as "People in different departments of this organization are prepared to share information"; and "Collaboration between departments in this organization is very effective" (Patterson, et al., 2005, p. 405). More prolific and productive exchange of information and conversations between co-workers is also linked to higher-quality relationships. Collaboration implies cooperation and parity on some level, where each party values the other, increasing mutual esteem (Lewis, Isbell, & Koschmann, 2010; Rogers, 1980). Feeling integrated in a group may encourage and energize organizational members (Dutton, 2003; Guowei & Jeffres, 2006; Kahn, 2007; Quinn, 2007). In turn, these higher quality conversations that build relationships within the group are associated with greater collaboration and communication (Mueller & Lee, 2002).

Welfare includes statements, such as "This company cares about its employees"; and "This company tries to be fair in its actions towards employees" (Patterson et al., 2005, p. 406). Social systems can be cultivated by organizational members, specifically by managers, that simulate a group usually associated with family or circle of friends (Abu Bakar, Dilbeck, & McCroskey, 2010) wherein coworkers feel caring toward each other, advocate for each other, and desire that others in the group are treated fairly as well as themselves. Positive organizational climate stimulates relationships in which coworkers care about each other and promote organizations where coworkers with caring relationships and connections associate with positive organizational climates. Increased caring and empathy builds community (Buber, 1958; Mirivel & Tracy, 2005; Rogers, 1980).

Training contains the statements: "People are strongly encouraged to develop their skills"; and (phrased in the negative) "People are properly trained when there is a new task, process or requirement" (Patterson et al., 2005, p. 406). Receiving training not only adds to employees' skill sets and ostensibly increases their value to the company, training may also create or enhance employees' sense of being valued (Dutton, 2003; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2011).

Effort includes statements, such as "People here always want to perform to the best of their ability"; and "People are enthusiastic about their work" (Patterson et al., 2005, p. 407). In organizations, employees' desire to perform to the best of their ability and their passion for their work may be contagious (Dutton, 2003; Huston, Garland, & Farb, 2011; Quinn, 2007). Effort may derive from a feeling of satisfaction in a job well-done or it may be in-part a desire for inclusion, integration or praise, all of which are relationship-oriented motivations. Managers or mentors and colleagues who act as role models in terms of their work ethic may cultivate a similar sensibility in those with whom they have conversations that build connections and relationships (Egan, 1996). Organizations with positive climates may inculcate a positive spiral of effort and reward (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2011; Quinn, 2007), shared goals, participation, empowerment, and career and emotional support (Douglas, 2006; Madlock, 2008; McCroskey & Richmond, 2000; Miller, Johnson, Hart, & Peterson, 1999; Thomas, Zolin, & Hartman, 2009).

Internal process. The second quadrant is Internal Process and includes the dimensions *formalization* and *tradition*, which initially may seem to have a less explicit link to relationships and connections. Upon, closer examination, the individual statements associated with these climate dimensions correlate directly to relationships and connections.

Formalization includes statements, such as “It is considered extremely important here to follow the rules”; and “People can ignore formal procedures and rules if it helps get the job done” (Patterson et al., 2005, p. 406). For some employees, clarity of roles and expectations is an important aspect of POS (Dutton, 2003). Indeed, role ambiguity is one of the most salient stressors in the workplace (Jackson & Schuler, 1985). As a function of accuracy of information within interaction between coworkers, employees experience security in being informed of the guidelines of the formal structure and the satisfaction of fulfilling roles and being productive (Rosenfeld, Richman, & May, 2004; Sharbrough, 2006).

For other employees, bending those rules or having a less structured environment stimulates creativity and dialogue (Ellingson, 2003). Knowing and following the rules may be associated with an atmosphere of trust and cooperation, in organizations where coworkers are co-present or working virtually (Allen, 1996; Gibbs, Nekrassova, Grushina, & Abdul Wahab, 2008; Lewis et al., 2010). As well, relationship-building may be perceived as more important than following the rules, possibly resulting in sloppiness, inaccuracy or inattentiveness (Sass, 2000).

Tradition, as suggested by statements, such as “Senior management like to keep to established, traditional ways of doing things”; and “The way the organization does things has never changed very much” (Patterson et al., 2005, p. 406) are two indicators how people do work and communicate. Traditions may also be viewed in a positive or negative light depending upon the individual and also depending upon the way the traditions are characterized and shared by managers and coworkers. Traditions in spiritual organizations, either in the activities, in the structure of relationship-building, or even in the way colleagues address each other and interact, may contribute to positive relationships and positive climate

through a sense of connection to a higher being (Cheney, Zorn, Planalp, & Lair, 2008; Frye, Kisselburgh, & Butts, 2007).

Open systems. The third quadrant, Open Systems, includes the dimensions *reflexivity, innovation and flexibility,* and *outward focus*. Statements corresponding to these dimensions refer to the communicative aspects of connections and relationships.

Reflexivity is measured by agreement with statements, such as "In this organization, the way people work together is readily changed in order to improve performance"; and "There are regular discussions as to whether people in the organization are working effectively together" (Patterson et al., 2005, p. 407). Improving the connection and relationship between colleagues in organizations may be a desired result or it may be the byproduct of another purpose (Black, 2005). In being reflexive about whether people are working and talking effectively and to maximum capability, there may also be contemplation about the connection and relationships that will engender maximum performance. POS focuses on these connections and relationships (Buber, 1958; Kahn, 2007; Rogers, 1980; Sigman, 1995) that are integral to climate. People are energized when they feel there is purpose in their tasks (Thomas et al., 2009).

Innovation and flexibility are measured via statements, such as "New ideas are readily accepted here"; and "Assistance in developing new ideas is readily available" (Patterson et al., 2005, p. 406). Constructing innovative ideas or products in an organizational setting begins with communication and connection. Many employees who feel empowered to create and innovate have a relationship with their manager and colleagues that is based on trust and respect (Krone, 1994; Mueller & Lee, 2002). Discussing ideas and being challenged in a positive way is also empowering (Buber, 1958). Sharing a sense of the new or the thrill of

discovery may empower organizational members (Carlsen, 2008) to be innovative and flexible and enhance relationships.

Outward focus is measured by agreement with statements, such as "Ways of improving service to the customer are given much thought"; and "Customer needs are considered top priority here" (Patterson et al., 2005, p. 406). *Outward focus* suggests that internal and external relationships with customers and other stakeholders influence members' perceptions of the organizational climate. Within an organization, being fully present to others, including and especially to customers, is sometimes valued very highly (Goodier & Eisenberg, 2006). Listening to customers allows organizational members to better understand customers' needs and desires. Therefore, rapport with customers is extremely important. In these organizations, establishing a mutual and reciprocal open line of communication between employees and customers may contribute to high quality relationships (de Vries, van den Hooff, & de Ridder, 2006) and to positive climate.

Rational goal. The fourth quadrant is the Rational Goal quadrant which includes *clarity of organizational goals, pressure to produce, quality, performance feedback, and efficiency*. Meaningful work, which may be associated with each of these dimensions, is facilitated though communication (Black, 2005; Cheney et al., 2008; Lynch, 2009; Mize Smith, Arendt, Bezek Lahman, Settle, & Duff, 2006; Quinn, 2007).

Clarity of organizational goals is measured via agreement with statements, such as "People have a good understanding of what the organization is trying to do"; and "There is a strong sense of where the company is going" (Patterson et al., 2005, p. 407). Managements' need to connect with employees is implicit in communicating the goals of the organization clearly. High quality relationships in organizations are associated with authenticity, honesty

and transparency (Buber, 1958; de Vries et al., 2006; Kahn, 2007; Rogers, 1980) including the goals of the organization. When these high quality relationships exist between managers and employees, communicating the goals of the organization has a multiplier effect, in that there is greater cooperation between coworkers (Mueller & Lee, 2002) to carry out objectives. If management and employees develop trust over time, so that there is a climate of trust, then positive feelings of trust become stronger (Dutton, 2003; Kahn, 2007; Kram & Isabella, 1985; Young & Chen, 2013).

Pressure to produce includes the statements, "Management require (sic) people to work extremely hard"; and "The pace of work here is extremely relaxed" (Patterson et al., 2005, p. 407). For some people, feeling pressure to produce elicits positive emotion, a thrill of sorts. For others, pressure evokes negative feeling and contributes to stress and burnout (Tracy, 2009). In organizational situations where there is a high level of pressure, conversations between organizational members can influence climate. If members interact with each other and the pressure-laden environment with humor, the humor can increase feelings of closeness and camaraderie within the in-group and reduce stress (Lynch, 2009; Martin et al., 2004). In customer service positions, the pressure to produce may come from those outside of the organization. Relationships between customers and organizational members and relationships within the organization may impact each other. A positive feeling or connection can be transmitted throughout and positively impact climate (Huston et al., 2011). Pressure may also be framed as a positive challenge by management or coworkers and conveyed to each other (Carlsen, 2008).

Quality contains statements, such as "This company is always looking to achieve the highest standards of quality"; and "People believe the company's success depends on high-

quality work" (Patterson et al., 2005, p. 407). In organizations with positive climate, people generally care about quality. Organizational members consider quality to be a shared value. They confirm each other's inclusion in the group. Trust, as part of this relationship, may serve as motivation to maintain and enhance performance (Fay & Kline, 2011; Gibbs et al., 2008).

Performance feedback, a communicative workplace experience, is measured by agreement with statements, such as "People usually receive feedback on the quality of work they have done"; and "People's performance is measured on a regular basis." Managers that provide timely and truthful information to employees, including feedback on their performance, are crucial for job satisfaction, performance improvement, and strong relationship between supervisor and subordinate (Botero & Van Dyne, 2009). This information may result in facilitating successful change and enhanced relationships between managers and employees, and between coworkers, resulting in a more positive climate (Rosenfeld et al., 2004; Sharbrough, 2006; Sias, 2005; Thomas et al., 2009).

Efficiency is measured via agreement with statements, such as "Things could be done much more efficiently, if people stopped to think"; and "Productivity could be improved if jobs were organized and planned better." Stopping to think, organizing, and planning implies the type of dialogue and connection associated with presentness (Buber, 1958; Johannesen, 2000; Rogers, 1980) and is linked to efficiency, productivity and profitability (Guowei & Jeffres, 2006; Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004). There is a feeling of being valued when people focus on a mutual task (Kahn, 2007) and each person pays full attention to the other (Buber, 1958; Rogers, 1980).

Organizational Climate Dimensions and Models of Connection and Relationship

These dimensions illustrate some of the ways that ongoing interactions of organizational members with coworkers, managers, and customers can shape organizational members' expectations, feelings, and attitudes about their organizations—perceptions of organizational climate. Climate, then, is dynamically constituted through the dimensions, which point to interactions and experiences with internal and external others—through connections and relationships. Models of these connections and relationships are contained in the scholarly literature and serve as a resource from which I can derive dimensions and construct a meta-model for quality connection and positive relationship.

Specifically, POS and the communication field feature a number of theoretical perspectives which provide a qualitative frame regarding quality connections and positive relationships. The models I chose for inclusion in this study are those represented in contemporary bodies of work, highlighted in POS, and relevant in today's workplace. Some approach connections and relationships in subtly different ways and others in explicit ways. For instance, although both in the communication field, Sias and Cahill's (1998) continuum of relationships or friendships is quite different from Sigman's (1995) construct utilizing social communication theory. As well, the POS scholars, Dutton (2003), Kahn (2007) and Quinn (2007) each focus on a different facet of quality connections. Silva and Sias' (2010) model refers to a very specific context for connection in organizations, that of group connection. It is incorporated into this study in order to provide an opportunity for reflection upon the position of individuals in groups or teams in organizations, since this is such a central organizing system in the contemporary workplace.

The models selected for this study are present in various threads of scholarship across disciplines. Research about connections and relationships in the workplace is conducted and talked about across the fields of psychology, organizational behavior, and organizational communication. Even though models stem from different disciplines, their focus on quality connections and positive relationships connects them and calls for an interdisciplinary standpoint. More recent scholarship from one discipline draws upon the scholarship from another discipline. For example, Dutton (2003), a management and organizational behavior scholar, references Buber (1958), known for his theories about dialogue, a communication concept.

Finally, the following nine models in this study are developed historically and feature contemporary leaders and respected scholars in their fields. Key scholars include Martin Buber (dialogue), Jane Dutton (high-quality connections), Carl Rogers (person-centered approach), and Patricia Sias (workplace friendships). A robust body of work concentrates on the positive influence of spirituality (Goodier & Eisenberg, 2006; Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004; Kolodinsky et al., 2008; Sass, 2000; Young & Chen, 2013), how it is communicated through discourse and symbols, and its association with quality connections and positive relationships in the workplace.

Nine Models of Connection and Relationship

The nine models of connection and relationship are distinctive from each other, and they provide a variety of themes relevant to the construction of a meta-model for quality connection and positive relationship; they contribute to the understanding of members' perceptions of organizational climate. The models are loosely-ordered, ranging from infrequent and enigmatic connections (I-Thou) to continuous and robust relationships

(friendship). The models include: I-Thou dialogue (Buber, 1958); person-centered approach (Rogers, 1980); high quality connections (Dutton, 2003); meaningful connections (Kahn, 2007); energy and connections (Quinn R. , 2007); identification with organization through group connection (Silva & Sias, 2010); connectedness in organizational spirituality (Sass, 2000; Young & Chen, 2013); social communication approach (Sigman, 1995); and peer relationships and friendships (Kram & Isabella, 1985; Sias & Cahill, 1998). Table 1 summarizes these models as they relate to the dimensions I initially propose to use in the data analysis.

Table 1. Dimensions of Quality Connections and Positive Relationships

DIMENSION CLASSIFICATION

MODEL	Sensemaking	Generative Emotional Resources	Inclusion	Transparency	Instrumental	Encounter Type	Participants
I-Thou Dialogue	Dialogue	Attentiveness, Presentness, Confirmation	Mutuality, Equality	Authentic		Connection	2 people plus "spark"
Person-Centered	Connection "in-between" = wholeness	Caring, Empathetic understanding, Unconditional positive regard	Mutuality, Equality	Congruence		Connection	2 people
HQC		Empathetic support, Effective listening, Sharing	Reciprocity, Belonging	Trust, Honesty	Task enabling, Positive cycle of energy & resources	Connection	2 people
Meaningful Connections	Purpose-driven cognition	Emotional elements, Personal support	Person-centric	Realness, Alignment of beliefs with behavior	Accomplished through resource generation	Connection	2 people
Energy & Connections	Energy feedback loop	Self-esteem, Self-worth	Reciprocity, Belonging		Accomplished through resource generation (energy)	Connection	2 people

Grey block indicates dimension not present in model.

Table 1. Dimensions of Quality Connections and Positive Relationships (continued)

MODEL	DIMENSION					CLASSIFICATION	
	Sensemaking	**Generative Emotional Resources**	**Inclusion**	**Transparency**	**Instrumental**	**Encounter Type**	**Participant**
Group Connections	Group as mediator	Feeling heard	As impacts affiliation to organization				1 person plus group
Spiritual	God/Universal Being	Loving	Inclusive in name of God/Universal Being	Honesty	Service orientation		2 people plus God/Universal Being
Social Communication	Performance constructing identity; community					Relationship (continuum)	2 people
Peer Relationship	Stages of greater affiliation	Self-confidence, Emotional validation (by stage)	Belonging (by stage)	Trust, Revealing, Personal feedback (collegial/special peer)	Information exchange, professional planning, mentoring (by stage)	Relationship; friendship if chosen (by stage)	2 people

Grey block indicates dimension not present in model.

Each of the model descriptions contains a definition and overview of the model, its communicative features, and limitations of the model in terms of its application for this study. I begin with Buber's (1958) I-Thou model of ethical dialogue.

I-Thou dialogue (Martin Buber). Buber conceived of genuine connection as ethical dialogue, whereby partners involved in an exchange mutually empathetically attend to each other in service of authentic relationship building. In I-Thou ethical dialogue, mutual recognition of the other dictates that the dialogic partner or partners neither put themselves first nor their partner first. They are in equal position to each other. Buber's (1958) theory described ethical dialogue as privileging values that are mutually respectful of one's self and others.

Buber (1958) refers to many characteristics of ethical dialogue, including trust, honesty, being forthright, respectful, attentive and supportive. These qualities are synthesized by Johannesen (2000) into the four attributes of authenticity, presentness, inclusion and confirmation. Each attribute in and of itself has ethical implications for communication, and the four together present a force for valuing the other.

As such, I-Thou ethical dialogue occurs when "we" meet together in the space between "us." In order for this genuine connection to occur, the four attributes are present and dialogic partners come to the dialogue by choice. In addition, another element beyond the control of the dialogic partners must be present, and Buber refers to it as a "spark." Years later, in the postscript added to I-Thou, Buber uses the term "spark" to describe the Eternal Thou (Buber, 1958). Kramer (2003) refers to this spark as grace. Dialogic partners cannot focus their attention on the dialogue itself, or the I-Thou experience is precluded. However, if I-Thou dialogue takes place, partners can recollect the experience.

Buber's relationship theory of I-Thou dialogue has not been directly adapted for utilization in contemporary organizations, although POS researchers and practitioners refer to it (Black, 2005; Dutton, 2003; Rogers, 1980), when other ethically oriented practices are introduced or adopted. By definition, I-Thou is a rare occurrence. Coworkers may be able to control their actions with regard to the four necessary attributes of I-Thou -- authenticity, presentness, inclusion, and confirmation -- but the *spark* that manifests itself in an I-Thou dialogue is often outside of their control. As such, predicting when and how I-thou dialogue occurs or the outcome of an I-Thou connection is very near impossible. Additionally, one or more of the attributes of I-Thou can be in tension with each other. Buber's (1958) addition in the postscript and the promotion of the idea that "God" is the spark that is always part of an I-Thou dialogue may be unacceptable in organizations where spiritual concepts and talk of God are not part of the accepted communication. Next, I review the person-centered approach, developed by Carl Rogers.

Person-Centered Approach (Carl Rogers). Carl Rogers is renowned for creating person-centered psychotherapy. The foundation of his holistic approach to psychotherapy is also a model relevant to relationships, including positive relationships in the workplace. Rogers (1980) identified a person-centered approach as the central theme for his discussions with others in teaching, counseling, therapy, and leadership of committees and organizations. His approach is premised upon the assumption that people have within themselves substantial capability for self-awareness and for reorienting their perceptions, opinions and feelings, and conduct toward themselves. Reorienting is only possible, however, in an environment that is conducive to generative psychological viewpoints, in which people can openly express their

thoughts and opinions. Such an environment must be one of transparency, caring and empathetic understanding; the same type of environment important to positive relationships.

According to Rogers (1980), then, relationships evolve from communication that produces: transparency, caring and empathetic understanding. These elements comprise the model for quality connections and positive relationships, since the generative aspects of the conduct toward the self are also mirrored in the communication of the other. Rogers (1980) explains his experiences with the phenomenon in aspects of his life and refers to similar research conducted by others. As a counselor, he focuses on the emotional effects from empathetic interaction.

Transparency means the parties to the relationship communicate in ways that include realness, genuineness, honesty, and congruence (Rogers, 1980). Congruence means there is consistency within the three "layers" of experience. The first layer is what occurs in the moment, the communicators' honest and open feelings and thoughts. The second layer is what communicators recognize in that moment; the third layer is what communicators convey in that moment. When all three layers correspond, congruence is present, which is represented by a wholeness or integration of being.

Caring is prizing, accepting, and displaying "unconditional positive regard" (Rogers, 1980, p. 116) in the person-centered approach. People in a relationship are open to each other expressing proximate emotions which are viewed nonjudgmentally by the other. Empathetic understanding focuses on listening to the other person as an experience that goes far beyond hearing the words they speak or noticing their body language. A much more holistic experience takes place when the listener is called to feel the meaning and recognize the intent of the other person in an unconditional, non-evaluative manner.

At times within the relationship, one party is able to hear the other party more deeply or intuit more about him or her than the obverse. Rogers (1980, p. 8) refers to this as "hearing deeply," which he describes as hearing "the words, the thoughts, the feeling tones, the personal meaning, even the meaning that is below the conscious intent of the speaker." In a person-centered relationship these conditions are reciprocal. Intense listening is matched by being heard, honesty begets more honesty from others, and ultimately appreciation leads to appreciation and love.

When all elements are present, Rogers (1980) refers to this intense state (the person-centered approach) as happening in moments. He notes that "interpersonal relationships best exist as a rhythm: openness and expression, and then assimilation; flow and change, then a temporary quiet; risk and anxiety, then temporary security. I could not live in a continuous encounter group" (Rogers, 1980, p. 44). In other words, the person-centered approach is a model that requires concentrated periods of intense focus on the relationship. Another model that emphasizes the power of connection is Dutton's high-quality connections.

High Quality Connections (Jane Dutton). High-quality connections (HQCs) are associated with positive deviance in organizations, that is, "extraordinarily positive outcomes and the means that produce them" (Baker & Dutton, 2007, p. 326). Baker and Dutton distinguish high-quality connections from relationships, although the elements of HQCs most likely are also relevant to relationships in organizations. HQCs can be quick, fleeting connections between individuals, not only long-term relationships. These connections are reciprocal (people have an equal opportunity to speak), energetic (people speak in a style that is upbeat and animated), and affirming (people comment about others' contributions). They involve greater amplitude of emotion and higher levels of emotion than less intense

connections. HQCs are more flexible regarding stress in demanding times and situations. Additionally, people in HQCs are more amenable to trying new approaches and withstanding influences that might negate the generative practices (Baker & Dutton, 2007).

HQCs occur in everyday interactions. Dutton (2003) identifies three major contributors to HQCs: respectful engagement, task enabling, and trusting. Respectful engagement is the method by which coworkers interact with each other, directly or symbolically communicating their significance and worth. Respectful engagement is shown through being present, which is communicatively demonstrated through body language, being accessible and paying attention to the immediate situation. Being genuine is another aspect of respectful engagement, "behaving toward someone based on internal desires and motivations as opposed to external pressures and force" (Dutton, 2003, p. 30). The third contributor to respectful engagement is affirmation, which is accomplished by making confirming statements, providing an environment between communicators that allows for differences of opinion, expressing acknowledgement of someone's worth, showing authentic interest by asking authentic questions, sharing about yourself, and treating time as a resource that is worthy of another. Effective listening, which Dutton (2003) describes as empathetic and active, is the fourth attribute. Supportive communication is the fifth contributor and involves invitational and goal-oriented dialogue and use of explicit descriptive language to express opinions, needs, and desires without causing defensiveness.

Task enabling, the second contributor to HQCs, is the use of techniques for engaging in the workplace that facilitate an individual's effectiveness. Task enabling includes coaching and training, planning, promoting and encouraging, and adjusting and cultivating (Dutton, 2003). Helping coworkers develop these skills and improve implementation has

several positive outcomes. Organizational resources in the form of knowledge and skills are circulated as people recognize that a coworker's support increased their capability and their desire to reciprocate. The act of helping conveys positive regard and affirmation and communicates a comprehension and appreciation of the other person's work. Task enabling is reciprocally empowering, and each person's enhanced sense of worth leads to additional action to create connections.

The third element is trusting, which is interacting and acting with honesty, reliability, and positive intentions. Some of the examples that exemplify trust include sharing important appropriate information about oneself or work, working collaboratively on a project, and allowing others to work without micro-management or censorship. Dutton (2003) refers to trust as a shifting, changing resource that waxes and wanes depending upon circumstances and people. Trusting increases with greater use and can be self-fulfilling. That is, if one person acts with trust, and the other person responds similarly, the cycle continues. Both showing trust and receiving trust lead to a higher-quality connection.

The reciprocal character of HQCs means that people in these connections need to reinforce each other's quality of communication. This does not mean that either one or both people need to be falsely positive. However, the mutual nature of HQCs requires a likeminded response between coworkers at some point in their association in order to actualize the potential for HQCs.

Dutton (2003) argues that time is a needed resource for adapting and using the contributors to HQCs (respectful engagement, task enabling and trust). Positive communicative behavior and positive organizational climate may develop over time, as organizational members dynamically construct positive feelings about being an

organizational member. Additionally, HQCs come quite naturally or easily for some organizational members. However, other coworkers may see them as too difficult or too time-consuming to work toward. Kahn's model, which follows, is also one of connection.

Meaningful Connections (William Kahn). Kahn (2007) argues that positive relationships come from "meaningful connections" (p. 190). Positive relationships "enable individuals to personally engage in their work—that is, to be authentic, present, and intellectually and emotionally available as they go about their work" (Kahn, 2007, p. 190). This model assumes that people who have meaningful conversations that build connections are more likely to engage personally in their work. In Kahn's model, the elements of meaningful connections range from instrumental to emotional, reflecting how different people, contexts, and situations affect organizational member viewpoints at any particular time and place. Kahn describes instrumental connections, at their most extreme, as the means for achieving work assignments and professional advancement, and emotional connections, in the most intense circumstances, as the ultimate home-base for contemplation, nurturing and empathy.

The five elements of meaningful connections are task accomplishment, career development, sensemaking, provision of meaning, and personal support. Task-accomplishment means completing assigned jobs and focusing on the work to be done. Task-accomplishment relationships take place as part of doing a job, so are instrumental; whereas career development advances one's professional position or reputation. Career-development relationships are instrumental in that they are relationships with coworkers for consideration of and assistance with professional development. Sensemaking is the process of framing perceptions and intellectually orienting to new situations and difficult events; it is

"a motivated, continuous effort to understand connections (which can be among people, places, and events) in order to anticipate their trajectories and act effectively" (Klein, Moon, & Hoffman, 2006, p. 71). Kahn (2007) argues that challenging, ambiguous, or disempowering experiences call for instrumental sensemaking relationships, whereby situational aspects can be debated and discussed, to a greater degree than emotional sensemaking.

Provision of meaning, primarily in emotional connections, comes from employees receiving confirmation and experiencing a heightened sense of identity. Relationships that enrich life's meanings are those in which people feel that their intentions and efforts are valued and of consequence—that they are making a difference. Personal support is part of aiding others during stressful circumstances, both professionally and personally and is mostly emotional in nature. Personally supportive relationships are a significant resource to organizational members.

These elements of meaningful connection, then, play a significant role in choices people make about whom they seek out for a relationship and eventually about the climate in which they work. For example, if someone wants a job promotion (career development element), they may interact with a different colleague than if they want to discuss a problem about their teenager (personal support element). The five components are the elements of positive relationships and connect people to each other and their workplaces, according to Kahn (2007). The intersection of individual and contextual factors impacts their choices of who, based on the five elements, people seek out for their relationships and the number of relationships that meet their needs.

The model makes two assumptions: (a) people have the power to choose with whom they will initiate work relationships; and (b) people can control the number of work relationships they initiate. One caveat is that Kahn (2007) mentions that contextual and personal factors are relevant to agency. Sensemaking is not a neutral indicator that may shift positively or negatively, but rather it derives meaning from negative occurrences only. Others might argue that sensemaking involves the communication practices and cycles in which people engage to reduce the ambiguity of any situation or context, both positive and negative (Tracy, Myers, & Scott, 2006; Weick, 1995). Shifting the focus from meaning to energy and connections is the contribution of Quinn's model follows.

Energy and Connections (Ryan Quinn). Energy, referred to as vitality in the Energizing Model, is a resource and result of positive relationships. According to Quinn (2007), energy relates to feeling enthusiastic and competent about engaging in action. The level and type of energy affects the quality of the connection and can lead to outstanding employee performance and a more positive organizational climate. "People who energize others in their social networks outperform people who do not energize others or who deplete others' energy" (Quinn R. , 2007, p. 74). Connection refers to the development of reciprocal mindfulness and interpersonal communication. Quinn argues that connections are the animate tissue and an element of the interaction between two people, not a trait or behavior of one person in the connection. Connections can occur in quick conversations and in repetitive social discussions that occur over longer periods.

Increased affective energy is associated with connections, when the connections, conceived of as conversations, increase a person's sense that they fit in, and are proficient and independent. High-quality connections produce energy because people obtain sought

after resources through the connection, they use them to create and form identities that impart self-esteem and worth, capability and competency and to transfer knowledge. Receiving and imparting this energy is part of the state-of-being referred to as *lift* by Quinn and Quinn (2009). Achieving *lift* for oneself and inspiring coworkers comes from being committed to a course of action, with integrity towards oneself and others, in pursuit of improvement.

Quinn (2007) conceptualizes the model as continuous circular movement, whereby energy and connection quality are mutually located on opposite sides from each other. Between these sides are the means by which connection quality produces energy, i.e. autonomy, competence, and belonging, and the means by which energy impacts the connection quality, i.e. mutual resources (value), feedback (desirability) and attachment (copresence). The link between energy and connection creates a constant feedback loop. Mitigating factors to this feedback loop are agency and structure. At any time an individual in the connection may change the direction of an interaction through reframing either positively or negatively which may impact the structure of the connection. Energy as both a source of positive connection and an outcome of positive connection is an important aspect of connections, but it does not provide a complete or holistic picture of specific connections. Also, connections, as depicted in this model, have an instrumental focus. Now, I turn to a model connecting the individual with the organization through a smaller group.

Identification with Organization through Group Connection (Deborah Silva and Patricia Sias). Silva and Sias (2010) argue that people who consider their connections with group members to be positive extend this connection and positive identification to the larger organization. Groups also serve as a location for reviewing and reframing conflicts with the

larger organization and when those conflicts are insurmountable groups can provide a buffer. Individuals can identify with the group as their segment of the larger organization.

According to these authors, one of the factors most important to connection is proximity. Proximity relates to the situatedness of the group, as a tangible entity, between the person and the organization. If the organization appears less concrete to the individual, the relationship between the organization and the individual is also less concrete. Communication with group members is central to the group members' feelings about the group and about the organization. The group provides the link between the two (Silva & Sias, 2010).

Discussion with group members can bring about reframing and empathic understanding of the larger organization's position or codes of conduct. Further, when individuals are unable to reframe and are in conflict with the larger organization, the group context may provide a safe locale in which to express their dissatisfaction without disconnecting from the larger organization. Over time, points of meaningful connection with the larger organization may grow once again.

Silva and Sias' (2010) model refers to a very specific context for connection in organizations. The model may be especially relevant in large organizations and important for designing affinity groups, but it is not a general model for positive relationships. The identification with organization through group connection model is incorporated into this study in order to provide an opportunity for reflection upon the position of individuals in groups or teams in organizations, as this is such a central organizing system in the contemporary workplace. As such, the interview data of best experiences in the workplace

may directly relate to this model. The next model, connectedness in organizational spirituality, is relevant to a specific type of organization or specific people in an organization.

Connectedness in Organizational Spirituality (James Sass; Priscilla Lynne Young and Guo-Ming Chen). In the spiritual model, the point of connection is not only between those in the relationship, but is also a dialogue (for at least one of the participants) with a universal entity (Young & Chen, 2013). Some call the entity God, but for others the entity is a less definitive entity, perhaps simply a power greater than themselves. Mitroff and Denton (1999) describe this as "the basic feeling of being connected with one's complete self, others, and the entire universe" (p. 83). This research, although somewhat dated, found that people associated spirituality with "interconnectedness" and spiritual organizations tend to produce greater profits, and integrate home with work identities.

The connection between the self and a universal being, God, or other entity is a primary and conscious connection. Religion and spirituality provide ethical direction for both behavior and communication with others. A feature of this communication is that it is "mediated by a conscious decision to pause, reflect and then respond" (Young & Chen, p. 103) to others in conversation. This model views God or other entity or universal being as positive and its adherents consider themselves vested in communication that is "positive, loving, respectful, and inclusive" (Young & Chen, 2013, p. 103). Positive communication in this model is associated with informality in direct relationships, adherence to workplace standards and rules, long-standing worker relationships, and with use of a first-name basis in interactions.

Bringing God and spirituality into the workplace may be a source of discomfort for some coworkers that may limit connections and relationships in the workplace. Therefore the

model may have limited application. In a work site that is not specifically identified as religious or spiritually-based, intercultural communication approaches that foster acceptance of differences may be needed in order to mitigate potentially negative reactions to this model.

The values of spirituality exist in tension with workplace procedures seen as impersonal and detached (Sass, 2000). Accordingly, running an organization in a professional manner, focusing on production and profits, limits the space for spirituality and deemphasizes relationships. Informality may lead to lack of safety and security, if co-workers do not follow rules and policies, for both staff and clients. Daily job requirements may be eschewed because a problem exists in the relationships between co-workers and or staff and clients (Sass, 2000). The next model, social communication, focuses on the message instead of the people in the connection.

Social Communication Approach (Stuart Sigman). Sigman (1995) argues that social communication theory provides an alternative theory to psychological treatments of relationships. Two primary assumptions of social communication theory in terms of relationships are (a) a focus on the message instead of the people, and (b) the notion that communication constitutes relationships. Meaning is located in the performance between people, not in the individual performance by each person in the relationship. This interactional performance creates identities and community. A relationship is dynamic and ever-changing, a continuous social progression formed by interpersonal interaction, organizational expectations, organizational member behavior, and contextual factors. Sigman (1995) makes a distinction between social relationships, which are ongoing relationships, and interactional relationships, which are face-to-face interactions. Each of these relationships calls for different types of behaviors. However, social relationships may

include, over time, numerous interactional relationships. There are six attributes of this model which Sigman (1995) refers to as projected time duration, degree of on-callness, interruptability, exclusivity, nature of on-behalfness, and stages.

Projected time duration suggests that relationships are delineated by how much time people are compelled to stay within them and how obliged they are to each other. This is mitigated by the precedent of anticipated interaction in a progressive manner and within a premeditated timeline. Social relationships may last for very long times, but definitely longer than in many interactional relationships.

Degree of on-callness indicates that co-presence is neither necessary for social relationships nor interactional relationships. Coworkers in the same office, though, are expected to have more co-presence than a coworker who is located in another country. Interruptability is the extent to which co-presence is required in the relationship, which can affect the level and number of interruptions that can occur before there is a change in the relationship definition.

Exclusivity is the number of relationships required or limited in a particular interaction category (for example, organizational rules, both stated and implicit, regarding dating). Nature of on-behalfness suggests that an individual in the relationship may act or speak on behalf of the other person in the relationship, in effect, acting as the other person's representative. This is usually only relevant in social relationships. Stages point to developmental features of relationships in which a continuous social progression leads to stages of development. There are sociocultural patterns, which may or may not be followed, regarding relationship progression. There may be expectations for certain behavior in each stage and for the stages to be named, but those in the relationship may not consider

themselves to be in the same stage or recognize the same type of staging process. Interactional relationships consist of events (salutations, introductions, question and answers) but are rarely identified as stages.

This model does not acknowledge personal growth or actions. The progression of a relationship is certainly impacted by the context and community, but personal agency on the part of the individuals in the relationship is also relevant. The social communication approach does not address the possibility for transformative connection, or the potential for individuals in interactional relationships to be inspired. Potentially, the synthesized model that I propose will address these issues according to the empirical data I collect. Another model that views relationships as socially developmental comes from Kram and Isabella's and Sias and Cahill's explication of peer relationships and friendships.

Peer Relationships and Friendships (Kathy Kram and Lynn Isabella; Patricia Sias and Daniel Cahill). Kram and Isabella (1985) name the types of peer relationships as informational, collegial, and special-peer in their study examining the role of peer relationships and mentor relationships in professional development. They found that in each stage of someone's career, each type of relationship can play a specific and sometimes different role than in the other stages. The characterization of how these relationships develop is undertaken by Sias and Cahill (1998). They identify transitions from acquaintance to friend, friend to close friend, and close friend to "Almost Best" friend, as "collegial and special peer relationships are characterized, in part, by friendship" (Sias & Cahill, 1998, p. 293).

The information peer relationship is based on give-and-take discussion of information about the workplace, both concerning work and the organization. Information peers do not

reveal a great deal about themselves nor do they exhibit trust. They may exchange feedback about their job, but the lack of trust or allegiance to each other limits the amount of personal feedback. Individuals receive infrequent affirmation or emotional validation.

Collegial peers reveal more about themselves and exhibit a higher level of trust. In addition to information exchange, they provide feedback, affirmation and emotional validation to each other. Collegial peers have moderate levels of friendship, in that they have chosen to be friends (Sias, Krone, & Jablin, 2002). This provides opportunities for enhancement of self-confidence. Conversations may include topics that are personal, including concerns about work and family, as well as professional planning.

Special peers take the relationship to an even higher level in the continuum. They disclose important concerns and quandaries regarding work and family life. They are more genuine and honest about expressing their personal views and beliefs. Individuals receive professional support, as well as personal feedback and the highest level of affirmation and emotional validation. There is a sense of connection that may provide enhanced comfort, security and feeling of belonging. Special peers are akin to "best friends" and are chosen by each other, not appointed, and provide a mentoring relationship as well as friendship (Sias et al., 2002). Given Sias' and others' work, the elements of a relational model include information exchange, emotional support, transparency, and inclusion.

The typology of relationships suggests that relationships develop in a linear fashion from an information peer relationship into ones with emotional attachment. However, some relationships develop more randomly and individuals reveal certain information and keep other information private. Relationship-building, similar to social-penetration, "is cyclical because it proceeds in back-and-forth cycles, and it is dialectical because it involves the

management of the never-ending tension between the public and the private" (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011, p. 237).

Comparison of the Models – Similarities and Differences

The type of encounter referred to in each of the above models, as a positive connection or relationship, ranges from a quick conversation that builds a connection to a long-standing friendship. In what follows, I explore the similarities and differences between the models' attributes in terms of key dimensions identified in Table 1: encounter type, participants, sensemaking, generative emotional resources, inclusion, transparency, and instrumental. In the final section of this literature review, I propose these initial dimensions for a synthesized model of positive connection and relationship. The empirical data shows whether or not they ultimately emerge as important dimensions in this research.

Encounter type. Encounter type is a classification that identifies the models that are based on connections as compared to the models that are based on relationships. Connections may be between people who have never met or people who have known each other for a longer period, but the connection is the focus of the model. This is true for high quality connections (HQCs) (Dutton, 2003) and I-Thou dialogue connections (Buber, 1958) which may be quick and fleeting. The energy and connections model (Quinn, 2007) is focused on quick meetings as well and also repetitive social meetings over longer periods. For the person-centered model (Rogers, 1980), ideal interactions are intense moments followed by breaks. In these moments, "the communication is especially involving and from which growth is more likely to come" (Anderson & Cissna, 1997, p. 30). In fact, Rogers likens the moments of dialogue in the person-centered model to I-Thou dialogue (Anderson & Cissna, 1997). The group connection model (Silva & Sias, 2010) holds proximity as a

factor of importance. According to the model of meaningful connections (Kahn, 2007), it is those, the meaningful connections that comprise positive relationships.

Two models, social communication (Sigman, 1995) and peer relationship (Kram & Isabella, 1985) portray relationships as continua. The social communication model depicts a social relationship as ongoing and minimizes the role of the interactional relationship or face-to-face moments, such as rituals of welcome or leave-taking. The peer relationship model features three stages of relationship that occur over a period of time: informational, collegial and special peer. At the collegial stage, it is possible that individuals will refer to each other as friends (Sias & Cahill, 1998). When people are at the special peer stage, which is rare, they may refer to each other as "best friends." Becoming friends at the collegial and special peer stage is a choice made by colleagues and special peers, and the distinguishing factor between the categories of friends and peers.

Participant number. Participant number is a classification that identifies the number of people in the connection or relationship. For most of the models, there is an assumption of two participants in an interaction. The HQCs (Dutton, 2003), peer relationships (Kram & Isabella, 1985) energy and connection (Quinn, 2007), and social communication (Sigman, 1995) models refer to two people in the interaction. The person-centered model (Rogers, 1980) also refers to two people in the interaction; however, critics of Rogers claim that the person-centered model is self-oriented instead of reciprocal (Anderson & Cissna, 1997). In the meaningful connection model (Kahn, 2007), the participant number is less important than the interest displayed by people in instrumentally-oriented relationships toward the goal of one of the five elements in this model: task accomplishment, career development, sense-making, meaning, and support.

In the I-Thou dialogue (Buber, 1958) and the spiritual (Young & Chen, 2013) models there are three distinct participants, two people and God, or, in the case of I-Thou, a "spark." The group connection (Silva & Sias, 2010) model assumes that participants are groups and an individual.

Sensemaking. I define sensemaking as a way of framing perceptions and deriving meaning through communication about the community, context, objectives, and identity. The energy and connections (Quinn, 2007), person-centered (Rogers, 1980), social communication (Sigman, 1995) and I-Thou dialogue (Buber, 1958) models, whether connection or relationship oriented, short or continuum based, show the locus of speech acts or other communicative behavior as in-between partners. In the energy and connection model, Quinn describes the place of meeting as animate tissue. Sigman characterizes the interaction as a performance between people that constructs identity and community.

For Buber (1958) and Rogers (1980), these interactions are the ultimate form of dialogue and sense-making, with the possibility of reorienting the partners' perceptions and opinions, and for Rogers, maybe even more importantly, their feelings and conduct toward themselves. Sigman (1995) makes the distinction that the focus of the relationship is the message, not the people. For him, communication is a process that constitutes relationships. To this end, Quinn's (2007) model attributes meaning to the energy and connection quality of the feedback loop in connections.

Through meaningful connections, people achieve positive relationships and sense-making, according to Kahn (2007). Roger's (1980) caveat for wholeness which he defines as congruence is that although people have the capability for knowing themselves, they need to have an environment conducive to generative psychological viewpoints in order for it to be

actualized. In the spiritual model (Young & Chen, 2013), discussion is mediated by a conscious decision to pause, reflect and then respond. In this moment or time of reflection, the third party in the interaction, God or a universal being, is a source for sense-making. For the people in the group connection (Silva & Sias, 2010) model, the group either represents the larger organization or a buffer to the larger organization. When the connection with the group is positive, this sensibility extends to the organization or if there is something about the larger organization that is unfavorable to the individual, the group can mitigate this connection by becoming a sounding board for employees' negative sentiments.

Generative emotional resources. I define generative emotional resources as a type of social support, inclusive of effective listening, presentness and confirmation, in the form of a potential renewable resource. Emotional support, listening and confirmation are highlighted in eight of the nine models as one of their cornerstones. Terms that demonstrate these characteristics include: empathetic support, affirmation, effective listening, sharing about oneself (HQCs) (Dutton, 2003), attentiveness, presentness, confirmation (I-Thou) (Buber, 1958), caring, empathetic understanding, prizing, acceptance, unconditional positive regard (person-centered) (Rogers, 1980), self-esteem and self-worth (energy and connections) (Quinn, 2007), emotional elements, personal support (meaningful connections) (Kahn, 2007), feeling heard (group connections) (Silva & Sias, 2010), loving (spiritual) (Young & Chen, 2013), and self-confidence and emotional validation, which vary in degree depending upon peer relationship and friendship stage (peer relationship and friendship) (Kram & Isabella, 1985; Sias & Cahill, 1998).

Making an active choice to have a connection and to ardently attend to the other for purposes of the connection is an inherent part of the process of I-Thou dialogue (Buber,

1958). As well, making a choice is what distinguishes friendships from peer relationships (Sias & Cahill, 1998). In the meaningful connections (Kahn, 2007) model, people are more likely to choose their relationships based on the elements of the model: task accomplishment, career development, sense-making, meaning and support. Participation with the group often leads to a meaningful communication with the larger organization in the group connection model (Silva & Sias, 2010).

Both of the models create a continua, the peer relationship model (Kram & Isabella, 1985) and the social communication model (Sigman, 1995), are action-oriented, in that relationships are conceived of as moving through stages. They may be interrupted, but there is a continuous social progression. Person-centered connections (Rogers, 1980) create a flow or rhythm of intense moments of interaction and rest in between.

Generative elements of the person-centered (Rogers, 1980) model include transparency, caring, empathetic understanding and conduct toward the self and others. In the person-centered model, the energy connections (Quinn, 2007) model and the HQC (Dutton, 2003) model, these elements, and others, are resources that can engender greater amounts of support if people use them within their relationships. An example for Dutton is trust, which, when one person communicates it and the other person then also communicates it, a cycle of trust may ensue. This energy resource concept is the central thesis of the energy connection model wherein HQCs produce energy by people obtaining sought after resources through connection and using them to create and form positive identity, self-esteem, capability and competency. Mitigating factors to this portrayal of energy resource circulation are agency and structure.

Inclusion. I define inclusion as active acknowledgment of being part of a whole. Inclusion is another theme that is significant for many of the models. However, a number of models vary according to how they address belonging, as both an instrumental resource and enhancement of personal identity and emotional values. Quinn (2007) and Dutton (2003) conceptualize connections as resources that are reciprocal, resulting in an increase in the sensibility of both people that they fit in. Feeling included produces energy.

For Rogers (1980), mutuality is also generative in many ways including listening and being heard, and honesty from one person precipitating honesty from the other. He also refers to appreciation generating a sense of belonging by the other. Rogers likens dialogic interaction to the I-Thou dialogue model in that it links people at the moment of connection. "At such important moments the question of overall equality or inequality is totally irrelevant" (Rogers, 1980, p. 39).

For Buber (1958), inclusion relates to one's focus on the other by being completely generous and open, without losing one's own identity. The focus of belonging is on "you" feeling as if you are included, not "me." This implies a slightly different nuance which caused much debate between Rogers and Buber and subsequent scholars (Anderson & Cissna, 1997). Accordingly, Anderson and Cissna credit Rogers for making the same point as Buber; that is; true dialogue comes from maintaining one's own position at the same time as acknowledging the position of the other (Anderson & Cissna, 1997).

Belonging is central to the group connection (Silva & Sias, 2010) model. If people do not feel included and heard in the group, their sense of connection with the larger organization is most likely lost. Belonging is also central to the spiritual (Young & Chen, 2013) model, that is, inclusive by way of conversation with the universal power.

Kahn (2007) views a sense of belonging as person-centric and more or less meaningful depending upon the viewpoint of the person in the connection. At the highest level of peer relationships (Kram & Isabella, 1985), the sense of belonging is also the most profound.

Transparency. I define transparency as being wholly authentic in conversation with others and conversation with one's self. Honesty, transparency, trust, genuineness, reliability, not micromanaging, authenticity, intellectually available, and realness are the terms utilized to describe an important element to the meaningful connection (Kahn, 2007), spiritual (Young & Chen, 2013), I-Thou dialogue (Buber, 1958), person-centered (Rogers, 1980), and HQC (Dutton, 2003) models. In the peer relationship model (Kram & Isabella, 1985), trust and self-revelation, as well as personal feedback, are incorporated at the collegial stage and even more so at the special peer stage.

Both Kahn (2007) and Rogers (1980) relate transparency to the correspondence between internal beliefs with external conduct. Roger's adds an additional distinction between internal beliefs in the moment and the internal perception of these beliefs.

Instrumental. I define instrumental as interaction that facilitates an individual's effectiveness in achieving a purpose or completing a task. This interaction may include speech acts, symbolic communication, and communicative behavior. Energy enhances task completion in the energy and connections (Quinn, 2007) model. When capability and competency are produced, they provide, along with other elements such as autonomy and knowledge transfer, continued energy to realize task completion. This concept is also employed in the HQC (Dutton, 2003) model and the meaningful connections (Kahn, 2007) model. Task enabling is one of the most important elements of the HQC model, wherein

skills and resources such as time, emotional support and trust (the other two named elements) are circulated in the form of coaching, training, planning, and promoting and by using tools such as goal-oriented dialogue and explicit, descriptive language. Kahn's description of task accomplishment in the Meaningful Connections model is less personally supportive than is Dutton's task enabling element.

In the peer relationship model (Kram & Isabella, 1985), task enabling activities are undertaken at all three stages. Informational peers discuss information about work. Collegial peers also discuss information about work, assist with professional planning, and provide feedback. In addition to all of the actions carried out by informational and collegial peers, special peers talk about work concerns and challenges, provide professional support, and engage in mentoring.

The spiritual (Sass, 2000) model reveals a tension in its consideration of tasks because professionalism is sometimes forsaken for relationships. Organizations employing a spiritual model may favor an informal organizational climate that promotes positive connections and relationships, but at the same time, this kind of climate may decrease adherence to workplace standards and rules.

Context

Multiple orientations. If meaning is socially constructed, as I believe it is, communication is impacted by and impacts context, history and viewpoints of individuals in the workplace (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). As well, organizational shifts create different meanings and shades of meaning depending upon perceptions and judgments by an individual based on their gender, hierarchical location, race, resources, privilege, ideology, voice, status (Collier, 2009) and technology-orientation. The political, economic and social

structures in society provide the contextual variables that also affect individuals in the workplace, what McPhee and Zaug (2000) refer to as the institutional-positioning communication flow.

As depicted in the social communication model, relationships are enacted with multiple participants, even if only two people are involved in each interaction (Sigman, 1995). To use an example in the organizational sphere to parallel Sigman's choice of a married couple, the superior-subordinate relationship includes the employees and their managers, and also colleagues in the same group as well as colleagues in other organizations, friends and families, and all other stakeholders in the relationship.

Sias and Cahill (1998) echo this concept with regard to organizational affiliations, such as membership in religious institutions, sports, clubs and settings. They similarly note that an individual's personal and professional life are not as compartmentalized as previously perceived, also perhaps due, in part, to technology and mobility of organizational members. This is relevant for the peer relationship model, in that "life events…likely influence workplace friendships" (Sias and Cahill, 1998, p. 277). They comment that for many of the participants in their study on peer friendship, "a coworker went from being 'a friend at work' to 'a friend that happens to be a coworker'" (p. 292).

Particular implications of context for High-Quality Connections Model. Dutton (2003) is very explicit about the importance of context to connections. In the diagram entitled "Contributors to and Consequences of High-Quality Connections", contextual factors are listed, along with communicative features, as contributors to high quality connections. Context, for her, includes "values, rewards and recognition, structure, practices and processes

for cultural transmission, getting things done, interpersonal helping, physical space and leadership" (p. 17).

Values that promote high-quality connections, according to Dutton (2003), are "teamwork, development of people, the whole person, and respect and dignity of others" (pp. 143-144). Not all of these are necessary to occur at the same time for an organization to experience high-quality connections; however each is conducive to the others. It is not enough to have these activities within the organization, but they are meant to be prized. For example, collaboration, mutual accountability and mutual achievement translate into mutual assistance with projects. Valuing the development of people implies that the company leaders respect and care about people's needs, evoking genuineness among coworkers. As well, when the whole person is valued and genuineness is comfortable and feasible, this recognizes that the lines of home and work are overlapping. Openness may lead to presentness and greater respect, all leading to HQCs, which lead to collaboration in activities including meetings, production and networking.

Dutton (2003) points out that determining whether stated values are true values of the organization is possible through examination of the rewards and recognition system. For example, Dutton asks: Are the rewards based on group successes as well as individual achievements? Shared rewards symbolically communicate respect and potentially trust between group members and fosters positive organizational climate. Thus, cyclical, intersecting and generative coordination of contextual factors encourages HQCs. Another of these contextual factors, according to Dutton, is less hierarchy in the organizational structure and more social networks established through discourse that build connections and communicative interactions with coworkers. Multiple points of meeting in these social

networks, or being friends outside of work, are optimal for HQCs to flourish, and for positive organizational climate.

Dutton (2003) chooses three of the many activities and systems in an organization that enable task completion and demonstrate their impact on HQCs. Including many voices, both formally and informally in hiring procedures and selecting people with greater interpersonal skills is one recommendation to achieve HQCs. Using the HQC model to initiate newcomers to the organization and to run meetings will also motivate HQCs. Creating an emotional space where empathy is encouraged and compassion the norm, as well as a physical space that is open and welcoming with less separation between levels of hierarchy may also nurture HQCs. All or little of these aforementioned practices and implementation of standards can be undertaken, depending upon the leadership of the organization. When HQCs are occurring in an organization, the contextual attributes, similar to the communicative elements, act as generative resources.

Proposal of Dimensions for a New Model

To portray the range of expressions, nuances of emotions, and ways people use communication to create positive climate surrounding positive work connections and relationships is complex. The nine models discussed here each contain concepts and elements that are applicable to this study. Based on the similarities and differences between the models, five dimensions emerge. I compare these dimensions with the interview data themes in order to examine if and how the concepts within the dimensions are present in participants' portrayal of their best work experiences. I also collate comparable information for encounter type and participants to determine if they are germane to this study.

To obtain these dimensions, I coded all of the models and constructed a master code list. I then collapsed the codes into dimensions. I reviewed each model and the coding for substance and inference. I compared and contrasted salient aspects of each model, as well as the context in which the dimensions were relevant. The dimensions are pervious to each other, welcoming interaction and commonality, as they ebb and flow in connection and within a relationship. Their content is contiguous and intersecting, as portrayed in Figure 1, and the encounter types, participant numbers, and participant diversity are fluid.

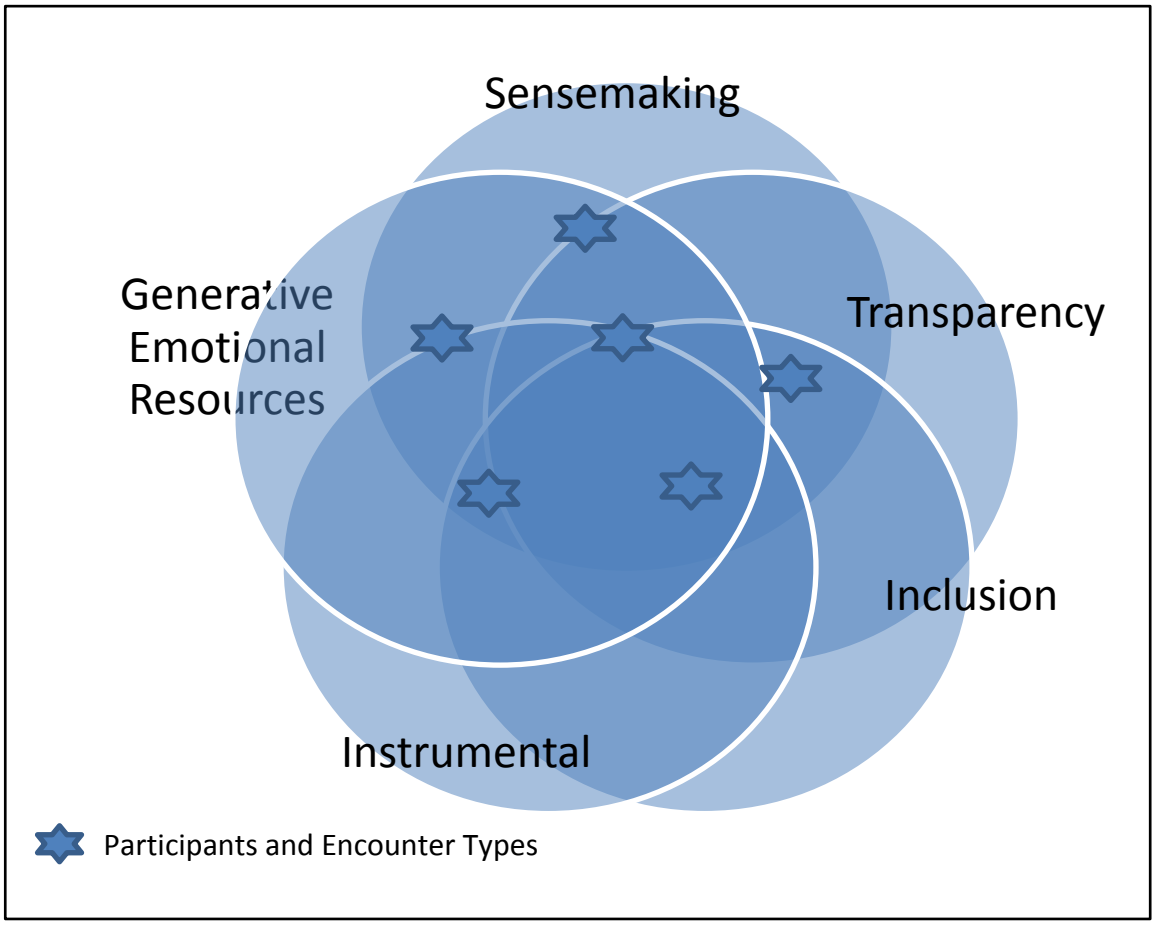

Figure 1. Dimensions of Quality Connections and Positive Relationships

In the following section, I describe these five dimensions: sensemaking, generative emotional resources, inclusion, transparency, and instrumental, in more detail.

Sensemaking. Meaningful or purposeful work has been linked to a number of factors including close relationships at work (Cheney et al., 2008). Through the "connective tissue" (Quinn R. , 2007) of interaction, whether by use of humor (Lynch, 2009; Martin et al., 2004), or dialogue (Black, 2005; Cheney et al., 2008; Ellingson, 2003; Mize Smith et al., 2006), meaning is made. This is true for Lynch, in the exposition of humor in the kitchen of a restaurant, whereby professional identification is constructed and enacted. (2009). Professional identification is not only self-constructed but also based on how people perceive others' views of them. As such, it may be meaningful for certain people to explain to others why they do the work they do, especially if it is more spiritually-oriented (Mize Smith et al., 2006). Alternatively, meaning may come from aspects of work not associated with specific duties, including relationships at work (Cheney et al., 2008).

Each member in a relationship, whether dyad, triad, or larger, may infer a different meaning from the interaction. Following Weick, Hermon (1996) professes that "through the process of discussing and debating what causes the 'glass ceiling' and how it can be shattered, each individual who participates in the group's communication derives meaning from the interaction with others" (pp. 430-431). Informal connections between organizational members offer opportunities for less hierarchical identification in which there is space to examine and reframe beliefs and attitudes over time (Ellingson, 2003).

Connection is a term that participants used to describe the meaningfulness of their experience in an organizational training seminar (Black, 2005). Although the point of the

seminar was instrumental, in improving organizational workers' skills in dialogue (being present, listening, being open) in service of creating shared meaning, the outcomes included connection and other Buberian notions of dialogue, appreciating the other and the "spiritual" (p. 287). Black argued that conducting training to enhance meaningfulness may be looked upon with skepticism by organizational members, but that training to enhance skills in dialogue resulted in the byproduct of increased meaningfulness between organizational members (Arnett, 1986).

I focus on sensemaking as a dimension that combines two elements of the meaningful connections (Kahn, 2007) model, provision of meaning and sensemaking. Sensemaking is purpose-driven, in that gaining proficiency and knowing oneself and the other through connection and relationship are valuable cognitions (Buber, 1958; Kahn, 2007; Rogers, 1980; Sigman, 1995). Deriving meaning about the community, organizational action and other contextual factors with coworkers through discussions and other communicative interaction, whether the experiences are disquieting or celebratory, is mutually satisfying, important, and worthy (Kahn, 2007; Quinn R. , 2007; Rogers, 1980) and fosters positive organizational climate (Patterson et al., 2005).

Generative emotional resources. The positive outcomes derived from emotional support between coworkers and from supervisors to subordinates are well-documented in the literature. Empathy (Ashforth et al., 2008; Madlock & Kennedy-Lightsey, 2010; Martin et al., 2004; Snyder, 2009), caring (Mirivel & Tracy, 2005), effective listening (Cooper, 1997; Madlock & Kennedy-Lightsey, 2010), humor (Lynch, 2009; Martin et al., 2004), and friendliness (Martin et al., 2004) lead to understanding (Sias, 2005), self-esteem (Snyder, 2009; Whitford & Moss, 2009), empowerment (Ashcraft & Kedrowicz, 2002; Haskins, 1996;

Lynch, 2009; Rogers & Singhal, 2003), appreciation (Mirivel & Tracy, 2005) communication satisfaction (Madlock, 2008), relational satisfaction (Ellingson, 2003; Madlock & Kennedy-Lightsey, 2010), overall job satisfaction (Martin et al., 2004), and positive organizational climate (Patterson et al., 2005). Quality supervisor-subordinate support may develop into a mentoring relationship (Egan, 1996). There is also a distinction made in the relevance of the support from coworkers to fellow caregivers, where understanding specific aspects of the job requires hands-on involvement, in comparison to supportive supervisors, whose confirmation and encouragement reportedly led to more caring connections on the part of caregivers toward their clients (Snyder, 2009). In a more nuanced application, Fix and Sias (2006) found a distinction between the association between supervisor-subordinate relationship quality and job satisfaction and supervisor-subordinate style of communication and job satisfaction. Specifically, their study indicated that person-centered communication, which "generally refers to the extent to which one's communicative messages consider the perspectives of others" (p. 37) was the cause of job satisfaction among their study respondents.

Full personal engagement requires physical, emotional and psychological availability in that individuals feel secure in their organizational role, have ample energy and are not preoccupied by matters unimportant to the moment (Kahn, 1990). Disengaging takes less energy especially with regard to emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983). For Kahn, (1992) presentness is indicated in "four dimensions of psychological presence: people feel and are attentive, connected, integrated, and focused in their role performances. These dimensions collectively define what it means for people to be alive there in the fullest sense, accessible in the given work role" (p. 321). Being present, spontaneous, intensely focused and totally

aware of the other (Johannesen, 1971) in conversations beneficial to the organization (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004) and linked to the organization's bottom line (Kolodinsky et al., 2008).

Performing verbal and nonverbal actions of presentness is part of the role undertaken by many workers. "Behaving professionally and striving for a flawless performance" (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 23) captures the times when it is necessary to play the role in order to seem present and attentive, such as when employees are relegated to menial tasks, they are working with clients or members whom they know do not appreciate their efforts, or they are focused on their personal lives. However, research also indicates that employees whose focus is on some positive personal outside involvement may also bring extra energy, attentiveness and intensity to their work (Kahn, 1990).

Likewise, scholars discussing spiritual organizing recognize the importance of presentness in the paradigm of positive work behaviors (Goodier & Eisenberg, 2006; Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004; Kolodinsky et al., 2008). Goodier and Eisenberg (2006) describe how the CEO of a faith-based hospital opened each session by "focusing on new employees…standing next to each person as he/she spoke, shaking hands and frequently commenting upon what was said" (p. 57).

Confirmation, a type of communication practice, is associated with terms such as mutuality, encouragement, caring, appreciation, supportive environment, recognition, affection and love (Johannesen, 1971; Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004; Kolodinsky et al., 2008; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2011) and is acknowledged as being important to positive workplace climates and positive attitudes by co-workers. This proves to be very important in leader-subordinate or leader-follower and leader-client relationships. Even making a point to

know peoples' names may make a difference (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2011; Sass, 2000). Recognizing and appreciating someone's uniqueness also takes the form of small gestures such as a welcoming handshake, moving closer to someone as they speak, repeating their name after being introduced or commenting positively about something the other person said (Goodier & Eisenberg, 2006).

The literature on spiritual organizations adds other descriptors for emotional support including servant-orientation, purpose, honoring successes, benevolence, receptivity and respect. Positive employee attitudes in the workplace are linked to greater productivity (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004; Kolodinsky et al., 2008). The action-orientation and sensibility associated with emotional support, inclusive of effective listening, presentness and confirmation, is a renewable resource (Buber, 1958; Dutton, 2003; Quinn R. , 2007; Rogers, 1980) that frames this dimension of generative emotional resources.

Inclusion. Inclusion takes on a very broad connotation in the literature. It is perceived as access to information, being part of the team, empathetic connection, integration, interaction, open-heartedness, interconnectedness, voice, trust, organizational identification and impacting processes undertaken by the group (Kahn, 1990; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2011; Roberson, 2006; Sass, 2000). There is a causal connection between these descriptors and organizational purpose, professional fulfillment (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004; Kolodinsky et al., 2008), positive organizational climate (Patterson et al., 2005) and workers top experiences at work (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2011).

Inclusion in the spiritual organizing literature symbolically communicates work as "home" and commitment to a comfortable feeling of belonging (Harter & Buzzanell, 2007; Sass, 2000). This sense of community is recognized as helping to lessen employee turnover

(Kolodinsky et al., 2008). In a high-quality relationship between manager and employee, the interaction with the manager can increase the employee's commitment to the organization (Abu Bakar et al., 2010). This was also demonstrated with teleworkers in that their informal relationships with coworkers projected group affiliation (Fay & Kline, 2011). Being active participants in a group increased members' desire to interact and also increased their trust and their sense that information was correct (Krone, 1994).

As an example of a vehicle for inclusion, humor is cited as a bonding element as well as providing group identification (Lynch, 2009; Martin et al., 2004). The reciprocal nature of humor and bonding is highlighted, as well. This creates a special relationship between those in the group, but also creates a separation from unaffiliated coworkers (Lynch, 2009). This relationship creation is also true for storytelling or "small talk" (Mirivel & Tracy, 2005).

In one study, collaboration and purposeful discussions promoted a perception of equality and camaraderie within the group wherein group members came to the aid of each other beyond the scope of work for the group. One participant in the study noted that they felt comfortable requesting help from others, if they had complementary skills or information, as a means of reducing duplication of effort (Lewis et al., 2010). Discussion and advice or help regarding personal issues may cross over a line for some, but it promotes a sense of acceptance and connection between coworkers, and potentially a more congenial relationship with others in the group or organization (Amason, Allen, & Holmes, 1999; Ellingson, 2003).

As a dimension, I perceive inclusion to be a resource for instrumental, identity and emotional purposes (Buber, 1958; Dutton, 2003; Quinn R. , 2007; Rogers, 1980). As is apparent from the literature, teaming and collaboration are central to contemporary

organizational life and, therefore, interactions that generate a sense of belonging are foundational to organizations.

Transparency. Transparency is associated with authenticity, honesty, truth-telling, openness and keeping promises (Goodier & Eisenberg, 2006; Johannesen, 1971) and behaviors that reflect internal values (Addison, 2008; Khan, 2010). Positive organizational climates are linked to openness and honesty, as well (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2011). Openness is one element that furthers productivity and inspiration (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004). Transparency is also connected to effective leadership constructs (Khan, 2010).

The same terms, honesty, truth-telling, openness and fairness, in addition to integrity and justice, are elements of spiritual organizations and are associated with more optimistic employee outlooks. These characteristics are also identified as some of the essential values upon which spiritual organizing is based (Goodier & Eisenberg, 2006; Kolodinsky et al., 2008; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2011).

Talking candidly and sharing accurate information leads to trust (Allen, 1996; Lewis et al., 2010). And trust, as a precursor to collaboration (Douglas, 2006; Fay & Kline, 2011; Lewis et al., 2010; Martin et al., 2004; Thomas et al., 2009; de Vries et al., 2006 in the organization, is also a prerequisite for transparency, participation and commitment to the organization's objectives (Thomas et al., 2009). Even in nonprofit organizations where emotional support is paramount for nonprofit volunteers, their involvement is greater if they receive informational and assessment support, as well (Ashcraft & Kedrowicz, 2002). While participants in one study considered personal co-presence essential to establishing trust (Lewis et al., 2010), trust is viewed as an essential element in the effective performance of virtual teams (Gibbs et al., 2008). Procedures and rules are established in virtual

environments to encourage trust, however "examining trust as a communicative accomplishment achieved through a sequence of meaningful actions in routine interactions" (Gibbs et al., 2008, p. 209) may prove to be fruitful.

Transparency, then, is conceived in several ways: as having a positive impact on workplace climate, culture and productivity; as one aspect of spiritual organizations; and as a marker of clear and direct viewpoint. Jurkiewicz and Giacalone (2004) depict transparency as "the ability to live an integrated life, so that one's work role and other roles are not inherently in conflict and so that a person's work role does not conflict with his or her essential nature and who the person is as a human being" (p. 134). Feeling comfortable talking about these other roles and the challenges, achievements, and emotions associated with them, in other words, being wholly authentic in the workplace, may lead to greater affiliation to the organization and more gratifying workplace relationships (Fay & Kline, 2011; Kristiansen & Bloch-Poulsen, 2000).

Khan's (2010) definition of transparency is "the successful alignment of one's inner values, beliefs, and convictions with one's behavior" (p. 170). This definition and Rogers' (1980) notion of congruence as a metaphor for transparency begins to complicate this dimension. Rogers' view of congruence is that it exists on three levels. Level One is the real and present belief. Level two is the perception of the belief. Level three is conveying the belief. I build upon Rogers' conception, but change the picture somewhat. My representation is three parallel greased ropes being tugged upon by contextual forces, both professional and personal. Each of the ropes represents the same as Rogers' levels, real and present belief, perception of belief, and conveying belief. If these ropes are able to line up with each other, at that moment congruence and true transparency is achieved. Thus, this

may only be obtainable in rare moments or connections. But recognizing that true transparency is very difficult to achieve may heighten respect and appreciation for efforts toward that end.

Instrumental. The literature strongly indicates that relationships in which more information and more accurate information is provided to enable people to be productive results in greater satisfaction (Rosenfeld et al., 2004; Sharbrough, 2006; Sias, 2005; Thomas et al., 2009). This phenomenon has been discussed, even more specifically, in studies regarding supervisor-subordinate relationships, or Leader Member Exchange (LMX) (Sias, 2005; Thomas et al., 2009) and mentoring (de Vries et al., 2006). Even informally, practical knowledge and current, relevant information are significant attributes for relationship-building (Fay & Kline, 2011; Guowei & Jeffres, 2006; Kleinnijenhuis, van den Hooff, Utz, Vermeulen, & Huysman, 2011). This is true in-person and by way of communication and information technologies (Waldeck, Seibold, & Flanagin, 2004). Amount of information versus quality of information becomes a salient issue, as demonstrated by teleworkers' perception that they can be more purposeful in their work connections and relationships and work without as many interruptions (Fonner & Roloff, 2010) when they are not co-located and partaking in or worrying about organizational structure and politics.

In addition to information exchange, high quality relationships have been found to be task enabling because of shared trust, goals, participation, empowerment, and career and emotional support. Again, the quality of supervisor-subordinate relationships is demonstrated this in the literature (Douglas, 2006; Madlock, 2008; McCroskey & Richmond, 2000; Miller et al., 1999; Mueller & Lee, 2002; Thomas et al., 2009) as well as other relationships, including that of non-profit volunteers (Ashcraft & Kedrowicz, 2002).

Participating in decision-making is important in quality relationships (Douglas, 2006; Keyton & Beck, 2008; Mueller & Lee, 2002) and perception of quality information exchange (Krone, 1994), whether for a group, LMX, or peer co-worker relationship. This may require training of specific skills, including relationship building and retention (Guowei & Jeffres, 2006). Micro-lending, as an example, tends to engender participation in decision-making discussions and negotiation within the relationship (friends or acquaintances) in support of furthering the businesses of the participants, and when successful, empowers the participants in the group (Rogers & Singhal, 2003).

Relationships and connections that enable tasks occur in meetings, in offices, in the hallways and in the kitchen. Sometimes less traditional approaches to dialogue engender collaboration, decision making and role negotiation. One study cited the connections that health care workers made with each other in clinic spaces between patient visits (Ellingson, 2003) as accomplishing this goal. Another study focused on the role of humor (Lynch, 2009) within relationships and as a point of connection, and finally, spirituality is attributed as facilitating task accomplishment by framing job duties as having a purpose beyond the materialistic and associated with the connection to a higher being or universal influence (Cheney et al., 2008; Frye et al., 2007).

Instrumental, as envisioned in Dutton's (2003) framing of Task Enabling, is the fifth dimension I propose. In addition to Dutton's depiction of Task Enabling, which provides the structure for this dimension, there is a strategic aspect to training, planning, promoting, encouraging, adjusting and cultivating, which I would like to recognize in this dimension. Sometimes the most beneficial action on the part of colleagues and especially managers is to remove obstacles so that organizational members can realize their capabilities and potential.

I began this chapter with a review of the literature about organizational climate and dimensions of the Organizational Climate Measure (OCM) (Patterson et al., 2005). I established a link between the organizational climate dimensions and workplace connections and relationships. I examined the literature about nine models of connection and relationship based in the disciplines of psychology, communication and organizational behavior. The focus of these models on quality connections and positive relationships connects them to a common interdisciplinary standpoint. I compared the models and discussed the contextual factors associated with them. Based on the review of this literature, I proposed dimensions for a new model of quality connections and positive relationships: sensemaking, generative emotional resources, inclusion, transparency, and instrumental.

Chapter 3: Methods

The central goal of this research is to develop a communicative model of quality workplace connections and relationships associated with positive organizational climate that synthesizes past research and is also grounded in empirical evidence from working adults' experiences. Beginning with the dimensions of quality connections and positive relationships from past research and coupling those dimensions with any emergent elements, I analyzed interviews of best-work experiences of a diverse group of working adults, explored the applicability of my proposed model and adjusted the model based on empirical evidence. Using an interpretive approach, the study's methodology included drawing a diverse group of working adults through maximum variation criteria and snowball sampling, conducting semi-structured respondent interviews, and analyzing the data both deductively and inductively. From these steps, I developed a communicative model of quality relationships in the workplace that incorporates past models and emergent elements in terms of the various overarching dimensions of these connections and relationships.

In what follows, I present the philosophical foundations of this study, my positionality as a researcher, and the research design and methodological procedures used to collect and analyze data.

Interpretive Approach

The models of positive relationships and quality connections provided the sensitizing dimensions that I used in this study, a starting place for understanding working adults' positive experiences at work. I examined past elements and dimensions of positive relationships outlined in the previous chapter, comparing these to working adults' recollected experiences of workplace positivity. I took as a starting point that the working adults'

recalled experiences are, in and of themselves, social constructions, as are past models of relationships and my subsequent analysis of these models and their comparisons to recollected accounts.

Creating a conversation to merge past models with adults' subjective accounts of work is best done using an interpretive approach. When using an interpretive approach, researchers pose questions but also invite participants to ask questions, suggest possible tangents, and offer ideas that add to the research (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Such was the case in this study. I tried "to understand the particular systems of meaning of those whose actions are being understood"…and to "try to see the world through [the] eyes of the people that I am studying" (Baxter & Babbie, 2003, p. 59). Although my work began with past research about quality connections and positive relationships, the empirical data from interviews served as the litmus test for whether or not the resulting model I created includes or precludes various elements and dimensions.

Constructionism and interpretivism are related approaches to research that share philosophical assumptions that are representative of particular philosophical world views. (Schwandt, 1994) argues that an interpretive perspective means that researchers

> share the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it. This goal is variously spoken of as an abiding concern for the life world, for the emic point of view, for understanding meaning, for grasping the actor's definition of a situation, for Verstehen. The world of lived reality and situation-specific meanings that constitute the general object of investigation is thought to be constructed by social actors (p. 118).

This perspective, of discovering how adults understand and express quality connections and positive relationships at work, undergirds my research, discerning the subjective meaning that working adults place on experiences they identify as positive. That is, why are workplace connections and relationships positive *according to the people who experience and talk about*

those connections and relationships? The philosophical grounding and methodological commitments of constructivism lead to certain types of research problems and questions as well as certain approaches to answering those questions. These include how people perceive phenomena (Grbich, 2007), in this case the workplace communicative experiences adults perceive as positive. As Guba and Lincoln argue, "knowledge consists of those constructions about which there is a relative consensus … among those competent … to interpret the substance of the construction" (1994, p. 113). Certainly, no one knows better what feels good and why than does the person experiencing the positive feeling.

Indeed, I view the connections and relationships that are the focus of this study as constructed and transformed via intersubjective communication. Sias (2009) argues that a social constructionist perspective of workplace relationships suggests that relationships are "constituted in the interaction of organizational members [and] are constituted in human behavior" (Sias, 2009, p. 11). I believe this argument is true about nearly all workplace phenomena. Thus, this study is rooted in social constructionism. I used interpretive data collection and analysis methods to better understand the constitutive elements and dimensions of high quality connections and positive relationships in the workplace.

In my role as researcher, I am a participant and a facilitator of multiple articulations. As co-producer of the texts, I review and rethink the texts, keeping in mind my impact on the texts, and their impact on me (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). My positioning is a mid-age female, white Euro-American with experience in both non-profit organizations as a volunteer and officer and for-profit corporations as an employee and manager.

Data Collection

Selection of participants. The parameters for the selection of participants for this study were relatively broad in that a meta-model of relationships and connections called for the maximum variation possible in the sample of organizational members. Therefore, I attempted to recruit participants of diverse ages, genders, countries of origin, countries of work, stages of career, levels of responsibility, and professions.

I interviewed 21 working adults who were at least 18-years-old and had 12 or more months' working experience. Participants were retired, employed or currently unemployed. I spoke to a limited number of young workers (10% or less) because of past research's over-use of student samples (i.e., young adults 18-25), so that findings might be transferable to a broader segment of working adults. Predominantly, I interviewed adults with many years' extended work experience in various workplaces. Such a sample likely has a richer repertoire of experiences in terms of quality relationships in one's professional life (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Mason, 2002).

At the time of the positive experience participants chose to talk about, participants ranged in age from 17 to 57. At the time they were interviewed, 17 of the 21 participants were between the ages of 30 and 60, with two participants in their 70s and two participants in their 20s. The number of years between their positive experience and the time of our interviews ranged from one to 38. One third of the participants chose an experience to relay that occurred 20 or more years ago. Approximately half of the participants told a story that occurred within the last 10 years.

Participants worked in a variety of industries when their best experience occurred: six worked in telecommunications or information technology; five worked in manufacturing;

four worked in banking or financial services; four worked in education, government or healthcare; and two worked in international non-governmental organizations. The majority of participants characterized the organizational structure in which their very positive experience took place as hierarchical, followed by a matrix structure. Three participants described the structure in their organization as participatory or as a team. Sixty percent of the participants were managers at time of their best experience.

Half of the participants described experiences that occurred while they were working in companies in the U.S. Others were working in Turkey, Indonesia, Canada, China, Saudi Arabia, Germany, Puerto Rico, Denmark, Romania, Australia, and Scotland. The country of employment did not always correspond to the country of origin. While eight of the participants were from the U.S., three were from Canada, and one each from the U.K., Turkey, Russia, India, Czech Republic, Germany, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Romania, and Australia.

Sampling aimed to combine maximum variation criteria and snowball sampling. In terms of maximum variation criteria sampling, which is sampling that is intentionally varied within a defined category, my sample fell "short of the demographic richness of all" organizational members, but this approach provided for "a range of some key characteristics" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 113). Key characteristics included variation in age, gender, country of origin, country of work, stage of career, level of responsibility, and profession, which tapped into "a range of qualities, attributes, situations, or incidents of the phenomenon under study" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 113), in this case quality connections and positive relationships at work.

Using these criteria, I recruited participants through snowball sampling methods, that is to say, I enlisted sample participants who, in turn, located other participants, in order to achieve a wide-ranging sample. People that I thought of as potential participants knew others who shared similar demographics and may also have experienced positive relationships and quality connections in the workplace (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). That is, I approached adults over the age of 25 first, both U.S. and internationally-based, through my professional and personal networks.

Using maximum variation sampling did not guarantee that all participants would describe meaningful connections or positive relationships as part of their best-work experiences. The snowball sample did draw people with positive experiences about quality connections and positive relationships because I asked the initial interviewees whose best-work experiences involved these types of connections and relationships about similar others whom they could ask. For the initial sample members who were willing to do so, they asked their friends, family, or colleagues if they were interested in participating in the study. If so, they provided my telephone or email contact information. People in the sample provided me with the names and contact information for the working adults that responded positively to the request to be interviewed. Simultaneously, I posted a request for participants on a social media site used by a few of my professional network members to encourage people to respond to snowball sampling requests.

In my emails and in my personal contacts with my network, I explained the purpose and the protocol of the study including interview length, interview questions, information about informed consent, and requests to record the interview. Once I had contact with people,

I explained the informed consent in more detail, secured their consent, and provided them with a copy of the informed consent agreement.

Method

This study used respondent interviews and sought to "elicit open-ended responses" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 179) to find out about participants' best experiences in the workplace. Because of the complexity of quality connections and positive relationships at work, as past models of connections and relationships suggest, in-depth semi-structured interviews gave people the freedom to tell their own story. Semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity for the researcher to deviate from the interview guide, to ask follow-up questions, and to invite the participant to lead the interview in the direction that made sense for them (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). More specifically, in this research project, semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity for participants to construct and perform elements of significance to them; communicative elements which became part of the coding for dimensions in the new model.

Respondent interviews helped me identify dimensions and their forms for the empirical model I created. The interview data specifically focused on how participants understood the relationships and connections that they associated with their best experiences and how those connections and relationships affected participants' conceptualization of both their work and personal lives.

Once participants gave their informed consent and I confirmed that they were at least 18 years of age and had at least 12 months of work experience, I reiterated the purpose and the protocol of the study. The explanation included the risks and benefits, interview length, and so forth. I provided them with a copy of the interview guide (Appendix 2) before the

interview, so that they had an opportunity to think more deeply about the questions in preparation for the interview. With time to contemplate the questions, a participant may have chosen to relay an experience that they might not have thought of in a short time, they may have focused on the significant implications of an experience, or thought of multiple positive experiences. Interview guide questions loosely followed a format like Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Whitney, Cooperrider, Trosten-Bloom, & Kaplin, 2005) in which questions guide participants to positive experiences.

I conducted the interviews via telephone, Skype, and in-person, depending upon what participants preferred (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002), and recorded the interviews with the participant's consent. I asked them to choose a pseudonym and I did not link their real names to the transcripts. I used pseudonyms for both participants and organizations and will destroy recordings after seven years. Although I provided these protections for participants in terms of identifying information, the nature of the subject matter (positive experiences at work) has very little likelihood of harm to participants.

Data Analysis

I used deductive and inductive coding for this study (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). I coded for elements of positive relationships in terms of the dimensions that I categorized in Table 1. When these dimensions failed to capture the aspects of the participants' experiences, I coded these data elements with open-coding procedures (Charmaz, 2006). I used a circular process in which theory explains phenomenon and phenomenon called for theoretical development.

To accomplish this, I used qualitative content analysis to increase comprehension and perception of the phenomenon being analyzed. Qualitative content analysis of texts is "a

research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). Patton also explains it as "any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings" (2001, p. 452). Patton distinguishes between pattern and theme, both of which are represented in content analysis, in that a pattern has a more specific connotation with regard to study cases and themes are more general. As example, a pattern of participants reporting that they became friends with colleagues whose children were of similar ages might be part of a theme of relationships based on similarities outside of work (Patton, 2001).

Implicit in Patton's (2001) and Hsieh and Shannon's (2005) definitions of qualitative content analysis is that they are referring to latent content or content that is not on the surface nor easily observable. This content is subjective and usually influences manifest content (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). As an example of the difference between latent and manifest content relevant to this study, a participant might have described their best work experience as a team situation where everyone got along really well and interruptions to their work were at a minimum (manifest content), which, depending upon context, may have been related to the participant feeling included and heard (latent content). The latent approach is consistent with a constructivist paradigm, however "the question of epistemology is usually determined when a research project is being conceptualized, although epistemology may also raise its head again during analysis, when the research focus may shift to an interest in different aspects of the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 85).

More specifically, directed content analysis guided the data coding and analysis for this study. The five dimensions identified in my literature review served as the initial coding groups (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). The dimension of sensemaking, defined herein as framing perceptions and deriving meaning through interactions about the community, context, objectives, and identity, included elements such as personal identification, deriving meaning, understanding, appreciation, dialogue (Buber, 1958), wholeness (Rogers, 1980), cognition (Kahn, 2007), energy feedback loop (Quinn, 2007), group as mediator (Silva & Sias, 2010), universal being (Young & Chen, 2013), performance, constructing identity, community (Sigman, 1995), stages of greater affiliation (Kram & Isabella, 1985; Sias & Cahill, 1998). Generative Emotional Support is emotional support, inclusive of effective listening, presentness and confirmation, in the form of a potential renewable resource.

Terms that appeared in the data were the same or similar to the elements of the models, such as empathetic support, affirmation, effective listening, sharing about oneself (Dutton, 2003), attentiveness, presentness, confirmation (Buber, 1958), caring, empathetic understanding, prizing, acceptance, unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1980), self-esteem and self-worth (Quinn, 2007), emotional elements, personal support (Kahn, 2007), feeling heard (Silva & Sias, 2010), loving (Young & Chen, 2013), and self-confidence and emotional validation (Kram & Isabella, 1985; Sias & Cahill, 1998). Inclusion, which I define as active acknowledgement of being part of a whole, had elements including mutuality, equality (Buber, 1958; Rogers, 1980), reciprocity, belonging (Dutton, 2003; Kram & Isabella, 1985; Quinn, 2007), alignment of belief with behavior (Kahn, 2007), affiliation to organization through group (Silva & Sias, 2010), and inclusive as part of belief in a universal being (Young & Chen, 2013). In this study, I define transparency as correspondence of

internal beliefs with external conduct. Within the nine models, elements of transparency included honesty, trust, genuineness, reliability, not micromanaging, authenticity, intellectually available, congruence and realness (Buber, 1958; Dutton, 2003; Kahn, 2007; Kram & Isabella, 1985; Rogers, 1980; Sias & Cahill, 1998; Young & Chen, 2013). Instrumental, the fifth dimension, is interaction that facilitates an individual's effectiveness in achieving a purpose or completing a task. The interview data evoked the elements in the nine models such as task enabling, resource generation (Dutton, 2003; Kahn, 2007; Quinn, 2007), service orientation (Young & Chen, 2013), and information exchange, and professional planning (Kram & Isabella, 1985; Sias & Cahill, 1998).

Because the objective of the study is to ascertain and thematically group the instances of positive relationships and quality connections associated with participants' best experiences in the workplace, I read the interview transcripts and identified all possible cases of positive relationships and quality connections. According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), uncovering all instances of positive relationships and quality connections first, before coding, may enhance trustworthiness. As data emerged or evidence surfaced suggesting that the dimensions (sense making, generative emotional resources, inclusion, transparency, instrumental) were absent in the interviews or did not encapsulate the breadth of the data, I made changes and additions to the model.

It was at this point that I added the dimension of positive spiral. A positive spiral occurs when communicative interactions generate positive emotions which lead to other positive interactions which create a spiral of positivity. Positive spirals evoked elements from the nine models that related to chains of affirmation (Buber, 1958; Dutton, 2003;

Quinn, 2007; Rogers, 1980) and mentoring (Dutton, 2003; Kahn, 2007; Kram & Isabella, 1985; Quinn, 2007; Rogers, 1980; Sias & Cahill, 1998).

After identifying the cases, I coded aspects of the cases using the six dimensions, knowing that there were multiple codes for each case. Where there was text that did not fall into one of the six dimensions, I assigned a new code to it. The new code, Adventure, and the texts it represented was in concert with the six dimensions and provided a more nuanced view of the participants' relationships and connections (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). As well, if one or more of the initial codes, the five dimensions, had not captured the themes within the data; I would have deleted the dimension from the model. My process included additional readings of the cases in order to describe the manifest content and, ultimately, to analyze the latent content (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999).

Since I did not know what I would discover through this research, I wanted to keep my options open for representation of the findings, whether through diagrams, charts, or some format of which I was not even aware. In this regard, I follow Miles and Huberman (1994) and perceive the value of pragmatism in producing diagrams and charts that are cohesive and easily understood, even if the "best" representation is anecdotal, categorical or correlated. They also note that some interpretive studies include "predesigned conceptual frames and instruments, especially when dealing with multiple cases" (p. 4). Although there are many who would argue that Miles and Huberman are incorrect in their explanation that "in the actual practice of empirical research, we believe that all of us – realists, interpretivists, critical theorists – are closer to the center, with multiple overlaps" (1994, pp. 4-5), there is merit in the point that an organizational communication audience is possibly interested in usefulness as much as significance.

In the next chapter, I present the findings of this study anecdotally (Arnett, 1986), through the stories of participants, along with interpretive analysis. In Chapter 5, I explore the implications for understanding the dimensions of quality connections and positive relationships in the workplace, aided by a table and a figure, for purposes of cohesion and visual explanation.

Chapter 4: Findings

In answer to Research Question 1, in Chapter 2, the dimensions involved in a climate of positive relationships and quality connections at work were proposed as part of the meta-model based on past research. Research Question 2, which asked for the evidence in working adults' accounts of their best-work experiences that illustrate these dimensions, will be answered in this chapter. In fact, these dimensions of positive relationships of inclusion, instrumental, sensemaking, transparency and generative emotional resources were very well represented in the stories of the twenty one participants. I found evidence of all these dimensions in participant interviews. Additionally, I recognized two other dimensions, positive spiral and adventure. Positive spiral included the chain of affirmation and mentoring. Adventure was in the form of work that was thrilling, included travel or some type of novelty. Research Question 3, which inquired about the implications of this evidence for a new communicative model of positive relationships and quality connections at work, is also addressed in this chapter and further considered in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

The stories participants told about their positive workplace experiences and their integral high-quality connections and relationships generally included several dimensions and forms of these dimensions. I define the term "form" as the manifestation of the associated dimension. For example, *linking* is one *form* of the dimension of inclusion. Definitions of dimensions and forms are included in the body of the Findings and listed in Table 2: Definitions of Dimensions and Forms.

Table 2. Definitions of Dimensions and Forms

Dimension/Form	Definition
I. Inclusion	Active acknowledgment of being part of a whole
A. Linking	Interconnectedness, integration, and access to information
1. Access to information	Available and comprehensible data
2. Employee input	Participation, involvement of employees
3. Feeling valued	Appreciated, prized
4. Humor and camaraderie	Companionship
5. Integration	Fitting together in a cooperative manner
6. Profound and long-term	Intense or deeply felt
B. Engaging	Interacting, acting as part of the team
1. Unstructured interaction	Unplanned, free-form
2. Changing perspective	Offering differing viewpoint
3. Participatory teaming	Hands-on involvement
C. Close-knit	Feeling cohesive, interdependent, empathetic or like extended family
II. Instrumental	Interaction that facilitates an individual's effectiveness in achieving a purpose or completing a task
A. Career support	Cultivating and assisting with professional development
1. Loose connections	Not known well
2. Visioning	Conceptualizing professional aspirations

Dimension/Form	Definition
3. Advocating	Supporting
B. Empowerment	To feel encouraged, purposeful, confident
1. Autonomy	Independence
2. Expertise	Proficiency
3. Purposeful	Determined
C. Task enabling	Help accomplish or remove obstacles to achieving results
1. Removing obstacles	Addressing impediments
2. Information sharing	Data availability
3. Training	Coaching, instructing
4. Personnel selection	Employee choice
III. Sensemaking	Framing perceptions and deriving meaning through interactions about the community, context, objectives, and identity
A. Attitude	View or opinion about something
1. Comparison of climates	Comparison of previous work environment to current one
2. Reframing perceptions	Changing point of view
B. Belief	Idea that is accepted as true
C. Constructing signification	Meaning making
D. Purposeful	Pursuing an objective
IV. Positive spiral	Interactions generate positive emotions which lead to other positive interactions which create a spiral of positivity
A. Chain of affirmation	Interconnected positive comments or feelings

Dimension/Form	Definition
1. Reframing emotions	Reorienting feelings
2. Reciprocal and enduring	Mutual and lasting
B. Mentoring	Providing guidance; modeling
1. Advisors	Provide guidance
2. Role model	Example to emulate
V. Transparency	Correspondence of internal beliefs with external conduct; trust may be a precursor
A. Trust	Have faith in
1. Progressive trust	Trust that develops over time and shared communication about experiences
2. Dependability	Reliability
B. Independence	Freedom
C. Authenticity	Honesty and openness in interactions
VI. Generative Emotional Resources	Emotional support, inclusive of confirmation, effective listening, presentness, in the form of a potential renewable resource.
A. Confirmation	Recognizing and appreciating the Other
B. Effective listening	Focusing attention to hear the speaker, receive their message and actively cue them that this has been accomplished.
C. Emotional support	Provide a strong feeling of comfort or encouragement; empathy
D. Presentness	Full personal engagement with the Other
VII. Adventure	Activity that involves uncertainty, risk and unknowns

Demographic and organizational data from participants is presented in Appendix C. Reported ages of participants are the ages they were at their best experiences, not at the time they were interviewed. In what follows, I present each dimension, the related forms, and the representative positive relationships and exemplars.

Inclusion

Inclusion is an active acknowledgment of being part of a whole. The forms of inclusion are linking, engaging and close-knit (Buber, 1958; Dutton, 2003; Quinn, 2007; Rogers, 1980). I explore each in what follows.

Linking. One form of inclusion in participant stories was feeling connected, bonded, or otherwise emotionally attached to others associated with work (Kahn, 1992; Roberson, 2006; Sass, 2000). Participants described being linked to coworkers, customers, supervisors, and others as an extremely important type of inclusion which contributed to high quality connections and relationships. Participants also talked about feeling linked to their organizations, coworkers, or customers. These interactions and experiences included access to information, employee input, feeling valued, humor and camaraderie, integration, and profound connection.

Access to information had a very specific connotation related to the communication and reasons for change for two participants. Access to information also showed how the organizational climate was one in which employees felt encouraged to share information with each other. Having access to information resulted in feeling connected – linked – to the workgroup or people in that group (Krone, 1994). For example, Donna, a 28 year-old woman working in St. Louis, said she felt linked to others because of how her employer communicated an unpopular change, including why the company made the changes. She

recalled being on the phone with a colleague in California, discussing a new video that "really brought the company together, even though we were all in different parts of the country." Likewise, she recounted when her company increased the insurance cost to employees (an action that could have left her disgruntled) the company's management openly communicated the change and provided her with information about why the change was necessary. She said the administrators held meetings with employees across the company in order to explain

> why they made the decision that they did and to say, "This is what happened this year, but it doesn't have to happen again next year, so if you have a better idea, come talk to us. Now you have all the numbers, you have all the information," and it empowered employees to think creatively and think critically about the company's finances and the bottom line and where we were putting our money, so I thought that was a very empowering thing. So I think that they achieved their objectives in terms of making sure that everybody understands what is going on, they gave us the rationale behind it, and they gave us a voice to make a change if we didn't agree with it.

By sharing very specific information with the employees, in group meetings (Silva & Sias, 2010), management symbolically and literally invited the organizational members to participate in the process of solving a problem together. This linked the members of the organization and felt to Donna as if she, along with them, could actively (Quinn, 2007) be a partner in realizing the solution.

Donna also said

> we had fantastic internal communication, we had an intranet where we had an entire team of the company devoted to internal communication and this website that they had put together, and it was really fun and it really reflected the character of the company. It was informative, but it was also done in a way that built community.

Donna's description of the importance of access to information at her company and the community it built among her colleagues confirmed research that suggests when subordinates

conceive of their relationship with management to be of a higher quality, information exchange is greater between colleagues at different levels and at the same level. As well, greater information exchange occurs between subordinates and supervisors with higher quality relationships (Mueller & Lee, 2002). In the case of Donna's company, the CEO and administration made information exchange a priority and the employees followed suit. For Donna, that "it was done in a way that built community" was also a comment on the centrality of linking and inclusion to the positive climate in her organization.

Having access to information and then sharing that information with her colleagues was part of the best work experience story that Nancy recalled, from 20 years earlier. At the time, Nancy was a 27 year-old manager in a branch office of a multinational IT corporation. She described an experience where she was involved in a corporate change and the inclusive aspects of being a link in the dissemination of information about the change (Krone, 1994). At a very early stage of her career, Nancy and a colleague were responsible for preparing and conducting a day-long training seminar for 350 people at her branch office to introduce this world-wide change to all employees. Although other employees were less enthusiastic or indifferent to the change, Nancy and her colleague embraced the essence that "Wow, this is really interesting, you know, huge transformation within one of the world's largest companies, and we get to be a part of it. How do we take that and really make it something cool?" Even though Nancy was a fairly new employee at a branch office of her company (Silva & Sias), she perceived herself as linked to the larger organization by being part of the activity (Quinn, 2007) of disseminating information. This specific positive experience of feeling linked and being part of an activity that she thought would have far-reaching ramifications made a long-term impression on Nancy (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2011).

Employee input. Bernie was 45 years old and Executive Vice President of an industrial product manufacturing firm when he attended a week-long management seminar which focused on the Japanese management and management communication techniques. At this seminar given by Edward Deming, about total quality management (TQM), Bernie explained that presenters urged management to share more information with employees and to enlist employees' input about their jobs and daily practices in the factory. Doing so would, they said, mutually establish best practices and solve problems.

Bernie was eager to bring this approach into his company and the logical and tangible exercises conducted at the seminar were useful and supportive of Bernie's ideas and to making this type of communication more credible. For Bernie, the seminar was powerful and empowering because it supported ideas that Bernie had had for some time about disclosing more information to employees and encouraging employee input. When he tried this type of interaction with his employees, the result was that "the solutions were shared and it's the sharing of the adventures I think helped me and I think it helped the employees to be successful." Bernie's communication with his employees, increasing information sharing by him and encouraging participation from employees suggest that supervisor communication has an impact on employee linkage to the relationship with the supervisor and the organization (Baker & Dutton, 2007).

Bernie's desire and ultimate satisfaction at "sharing the adventure" with his employees was accomplished through giving information and soliciting information, actions that, for Bernie, created a sense of inclusion that elevated mutuality (Buber, 1958; Rogers, 1980) and reciprocity (Dutton, 2003) between he and his employees. Ultimately, Bernie linked these high quality relationships with being "successful."

Encouraging employee input was also a change in Alex's management approach that positively impacted his relationships with employees. Alex, 57 and a project executive from the U.K., based in the U.S., and leading international teams in IT, found that when he changed his management style from "…fix the deal at all costs and do as you're told to I'm prepared to actually listen to what you have to say now and maybe I'll let you figure it out yourself, they started to like me as well." When asked if that had any intrinsic value to him, he responded, "Yes I think so. I don't think anybody wants to be disliked unless you are some kind of weirdo. … If they like me, if they like working for me as well, that's a bonus as well."

The change that Alex made in his management style also had a tangible effect on the projects he was assigned. He was no longer perceived by his managers as just a "clean-up expert" but received assignments that included engaging new business, which he perceived as an endorsement of him. Similarly to Bernie, Alex was more inclusive of his employees, and encouraged their participation (Buber, 1958; Rogers, 1980), the connection became greater between Alex and his employees (Baker and Dutton, 2007; Buber, 1958; Douglas, 2006; Keyton & Beck, 2008; Rogers, 1980) and the climate in their working environment improved.

Feeling valued. Participants perceived words, such as respect and professionalism, as an important element, implying that they thought of themselves as being recognized by their work associates as being valuable. For example, Bruce, a 30-year-old plant manager of a start-up company, was newly in charge of construction of the factory and visited other factories of the consortium to meet periodically with the corporate executives. He described

the respect others paid him in interactions, respect he interpreted as being very professional. He associated respect with professionalism when he said,

> Even though I was just starting to work on the building of the new factory and all that stuff, these guys showed me the same respect and professionalism they had for each other as they worked with each other. That would be one of the best experiences I had working with them… Even the CEO he would just sit down with me and talk with me as if we were two colleagues not like someone on the top of the company and someone who was just running the factory.

For Bruce, respect and professionalism were terms that, to him, were symbolic of being considered equal, even though Bruce was lower in the hierarchy of the organization. Feeling equal made him feel valued and worthy of being included as a colleague, as having positive relationships with these managers (Lewis et al., 2010).

Sara also used the term respect to indicate that she and her colleagues valued each other. She was a 29 year-old senior lending specialist from Romania, who returned to Romania to work for a large international bank. Sara credited respect as the "most important component" sustaining the link between her and her colleagues/friends. Sara affirmed,

> But even if we were—we were actually quite different with regard to our backgrounds, but just had the ability to understand each other really well and I think sometimes we didn't even really see things the same way—not work-related issues, like religion or I don't know, personal life, but we would understand each other very well. We would just talk to each other very well and we would respect each other, that was the most important component.

Even though there were differences in Sara's team members in their backgrounds, religion, and personal life, their focus was on their relationships with each other. Valuing the relationship and mutuality above differences was not an act of dismissing those differences. Instead, it led to team members respecting those differences and feeling a deeper understanding and closer link with each other and the group (Buber, 1958; Rogers, 1980).

Humor and camaraderie. In Heidi's workplace positive humor played a linking role between colleagues, employees and customers, and employees and supervisors (Martin et al., 2004). Heidi, originally from the Czech Republic, "always connected" with her customers at the credit union in Utah in which she worked.

> I mean like for instance what really sticks out in my mind and makes me laugh to this day. I was hanging something above the teller line. And my legs were just showing through the drive-up window and I had a customer at the drive-up window and I couldn't get down off the desk and I had to have one of the customers come behind the teller line and lift me down. That's just how we were with our members. It was just personable and [a] very friendly atmosphere and we could all laugh about things. Yeah, it was always positive.

As Heidi told this story she giggled a few times and then we laughed together at the mental picture of her legs in the window. The "friendly" climate Heidi described prompted this situation to be perceived as a shared and inclusive humorous event, even as retold years later.

Humor and camaraderie were also important in Mary's best work experience. Mary, who grew up and worked in Puerto Rico, was 19 and just graduated from secretarial school when she began her first job as a secretary at a construction site. She felt very positive about securing the job. From the start, she connected with her coworkers and continued to maintain a friendship with some. She said, "just meeting people and sharing and having opportunities to have lunches and have dialogue, personal or work-related…I still worked with them, I came to New Jersey with them for 25 years." Mary reminisced with fondness about lunches spent together chatting about different topics, both work and non-work related. Linking with coworkers through casual sharing of stories and conversations about personal and work issues nurtures and maintains work relationships (Mirivel & Tracy, 2005) and fosters greater affiliation (Kram & Isabella, 1985; Sias & Cahill, 1998). Mary's story

demonstrates the extensive positive impact of a work climate of positive relationships specific to the dimension of inclusion.

Sara recounted numerous experiences of humor and camaraderie between her colleagues in both formal and informal (Martin et al., 2004) settings as a linkage that was among the team, yet she also emphasized repeatedly its accessibility to others.

> We would have a really good time when we would go out together outside of work and it was just us and we would have a lot of fun, but even when other people joined they were able to fit in, I guess because we were just—the atmosphere was very pleasant, so even if we were having colleagues come over to our cubicles and we would kind of be together, it was really exceptional…So I don't think they would feel like an outsider… We were all a very open minded group of people and maybe this is why we were able to connect so well. Sometimes people from other departments would just come and just join us… We were welcoming to others and open minded, but also that the relationship itself, in that moment in time, among us, was special.

In contrast to the openness of Sara's team and willingness to temporarily include co-workers that were not part of their group, humor points to in-group and out-group orientation. Sara maintained that other friends were always welcome to join in the fun with her team, which is in contrast with past research about humor, whereby the "in- and out group boundaries are (re)produced by excluding individuals (or groups)" (Lynch, 2009, p. 456) that do not have common terminology, language, allusions and connotations. However, what appears to be common in Sara's, Mary's, and Heidi's stories about the humor and camaraderie shared with their coworkers was that it was not exclusive to the in-group. Through these high-quality relationships at work, the feeling of being linked, being included, and part of the group was shared and mutual (Buber, 1958; Rogers, 1980). In other words, this positive feeling or positive climate spread to those outside of the in-group (Dutton, 2003; Kahn, 2007; Quinn, 2007).

Integration. Another aspect of linking participants found in the positive relationships that are part of their best work experiences is fitting together in a cooperative manner. Integration is linked to a sense of connection, community and motivation (Dutton, 2003; Kolodinsky et al., 2008). Bernie, from the U.S. directed the construction of a manufacturing facility in Scotland. He said he

> had been warned about people in Scotland and the differences…the Scottish people were pretty independent. But I found they were very cooperative and I was hoping that they would be successful because only through them I could be successful and I think they appreciated that encouragement… that they weren't looked down upon and when I would compliment them they returned the effort and were better and did a good job.

Integration between Bernie and his Scottish counterparts and the feeling that their success hinged on cooperation with each other provided impetus for Bernie to encourage these employees and express to them that they were valued. In turn, Bernie felt the sense that he was valued through the Scots' efforts and their drive to do "a good job." (Lewis et al., 2010; Rogers, 1980).

Similarly, Carol's experience in Indonesia, as head of office working on reconciliation efforts between Muslim and Christian villagers, called for her employees to integrate.

> At first, we'd stay at one hotel, Christians in one [place], Muslims in the other. Then there were times when people could start feeling more comfortable staying in the same place, and they weren't really hotels. But, you know we would go out. We would do everything together.

The initial cooperation and relationship-building by Carol's team may have been achieved as a result of another purpose (Black, 2005), perhaps because their goal of reconciliation was purpose-driven (Thomas et al., 2009) or their initial motivation was spiritual (Sass, 2000; Young & Chen, 2013), specifically because of the work they were doing. As Carol

described, it took time for this team to develop a comfort level with each other. Integration, as a dynamic process of connections may develop into high-quality relationships (Kram & Isabella, 1985; Sias & Cahill, 1998).

Similarly to Carol and Bernie's experience, Donna was a supervisor in her workplace when she encouraged integration in her team. Donna perceived the linkage among her colleagues as being a top-down alignment that emanated from the CEO, making it easier for her to create similar integration within her own team. The message to her and her colleagues was one of shared import, direction and objective. "I think that kind of transparency and that kind of collective vision was really beneficial to the employees and to the people who were engaged in these projects." In other words, when there is a higher-quality relationship between supervisors and subordinates there is greater collaboration among subordinates and this is reflected in the communication in the organization (Mueller & Lee, 2002).

John's sense of integration in the senior management team of his NGO, a job that he had in addition to his day-to-day job, was both positive and interesting for him. "And that would take me out of the context and put me in a broader China context. And I thought it was really, it was great. It was very collegial."

When participants perceived their projects or assignments as an important team activity that required the integration of specific people with a certain set of skills performing at their best, they reported that their commitment level and that of their colleagues was elevated (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2011). For Barry, a 40-year old, Canadian based in the U.S. in the IT industry, integration with colleagues was paramount for his company's success, as they had complementary skills or information (Lewis et al., 2010),

> I was working as a sales support person and had multiple sales people coming to me for my assistance on their projects, and when I worked on projects, I worked with several sales support technical peers, so it was very matrixed, very networked at a day to day level. Often the way the teams were constructed, the pre-sales sales engineers had complimentary skills, some had overlapping skills, so it tended to be more of an "I need you, we are all in this together, we can't succeed without each of us putting in our best performance."

Likewise, Hugh, 32 years old and a HR director who first worked as part of an acquisition team and then became the highest level HR staff person at the acquired manufacturing facility, emphasized the necessity of integration of personnel:

> one of the things about HR that I think resonates with me is you can't do it by yourself. There is no by yourself, because you are dealing with a lot of unknown, difficult to pin down quantities, and they change over time, and the descriptions change over time, and what you are looking at, and there is too much to do to do it all, and there is no way to put a bound on what is in scope and out of scope. I mean, HR is everything.

Hugh had been in a leadership role in the military before he began working for his company, a multinational energy firm, and his focus on relationships, team and mission were palpable in his stories. The reciprocal actions of energizing organizational members (Dutton, 2003; Guowei & Jeffres, 2006; Kahn, 2007; Quinn, 2007) through high-quality relationships and the association of high-quality relationships with greater collaboration (Mueller & Lee, 2002) were fundamental to Hugh's beliefs.

The level of integration of management and remote employees was apparent only through interpersonal contact and interaction, in the case of Steven. He was a 42-year old Australian, general manager of a drilling company with main offices in Australia. Steven traveled to Laos to visit the mine site and recalled being surprised by how friendly and appreciative the mine workers were in Laos. "We had 140-160 people working for us in the very remote part of the country, traveling down the mine site and actually getting to meet

these different people and the way they welcomed you with open arms." Steven's visits to the mine sites and interpersonal contact with the employees (Waldeck et al., 2004) revealed to him the integration between his company and these employees in the field, the theme of his stories of his best working experience.

Profound and long-term connections and relationships that began in participants' best work experiences continued beyond the specific positive work experiences (Dutton, 2003; Kram & Isabella, 1985; Rogers, 1980; Sias & Cahill, 1998). John spoke of his colleagues from China and his ongoing relationships with them as being special, something he didn't have with all of his former colleagues from other projects, "I mean in terms of the number of the people that I'm still engaged with, the quality of the relationships in terms of you know, how I interact with them professionally…" Throughout our interview, John attempted to identify the positive aspects of his best experience that culminated with these long-term relationships. He felt that the bond he had with these coworkers was one of the most satisfying personal results of his professional life.

Martin's connection with his conversation partner was not only profound, but extremely productive. Martin, 50 years old, from Germany and located in Germany as an executive in telecommunications, focused on the conversations that he had with a colleague in his office. Through these particular conversations, in which authenticity, . , inclusion and confirmation were displayed (Johannesen, 2000; Buber, 1958), Martin and his conversation partner reached a "deeper and more relevant understanding. And I think it is not just that I profited from these conversations but he did as well…It's a little bit like putting two processers to work together without all the hurdles in between." The point of their conversations was to be productive, and they were extremely productive, according to

Martin. In addition, the enhanced meaningfulness they achieved in their relationship (Black, 2005), served to link them closer together and to increase their desire for more of these conversations, creating this cycle of increased productivity and creativity (Quinn, 2007).

Sara seemed somewhat incredulous that her team, consisting of people with a diversity of experiences, maintained such a profound and long-term connection (Kolodinsky et al., 2008). "So even if we had completely different backgrounds and … different experiences … we just clicked.… Not just work-wise, but also personally. Eventually it even made the work itself not that important; it was the bond between us." The interaction of Sara's team had a rhythm that recalled Rogers (1980) description of the person-centered approach. Sara's stories included descriptions of intense moments of work and easy-going lunches, the anxiety of constructing and discussing large financial deals and the relief of joining teammates to relax together in the area outside of the office. This group continued to stay closely connected, even though many of Sara's colleagues left the organization. When relationships at work move through the continuum to best friends or special peers (Kram & Isabella; Sias & Cahill, 1998), as Sara's and other participants' did, the friendships may far surpass the work relationship. Or it may cause friends to seek out situations where they can work together again, as it had for Sara, in order to try to recreate the climate that made their best work experiences so positive.

Engaging. Another important form of the dimension Inclusion is engaging. This aspect of inclusion connotes an action-orientation that occurred when participants interacted with their coworkers, whether spontaneous or planned, or specifically acted as part of a team. High quality connections and interactions that constituted forms of engagement, then, included unstructured interaction, changing perspective and participatory teaming. For

participants, being included in this manner contributed to the positive workplace relationships of their best work experiences (Dutton, 2003; Quinn, 2007).

Unstructured interaction. Marilyn expressed her preference for constant interaction (Quinn, 2007) and laughingly depicted herself as a:

> sociable person…I have to have an office somewhere within the flow of traffic… I wouldn't care if my office had no walls. I like the fact that people walk by all the time on their way to the kitchen and stick their head in and say good morning to me. I don't find it distracting. I actually find it energizing.

Central to Marilyn's positive feelings about her workplace was her engagement with her colleagues in an unplanned manner. These informal interactions, whether they constituted relationship-building or were simply small-talk or a quick salutation were salient and valuable to her (Dutton, 2003; Mirivel & Tracy, 2005; Sigman, 1995).

Unstructured interaction was also considered a form of teambuilding by Carol and Mary. When asked to describe one of the teambuilding exercises that she used in Indonesia, Carol, working on a reconciliation project with a NGO, told me that she and her team "had lots of fun together." They played "lots of fun games. Because that's the whole point, they had to do a lot of games. We danced a lot. They were big dancers." Mary was elated to reminisce about her experiences as secretary for a construction company in Puerto Rico, from the team coordination in solving problems to the work ethic to the social interaction. She noted that this experience occurred in the "early 80s, there was money, there was fun, there was a disco, everybody was happy, so it was a great time." They worked hard "and then we looked forward to having a good party, too." In the case of Carol and Mary's experiences, they attributed the development of high-quality relationships between team members, at least in part, to the unstructured engagement of their teams (Mirivel & Tracy, 2005).

Changing perspectives. For Martin, engagement in a particular type of dialogue (Buber, 1958) with his colleague altered his perspective about the nature and the potential of having open and authentic discussions. This colleague, who happened to sit next to him in their office, also held a very senior position in the corporation.

> What I find positive, and this is a very personal thing, he is someone who whenever you have a discussion with him and you leave the discussion you feel you have won something. You have made progress, you have gained insights, and he is, I would say, very blunt. What he likes is to engage in sometimes also controversy, but engage in constructive dialogue in order to come to the right findings regardless of who started with which opinion. So it is not a thing about losing or keeping face or something like that so when I enter in discussion with him I know that it is not being right or wrong it is not for myself or him it is just about knowing that he will dedicate his entire thinking and his consciousness and at the end of the conversation the two of us will have a better understanding and a better picture of the discussion topic.

Martin's engagement with his colleague in their discussions was fulfilling for him for several reasons. He felt that his discussion partner made it safe and inclusive for Martin to express his opinion (Harter & Buzzanell, 2007; Sass, 2000). Ongoing interactions intensified their relationship and, according to Martin, they were able to produce better solutions to meet company objectives (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004).

Steven, the general manager of the mining company in Australia, had previously worked in the financial department of the company. He found the interaction with employees working in the mines altered his perspective (Waldeck et al., 2004):

> So it was a very interesting experience going from thinking about when it was just a set of numbers and a result coming through our profit and loss statement to actually seeing the people and going into their village getting to know them and sitting down and having a meal with them and getting invited to a marriage ceremony. I guess I think for me at that point of time realizing what… management was all about, rather than just the financial side. Trying to do something.

Steven told me that this caused him to try to travel to all of the drilling sites every year in order to meet employees on each of the drilling crews. "If somebody tells me that somebody

up in Oregon [is at] a mine I can actually put a face with a name and actually know who they are talking about." This change in perspective through engagement with his employees has the potential for many positive repercussions in terms of Steven's connections and relationships with employees, both for Steven and for his employees (Kolodinsky et al., 2008; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2011).

Engagement with customers altered Heidi's perspective, both personally and professionally. Interacting with customers was not only part of the quality workplace connections for Heidi, the credit union teller, but she claimed that it was also beneficial for her professional and personal growth (Baker & Dutton, 2007). She described the climate at the credit union as having a "really relaxed atmosphere." Being "on pretty much a name basis" with customers and helping them out with their questions and problems "made me more friendly. Open. I used to be very shy. So being able to speak to others and being friendly instead of shy and staying in a corner, and being more understanding of others…" Heidi's openness and being amenable to change are characteristic of people in HQCs, according to Baker and Dutton (2007).

Ron, originally from Mexico, who was 17 when he worked in a call center, the site of one of his best experiences, shared his perspective about engaging with others in a longer-term relationship or a quick connection. "When I give 150% to anybody, whether … emotionally in a relationship … with a coworker or a relationship with just somebody that I meet on the streets, … it definitely changes people and the way they treat me too." In this exemplar, Ron focused on the change in perspective of others that he was able to affect through his actions. He recognized that through his positive engagement, he was able to

engender a positive connection and that it would result in a more positive outcome. In other words, there would be a reciprocal effect to Ron's engagement (Kahn, 2007).

Sara's perspective about teams changed completely after the experience she had working at the international bank in Romania. Although she and her colleagues were in a demanding business, Sara believed that their team was helpful to each of the members to their mutual benefit. Even with the stress of being responsible for large amounts of money and demanding corporate clients, Sara and her team were able to thrive. This experience made her change her perspective of what a team really meant.

> I would have said I like very much being on my own. I'm very independent, and I don't really—I wouldn't have called myself a team player before. Not that I don't like teams, but I just prefer working on my own and sometimes I prefer doing things, because I don't really trust anyone else to do them. But everything changed with them.

Sara's affiliation to the team and her gratification with the authentic communication and bonding she experienced were transformational (Buber, 1958; Rogers, 1980) and she expressed a desire to experience it again.

Participatory teaming. John, working in China, spoke about engaging with his staff and also along with his staff with the target population for their programs. He felt that this engagement enhanced his relationship with his staff and also enhanced the relationships with the children, and their parents.

> So there was a lot of consultation with, you know, a broad range of people, including children which that's one appreciation that I had for this particular job is that we actually did what a lot of other NGO programs talk about doing but don't do much of, which is really true engagement with children. And having them be involved in their own development of their own questions and coming up with their own solutions and then working with them on making that a reality for them, which is what we did.

Approaching the projects in this participatory manner invigorated John and his team and the families, enhanced all of their relationships and increased their sense of shared results (Dutton, 2003; Keyton & Beck, 2008).

Carol conceived of team engagement in a participatory manner in at least two ways, as an organizing approach and as a response to struggles within the team, and as two teams, one with her and one without her:

> A lot of these young people, and they, oh we had major melt downs. Major kind of where we'd have to get together as a team because it was, when you work in conflict, any time there is anything going on it just, it just breaks along those lines of conflict.

Carol's approach to her role as a member of the team was that her "work was with the team" and "the team's work was with the communities." She "had to work with that team because they're the ones who are going to stay there. So, I think that part of it was a really strong kind of orientation toward being participatory and being participant oriented." Carol's work in organizing the team was akin to backstage communication, wherein the team progressed from communicating in order to apprise each other of the situation to a more interconnected and entrenched form of interaction and higher quality relationships (Ellingson, 2003).

By using a participatory team approach, the challenges of engaging with team members who were not co-located (Fay & Kline, 2011) were overcome by Peter's global team. Peter, 38 years old and from Canada, was an account manager at a multinational IT corporation. His team, which included members from Peter's IT corporation and members from the customer's company, incorporated smaller group team meetings based on geography which resulted in high quality relationships for a number of team members including Peter, "…instead of trying to get 15-20 people on the call and trying to come up

with ideas, and you get this mishmash of conversations and everything." Peter, in Phoenix was paired with the project manager on the customer side, who resided in London.

> And now that I have had this face to face rapport with the person, the following conversations even over the phone, you could tell that it was different, it was a little bit of a—or quite a bit of a relationship there that didn't exist before.

Peter has used this participatory teaming approach with other projects, due to his satisfaction with it in his best experience. The high-quality relationships that were constructed through engagement of the 2-or 3 person teams created a better climate in the smaller teams and a better working relationship and climate with the larger group (Silva & Sias, 2010).

The motivation for coworkers to participate in teams to their best capability with positive effect was exemplified by Barry, a 40-year old Canadian, based in the US and working for a German IT company as a sales engineer. He attributed the practice of salespeople on the teams "allocating commission payment to the sales engineers…based on their subjective assessment of the sales engineer's contribution to winning the project or winning the deal" as "really encouraging each of the sales engineers to try their hardest to contribute to the deal." According to Barry, this internal recognition and monetary reward (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2011) "created, in the best situations, a real team environment." He continued that this specific experience was a "true team situation where we had slight overlap in terms of expertise into each other's areas enough to be able to communicate with each other but we couldn't win it without a solid performance from all three people." The importance that each sales engineer played in advancing the team's efforts also furthered the team's solidarity (Lewis et al., 2010).

Close-knit. The third significant form of the dimension Inclusion was close-knit, defined as joined together by feelings of attachment. Respondents felt an empathetic

connection or even felt as if they were an extended family with their coworkers. This form of inclusion furthered their quality workplace relationships (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2011). Literature that focuses on spirituality (Harter & Buzzanell, 2007; Kolodinsky et al., 2008; Sass, 2000) in organizations also incorporates the metaphor of home, and although none of the participants in this study worked in what might be traditionally considered spiritual work, e.g. a house of worship, a religiously affiliated hospital or non-profit religious service organization, they used expressions related to home and family. Research on organizational relationships has shown that "supervisory communication has the potential to create a social system," in this case identified by some of the participants in this study as family, "that affects behavior and perceptions" (Abu Bakar et al., 2010).

Harry, from India and living in the U.S. working for an international IT company, was very clear that his best work experience was the close-knit relationship he had developed and continues to have with his mentor, a woman, originally from Thailand and working for the same company. Harry anticipated that "this is a relationship, in my opinion, that will continue for a lifetime that started at work." Harry posited that having a close-knit relationship with his mentor helped him to understand how to encourage cohesiveness with colleagues and employees, as a means to build community (Mirivel & Tracy, 2005) and a climate of inclusiveness.

Heidi's close-knit connection with her customers at the credit union may have been part of the reason they returned two and three times a day. She remembered "looking at their transactions or if they had questions or if there was a problem. Taking the time. Explaining things to them … it has had a long term …positive effect. I miss it. I miss serving the

people." Aiding people is another community building behavior (Kolodinsky et al., 2008) and contributed to Heidi's positive sensibility about her work climate.

Carol's team was very close-knit. She recalled when one of her team members, Bat, phoned her, and addressed her as if she were a family member (Kolodinsky et al., 2008), "It was Bat calling me. And he said, 'Ibu' and it was really nice. People in Indonesia, 'Ibu' means 'mother,' but it also is just any kind of just a term that people would use for someone older."

Carol's experience of traveling with her team demonstrated that being an extended family is not always comfortable or easy (Kolodinsky et al., 2008).

> And lots of times we'd stay in villages. And you would wake up and there would be people lined up to go brush their teeth. You'd come out looking all bed-headed, and it was such a family, intimate kind of experience. And I was willing just to do that. And that's hard. I mean it's hard to, it's, that's hard work.

Being an extended family also came with responsibilities (Kolodinsky et al., 2008), even if it meant putting yourself in potential danger. "The reason we crossed this border though was because one of our, one of the Muslim staff, his dad died, and so everybody, we had to go to his house." Even though in most participant stories, "family" intimated a positive connotation, feeling close-knit, as if a family, could be perceived as either positive and negative, depending upon the situation (Sass, 2000).

Being close-knit was conveyed in Donna's company, according to her, through both structural and spontaneous approaches (Mirivel & Tracy, 2005). She told the story about how a group of employees including some from executive staff and some from the cafeteria, the CFO and employees from the branch offices planned, choreographed and "flash mobbed the CEO while he was having his lunch in the cafeteria [showing] that everybody just really

likes each other and they really like him and they really like being there." Donna credited the CEO at her company for creating and sustaining the climate that led to this type of close-knit feeling of inclusion and the quality workplace connections and relationships (Abu Bakar et al., 2010; Dutton, 2003; Quinn, 2007).

Marilyn felt a close-knit connection with her colleagues in the clinic in Saudi Arabia. She remarked that she was,

> …getting paid to do something I would have done anyway. And that was to be a really good neighbor. Not just to the expatriate community but to my hosts in that country…. In fact, one of the things that was really great about this experience is the fact that the Saudis, culturally, are extremely family oriented and family always comes first. And that made for, again, this feeling of community, but almost that you have a working family as well as your own family.

Community became family (Kolodinsky et al., 2008) for Marilyn. In the context of her position in Saudi Arabia, the family-orientation of religious and social culture permeated the workplace culture as well as the language (Sass, 2000; Young & Chen, 2013) which for Marilyn contributed to a close-knit, inclusive work environment.

Sara's close-knit relationship with her team at the international bank in Romania seemed to develop spontaneously:

> I think we didn't even realize it as it was happening. It was just normal for us. Already just a couple of months into this relationship, we were just used to working well, just used to us giving each other advice and feedback, and it was just normal, it was like family. Like you go to your mom and you talk about things and you come up with something and you don't know who came up with that. It was the same thing.

Sara equated her relationship with the closest of relationships that she might experience, specifically, the relationship between Sara and her mother. And, as she might experience with her mother, within Sara's high-quality relationships with her team, she felt a sense of

freedom, professionally, whereby she was not worried about who received credit for ideas or solutions (Buber, 1958).

Instrumental

Instrumental interactions facilitate an individual's effectiveness in achieving a purpose or completing a task. The indicators of instrumental communication were career support, empowerment, and task enabling. I examine each in what follows.

Career support. One aspect of participant stories focused on being the recipient or the provider of cultivation and assistance with professional development. Participants described how they made quick connections and developed high-quality relationships with people who rewarded them for their efforts in a way that surprised and delighted them, mentoring relationships that advanced their careers and relationships with advocates who assisted them professionally (Dutton, 2003; Kram & Isabella, 1985; Quinn, 2007). In their stories of best experiences, many of the participants emphasized the role their boss or mentor or colleagues played in furthering their careers. Through probing, it became apparent that these participants were active partners in this process of professional advancement. In other words, although participants credited others, they also advocated for themselves or reciprocated in a way that prompted others to support them (Dutton, 2003; Quinn, 2007). Career support involved communication focused on rewards and loose connections, visioning, and advocating.

Rewards and loose connections. The literature indicates that rewards are one of a number of experiences distinguishing individuals positively in their work settings (Dutton, 2003; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2011). Both Alex and Ron chose as their all-time best work experiences situations where they were surprised by a reward that came from someone in

management with whom they had a loose connection (Dutton, 2003), not their immediate supervisor. For Alex the reward was a promotion and for Ron the reward was a bonus.

Alex had a conversation with his boss about a large sale that appeared to be far off-track. In their conversation, Alex asked his supervisor to allow Alex to work independently with his team and with the customer. His supervisor reluctantly agreed, as long as Alex would also accept the consequences. And then Alex received a shocking call from his boss's boss, who told him, "If you sell it before the end of our financial year, which is 12/31, I'll promote you." Alex and his team were able to complete the sale and provide a signed contract before the end of the year. He noted, "[This was a] supremely positive situation where it wasn't written down.… It was communicated as one guy to another, 'If you do this, I will do that for you.' And they kept their word … paid me and they didn't make an excuse." What prompted Alex to begin with this story as one of his best experiences at work was that a manager, or specifically his boss's boss, made a promise that he kept, a promise that optimized Alex's career trajectory. The tangible reward was important, but what it represented to Alex was a trust in Alex's capability to perform independently. When Alex's boss's boss sealed that trust by keeping his verbal agreement, Alex reciprocated in his positive feelings about his relationship toward management and his increased loyalty to his company (Thomas et al., 2009). In his story Alex never referred to his direct manager, other than to say that he was not very enthusiastic about Alex's status on this project. His relationship with his direct manager was not the relationship that mattered, however. The loose connection that Alex had with his boss's boss and the actions this indirect manager took of providing an opportunity, making a promise, then keeping the promise to Alex prompted Alex's response. In contrast to the linear progression of relationships in the peer

relationship model (Kram & Isabella, 1985; Sias & Cahill, 1998; Sias et al., 2002), Alex's loose connection with his boss's boss was the relationship that propelled his career.

Ron was also surprised by a reward in his best work experience. Working in a customer sales call center, he was the only employee to positively respond to the general request to work late on Christmas eve to fill in for a fellow employee. Although Ron had never met him, the owner sent Ron an email to thank him and to also surprise Ron with the news of a large bonus. Ron commented, "It boost my confidence and made me more aware that people are really watching what you do. So it definitely affected me in a positive way in how I act or how I perform my job." Ron felt appreciated and recognized (Ashforth et al., 2008; Dutton, 2003; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2011) and continued to perform in future positions as if "people are really watching what you do." As with Alex, the person who provided the reward that caused a turning point in Ron's attitude about work was also a loose connection. Again, this also mitigates, in some cases, the linear progression of relationships in the peer relationship model (Kram & Isabella, 1985; Sias & Cahill, 1998; Sias et al., 2002) and supports the cyclical and dialectical nature of connections as a support and reinforcement of positive climate (Dutton, 2003).

Visioning was conceptualizing professional aspirations. Harry, now in management in a multinational corporation, attributed much of his success to his interaction, whether through discussion, text, or parsing appropriate corporate behavior, with his specific mentor, whose attributes included empathy and responsiveness (Madlock, 2008). This high quality relationship began six years earlier and had been "truly life changing." Initially Harry and his mentor met virtually and then, when she came to the U.S. for an assignment, they met in person. "What it helped me do," according to Harry, "is look 20 years ahead of me and say,

‘here are some of the steps that I needed to take to sort of progress my career, to be good at what I'm doing, to expect, to anticipate.’” Harry’s relationship with his mentor was the catalyst for him to follow and be guided by her orientation, actions and attitude in her career (de Vries et al., 2006; Goodier & Eisenberg, 2006; Kahn, 2007).

Sometimes mentors and managers envision an individual’s potential more than they do themselves. This was the case for Mary, working as an administrative assistant at a construction site in Puerto Rico, the relationship she had with her colleagues and her boss were instrumental in advancing her career. Mary was the only woman in her office, which she pointed out. In the same sentence she referred to the respect and assistance, including training, which she received from all of her colleagues including her boss. In addition, she noted that the position “paid well and after a few months there they asked me to go to college, and they paid for my college.” Mary’s heart-felt appreciation for these opportunities for career advancement was life-long and contributed to her positive feeling about work and her belief that she could influence workplace culture positively (Dutton, 2003; Huston et al., 2011;Quinn, 2007).

Advocating. Other participants found career support from a boss or even the company CEO, who supported or spoke on their behalf or in the case of the CEO, on behalf of all employees. Barry, working in high tech, spoke about his manager’s positive influence on his success:

> I didn't really see her that much and really didn't communicate with her that much, except by copying her on emails, but I did keep her apprised of things so that when I had a stumbling block, she knew that it was an issue, that if I was bringing it to her, that it was something I couldn't solve myself after a fair amount of diligent effort, and she gave me the benefit of the doubt and came in swinging a huge baseball bat—I don’t mean physically, but came in like a SWAT team with a great understanding of my situation and what was really important in any case, and she solved my problems

> rapidly and immediately, without delay, just knocking down whatever had to be knocked down in order to enhance my success.

The high-quality relationship that Barry enjoyed with his manager allowed him to work independently and when he needed her assistance, she advocated for him (Miller et al., 1999) and Barry appreciated it, contributing to positive feelings about his work climate and his relationship with his manager (Dutton, 2003; Quinn, 2007).

In Donna's best work experience, a high quality relationship that led to professional development was the relationship of employees to CEO. She referred to the "company [being] very, very successful in working with customers, because all of the people are so excited to be there." She attributed this to the CEO's leadership in providing what his employees needed. "His philosophy was that when employees are taken care of and when employees are happy and when they understand what we are doing and they get behind it, that the customer piece of it kind of takes care of itself." As Thomas et al. (2009) assert, the quality of information associated with trust leads to employee involvement and achievement of organizational goals.

Participants also advocated for themselves. John's positive experience in China "created quite a nice professional network for me to pull from even now. And you know, just this morning, I got a Linked-In connection to a woman that was working there." Sara continued to think of her former colleagues for possible professional opportunities, commenting, "One of them left the country and is in the U.K., and I am going back to visit her and maybe do something together, like business, so there's unbelievable trust." Harry found his mentor, a woman from Asia. When prompted about how he received a mentor he responded, "It was my initiative—I knew there was a resource out there … so that is how I

reached out to just run some situations by them to see how they would have handled that." He contacted more than 20 people in his company but continued to work long-term with "my mentor." Participants advocating for themselves also contributed to the relationship, which may have prompted the favorable support from others, initiating or continuing a cycle of positive relationship (Dutton, 2003; Quinn, 2007) and friendship (Sias, 2005).

Empowerment. Another facet of participant stories related to the instrumental dimension concentrated on the form of empowerment, or the sense that participants felt encouraged, purposeful and confident. Participants felt empowered through their high quality relationships in which they experienced autonomy, expertise and purpose. Notwithstanding the link scholars have made between trust and autonomy, expertise and purpose, they will be examined separately as part of this dimension (Dutton, 2003; Kahn, 2007; Kram & Isabella, 1985; Quinn, 2007; Sass; 2000; Sias & Cahill, 1998).

Autonomy. Alex appreciated the relationship with his supervisors and the climate of his multinational corporation in that it allowed him to do his job in the way that he saw fit. He summed up his responsibilities on each assignment as; "figure out …the problem … fix it, get the customer back on [track], make money, make sure we are delivering the service…" To accomplish this he was given "absolute power to organize people and events and … engineer relationships to achieve those objectives." This autonomy empowered him and allowed him to flourish professionally. "In the end", he commented, "there is a deal of satisfaction that I get from having the respect of my bosses, having the respect of the people that work for me and you know having the respect of my peers who recognize the accomplishment." Being given autonomy, for Alex, was equated with respect and trust

(Krone, 1994; Mueller & Lee, 2002) and increased his sense that his relationship with his supervisors was positive (Baker & Dutton, 2007).

Barry, working for another multinational company, also perceived autonomy to be empowering and positive in his relationships with his colleagues and boss. He gave an example of what his typical week might include,

> a different sales person each day coming to me saying, "Hey, we've got an opportunity to sell software to ABC Company, it is a three million dollar deal, there are going to be three sales engineers on the deal, you guys get to share the commission three ways, it is in Denver, are you interested and do you have bandwidth available?" And I would have the flexibility to say yes or no. I felt very empowered in terms of being able to make decisions on which projects to work on or not work on.

Barry's sense of autonomy was also linked to trust, but as Dutton (2003) reminds us, trust is a resource that may shift, depending upon the circumstances and people. If Barry or Alex was not performing to their company's expectations or needs, or other circumstances changed, their autonomy might be curtailed and this could alter their perception of their relationships with supervisors and most likely their sense of empowerment (Ashcraft & Kedrowicz, 2002) and how they felt about their workplace. In describing his best work experience, however, having autonomy was important to Alex and Barry's positive relationships. These exemplars support Krone's (1994) findings that "subordinates are more likely to perceive trusting, in-group supervisory relationships when they also perceive higher levels of job autonomy and participation in decision making" (p. 222).

Hugh considered the climate of autonomy in his Fortune 500 company as a limitless opportunity to use his imagination, "Nobody really knows how to do it, that is the thing, you've got to go figure it out, and that is what they are paying you for." Hugh perceived this autonomy as empowering for him and for his partners and this was reflected in his

interactions. Within his workplace relationships, Hugh framed this autonomy as a positive challenge (Carlsen, 2008) in which he and his colleagues had to "figure it out."

Nancy had some autonomy, albeit limited, yet it influenced her professional trajectory. In the positive experience Nancy chose to relay, her supervisor was someone from whom she "learned what not to do." He gave her and a colleague the assignment to prepare and conduct the change management seminar for her office. Nancy recalled that she and her colleague had a sense of ownership of the project and felt a mutual boost in confidence when it was well-received at the local level. Beyond that, she received very positive feedback from the corporate level, which was very important to her. She remembered the planning, "we could be creative within [corporate] structure. We had a lot of fun with it." And when it was over, she felt that they had "communicated the message the right way." This was Nancy's first "project management gig," the field that became her profession. Because of the strong positive relational identification with this project, her colleague, and corporate management, and her sense of empowerment, despite her negative relationship with her supervisor, Nancy was encouraged to continue in this discipline (Carlsen, 2008).

Expertise. Considering each person as an expert in their area was pervasive for Donna's work experience. Donna gave various examples of how she and others working at all levels in her investment services company "were entrusted with responsibility to get that work done and to strategize within their area of expertise and to present options, present suggestions, present dreams to management to try to drive growth in their own area." When she was viewed as an expert and saw that others were viewed as experts and encouraged, she felt empowered on multiple levels (Mueller & Lee, 2002), "I had a voice in meetings with

upper management…with the CEO … as soon as you establish that you know what you are talking about in your area, then people listen to you." This sense of empowerment enhanced her relationships with her colleagues as well as her supervisors and increased the positive energy in the organization (Quinn, 2007).

Marilyn's supervisor considered her an expert, because of her experience and knowledge, as it was channeled through her intuition. She had a pivotal experience where her manager entrusted her:

> in the long-term it gave me more confidence in what I am doing. Absolutely I mean somebody else saying to me trust your gut because your gut is really good. That was important to me. Since that time I have found myself at times in situations again where what I am choosing to do perhaps logically doesn't make sense to others but I know it is the right thing to do. And 99% of the time it turns out right. I think that is the biggest thing it has done for me.

Marilyn's supervisor demonstrated to her that he was willing to take a risk and support her in her decision because he considered her to be the expert in her area. This experience empowered Marilyn and positively influenced her relationship with her supervisor for the long-term (Miller et al., 1999; Thomas et al., 2009). Marilyn told me that this experience was so powerful that it mitigated other somewhat disappointing, less supportive interactions with her supervisor. In sum, positive workplace relationships may not be built on every interaction, but every interaction is an opportunity to build a positive relationship (Dutton, 2003).

Purposeful work. Work that was useful and meaningful empowered participants as well. Peter's experience in an international team was positively impacted when people from provider and customer were paired up and assigned a piece of the project to work on independently. They were given "ownership and entitlement to go ahead and do something,

they feel like they are bringing value … they come back with something that certainly will get corrected and adjusted, but they feel that they've created the initial draft", which Peter considered "a good thing." Changing the dynamic in the team from 15-20 people to 1-3 people working on each element provided an opportunity for a "one on one type of relationship." Each dyad had the chance and simultaneously, was under pressure to perform. But for Peter, and reportedly his colleagues, it was a breakthrough for their team, assisted in achieving their objectives, and was motivating. "You get so much satisfaction out of it that you get excited again about the job itself, about the daily things you have to do, and the potential rewards at the end." Participants felt empowered when there was a sense of purpose to their work (Thomas et al., 2009) which enhanced their relationships within the dyads and to the larger group (Abu Bakar et al., 2010; Silva & Sias, 2010).

Sara referred to this sense of purpose as being part of the climate of her team. Sara found that her relationship with her team in the investment bank in Romania was part of the "atmosphere." It gave her purpose, which empowered her and "definitely affected the way I see a workplace and I think I became much more hardworking." Sara's high-quality relationship with her team, then, was perceived by her as impetus for purpose and productivity (Ellingson, 2003; Fay & Kline, 2011). In this example, Sara's increased productivity was a result of the climate in her workplace as transmitted to her through the relationships with her team members. Thus the cycle of positive climate to positive relationship to personal productivity was constructed from the site of positive climate (Quinn, 2007).

Donna spoke "fondly" of the purpose of the centralized communication in her investment firm and how there was an "entire team of the company devoted to internal

communication and this website that they had put together, and it was really fun and it really reflected the character of the company." Donna emphasized the duel nature of this information network, "it was informative, but it was also done in a way that built community" and that it had purpose, "they recognized the value in making sure that everybody understands what is happening and understands why [a product] is important and feels comfortable using it, before we are asking them to show a customer how to use it." (Rosenfeld et al., 2004; Sharbrough, 2006). I purposefully used the term fondly in referring to the manner in which Donna spoke of the system of communication at her firm, since it made an impression on me. Donna felt empowered by this system, possibly because of its "duel nature" of purpose (instrumental) and community (inclusion) (Dutton, 2003).

In Carol's work of reconciliation building, a sense of purpose was profoundly empowering to her and her team. When she received the phone call from one of her employees, in which he recounted his experience in the village wherein he and the team were able to successfully bring the Christians and Muslims together and they ended up singing and hugging, Carol was overcome. She felt a combination of thrill, relief and fulfillment at this accomplishment. In her words,

> Yeah. That's what it's all about. [And] you look for these moments of transcendence. And look for these moments of transformation. And then when they come up it's really important to help people see that at this point that we transcended. Like, we created something that was, that no one else ever thought we could create and we did it together.

Recognizing that their purpose was met through their work, and that it was meaningful work, was important to Carol. Making sure that her team understood the ramifications and the impact on their relationships was, perhaps, even more important and empowering (Cheney et al., 2008).

Task enabling. A third form of the instrumental dimension of relational communication was evident in participant stories where interaction with others was task enabling and helped to accomplish or remove obstacles to achieving results. Participants described task enabling activities such as removing obstacles, sharing information, training and personnel selection as being integral to positive instrumental connections (Dutton, 2003).

Removing obstacles. Alex took very seriously the importance of removing obstacles for his team. He explained that he would not be upset with anyone that he managed if they were not able to perform their duties "because somebody else isn't providing information, tools or the services.… And that goes all the way through for me right down to the guy who unloads the tapes and transports them to an offsite facility." By making this explicit to his team in his interactions with them, Alex communicated that they were not responsible for something beyond their control. This sense of security may result in employees tending to concentrate more fully on their tasks (Thomas et al., 2009).

Removing obstacles was also important in Bernie's interactions with his employees. Bernie's positive experience building a plant in Scotland "reinforced my approach to management." He offered that "people will do a good job if they are allowed to…. I look at my job as clearing the way [of] obstacles … that they couldn't and let them progress." From a global perspective, Bernie viewed management's job as enabling employees to complete their tasks, "most of the problems in manufacturing are management problems and only management can solve them." From his experience in factories, he commented that, "no matter how hard you coax or yell or scream at an employee they really can't make the changes necessary in order to solve the problem. The system had to be changed. And that is the management problem." Bernie's positive relationship with his employees stemmed from

his assumption that they want to "do a good job" and that they cannot change something for which they do not have the tools or knowledge. By clearing the obstacles or facilitating work (Miller et al., 1999), Bernie lifted the responsibility from the employees to management, where he felt it belonged.

Donna also concurred that removing obstacles was an important point of discussion with colleagues and supervisors, but she expressed the process more deliberately and placed responsibility on the employee instead of on the supervisor or management:

> one thing that my manager said to me very early on that just made a lot of sense for me was, "It is my job to remove the obstacles so that you can do your job." We had responsibility for our area and we were given complete trust and confidence to do what we needed to do and when we thought of a better way to do it, we needed to talk to our boss and our boss would help us remove those obstacles to getting bigger and better things done and to doing it more efficiently.

In her description of the process for removing obstacles, Donna placed the responsibility with the employee, then she emphasized that the relationship between supervisors and employees was built on trust (Thomas et al., 2009). It was the employee's responsibility to interact with their supervisor to make them aware of a problem. Finally, the supervisor would then help them to remove the obstacle (Miller et al., 1999).

Information sharing. Another key communicative dynamic in high quality relational communication is imparting knowledge, facts or details about what was happening—a feature of communication that participants considered crucial to enabling task completion. Bernie put it simply, "people work best when they know what's going on" an attitude that was reinforced at a particular seminar that was one of his best work experiences. Providing information may increase the sense of trust and belonging by all organizational members (Sharbrough, 2006) and enhance relationships.

Information sharing was also very important to Bruce. He preferred to work with people who were "proactive" in expressing their difficulties and then advised how they were going to deal with the problem. "I really like working with the people that way because it gives them the freedom and the confidence. OK, Bruce trusts me with this assignment … so I will make it happen and I will keep him in the loop." Bruce also felt that a trusting relationship was part of the equation for sharing information (Dutton, 2003), but he had the expectation that employees would provide a solution to their problems as well.

At Donna's investment firm there was a commitment to information sharing. The whole company knew the priority of projects and was then able to cooperate on allocation of resources. The priority was communicated to everybody in the company by literally numbering the projects. If a project had a number that was before another project, then they received the resources first. Donna gave the example of a project being number 7 and another project being number 36. The people who were in charge of Project 36 would relinquish the IT sources to the people working on Project 7. Donna's reaction to this was that the management had provided enough information for employees to self-regulate the system. "They achieved their objectives in terms of making sure that everybody understands what is going on, they gave us the rationale behind it, and they gave us a voice to make a change if we didn't agree with it." This was perceived very favorably by Donna (Rosenfeld & Richman, 2004), as she welcomed the sense of empowerment that this access to information gave her and other employees.

Full sharing of information about a particular subject was essential and integral to the discussions that Martin had with his colleague. "I had an initial idea about doing it this way, of achieving something and I discussed with him and at the end of the discussion I had a

much better plan." Martin found that exchanging information with his colleague (Sias, 2005) about a project, given the type of authentic dialogue (Buber, 1958) they shared, brought a result that was different than he would have thought of on his own.

Michael, 40 years old, from the U.S. and an elementary school teacher in Denmark for many years, used his own technique of game playing to share information with his students. He modified the method for transfer of information, but maintained the quality and found the result to be satisfying to students, and himself (Sias, 2005). He found that "changing components of different types of games and developing games so that the children through play situations actually learned as much as another traditional teacher with writing things in a book or something." Positive relationship-building was a byproduct of the games, as well.

Training. Some of the positive workplace relationships that participants described related to training. According to Harry, his mentor provided specific and exceptional feedback about questions such as how to handle issues that arise very quickly, how to foresee potential risks, how to build a relationship with supervisors, colleagues, customers, how to inspire and propel the team forward, and "when do you let the team work the problem versus you jumping in and taking it and steering it to the desired outcome you want it to be?" Training may increase employees' sense of being valued. The appreciation that they feel may positively impact their workplace relationships and climate (Dutton, 2003; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2011).

For purposes of ongoing training, Peter's company had a process of documenting lessons-learned for projects. Peter found that in the project that was the focus of his story and unlike most documented lessons-learned, which result from negative outcomes, these

lessons-learned were “about how a successful thing gets done…. So it’s not forgotten or just by memory, but it’s really something that I can go back and say, ‘Oh yeah, this is something we did there, let's try it there.’ So yeah, I would [say] that because we’re documenting it, that it is more helpful.” What Peter documented was the process of positively changing the group dynamic on a project by pairing group members into manageable teams that could accomplish project pieces through interaction and then reporting back to the group (Silva & Sias, 2010).

Personnel selection. The people with whom participants worked had a significant impact on the experiences of particular participants. Peter thought that it was the people on his international team that “made it a good experience…. Having the right people, having the right skills, and not caring really where they’re located, but rather having the right people on the deal made it easier” for Peter’s team to accomplish the objectives of the project (Dutton, 2003).

Sara attributed her team’s outstanding interaction to personnel selection. She expressed her appreciation to the “senior manager that was overseeing all three departments and was personally responsible for selecting and recruiting people, and she was always very mindful about the persons she was hiring because she knew that they had to fit in very well.” In a similar way, Dutton (2003) refers to the importance of personnel selection as a contextual factor in promoting positive connections and high-quality relationships.

Sensemaking

Sensemaking is framing perceptions and deriving meaning through interactions about the community, context, objectives and identity. The forms of sensemaking included attitude, belief, meaning making, and purposeful. I explore each in what follows.

Attitude. One form of sensemaking in participant stories is attitude, or the view or opinion about something. A number of participants contrasted their positive work experiences with previous less positive ones. This comparison was a factor in shaping their attitudes about connections and relationships. As well, participants reframed perceptions as a result of or in anticipation of change.

Comparison of climates. Bruce found that his positive work experiences brought him to the realization that having a positive work climate was paramount. "If the negative is more than the positive and I cannot change it, that is not the place for me. It is not like giving up." In his opinion, it was better "looking for something different and to make the necessary correction" than to stay in the current job. Through the construction of meaning that developed from Bruce's connections and relationships (sensemaking) at various jobs, he realized that his work climate made a difference in his feelings about his identity, community (Sigman, 1995), and himself (Rogers, 1980).

Donna also made a comparison between the climate of her best work experience and the previous one. Before Donna worked at the investment company she worked at another firm that was "just the exact opposite of everything that was good" at the investment company that was the subject of her best work experience story. "I think that sort of influenced me, too, that I had kind of seen the dark side and this was just really a breath of fresh air … and I thought, okay, this is how Corporate America should be." In this positive environment, Donna was able to achieve meaningful connections and positive relationships (Kahn, 2007) and congruence between her personal work attitude and the positive work climate (Rogers, 1980).

Sara commented about the climate in prior professional situations both in long-term positions and in shorter-term consulting appointments. "You don't have to hate each other. On the contrary, if you have the type of relationship that we had, the result is so much better, and the atmosphere." For Sara, working with a team in an extremely positive environment "affected the way I see a workplace and I think I became much more hardworking, and just the perspectives on … work, it has changed." Sara reinforced Quinn's (2007) contention that group members who energize their team may accomplish more work. Specifically, she and other participants voiced the concept of lift (Quinn & Quinn, 2009) whereby coworkers in high-quality connections impart and receive energy from each other which conveys value, capability, and knowledge. Lift positively impacts attitude, the case with many participants as exemplified by Sara, and contributed to their sense that organizational climate mattered.

John contrasted his best work experience climate with other jobs he had and other contexts where the location or partners on the project were not amenable to the participatory approach he employed. In China, "the context was good enough to where it was done and it was supported. People understood it. Parents appreciated it. The parents of children who are involved in the programming really appreciated it." In some of John's other postings, he did not find the same level of support for this participatory approach from parents and other members of the local community. John's experience underscored the influence of context on workplace climate (Dutton, 2003). John's difficulty in utilizing non-participatory processes that conflicted with his identity caused him to form the opinion that these projects were worse experiences than those where his identity and his participatory approach were consistent (Rogers, 1980; Silva & Sias, 2010).

Reframing perceptions. Sensemaking is a way of framing perceptions and deriving meaning. Steven, who traveled to Laos as the general manager of a mining company, found that his attitude as a general manager was very different than it had been as a financial person, in general. "Knowing that all these people worked for me and kind of depended on me." And then, visiting the villages and seeing the living conditions of the mine employees impacted his attitude about them "and then coming back to the west and realizing how material we are over here. Yeah, I think it has an impact on me." He spoke vividly of the difference,

> So it was a very interesting experience going from thinking about when it was just a set of numbers and a result coming through our profit and loss statement to actually seeing the people and going into their village getting to know them and sitting down and having a meal with them and getting invited to a marriage ceremony. I guess I think for me at that point of time realizing what management was all about rather than just the financial side. I think that trip probably opened my eyes up to how important a company like ours could be in a small local community like that. I think it showed the social responsibility as well as the financial side of being an accountant in that sort of a situation.

The change in position from "numbers" to "management" causing him to feel a greater sense of responsibility for employees and the direct contact with employees and their living situation prompted Steven's new attitude and redefinition of his relationship with them (Weick, 1995).

John's context for reframing was very different from Steven's. Because of the time, location and people with whom John was working, what he said, wrote and the people with whom he was in contact were possibly being monitored by the communist party. His projects were with the local minority communities, some of whom practiced Islam, and were being targeted by the local government. John pointed out that he "had to figure out a way to live that way and to work that way … It made for very ambiguous conditions to work in and

I wasn't quite sure … what the boundaries were." John modified his attitude and actions about communicating based on the changing context of his interactions within his local environment in China (Weick, 1995). "When I'm talking with anybody, or writing something I assume everybody's going to see it so it's made me to be a more cautious communicator and to be very clear in my communications about my opinions, my ideas."

As assistant to the administrator of a clinic, Marilyn modified her attitude about the role of women and men in professional situations and professional life based on the context of living and working in Saudi Arabia. Prior to working in Saudi Arabia, she had been an immigration attorney, among other things. "Basically, I got to do 80% of my bosses work and made most of the decisions but it was his name on the things, not mine." According to Marilyn,

> that was OK. Because you have to also understand in that particular situation whoever's name was on the table was also the person who was responsible and I didn't want to be in a position in a country where the laws and consequences were very very different from what I was used to, to be the person that would be held responsible…So it's kind of nice to be in the position where I wasn't going to be held accountable to the nth degree.

In addition to accepting the limitations of the situation, Marilyn constructed a narrative of affirmation consistent with her professional responsibilities and lack of recognition (Weick, 1995; Hermon, 1996).

Belief. Participant stories also include belief, an attribute of sensemaking that was an idea that was accepted as true. Mary's positive experience was working for a construction company in Puerto Rico. Then she moved to New Jersey to work for the same company for decades and has had a few jobs since then. Her belief about working in "an office or anywhere, [is that] if there is someone there positive, somebody that cares or somebody that

listens or someone that is nice, I think people will react to that and change their ways" was established and reinforced in her first, best work experience. She declared that in her company in Puerto Rico "everyone had the same mindset of getting it done and there were also incentives in the sense of bonuses and just loving what you were doing and I believe everyone there loved what they were doing." The combination of financial rewards, purpose, and community created a sensibility for Mary that in her words translated to "love" and sustained her extremely positive view (Cheney et al., 2008) of the influence of individuals striving for high-quality connections (Dutton, 2003) with coworkers.

Barry shared his belief about what constituted the optimum company for him. He qualified his positive assessment of a company to a certain type of company that fit his criteria of having a "strong culture and a culture of investing in their employees." This type of company, for Barry, maintained a "level of standards for conduct across all aspects of the employee experience. How you treat your peers, how your boss treats you, how you are compensated, how the company invests in you, what the expectations are in terms of performance." Other participants also expressed their beliefs about the influence of the performance between people (Sigman, 1995) to construct workplace climate.

Michael, an elementary school teacher in Denmark, shared his belief that "if you have your heart in it and you're kind of good enough at it, well, then you are also a teacher in your free time." He experienced this himself and declared that "the involved teacher is a teacher all the time with his own kids, with his family, with other people, and just in a bus, if something's going on." Michael's personal experience and how he made sense of it solidified his beliefs and integrated these beliefs into his identity (Kahn, 2007) affecting his relationships with others in the workplace.

Peter believed that what proved a particular deal was "really successful is that I think when we had dinners with the customer, in a social environment, not in a business environment, we all felt like both companies came out as winners, at the same level." Peter made a distinction between a work dinner and a social dinner and ranked the social dinner, with less formality and less hierarchy, as the opportunity for team members from different companies to be more open. He conceived of the social dinner as a context for more authentic backstage interaction, with a higher level of truth and meaning, and the work dinner as enacting frontstage roles (Ellingson, 2003). Because Peter believed there could be a difference between the truth in the business environment and the social environment, he sought congruence and wholeness between them for confirmation (Rogers, 1980).

Constructing significance. Participants constructed significance about their high quality workplace relationships. Harry constructed significance about his perception of the role his mentor played, someone he held in high-esteem and with whom he expected to have a life-long relationship. The meaning of her life's work for him is the realization that it was her "pure hard work" that brought her to the point in her career that she attained. Her determination and dedication "fuels and constantly fuels and refuels, and keeps you going. It has been a constant chain reaction from that point." Harry's sense of his mentor brought vitality to his own work (Quinn, 2007).

Sara constructed significance from her experience with her investment bank team. In attempting to understand the uniqueness and special nature of her team's bonding (Buber, 1958; Rogers, 1980) at the bank in Romania, Sara opined that it was their "shared ethics. We just shared the same core values, as people.… everyone was on the same page and there was bonding and support … eventually, it even made the work itself not that important, it was the

bond between us." She also found that this experience "helped me to mature a lot and look differently at a work environment … Even if you are working for a corporation, we are so used to saying that corporations are bad and corporations are not people and so on". Sara mused that her previous assessment of corporations had changed and become more nuanced. Also, she made a distinction between a business that others owned and one that she might someday own, which was something she aspired to do. "But [even] if you are working for someone that you don't know and you don't actually have your own business, it doesn't have to be just work. And the environment itself can be fun, even if the work is tough." Sara's positive teaming experience at the Romanian bank was pivotal in her construction of the meaning of a positive work climate, or what is significant in her estimation of her interactions and work setting (Falcione et al., 1987).

Carol related a story of a colleague's construction of significance and her reaction. She was meeting with four of her colleagues who were heads of offices. These men and Carol assembled as a team and the first thing that occurred was that the field coordinator "did our astrological charts, you know to look at how we all work together, and I was just like, 'Well, isn't that cool.'" His approach to constructing meaning in terms of the fit of the team members with each other was unlike what Carol had experienced before, but she was open to it and viewed it positively (Rogers & Singhal, 2003).

Bruce constructed significance about the relationship-building that was part of a job he had as a mentor to participants at a two-month international business program. He learned that his tactics for interacting with and advising international program interns required taking into account their country, culture and other contextual factors. With interns from so many different cultures, he was better able to understand that there was no single way of

sensemaking, that each person might see things differently. "One thing you do with one intern would not work with another because of where they are coming from or how they have been educated or even their family structure will totally change how you have to coach them." Bruce learned to navigate the vicissitudes of his international business program interns in that they were desirous of being part of the community while also maintaining their own identity (Hermon, 1996).

"Profound experience" is how Carol refers to the "two and a half years" she and her team "got money to facilitate meetings. And we took great pride in that. You know, we were very pleased that that was our job. So I learned a lot about facilitation." Working in conflict zones in Indonesia, these facilitations between Muslim and Christian villagers were literally about life and death. Constructing meaning (Buber, 1958; Kahn, 2007; Rogers, 1980) under those conditions was conveyed by Carol as looking for "moments of transcendence [and] transformation."

In Donna's company, construction of signification was part of the company's organizational structure and employees were constantly reminded of the company's history and branding. Dates and numbers that were important to the company were used for passwords, for example. The number seven and the color purple were also widely used because of their significance. Donna enthusiastically listed the purple references: "you would look somebody up and see their picture and position on the purple pages, and we had a Wiki … called, 'The Purple Pedia,'" Donna's positive sensibility about these branding tactics was notable as it contrasted with the reaction of employees in other companies regarding similar strategies (Cheney et al., 2008). Donna interpreted these devices as "reinforcements … of where we came from, who we are, and for me I thought that was really

cool" and related them to construction of positive relationship with colleagues, positive organizational climate and positive organizational identity, "because everybody really took ownership of the company and liked being there and liked the family atmosphere and we were all really proud of our owner for the way he has been running the show." Company branding of the organization encouraged, and at the same time mediated, the construction of meaning (Black, 2005). Similar efforts to instill meaning have been known to backfire (Cheney et al., 2008), but for Donna and her colleagues the impact was positive (Davis, 2005).

Purposeful. Some of the participants vividly illustrate how their positive connections and relationships relate to pursuing an objective that is in concert with their organization's purpose. Again, Carol's story about the intense phone call she received from one of her team members describing the reconciliation meeting in the village bringing together Muslims and Christians illustrated the purposeful nature of the work that she and her team were doing and the shared acceptance of meaning (Hermon, 1996).

Donna remarked that she was very comfortable working in a company where they "always had a clear understanding of what [the] priorities were and what direction we were going strategically." Her comfort was also due to her priorities and objectives aligning with the firm's (Rogers, 1980).

It was also important to participants to pursue their personal objectives, which gave them a sense of purpose. In one particular instance of Marilyn's, she was finding appropriate services for a patient that was having difficulty in locating what they needed.

> Any time I had to do that kind of intervention for any of our patients particularly the expatriate community I would have a very strong and positive feeling of purpose in what I was doing. You know I really liked being in a position where I could be

> helpful, where I could immediately interject into the situation and save it from becoming something it didn't need to become.

Marilyn, Donna and Carol found their work to have an objective, to be of consequence, and always to include connections and relationships (Kolodinsky et al., 2008).

Steven found purpose, other than that with which he was originally tasked, due to his relationships with employees working in the mining industry:

> The village very much depended on our company at that time. Going there and visiting that village and seeing that remote mine site which is right on the Ho Chi Min trail. The conditions they were working under – there were still a lot of unexploded ordinances and things like that they would clear them away. They took me out and showed me where the unexploded ordinances were stored and things like that. It was very eye-opening experiencing the culture as well as how we were contributing positively to that. We actually did decide to drill a couple of water wells for the village to try to get them some clean water. We set up to do a little bit more community involvement with that village.

This experience underscored the sense of responsibility for Steven, in addition to purpose, in his activities as general manager of the mining company division (Frye et al., 2007).

Positive Spiral

Positive spiral evolves from interaction that generates positive emotions which lead to other positive interactions creating a spiral of positivity. Relationships between the participant in interaction with one person or several people and their positive influence on each other further linked to a network of others creating a legacy of positive vitality. Positive spiral was not one of the five original dimensions in the proposed model. However, in reviewing the interview transcripts I noticed that certain participants described this phenomenon as being central to their best work experience relationships. Thus, I added this dimension before I began coding the data. Positive emotions that came from an encounter with a boss, mentor or colleague lead to positive interactions with others (Dutton, 2003;

Garland et al., 2011; Quinn, 2007). The forms of positive spiral were chain of affirmation and mentoring.

Chain of affirmation. Participants voiced interconnected positive comments or feelings. They described their positive connections and high-quality relationships as reciprocal and enduring or as emotional reframing.

Reframing emotions. Based on Hugh's earlier comments, I enquired if he saw himself as a mediator, reframing emotions and events leading to a chain of affirmation. And so I asked him if he got pleasure from being the person who translated his positive feeling about the unknown into something palatable for those people for whom the unknown is not something positive. He responded that he thought that was "valid." He continued,

> I know that is why a lot of people trust me, because they come in and they have got these problems … but [by] having a much bigger perspective and not really being as intimidated by the unknown, I have been able to have some really productive discussions with some people. And that word gets around and people go, "That guy looks at things differently, you should go talk to him." "It sounds like you're struggling with something, go talk to this guy."

Further in the interview I referred to Hugh's military service and his leadership and how he was probably always trying to figure out how to get the best out of people. He responded that "it is easier in a combat environment. It is so much easier to get the best out of people, because they are much more willing to give it and they are much more focused." Hugh's experience in the military on extremely intense missions informed his positive connections with his colleagues, in which he retained aspects of authentic dialogue that included focused listening, positive intention, and reframing in an inclusive and confirming manner (Buber, 1958; Rogers, 1980).

Positive spirals that reframe emotions may have very tangible, even surprising, unintended consequences. An example of a long-term personal impact of positive spiral, which began with Steven's positive experience and his relationships with employees of his drilling company in Laos was Steven's changed outlook regarding charitable donations. "I think I was a very cynical person as far as charitable donations." The reason for this, according to Steven, was that his financial background highlighted for him the percentage of charitable contributions that was actually distributed to the intended recipients. "And I think this [experience in Laos] opened up my eyes to say OK if you can find the right charity and the right way to deliver the money, don't just write all charities off." Steven's positive connections and relationships with his employees in Laos caused him to reexamine the negative discourse that he had about all charities and search more deeply for those that he could feel positive about (Garland, Gaylord, & Park, 2009).

Reciprocal and enduring affirmation. Alex's story of a positive work experience illustrated a reciprocal version of a chain of affirmation. He became very excited when he told this story and even more so when I prompted him with the phrase "circle of affirmation":

> A: My level of confidence was probably 95% and I was feeling very optimistic that I could fix this because the customer and that's a real key thing for me is that the customer actually publicly states, I see a difference, I think we are getting better. And when they say that there's a whole bunch of emotional baggage that they can release, I suspect, because then they haven't got to wonder if I can fix it or not. All they have to wonder then is how soon can I fix it. Because the wondering about fixing it is less of an issue. Then it becomes a timing issue not an operation issue, but a question of when. When they feel more confident, they are less likely to snap at my managers, and I feel more confident. I'm likely to give the team somewhat of a breather, not much, and then I suspect that there is some kind of feedback mechanism between IBM and the customer in that we both tend to relax and when we relax we tend to do things better.
>
> S: So that circle of affirmation that comes…

> A: That's a nice way of putting it. It's that circle of affirmation. That's a very neat way of putting it, but yes it's that whole I'm doing better. You're doing better. Yep, I'm doing better. Yep, I'm feeling better. You're right, it's that circle of affirmation.

In Alex's story, he pointed out that when the customer's stress level was reduced and the blaming and negative judging were reduced, the customer voiced it by saying "I see a difference, I think we are getting better." For Alex, that was an extremely important message and one he had learned to both anticipate and attend to in his relationship with the customer. It triggered a positive response in him; a reduction in his stress-level and signified to him that this problem could be solved. And then he conveyed these positive emotions to his team in his interactions with them (Huston et al., 2011).

Harry viewed his relationship with his mentor as reciprocal and also as enduring. Although researchers have described mentoring as having no benefit for the mentor, other than a sense of achievement and prestige (de Vries et al., 2006), Harry and other participants viewed it as a "two-way street. There is always something that you could bring value to the table." (Clauson, Wejr, Frost, McRae, & Straight, 2011). Harry's cultural background, having been raised in Hyderabad, India, was something that as "a protégé to this lady," he "could exchange about." He called mentoring "bidirectional" and a "chain reaction." Just observing his mentor's "pure hard work" was motivating for him. He was confident that this chain reaction would continue through his mentees, as well. "It is going to compound. So she teaches me, I teach somebody else, and we have become a better place." This appreciation for the individual relationship and the enduring legacy from this relationship, something greater and more influential than one connection, was very important to Harry (Buber, 1958).

Similar to Harry, John's experience in China was also reciprocal and oriented to a common legacy. John and his colleagues from his project in China had maintained their relationship and various colleagues had told him that they found that experience to be positive for them. John contemplated that he chose this experience as one of his most positive partially because of its length relative to other postings and because it was "with people and building relationships … six years since then they've gone on to do other things and I've maintained relationships professional and personal." John commented on the legacy of the work they did in China, "And it's nice to hear back from colleagues knowing that the programs that we set up together are not only still there but they've actually expanded and gotten bigger and gotten more dynamic and created more influence with government." And he spoke about the people that he directed, "it makes me very proud to know what some of these other people have done that I've worked with, with colleagues, and they've gone on and they're doing great stuff." As John compared his relatively senior position and age to his colleagues, he focused on a chain of affirmation through his high-quality relationships that would be positive and enduring, both professionally and personally (Clauson et al., 2011).

Sara's story of her relationship with her boss was reciprocal and began three years before she actually worked for her, with an interview where "the chemistry was amazing. We just liked each other from the first moment. I really looked up to her and I really saw her as being special, and she really saw the potential in me." Then Sara was offered another job, outside of Romania, which she "couldn't refuse." However, three years later Sara was contacted by the same bank in Romania. Sara admitted that in the interim she hadn't been able to remember the last name of the person with whom she had the interview, even though she periodically thought of her and would have liked to have contacted her. Then Sara

received a call from the Romanian investment bank HR department to advise that there was an opening for a senior lending specialist and the person had asked them to call Sara to set up a meeting with her. Sara believed that it was "meant to be. There was this special bond and mutual respect between us. I always saw her as a role model and as a professional I don't know anyone I respect more in this profession or as a person." The mutuality between Sara and her supervisor stemmed from a positive connection and endured to become a high-quality professional relationship that spiraled into a high-quality experience and personal and professional network (Garland et al., 2011).

All of the participants were very upbeat in the interviews and some of them even mentioned that preparing and participating in the interview was a positive experience in itself, reciprocal and enduring. Peter was very explicit, "it allows me to just relive this great experience, and sparks a bit of a fire to say this was great and it brings it back to the forefront. So I think that is a nice piece of it." The interview, then, was a vehicle for reliving the positive experience and enacting the chain of affirmation (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2011).

Mentoring. When participants receive guidance from their mentors and serve as mentors to others, they constitute their role in a continuing chain of affirmation. Mentoring relationships are both structured and unstructured, assigned to participants or both. Participants in this study perceived mentors as advisors or role models, or both, and credited them for passing on relationship-building skills, among other skills.

Advisors and guides. When asked if his positive experiences at work impacted his personal life, Alex answered that the direction of the impacts was the opposite. His relationship with his wife and her mentoring caused him to have more positive interactions at work. She taught him, he said, about situational management, whereby he learned that being

authoritarian with his team was appropriate for certain projects, but that with other projects or phases of a project, a more open style where team members had more input and more independence was more fitting. He reported that this change in his style had been well-received. He said that he now advises his own mentees to use strategies of situational management. Alex received advice regarding his approach to relationship-building with his teams, which he followed, with positive results. He then shared this advice with the people he was mentoring (Guowei & Jeffres, 2006). The high-quality relationship Alex had with his wife was parlayed into positive connections with his colleagues, team members and mentees. Alex's experience demonstrated the fluidity of interaction between personal and professional life and potential positive energy in both directions (Dutton, 2003; Quinn, 2007).

Barry's story of his best work experience began with a "fantastic" mentor. His mentor assigned him to participate in her projects so that he could observe how she managed her work before he was "on the hook for my own success." When he was given his first project, she guided him and observed his presentation to and interaction with the customer and then gave him feedback for future meetings. "She was very supportive and very enthusiastic about what I was doing and I think that really helped me get off to a good start in the company." The direct contact that Barry had with his mentor may not have been long-term but he appreciated and followed her comments regarding coworker and customer interaction (Dutton, 2003; Kahn, 2007; Quinn, 2007).

Harry's mentor was both an advisor and a role model to him. Additional lessons that Harry learned from his mentor included how to cultivate a relationship, wherein he focused on the importance of being prepared as a tool for building trust. Harry's mentor counselled him that a client would interpret his being knowledgeable and prepared as trustworthiness

and reliability, “so if the other person can trust you that you have got their back, then that is a foundation and you can build the relationship. I have also learned … it might take years to get there.” He also noted that it was important to understand “the different climate, the different elements of an environment before you go and meet that person, so that you can have a meaningful discussion.” Harry’s experience highlights the investment of time and energy sometimes required to develop high-quality relationships (Kram & Isabella, 1985; Sias & Cahill, 1998).

Role models. Bruce took his lead from the management at the factory in Turkey, who were role models to him, to be open with people he managed. He observed that the managers were “listening to you and hearing you.” They treated him as an equal, as if he were providing them with the answers and made him feel as if he could be true to himself (Dutton, 2003; Rogers, 1980) in their presence. He found this openness to be very “freeing. They might be looking at it from a totally different point of view than I have. And might see something that I might not be able to realize if I look at it for 10 days straight.” This feeling of congruence, or feeling free, made him realize that this was how he wanted to manage others (Rogers, 1980).

Harry and Marilyn sought out a mentor or emulated a manager who represented the type of future professional position or management style that they were attempting to achieve. Harry summed up what he has learned from his mentor as, “20 years of experience, in a nutshell” which included successes and failures in her project experience, “how leadership actually works, how to step back from a situation, how to get into a situation, how to manage teams. The nuts and bolts of running large complex engagement.” Marilyn also constructed her management approach based on the styles of the people that managed her.

She preferred to work with people as "equals." She urged the people who worked for her "to take initiative, do things and make it their own. I think that is because whether consciously or unconsciously all throughout my career I have worked for people who have pretty much said get it done, make it your own." Harry and Marilyn constructed their own style of management based on how they made sense of the management style of their mentors, a style they preferred and which had most likely created a positive climate (Egan, 1996).

Transparency

Transparency was an interaction that indicated correspondence of internal beliefs with external conduct. Trust was potentially a precursor, as well as a form, of transparency. The additional forms of transparency were independence and authenticity. I examine each in what follows.

Trust. Participants' view of trust was that it underpinned the opportunity for them to act independently, which many of them prized. A number of participants used the term trust explicitly when they spoke of their workplace relationships in reference to a progressive trust, trust of a supervisor, boss or mentor, or trust in team members to perform and bond (Buber, 1958; Dutton, 2003; Kahn, 2007; Kram & Isabella, 1985; Rogers, 1980; Young & Chen, 2013).

Progressive trust. A number of participants articulated the progression of trust as it took place over time (Kram & Isabella, 1985). Bernie ascribed to developing trust with his employees, "Over the years I had a closeness to the operations." This increased familiarity over time with the people that ran the operations at his factories produced a comfort level whereby he "gave them a lot of trust [and] thought that I could trust them." Gradually,

Bernie and his employees recognized the interdependence of their positions and tasks, and that they had a mutual purpose (Miller et al., 1999; Rogers & Singhal, 2003).

Development of a relationship through a process was also important to Bruce's characterization of trust, "As I work with people … of course there is a process to figure out if I can trust them to get the work done." He noted that if, "I get the trust, and as long as I can feel the trust from them, then I will give them their assignment and ask them to give me their report weekly or bi-weekly or however they feel like it."

John pondered the importance time had in the continued development of trust that contributed to deepening his relationships with his colleagues in China,

> as time has gone on of course, I've really gotten to know people [in a] much more deeper way and understand their political leanings, their points of view, their honest opinions about things. But that wasn't necessarily in the context of that time. It's been over time in developing. I think that it does help to make people feel a bit more comfortable that I'm not going to do something or say something that's going to have a negative impact on them. And it helps with trust building I think.

It took a long time, longer than their assignment together, for John's colleagues from his project in China to trust him with certain information about their opinions and their thoughts. This may have been caused, in part, by a number of factors, perhaps cultural and hierarchical, but also because the stakes were much higher for them than for him. (Kram & Isabella, 1985; Sias & Cahill, 1998).

Alex's positive experience was directly related to the relationship he had with management and the mutual trust between them. According to Alex, this trust proved to be "well founded. And when they trust you they say, 'Okay. Go run it. It's your business just make sure you make your target.'" Similarly, Marilyn was told by her supervisor to "trust your gut because your gut is really good." This made a profound impression on her. Both

Alex and Marilyn commented, albeit indirectly, that this resulted in their increased loyalty to their management and organizations (Thomas et al., 2009).

Dependability. For Ron and Hugh trust equated to their perception of how responsible they were viewed by their supervisor (Miller et al., 1999). Ron was not comfortable being called a manager at the restaurant, but "I definitely like the responsibilities. I like to know that I've been noticed and they trust me with this, with the restaurant." Likewise, Hugh considered trust as a means to prove that he was not "the person that was going to let the people that had entrusted me to win for them—not be willing to let them down."

Sara imparted trust with signification of dependability and conscientiousness in her team members (Thomas et al., 2009). Her team experience and the trust that developed seemed surprising to her, "I wouldn't have called myself a team player before…because I don't really trust anyone else to do [things]. But everything changed with them … It is a trust I haven't experienced with many other people outside this particular circle." Sara trusted her team members, as she felt they could equally and totally depend upon each other. As team members and peers in a high-quality relationship, only they shared exactly their same situation so they were the best at understanding and providing emotional and instrumental support (Sias, 2005; Snyder, 2009).

Working with colleagues on an international team that included "the right people" with "the right skills" and believing that they were dependable, Peter commented that "we could trust that things would get handled properly, as opposed to trying to keep things let's say within a geography … I think that it was the right size and it contributed to making it a positive experience." Peter's trust in his international and virtual team contributed to his

sense that it was a positive collaboration and that trust supported a smoother implementation (Fay & Kline, 2011) which resulted in higher-quality relationships of the team members. It is also possible, as some scholars maintain, that trust operates as a "control mechanism" to compel team members who are not co-located to perform and to work collaboratively (Gibbs et al., 2008, p. 193).

Independence. Synonymous with autonomy, the term independence is a form of the *dimension of transparency* that distinguishes it from its usage as a subset of empowerment, a form of the *instrumental dimension*. Many of the participants were passionate about the sense of freedom that they had in their best work experiences, as it represented achievement of congruence between their beliefs and actions in the workplace. This, in turn, gave them confidence and made them feel respected.

Alex explained that

> for all of [his company's] silliness, they let me … I have an incredibly autonomous position. They don't come and chase me around. I have a financial call once a month. But for the most part I'm left entirely to my own devices. Manage the business. Make my decisions about how to deal with the customer. How to make it better, make it more efficient, make it more profitable, without any help … I can make the deal, my deal run the way I want it to. And that's another very positive reinforcement all the time.

Alex interpreted independence, or freedom, as a sign that his relationship with management was positive and that he was considered to be trustworthy and reliable (Dutton, 2003; Krone, 1994).

Barry viewed his boss's experience of having done his job as the impetus for his autonomy, "she understood the ups and downs associated with doing this kind of work and so she understood that I needed to be given quite a lot of latitude to work independently." Barry credited his boss for recognizing and selecting a way to manage him that fit him. "She knew

that I was independent and senior and competent, and so she didn't need to micromanage me and had she micromanaged me, it probably would have made me not as happy an employee." For Barry, the independence that he was given by his supervisor to control his own work processes, without micromanaging, increased his sense of having a high-quality relationship with her and raised the workplace climate for him (Krone, 1994).

Carol perceived her organization's criteria for choosing employees as a factor in their according a "high degree of autonomy" to their project managers, "So their whole thing was, 'we hire people who are mature, who we say, this is how much money we're going to give you. This is your grant. You go. You do the work.'" Choosing personnel that value and practice high-quality connections and relationships is suggested by Dutton (2003).

Carol remembered "one of my best bosses" who "just really had a lot of belief and confidence in me and I had the most autonomy I think that I've ever had." Carol's boss, whom Carol regarded highly, did not require that Carol travel to the central office on a regular basis just to report, as Carol's peers in the other NGO's were required to do. Carol voiced the perception that trust of her supervisor was correlated to the level of independence she enjoyed (Krone, 1994).

Jack enjoyed a certain amount of independence in his government position with the Canadian government but also referred to limitations, "I had a lot of independence as long as I was doing the job that I was supposed to be doing." John was "allowed great autonomy. I would say the thing that was most enjoyable about it was the level of control that I had as a manager."

In his particular position, John was also charged with responsibility for the development of new programming, which he relished, as he "had lots of creative and

management control over the development of the programming." Reflecting on this aspect of his job, which gave him so much satisfaction, he contemplated future consulting, and realized he preferred "work that say gave me a certain degree of autonomy and control in building the program. That would probably be a better fit for me than say something where I go in and everything is set in place." Further, John advised that as a result of his contemplation for our interview, he was reframing how he would conceive of searching for future consulting work. He expressed that he hoped to find positions that provided similar independence, opportunity to shape the programming, and high-quality relationships as his best work experience (Dutton, 2003; Krone, 1994).

Marilyn associated the independence of her position and the "atmosphere that led to a lot of these positive experiences" in Saudi Arabia with the separateness of her clinic from the larger corporation. "We had a very very close knit community-type feeling because while we had some dealings with the main offices and the main hospital we were in a lot of ways very autonomous." Working with a group that is associated with a larger organization, but still separate from the organization provided Marilyn and her colleagues with a buffer to the larger organization and less oversight from them (Silva & Sias, 2010).

Authenticity. Authenticity is characterized in participants' high quality relational communication as interactions participants believed are marked by honesty and openness (Goodier & Eisenberg, 2006; Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004). Martin spoke about the honesty his discussion partner required of people in order to have the type of authentic dialogue (Buber, 1958; Rogers, 1980) that Martin had experienced and valued so highly. Martin described the interaction as follows,

> I think he is ready to engage in that kind of discussion with anyone but he needs to feel a pressure point, so to speak. People who would be looking to please him by not clearly stating their opinion … would not be a candidate for him for this kind of discussion. He really requires you to have your own strength [of] opinions and offer these opinions and offer these opinions for rigid test and if they fail the test to abandon the opinion or to say revise the opinion.

As a result of their dialogue, Martin found that he became more open to different approaches to a problem or situation and was eager to hear others' alternative viewpoints (Douglas, 2006). "You get hooked on this kind of conversation that … goes deeper than regular polite kind of conversation." Martin tried to be more open in his interactions with others, by taking the "risk of opening up to something like that in the hope that I would find someone willing to engage in that level of conversation." Martin was convinced that "if you then run into someone … who shares the same conviction, you can have great quality discussions [and this] leads to better solutions." When asked how Martin felt when he came up with a better solution through this type of synergistic conversation, he commented, "It's a little bit like Christmas and getting a great gift. It's fun. It's fun. It's really strong fun." He also perceived that the connection with the individual was much more intimate (Black, 2005). "It's a little bit like putting two processers to work together without all the hurdles in between."

Being in this type of dialogue with his colleague prompted Martin to be more direct with others in his company (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004; Kristiansen & Bloch-Poulsen, 2000) "stating the obvious that nobody dares to state [and] and being honest about things in a blunt way that typically you wouldn't find." He shared an example of this, "In our company we are looking to have people move from one work location to another work location. Without getting into details the move isn't attractive. So if you do so, you've got to work

more hours at lower salary." Martin addressed his management and told them if one of their employees did not want to take this new position, "this person is taking a reasonable decision." He continued that in order for management to come up with a solution to their problem of transferring employees, they should recognize that this was the case. When Martin stated this, he saw that "people find that almost offensive. And managers are so convinced that people must think of the benefit of the company that they would be willing to transfer but I think even our managers wouldn't take this decision." Martin practiced authenticity in his high-quality relationships and conversations with certain colleagues that bore positive results. This may have prompted him to use a similar strategy with his management. However, if management did not welcome Martin's honesty and forthrightness, nor were interested in high-quality connections, this approach may not have brought a positive outcome (Dutton, 2003).

Honesty, openness, authenticity and similar expressions were articulated by participants. The bond that Sara felt with her colleagues prompted her to be "completely authentic probably the first time in my life. We knew each other very well. We knew our backgrounds and our families and we were completely open. It was this real feeling a family." Sara considered authenticity an extremely important component of her high-quality relationships and of her collaboration and cooperation with colleagues, supervisors and employees (de Vries et al., 2006).

Heidi shared that in two sales positions, one with a retail store and one at a car dealership, she was top salesperson. She attributed this to "honesty, just being friendly and just talking to people. I really like [having] a good relationship with people so, knowing, remembering that person when they first came in … because a lot of people like to talk about

their lives." In addition to being honest with people, Heidi understood from her experience that people want to be in a relationship with someone who listens to them (Dutton, 2003).

Jack equated openness and the ability to be transparent with "freedom." He "never felt that I couldn't voice my views to my boss at any time. I could say what I thought and then the decision was made and went with whatever it was that was decided, not a problem." Jack understood that he worked within certain limitations, as part of a government organization in which he was part of a hierarchy, and not the top decision-maker. He commented, "I had a lot of independence as long as I was doing the job that I was supposed to be doing." Authenticity and transparency, then, came with certain understood limitations. As long as Jack made sense of them, in that they were congruent with his internal expectations, he considered his ability to be transparent, albeit in a limited way, as "freedom." This sense of freedom invigorated Jack's high-quality relationships and his workplace climate (Rogers, 1980).

Generative Emotional Resources

Generative emotional resources are emotionally supportive actions in the form of potential renewable resources. Forms of generative emotional resources include confirmation, effective listening, emotional support and presentness. These communicative actions focus on positive relationships have been found to be predictive of "subordinate communication satisfaction" (Madlock, 2008, p. 72).

Confirmation. Barry considered his position, high technology technical sales and support, one that called for confirmation of customers and colleagues. He commented "I clearly have a personality that likes to serve, likes to support, is very accommodating, and wants to be able to help people so I think that definitely taps into my personality style."

Barry considered himself to be confirming to his clients and coworkers and was also appreciative for others support and assistance (Goodier & Eisenberg, 2006).

As Executive Vice President of his company and the person in charge of building the manufacturing facility in Scotland, Bernie was under pressure to "accept the building from the contractors" and begin production. However, he learned from the plant superintendent and the managing director that the boiler was not acceptable. Only Bernie had the authority to advise this to the contractors, which was not the desired course of action by some in the U.S. operations. However, it was confirming (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004) to his Scottish colleagues, who were "not threatened but rather encouraged," when he vocalized his agreement with their assessment.

Carol's work in Indonesia leading a team in reconciliation in villages between Muslims and Christians required a high degree of all aspects of generative emotional resources, and specifically confirming to her team members. As presented previously in my findings, one of the stories she told was about a phone call she received from a young team member in which he described his feelings about bringing a village's two groups, Muslims and Christians, together and how these villagers appreciated the team. He felt respected and confirmed in his work. As well, Carol felt confirmed, "and it was great to get that phone call. And it was great that he called me. I felt really honored. I like, 'Wow, that's great that he felt happy to call me.' It was a good thing." This mutual feeling of confirmation between villagers and team members and one of the team members and Carol illustrates the dynamic and reciprocal nature of generative emotional resources (Buber, 1958; Dutton, 2003; Quinn, 2007; Rogers, 1980).

Donna described how she felt confirmed by both the communication and the actions of her company management. In her opinion, they enacted "the idea of empowering people and giving them a voice and treating them as intelligent human beings who are capable of digesting this type of information, even if it is not in their specialty". The management in Donna's company recognized their employees in the fullest sense of confirmation (Buber, 1958) and, as such, they welcomed the diversity of opinions, accepting that they might be different from their own (Kristiansen & Bloch-Poulsen, 2000).

Eric was pleased and confirmed when the professors for whom he did research actively sought employment for him with their academic colleagues. He was pleasantly surprised "that they thought high enough of me that they would go to these extra steps and not just write me a letter of recommendation, because anyone can do that, but took the time to get me a job." This also helped to strengthen Eric's perception of his positive connection with his professors. As a student, he considered himself very junior to them and this experience made him feel more equal (Kolodinsky et al., 2008).

It was confirming to John to believe that his style of management engendered "independence and empowered people, who if they don't like what's going on in the organization they leave and they go elsewhere and do this. So for me, that's really the joy in the management work." His sense of it was that "I helped create that." John was delighted to feel that through his style of management, open and participatory, his employees were empowered (Haskins, 1996).

Marilyn felt that she had received "a lot of positive feedback and a lot of informal positive recognition" in her position at the clinic in Saudi Arabia, even though as a woman she could not be in charge of the administration for cultural and religious reasons. Marilyn's

sensibility about spirituality, context and her own religious beliefs helped her reconcile to the situation and look for opportunities to thrive in this environment. The positive feedback and informal positive recognition served as confirmation and reward for her efforts (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2011; Sass, 2000).

Martin, speaking about making changes to the professional educational program of his company considered "one of the great moments that I had [was] when I had the support of my team for the transformation that we were looking to do." Receiving confirmation, even as a manager, increased Martin's self-esteem and was obviously important to him (Miller et al., 1999).

Peter's positive experience of working with an international team "pushed me to just put it out there, because when somebody comes up with ideas, I never look at it as being stupid … I think that anything is good and then we brainstorm." Beyond the confirming sense that he had during this project (Johannesen, 1971), he continued to reap the benefits of being more assertive in proposing ideas in other projects, "it's paying off a lot more than if I'm just sitting back and not taking a chance."

Effective listening. Effective listening is focusing attention to hear the speakers, receive their messages and actively cue them that this has been accomplished. Although effective listening is considered a seminal characteristic as an emotional resource (Dutton, 2003), it was articulated explicitly by only one participant. Bruce conveyed the magnitude of effective listening both for himself and for others:

> At one point or another, they want to have input in the business and they want to be listened and heard. These people were listening to you and hearing you and at the same time treating you as someone that is giving you the freedom … to be who you are as you work with them. And that also gave me the understanding that that is what I should do as I work with people.

Possibly it was assumed that effective listening is necessary for positive organizational climate and if participants had been probed about this attribute they would have expressed its importance, as the literature indicates (Cooper, 1997; Dutton, 2003; Madlock & Kennedy-Lightsey; Rogers, 1980).

Emotional support. Participants appreciate when others provided empathy, or a strong feeling of comfort or support (Martin et al., 2004). Alex's wife is the person whom he credited for helping him develop a better "sense of empathy. And by that, that's not a squishy word for me. I try to as often as I can get the other person's perspective even if I don't necessarily agree with it." He also believed that his empathy contributed to his professional success. "…as I've switched from fix the deal at all costs and do as you're told to I'm prepared to actually listen to what you have to say now and maybe I'll even let you go figure it out yourself" his teams responded and he believed they "started to like me a bit as well." He considered the intrinsic value of this change to be a shift from his teams respecting him to respecting him plus liking him as a person and enjoying working for him (Madlock, 2008).

Harry credited his mentor's empathy for his own increased empathy and emotional support (de Vries et al., 2006). "I think I have learned to demonstrate empathy after seeing her." This included his approach to parents of young children when they asked if they should take assignments that required a lot of travel. Harry advised that his recommendation to them was to be "a good dad. Guess what, two … or four years down the road you might get an opportunity, but guess what? You will never get those first four years of your kid's life back, you know?" Harry's high-quality relationship with his mentor was so deep and her

advice had such a profound impact on his career, he was eager to provide similar advice to others (Dutton, 2003; Kahn, 2007).

Barry's boss understood that emotional support was needed for someone in his position and allowed for him to "work from home" periodically (Mirivel & Tracy, 2005), "which basically meant you took a half day or a day off and just kept a low profile but didn't take an actual vacation day." He appreciated that his boss empathized with his need to have some personal time "to mentally decompress and physically get affairs in order when they have been out of town on the road for a couple of weeks at a time." In addition to having a high-quality relationship, including trust, Barry's supervisor had done the same job and had empathy for him (de Vries et al., 2006).

Carol related many profound stories of emotional support for her team and between her team members doing reconciliation work in Indonesia:

> I think that when it's the teams that I've really worked with, and I know, because I've gotten letters from people and the team in Indonesia in Ambon, for when I left, they put together a video. We had this huge party, I'm all into parties as well. Had a huge party, they put together this video, and the last, the way it ends, the last one says "We love you." Gonna make me cry. It's really nice.

With encouragement, caring and empathy, Carol's team members were able to negotiate conflict within the team and within the communities they served, and maintain grace in intense situations and constant physical closeness (Mirivel & Tracy, 2005).

Eric's management and co-workers at the tennis club were supportive (Whitford & Moss, 2009), in his view, by giving him directions in speaking with an unhappy member, "be kind, be courteous, but you can put them on hold or have them leave a message with me, and I will handle it" and then following through with that member. Eric continued, "… and it is sort of knowing that you don't shoulder the burden for something that you have absolutely no

idea how to handle or what to do. That was I think really positive." Eric reflected on how the management at his job backed up the employees, "so the positive side of dealing with those parents was the fact that my employer and essentially everybody in the club was always on your side."

Jack considered low-key emotional support (Whitford & Moss, 2009) to be a natural part of the cadence of office life in his department in the Northwest Canadian government. First, it was important to understand how individuals worked. "Everybody worked in a different way. So you would have to [learn] how would they work best and try to adapt what I was doing to get that from them to do so." And then it would be important to have "a social out, declaring that compulsory donut out on the last Friday of every week…We'd get together and see what people were going to do for the weekend … Make sure you have that contact as well." Jack mixed the mutual support in the office with the informal support outside of the office (Mirivel & Tracy, 2005).

Sara ascribed many positive attributes to her team members in the Romanian bank, emotional support being one of them. "I think that we felt it's something you don't often feel in the workplace. We were very supportive of each other. There was no competition whatsoever among us." After she left the bank she would receive phone calls from her colleagues who told her "I am just used to looking above … the little tiny cubicle wall that was separating us, and … just seeing you there was making me feel better. Now that you are not there anymore it is not the same."

Presentness. Participants identified with the concept of presentness, as a sense of full personal engagement with the other (Kahn, 1990), sometimes one-way and sometimes reciprocated. Carol portrayed presentness in a number of her stories about her experience in

Indonesia. She explained that "when I went out into the field with people, I very seldom took my computer because I thought, 'You know I'm going to be here for people.'" She also commented that part of being in the moment was to "play lots of fun games because that's the whole point, they had to do a lot of games. We danced a lot. They were big dancers." Dancing provided an opportunity for full physical presence and connection (Goodier & Eisenberg, 2006).

One of the lessons that Harry learned from his mentor was to stay present, in his terms, to stay focused. "I don't think you can do eight hours in this day and age and just focus on work and not worry about family. You might have to step aside a little bit, do the family stuff, but come back …" He attributed his mentor with teaching him that what was important was to focus his attention on the task or the event that was occurring. "If you are doing work for that 30 minutes, you have to be highly focused and highly driven. If you are at a basketball game of your kids, that 30 minutes be focused on that, and don't check your Blackberry." The advice of Harry's mentor about staying focused is supported by the research that greater task focus is manifested through being fully present (Kahn, 1992).

John's sense of presentness with his environment and positive experience in China was so strong that he found that

> events still occur there that take me back there, not physically but emotionally, mentally I'm there … I was there long enough to have had … a meaningful deep kind of experience. So you know this place is so unique and so beautiful, I mean it really is. It's absolutely fantastic place, I mean geographically it's just incredible mountain ranges, absolutely huge deserts, you know, the Himalayas, just absolutely beautiful.

During the interview, when he was describing the physical locale, he smiled and became quieter and more peaceful, and he commented that even the surroundings have "stayed with me, you know, this incredibly large space. I guess it's helped me realize that there are certain

things that I really appreciate. I appreciate the mountains. I appreciate the desert, the high desert. That makes me happy." John's high quality relationships during his project in China included a relationship with the natural surroundings (Buber, 1958).

Martin valued the focus and concentration from his colleague during their dialogic encounters (Buber, 1958; Rogers, 1980). "And I always experience this as a great gift. Having the full attention of … this person dedicating his entire brainpower to the topic of the discussion." "So you will never be distracted or half-minded or something like that. He won't please you in the discussion in saying yes you are right if he wouldn't agree…" Regardless, Martin always believed that after their conversations he "really had gained something from the dialogue." Because his colleague gave his full attention, it prompted Martin to do the same and contributed to their high-quality relationship (Buber, 1958; Cooper, 1997; Rogers, 1980).

Adventure

An emergent theme that was salient in participants' stories was adventure—quests, undertakings, and explorations. Adventure meant that interactions and experiences involved uncertainty, risks, unknowns. Participants said these interactions ranged from being thrilling to being a novelty or something different. Adventure, in this regard, is similar to Carlsen's (2008) concept of positive dramas—"enacted self-adventures marked by a sense of something important being at stake, unpredictability, emotional engagement, and involvement of self" (p. 55).

Participants vary in how they identified what was thrilling to them, but it was the thrill that energized them. Barry found that "there was a 'thrill of the chase' aspect" to some of the projects, based on potential financial gain." For Bernie it was the thrill of seeing component

parts come together in a factory with those who helped make it happen, and "when you finally start the manufacturing process, you make a product." The thrill for Carol was being free, doing extremely intense and risky work and going to places no one had been to before. Hugh thrived on the thrill of the unknown, "so they threw me into this thing and but for that set of circumstances … it [wouldn't] have been as positive … and I wouldn't have probably had the drive to see how far I could go with it." Participant stories reflected a sense of accomplishment at exercising agency (venturing into the unknown) and constructing identity (making a difficult sale or building a factory) (Carlsen, 2008).

Eric viewed thrill and interest factor from a slightly different perspective, optimizing agency to instill energy into his activities (Quinn, 2007).

> I feel like the causal error might be running in the other direction. I feel like I do things and then by their very nature of me doing them I automatically—I try to make them interesting for me … I feel like ultimately I can self-actualize being interested in almost anything and that kind of helps me get through the very, very boring. In retrospect it may have been completely boring.

Travelling or encountering something new was also considered adventurous by participants. Barry commented "There were aspects of the job that were really exciting to me, since I was new to the United States, there was a lot of travel, particularly regional travel." Bernie guessed that "the idea of working in a foreign country added to the mystery and excitement." He was attracted to new projects and perceived that he "had a very interesting career in that [he] never really did the same thing twice." Part of the attraction of Jack's job in the Northwestern Territories of Canada was because it was "a unique environment, which made it an interesting experience. The range of people certainly different from Southern Canada the provinces, because of that. An interesting geographical location as well." John's experience in China was with people who were ethnic minorities. "There were a lot of

tensions. But, that made it particularly fascinating and interesting. And it was my relationships and learning about the circumstances for these people I was working with that makes it so interesting, fascinating, positive for me." One of Martin's most positive work experiences was his posting to Prague as the CEO of the Czech company associated with his multinational corporation. "I mean I had a lot of external interaction with politics, with the Ambassadors of the different embassies there, with customers, with society, with politicians."

Peter's reason for picking the particular work experience as his most positive was associated with:

> working through a diverse multicultural team. So by having people on our team in Australia and India, in the U.K., Denmark, and the U.S., it was the first time that I really got to work with people around the globe, on one deal, and then on the customer side you had the same thing, because they had people also, in the U.K., in the U.S., and scattered around the world, and I think that brought a lot of positive experience, because you got to really learn how they do things in different places, how they communicated, and even though at first it was an adjustment, I think that was the biggest factor.

Ultimately, constructing work as adventure "may enable peak performances, give momentum to organizational change efforts, and increase the attractiveness of work" (Carlsen, 2008, p. 55). Participants who embraced adventure as part of their best work experiences were doing so with colleagues, customers and employees. They either were leading others into uncharted territory or they were a member of a group doing something new, at least for them. The camaraderie and closeness that developed from being on an adventure together enhanced and deepened their positive connections and high-quality relationships (Buber, 1958; Rogers, 1980).

In their stories of their best work experiences, participants instinctively conveyed anecdotes that included quality connections and positive relationships. As they talked about

their lived experiences, they naturally used terms associated with organizational climate such as environment, atmosphere, and climate.

These findings of working adults' accounts of their best-work experiences identify the dimensions of inclusion, instrumental, sensemaking, positive spiral, transparency, generative emotional resources, and adventure. In the discussion that follows, I explain the implications of these findings to current theory and models of quality connections and positive relationships at work.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The findings in this study have a number of implications for understanding the constitutive elements (i.e., dimensions and their forms) of quality connections and positive relationships at work. First, data provide a convincing rationale for a meta-model of quality connections and positive relationships. Second, participants' stories offer empirical evidence for a synthesis of models as well as a link from the models to organizational climate. Finally, data and their analysis suggest a more comprehensive cluster of mutually associative dimensions that provide the basis for a new model of high-quality connections and positive relationships.

Rationale for Meta-Model of Quality Connections and Positive Relationships

A meta-model of quality connections and positive relationships addresses three distinctive gaps in the research. First, the models in positive organizational scholarship (POS) that focus on positive relationships lack synthesis. They come from a variety of scholarly disciplines, focus on distinct approaches to POS and represent multiple paradigms. As well, there is a lack of empirical "testing of these models. Finally, these models have under-played or ignored the importance of organizational climate and context in which relationships develop.

Although (POS) provides a number of models/theories of positive relationships, current scholarship offers very little cross-dialogue among models. The models include elements that are similar and disparate, overlap, and appear tangential. There has been little dialogue across models, despite all theoretical models aiming to explain the same phenomenon—high quality connections and relationships at work. Findings in the current study, weaved together with past theoretical models, suggest a synthesis in terms of

commonalities and incongruences, which serves as an overarching model/theory incorporating the various communicative dimensions and attributes of quality human connections in organizations. Indeed, the empirical evidence and past theory serves as building blocks for a meta-model of quality connections and positive relationships in the workplace.

Past research proposes theoretical explanations and illustrations for high-quality relationships at work with little empirical application. The findings in the current study empirically test, by using an interpretive approach, past theoretical propositions and by doing so offer a picture of how the models appear in everyday work life.

In past theories of positive connections in organizations, models have usually overlooked the contextual dimensions of organizational climate that can drive and affect human relationships. The findings provide strong evidence for how various communicative dimensions are inseparable from organizational climate.

Empirical Evidence of Synthesis of Models and Link to Organizational Climate

Findings point to a number of dimensions key to organizational climate, which provide empirical evidence for a meta-model of quality connections and positive relationships in the workplace. Weaving findings into past models provides support for a useful framework for exploring the dimensions and forms involved in a climate of positive relationships and quality connections at work. Past models, as they relate to the dimensions for a new model of quality connections and positive relationships, are included in Table 3, wherein the dimensions of *inclusion, instrumental, sensemaking, transparency and generative emotional resources* are complemented by the additional dimensions of *positive spiral* and *adventure.* The dimensions are arranged in order of salience in peoples' stories.

Table 3. Dimensions for a New Model of Quality Connections and Positive Relationships

DIMENSION

MODEL	Inclusion	Instrumental	Sensemaking	Positive Spiral	Transparency	Generative Emotional Resources	Adventure
I-Thou Dialogue	Mutuality, Equality		Connection "in-between"		Authentic	Attentiveness, Presentness, Confirmation	Sharing intensity and thrill
Person-Centered	Mutuality, Equality		Connection "in-between" = wholeness		Congruence	Caring, Empathetic understanding, Unconditional positive regard	Sharing intensity and thrill
HQC	Reciprocity, Belonging	Task enabling, Positive cycle of energy & resources		Additional action to create connections	Trust, Honesty	Empathetic support, Effective listening, Sharing	
Meaningful Connections	Alignment of beliefs with behavior	Accomplished through resource generation	Purpose-driven cognition		Realness	Emotional elements, Personal support	
Energy & Connections	Reciprocity, Belonging	Accomplished through resource generation (energy)	Energy feedback loop	Spread energy through Lift		Self-esteem, Self-worth	

Grey block indicates dimension not present in model.

Table 3. Dimensions for a New Model of Quality Connections and Positive Relationships (continued)

DIMENSION

MODEL	Inclusion	Instrumental	Sensemaking	Positive Spiral	Transparency	Generative Emotional Resources	Adventure
Group Connections	As impacts affiliation to organization		Group as mediator	Connection with organization		Feeling heard	
Spiritual	Inclusive in name of God/Universal Being	Service orientation	God/Universal Being	Connection with God/Universal Being	Honesty	Loving	Transcendence In name of God/Universal Being
Social Communication			Messages				
Peer Relationship	Belonging, (level based on continuum)	Information exchange, professional planning, mentoring (by stage)	Stages of greater affiliation	Mentoring (special peer)	Trust, Revealing, Personal feedback (collegial/special peer)	Self-confidence, Emotional validation (by stage)	

Grey block indicates dimension not present in model.

Inclusion exemplars demonstrate that perceptions of participation (Alex, Nancy), equality and respect (Bruce), casual sharing of stories and conversations (Sara and Mary), and linking through humor and camaraderie (Heidi, Sara, Mary), are associated with high-quality connections and positive relationships, in addition to positive climate (Baker & Dutton, 2007; Buber, 1958; Douglas, 2006; Keyton & Beck, 2008; Lewis et al., 2010; Mirivel & Tracy, 2005; Rogers, 1980). The models of I-Thou dialogue and the person-centered approach which focus on mutuality and equality as representative of inclusion and the HQC model which recognizes inclusion as reciprocity and belonging (Buber, 1958; Dutton, 2003; Roger, 1980) are incorporated into this new dimension of inclusion. Although it is not a straight or simple correlation, OCM dimensions of integration and involvement (Patterson et al., 2005) are also addressed in this model's inclusion dimension.

The opportunity for management and supervisors to create and maintain positive climate, similar to the OCM dimension of supervisory support (Patterson et al., 2005), through high quality connections and positive relationships, was also confirmed (Abu Bakar et al., 2010; Dutton, 2003; Quinn, 2007). For Bruce, respect and professionalism were terms that, to him, were symbolic of being considered equal, even though Bruce was lower in the hierarchy of the organization. Feeling equal made him feel valued and worthy of being included as a colleague, as having positive relationships with his managers (Lewis et al., 2010). Bruce's sense of belonging and reciprocity are discussed in both the HQC model and the energy & connections model (Dutton, 2003; Quinn, 2007).

Participants in positive relationships with colleagues where they noted differences in culture and background between themselves and their colleagues pointed out that they valued the relationship and the mutuality above the differences. This was not an act of dismissing

the differences. Instead it led to organizational members respecting those differences and feeling a deeper understanding and closer link with each other and the group, as referenced in the model of I-Thou dialogue and the person-centered approach (Buber, 1958; Rogers, 1980). That notwithstanding, in one participant's story, high-quality relationships that were constructed through engagement of 2-or 3 person teams, with similar culture and background, created a better climate in the smaller teams and a better working relationship and climate with the larger group, noted in the group connections model (Silva & Sias, 2010).

In situations where high-quality connections and positive relationships were climatic, humor and camaraderie shared with coworkers was not exclusive to the in-group. This contrasts with past research about humor, whereby the "in- and out group boundaries are (re)produced by excluding individuals (or groups)" (Lynch, 2009, p. 456) that do not have common terminology, language, allusions and connotations. Through high-quality connections and positive relationships at work, then, the feeling of being linked, being included, and part of the group was shared and mutual, as indicated in the model of I-Thou dialogue and the person-centered approach (Buber, 1958; Rogers, 1980). In other words, this positive feeling or positive climate has the potential to spread beyond the in-group, which recalls the HQC, meaningful connections and energy and connections models (Dutton, 2003; Kahn, 2007; Quinn, 2007).

An energetic cycle of positive relationship through bonding, collaborative discourse, and enhanced work achievement in terms of creativity and productivity was noted by several participants, as punctuated in the energy and connections model, as well as the HQC and meaningful connections models (Dutton, 2003; Guowei & Jeffres, 2006; Kahn, 2007; Quinn,

2007). Through the lens of the person-centered approach, these interactions appeared to have a rhythm of intensity of effort, labor and performance and then moderation through spontaneity and informality (Rogers, 1980). The various models of high-quality connection and positive relationship address aspects of the interactions but it is not until they are synthesized into the dimension of inclusion that it becomes fully apparent that there is a more complex and nuanced communicative dynamic occurring.

For example, the point of Martin's conversations with his colleague was to be productive, and he derived satisfaction from greater productivity. But it was the enhanced meaningfulness he and his dialogue partner achieved in their relationship (Black, 2005) that served to link them closer together and to increase their desire for more conversations. Further, the features of their conversations is somewhat captured, although not very elegantly, in the OCM dimensions of effort, quality, efficiency, involvement and integration.

Several participants referred to the feelings they had for organizational members in terms of family members such as mother, brother or extended family. In most of these participant stories, when referring to close-knit relationships, "family" intimated a positive connotation. Even so, feeling close-knit, as if a family, could be perceived as both positive and negative, as indicated in the spiritual model (Sass, 2000). A positive workplace relationship that was described as being like a mother-daughter relationship, for example, caused Sara to feel a sense of freedom, professionally, and less concern about receiving credit for contributions for her participation on the team, exemplified in the model of I-Thou dialogue (Buber, 1958). On the other hand, being an extended family was also perceived as not always comfortable or easy and came with responsibilities not generally associated with work (Kolodinsky et al., 2008).

High-quality connections and positive relationships were cherished and the stories associated with them were retold many years later. In the retelling of these stories, participants re-experienced the events and revived positive feelings (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2011). Bonds that were created through these relationships were long-standing and sometimes extended past workplace friendships to long-term friendships, the focus of the peer relationship model (Kram & Isabella, 1985; Sias & Cahill, 1998) and referred to in the social communication model (Sigman, 1995); possibly to new workplaces, in order to try to recreate the climate that made their best work experiences so positive. The OCM dimension of reflexivity (Patterson et al., 2005) is somewhat related to this concept.

Instrumental. Participants' stories of their best work experiences demonstrated that loose high-quality connections (connections that are not well-developed, recently formed or fleeting) could be influential professionally and could have similar ramifications as positive relationships. In other words, when indirect managers recognized participants (Alex, Ron, Nancy) in some way, participants reacted as they might have had they had long-standing relationships with these indirect managers. They still felt empowered and trusted (Thomas et al., 2009). This also mitigates, in some cases, the linear progression of relationships in the peer relationship model (Kram & Isabella, 1985; Sias & Cahill, 1998; Sias et al., 2002) and supports the cyclical and dialectical nature of connections as a support and reinforcement of positive climate in the HQC model (Dutton, 2003).

Being given autonomy was perceived by participants (Barry, Hugh, Alex, Carol, Bruce, Donna, John) as an indicator of trust. As Dutton (2003) reminds us in the HQC model, and is also referred to in the meaningful connections (Kahn, 2007) and energy and connections (Quinn, 2007) model, trust is a resource that may shift, depending upon the

circumstances and people. However, when participants felt that they had autonomy, as also indicated in the OCM dimension of autonomy (Patterson et al., 2005), it contributed to their high-quality connections and positive relationships (Krone, 1994). Positive interactions could be so powerful; they could mitigate other somewhat disappointing, less supportive interactions.

Participants, including Peter, Sara, Donna and Carol, felt empowered when there was a sense of purpose to their work (Thomas et al., 2009) which enhanced their relationships and, when relevant, the relationship to a larger group (the focus of the group connections model) (Abu Bakar et al., 2010; Silva & Sias, 2010). Some participants also felt a sense of purpose assisted them in achieving their objectives, and was motivating and empowering. Where increased productivity was a result of the positive climate in the workplace as transmitted through positive relationships, the cycle of positive climate to positive relationship to personal productivity was constructed from the site of positive climate. Feeling empowered by relationship and purpose was reciprocal and reinforced, perhaps, because of the "duel nature" of purpose (instrumental) and community (inclusion), central to the HQC and energy and connections models and present in the meaningful connections and spiritual models (Dutton, 2003, Kahn, 2007; Quinn, 2007; Young & Chen, 2013). Even more so, to articulate to organizational members that purpose was met through their work and that purpose was meaningful and impacted their relationship was important and also empowering (Cheney et al., 2008). As Carol and Peter recognized and appreciated, articulating or documenting the specific experience of the cycle of achieving purpose and positive relationship, "about how a successful thing gets done" is an investment in future purpose and positive relationship.

Removing obstacles and sharing information were overtly built upon trust, according to participants and referred to directly or indirectly in all of the models except for the social communication approach, which locates meaning in the performance between people, not in the individual performance by each person in the relationship. Alex and Bernie perceived their role, management's role, as one of responsibility for clearing the obstacles for organizational members in order to enable them to complete their tasks (Miller et al., 1999). Donna also concurred that removing obstacles was an important point of discussion with colleagues and supervisors, but she placed the responsibility with the employee, then she emphasized that the relationship between supervisors and employees was built on trust (Thomas et al., 2009), in this case trust that the employee would discuss with or inform their supervisor of a problem. Finally, the supervisor would then help them to remove the obstacle (Miller et al., 1999).

Information sharing had similar characteristics in terms of relationships and was featured in the OCM dimension of integration (Patterson et al., 2005). Implicit in a relationship in which there was information sharing was a relationship in which there was trust between people. Participants discussed this sense of trust and also what this means to the relationship if the information is shared, a concept central to the peer relationship model. Specifically, there was an expectation that having more information would cause or require action on the part of the information receiver. In positive relationships this responsibility to act was embraced and elicited a sense of empowerment for the participant, as described by Donna, Barry, Peter, Bernie and Carol.

Exploring the sense of responsibility that occurs along with the sense of empowerment is important, as having high-quality connections and positive relationships as

well as a positive workplace climate is not to say that workplace tasks are easy or without challenges. If having more information, removing obstacles or being given more autonomy, all associated with trust, is considered a burden instead of empowering and task enabling, it may be an indication that the climate is not positive. In these situations, it is also possible, as some scholars maintain, that trust operates as a "control mechanism" to compel organizational members to perform and to work collaboratively (Gibbs et al., 2008, p. 193).

Sensemaking. In coding for this dimension, which is most closely related to the reflexivity dimension of the OCM (Patterson et al., 2005), the reciprocity of high-quality connections and positive relationships and positive organizational climate was also reinforced. Participant stories about their attitudes influencing workplace climate and workplace climate influencing their attitudes demonstrated that initiation of positive sensibilities can occur from either of these locations. For example, working in an extremely positive environment energized participants such as Sara, Bruce and Donna, which they associated with becoming "much more hardworking" or productive, which, in turn increased their positive attitude. They reinforced the contention of the energy and connections model that organizational members who energize their coworkers may accomplish more work (Quinn, 2007). For Mary, her experience in a positive work climate made such an impression, it fostered her belief that she could improve a negative workplace climate with her positive attitude and by striving for high-quality connections with coworkers.

Participants recognized that positive organizational climate made a difference in their attitude, specifically about their identity, community, as described in the social communication model (Sigman, 1995) and themselves, as suggested in the person-centered approach (Rogers, 1980). Donna's comment that, "I had kind of seen the dark side and this

was just really a breath of fresh air … and I thought, okay, this is how Corporate America should be," typified the sensibility that participants knew it when they saw it. In other words, congruence between participants' personal attitude and what they considered to be a positive work climate, however they individually defined that, was significant to them and included high-quality connections and positive relationships (Kahn, 2007). Past positive workplace experiences and/or past negative workplace experiences were sensemaking tools for participants for construction of a model of what they considered to be a positive workplace climate.

Congruence was meaningful in terms of whether a change in context was acceptable to participants. If, in their process of making sense of a different context they were not able to find congruence between their personal attitude, or their identity, and other factors, they were less likely to reframe the context positively. For example, John's difficulty in utilizing non-participatory processes that conflicted with his identity caused him to form the opinion that these projects were worse experiences than those where his identity and his participatory approach were consistent (Rogers, 1980; Silva & Sias, 2010). He was not able to achieve the wholeness of the connection portrayed in the person-centered approach (Rogers, 1980). When John worked in China, where he was able to use participatory processes, congruent with his attitude and approach, a context where there were many other limitations, he was able to reframe his sensemaking within the contextual limits and considered that situation a very positive workplace climate where he made extremely positive long-standing relationships.

Likewise, Marilyn found congruence between her personal attitude and other factors in her professional position, enough to modify her attitude about the role of women and men

in professional situations and professional life based on the context of living and working in Saudi Arabia. In addition to accepting the limitations of the situation, Marilyn constructed a narrative of affirmation consistent with her professional responsibilities and lack of recognition, one which focused on high-quality connections and positive relationships within the workplace (Hermon, 1996; Weick, 1995). As such, it is significant that attitude and the OCM dimension effort (Patterson et al., 2005) are most closely aligned.

Attitude stemming from a place of positivity was also relevant in the case of Donna. Her positive sensibility about branding tactics used by her company, wherein she related them to construction of positive relationship with colleagues, positive organizational climate and positive organizational identity was associated with pride, ownership and "family atmosphere", or the OCM dimension of welfare (Patterson et al., 2005). Company branding of the organization encouraged, and at the same time mediated, the construction of meaning (Black, 2005). Similar efforts to instill meaning have been known to backfire (Cheney et al., 2008), but for Donna and her colleagues the impact was positive (Davis, 2005). A similar argument could be made for the OCM dimension of tradition (Patterson et al., 2005).

Having a sense of purpose to their work was part of participants' sensemaking and contributed to positive workplace climate, as indicated in the meaningful connections model (Kahn, 2007). The OCM dimension of quality (Patterson et al., 2005) might be germane, as the desired purpose, and the OCM dimension of clarity of organizational goals (Patterson et al., 2005) as one example of purpose. In the case of Marilyn, Donna and Carol, one of their work objectives was positive relationships. For them, fulfillment of this purpose and creation and maintenance of a positive workplace environment coincided.

Positive spiral. The dimension of positive spiral was added before coding, as it became apparent after conducting the interviews that this dimension was a very important aspect to high-quality connections and positive relationships in the workplace. Positive spirals were interactions that generated positive emotions which lead to other positive interactions which create a spiral of positivity.

Chains of affirmation, interconnected positive comments or expressions of positive feelings, were conveyed by participants in a number of cases. In general, high-quality connections and positive relationships, the constitution of which included some or all forms of the dimensions of transparency and generative emotional resources; specifically trust, dependability, independence, authenticity, confirmation, effective listening, or presentness, were associated with reframing of a negative discourse to one that was positive. In OCM dimensions, then, a chain of affirmation would also be associated with the communicative dimensions in the human relations quadrant; autonomy, involvement, supervisory, welfare, and training (Patterson, et al., 2005). However, the OCM dimensions do not explore *how* positive organizational climate is achieved, as the dimension of positive spiral and this study does.

Hugh was considered the "go to" guy by his employees in the factory for helping to broaden their perspective, affirm them and optimize solutions. Steven's positive connections and relationships with his employees in Laos caused him to reexamine the negative discourse that he had about all charities and search more deeply for those that he could feel positive about (Garland et al., 2009). For Alex, his customer's verbal communication of less negative discourse, in the comment "I see a difference, I think we are getting better," triggered a positive response in Alex and signified to him that this problem could be solved.

Then Alex conveyed these positive emotions to his team in his interactions with them (Huston et al., 2011).

Other constructs for positive spiral included mentoring, role modeling, and could be vertical and horizontal. Mentoring and role modeling were specific types of positive spirals, as depicted by participants. There was a confidence amongst participants that mentoring and the individual positive relationships associated with mentoring were enduring and part of their professional, as well as their personal, legacy. Even the interviews for this dissertation were perceived as an opportunity to relive and enjoy the positive experiences and the chain of affirmation (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2011).

The fluidity of interaction in a positive spiral was not confined to professional relationships. Participants commented on their pleasure and positive consequences of parlaying positive professional relationships into personal action and vice versa. Positive energy flowed in a variety of directions, and is indicated, to greater and lesser degrees, in the HQC, energy and connections, group connections, spiritual, and peer relationship models (Dutton, 2003; Kram & Isabella, 1985; Quinn, 2007; Sias & Cahill, 1998; Silva & Sias, 2010; Young & Chen, 2013). The dimension of positive spiral was also represented, if less prominently featured, in the group connection and spiritual dimensions.

Transparency. Trust, one form of transparency, was sometimes expressed as selective, or specific to a situation, such as completing a task or sharing particular information. Also, a number of participants, including Bernie and John, articulated their experiences with the progression of trust over time. This type of trust progressively recognized the interdependence of their positions and tasks, and that they had a mutual purpose (Kram & Isabella, 1985; Miller et al., 1999; Rogers & Singhal, 2003; Sias & Cahill,

1998). This type of progression of relationship is the main focus of the peer relationship model (Kram & Isabella, 1985; Sias & Cahill, 1998). For John, this type of trust was so long in forming, relationships became stronger and trust deeper between him and his colleagues post-employment. For Alex and Marilyn, trust was also associated with increased loyalty from participants to their management and their organizations (Thomas et al., 2009). Sara felt that one of the reasons that she and her teammates had such a high level of trust was that they shared exactly their same workplace situation so they were best at understanding the position of each other and, as such, being able to provide emotional and instrumental support (Sias, 2005; Snyder, 2009).

Participants including Marilyn, John, Carol, Barry, Alex, and Bruce were passionate about the sense of independence, or autonomy in the OCM dimensions (Patterson et al., 2005) they had in their best work experiences. They associated independence with trust, reliability, freedom and a positive relationship with supervisors and high-quality connections with management, as well as positive workplace climate, as noted in the HQC model (Dutton, 2003; Krone, 1994). Although only voiced by one participant, Jack, it was understood implicitly that even though these were their best work experiences, there were limitations, expectations, and responsibilities related to every job.

Having the ability to be authentic and open in the workplace was considered freeing and was perceived as a gift by a number of participants. Depending upon the subject about which the individual was being authentic, this could be considered innovation and flexibility, involvement, supervisory support or integration in the OCM dimensions (Patterson et al., 2005). Martin was in a positive relationship with a colleague where authenticity was a prerequisite for the type of discussions that they enjoyed, as presented in the model of I-Thou

dialogue. Martin's pleasure at being authentic in conversations with him and others, with whom he had high-quality connections and their positive results, may have prompted him to use a similar strategy with his management. However, if management did not welcome Martin's honesty and forthrightness, nor were interested in high-quality connections, this approach may not have brought a positive outcome (Dutton, 2003). As many participants understood, authenticity also came with certain limitations. As long as participants made sense of them, in that they were congruent with their internal expectations, they were considered to be part of a positive climate and invigorated high-quality connections and positive relationships, consistent with the person-centered approach (Rogers, 1980).

Generative emotional resources. Participants felt confirmed in their high-quality connections and positive relationships. Examples of the dynamic and reciprocal nature of generative emotional resources, underscored in the HQC, I-Thou dialogue, person-centered, and energy and connections models (Buber, 1958; Dutton, 2003; Quinn, 2007; Rogers, 1980), that they relayed included confirmation from management to employees, from supervisors to employees, from employees to supervisors, between colleagues, from organizational members to customers and from clients to organizational members. Carol's story, for one, whereby there was a mutual feeling of confirmation between villagers and team members and one of the team members and Carol illustrates the vitality of confirmation.

Feeling confirmed was sometimes associated with further positive action, as in the case of Peter. The meaningful connections model and the OCM dimensions of quality, effort and outward focus (Patterson et al., 2005) partially capture this form of generative emotional resources. Beyond the confirming sense that he had during the project that was the subject of

his best work experience (Johannesen, 1971), Peter continued to reap the benefits of being more assertive in proposing ideas in other projects, “it’s paying off a lot more than if I’m just sitting back and not taking a chance.”

Although effective listening is considered a seminal characteristic as an emotional resource in the HQC, I-Thou dialogue, person-centered and spiritual models (Dutton, 2003) and alluded to in the OCM dimensions of involvement and supervisory support, it was articulated explicitly by only two participants, Bruce and Heidi. Possibly it was assumed that effective listening is necessary for positive organizational climate and if participants had been probed about this attribute they would have expressed its importance, as additional literature also indicates (Cooper, 1997; Dutton, 2003; Madlock & Kennedy-Lightsey, 2010; Rogers, 1980).

Empathy and emotional support, included in the OCM dimensions of supervisory support and welfare (Patterson et al., 2005) and primary to the HQC, I-Thou dialogue, person-centered, meaningful connections, energy and connections, spiritual, and peer relationship models (Buber, 1958; Dutton, 2003; Kahn, 2007; Kram & Isabella, 1985; Quinn, 2007; Rogers, 1980; Sass, 2000; Sias & Cahill, 1998; Young & Chen, 2013), were expressed as part of other dimensions by participants and coded as part of those dimensions. Similar to effective listening, although empathy and emotional support were articulated by many participants, it was foundational to the implementation of other dimensions. For instance, Harry commented about his mentors’ empathy and how that made him more empathetic, continuing the positive spiral, or the emotions that Sara symbolically expressed with the word “family”, signifying inclusion.

Presentness, as depicted in the I-Thou dialogue, HQC and spiritual models (Buber, 1958; Dutton, 2003; Young & Chen, 2013), was discussed in a variety of ways by participants as part of best experiences in the workplace. Staying focused on the task at hand, whether a conversation with a customer or a conversation with your son's coach was one example given by Harry. Martin being completely immersed in a dialogue with a colleague was another. Full physical presence and connection (Goodier & Eisenberg, 2006) was manifested for Carol in dancing, games, and conversations. John's high quality relationships during his project in China even included a relationship with the natural surroundings (Buber, 1958).

Adventure. Emerging in the analysis of data, this dimension was added as it became apparent that best experiences at work included, for some participants, adventure. Participants ranged in how they identified adventure, or what was thrilling to them, but it was the thrill that energized them and positively influenced their workplace climate. Whether it was the "thrill of the chase", for Barry, to make the sale, or the thrill of a new product finally becoming functional, for Bernie, or the thrill of doing extremely risky work, for Carol, or the thrill of the unknown, for Hugh, participant stories reflected a sense of accomplishment at exercising agency and constructing identity (Carlsen, 2008). Although it fails to fully encapsulate the adventure dimension as portrayed in this study, perhaps a combination of autonomy, innovation and flexibility, formalization, and tradition would be the closest array of OCM dimensions (Patterson et al., 2005).

Constructing work as adventure "may enable peak performances, give momentum to organizational change efforts, and increase the attractiveness of work" (Carlsen, 2008, p. 55). Participants who embraced adventure as part of their best work experiences were doing so

with colleagues, customers and employees. They may have been leading others into uncharted territory or translating positive feelings for the unknown into something palatable for those for whom the unknown was not something positive. The camaraderie and closeness that developed from being on an adventure together enhanced and deepened their high-quality connections and positive relationships (Buber, 1958; Rogers, 1980).

Dimensions for a New Model of High-Quality Connection and Positive Relationship

I initially reviewed nine models of connection and relationship in order to synthesize and construct my proposed model. The models were distinctive from each other and provided a variety of themes relevant in constructing a meta-model for quality connection and positive relationship. The models included: I-Thou dialogue (Buber, 1958); person-centered approach (Rogers, 1980); high quality connections (Dutton, 2003); meaningful connections (Kahn, 2007); energy and connections (Quinn, 2007); identification with organization through group connection (Silva & Sias, 2010); connectedness in organizational spirituality (Sass, 2000; Young & Chen, 2013); social communication approach (Sigman, 1995); and peer relationships and friendships (Kram & Isabella, 1985; Sias & Cahill, 1998). The dimensions that resulted from the analysis of these models and became my proposed model of high-quality connections and positive relationships in the workplace were *inclusion, instrumental, sensemaking, transparency and generative emotional resources.*

There were two classifications that I was interested in exploring, based on these nine models. I questioned if there would be differences in participants' perceptions based on whether their interaction was one of quick connection or long-standing relationship. Also, I was interested in exploring whether the number of people with whom the participant was interacting was influential to the participants' positive perceptions in their best work

experiences. Based on the data, neither of these classifications was relevant. Positive perceptions resulted from both loose connections and long-standing relationships and high-quality connections and positive relationships between dyads, teams and even larger group interaction.

The dimensions of positive relationships of inclusion, instrumental, sensemaking, transparency and generative emotional resources were present in the stories of the twenty one participants. I found evidence of all these dimensions in participant interviews. Additionally, I recognized two other dimensions, the positive spiral and adventure. Positive spiral included the chain of affirmation and mentoring. Adventure was in the form of work that was thrilling, included travel or some type of novelty.

As a result of this study, I propose a new communicative model of positive relationships and quality connections at work. The dimensions that I propose resulted from the analysis of the literature and the evidence in working adults' accounts of their best-work experiences. The dimensions of this new model are: *inclusion, instrumental, sensemaking, positive spiral, transparency, generative emotional resources, and adventure*. Figure 2 depicts this model and its dimensions.

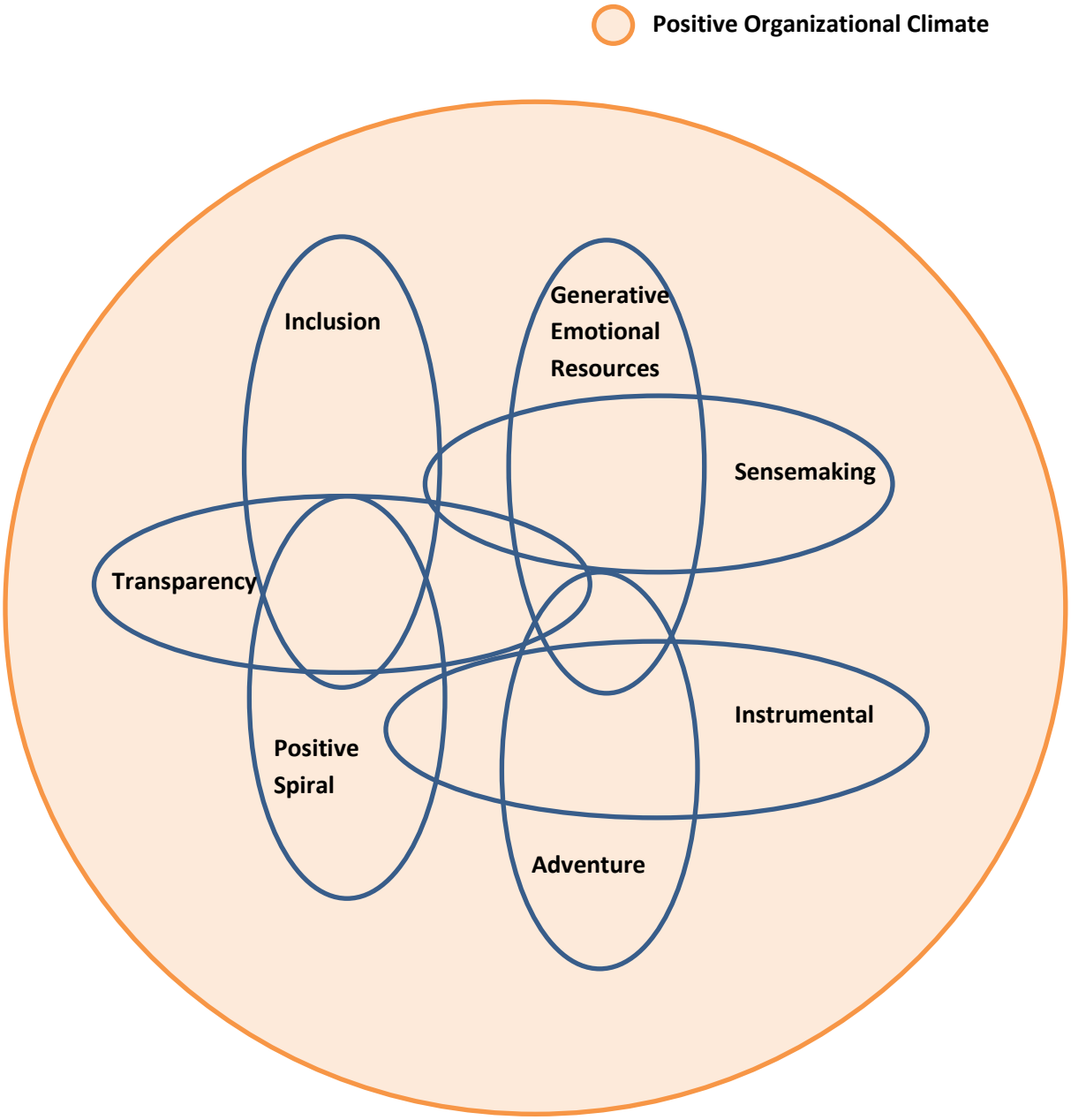

Figure 2. Dimensions for a New Model of Quality Connections and Positive Relationships

Organizational Climate

In the review of the literature relevant to this study about organizational climate, I demonstrated that the communicative elements of relationships and connections are associated with not only the communication climate dimensions as constructed in Dennis's measure (Dillard et al., 1986), but also the broader perspective of organizational climate in Patterson et al.'s OCM measure (2005). Specifically, communicative features of connections and relationships are part of the lived and perceived experience in every day work life that influences all of the climate dimension measures of the OCM: autonomy, involvement, supervisory support, integration, welfare, training, effort, formalization, tradition, reflexivity, innovation and flexibility, outward focus, clarity of organizational goals, pressure to produce, quality, performance feedback, and efficiency.

Interactions beyond the micro-level affect members' perceptions of climate. However, participants' positive connections and high-quality relationships, described in their own best work experiences, were between themselves and another person or themselves and a small group of people. As such, the definition of climate used in this study was at the individual level: organizational climate is the dynamically constructed "sense" of *how it feels* to be an organizational member, a feeling constituted through member talk and ongoing interactions, which shapes their expectations, feelings and attitudes. In other words, I conceptualized organizational climate as member' subjective, affective responses that they linked to being in and a member of the organization. With this definition in mind, I outlined the constitutive dimensions of organizational climate from past research.

Practical Implications

The findings in the data suggest a number of practical implications for organizations trying to build a more positive climate of relationships and connections:

1. To be more inclusive, involve organizational members in making decisions and changes. Share information widely and in a timely manner. Treat organizational members as equals and with respect. Share humor and camaraderie (small-talk and socializing) beyond the in-group. Include short breaks with time for socializing and relaxation during stretches of intense work.
2. Exhibit trust in organizational members. Encourage them to make decisions about their own work areas, clear obstacles or help clear obstacles that block task completion, and share information. Demonstrate trustworthiness by doing what you say you are going to do. Articulate the purpose of organizational members' work.
3. Recognize that a positive organizational climate makes a difference in the attitude of people about their work, their relationships and their organization. When organizational members find congruence between their attitude and organizational climate as well as contextual factors, they are more likely to frame the situation positively, even if there are other contextual limitations. This is reflected in organizational members' enthusiasm for their work and desire to perform to the best of their ability.
4. Quality connections and positive relationships, which include some or all forms of trust, dependability, independence, authenticity, confirmation, effective listening, appreciation and presentness, are associated with the potential for reframing a negative discourse to one that is positive. Be friendly, approachable and display

confidence in employees. Recognize that workplace relationships, attitude and energy influence personal relationships, attitude and energy and vice-versa. The energy has the potential to flow in a variety of directions and beyond initial connections and relationships (positive spirals.)

5. Encourage autonomy for organizational members. This may instill a feeling of trust, dependability and freedom in them. Be authentic and encourage organizational members to be authentic, even if it comes with certain limitations.
6. Be confirming and show appreciation to organizational members, whether higher, lower or equal in the organizational hierarchy. Effective listening, empathy, and emotional support are foundational to quality connections and positive relationships and positive organizational climate.
7. Construct work as adventure. Frame tasks as thrilling, adventurous, or including a new aspect or change. Accept and try out new ideas. Encourage a sense of flexibility in the organization to meet new conditions and solve problems as they arise.

Limitations and Further Exploration

This dissertation highlights the positive relationships and high-quality connections in organizations. High quality connections and positive relationships may weather negative influences, but positive organizational culture may be more fragile. One person's impact, especially if that person is the CEO, may alter the climate of the organization, either positively or negatively. The impact of one person on this process is worth additional exploration.

There is a tension, sometimes, between what the participant considers positive and how their colleagues receive their actions. For instance, Martin considered being authentic to

be very positive. However, his management may not have appreciated that he expressed his disapproval of their actions toward other employees. For Alex, having autonomy was, in large part, what made his best experience positive. Initially, he said, he had autonomy to manage his teams as he saw fit. And the way he managed was to be very authoritative, according to him. Until he gave his team members similar opportunities for autonomy and participation, they may have not considered the situation of working on his team to be positive.

The dimensions in the new model for positive relationships and quality connections address the points made by the 21 participants about their relationships and connections. But each participant is different from the others and has their own orientation to relationship building and positivity and safety and security and desire for change. These differing orientations and needs are reflected in the variety of the dimensions. For some participants, confirmation is the most important aspect of their positive relationships. For others, it might be autonomy. Sometimes these needs can be met through the interaction in a quick connection. But sometimes a relationship must grow slowly to be considered positive. A future direction of this study could be to further explore the dynamic nature of the dimensions of this model and of people in positive relationships and quality connections.

Exploration of the data based on demographics could be pursued. Because people socially construct their lives via language choices, possible studies could include focusing on the language of the participants based on demographics of gender, age, professional hierarchical status, country of birth or employment, for instance, to explore what language appears more prevalent in their descriptions of dimensions. Of specific note was that 60% of the participants in this study were managers. Future research could focus on the patterns of

connection and relationship specific to managers in comparison to non-managers. More generally, a future direction of this study could be to examine the intercultural implications to a climate of positive relationships and quality connections at work.

The dimensions of positive spiral and adventure emerged through analysis of the interview data. A future direction of this study could develop and explore these dimensions as constructs.

This study uncovered a rhythm of intensity of effort, labor and performance interspersed with spontaneity and informality in positive workplace relationships. This phenomenon bears further study.

Trust, along with empathy, emotional support and effective listening, forms of this model's dimensions of transparency and generative emotional resources, were found to be important to high-quality connections and positive relationships, as were the other five dimensions. And, in addition, they were found to be foundational to the other five dimensions in certain situations. The situational aspect of forms of these dimensions, for instance, situational trust, could be a future direction for exploration.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Organizational Climate Measure Dimensions

Organizational Climate Measure©

The Organizational Climate Measure (OCM) consists of 17 scales, divided in to four quadrants: human relations, internal process, open systems, and rational goal. Items marked with an asterisk (*) are reversed before the scale is calculated. Regression weights quoted are from the confirmatory factor analysis on the second 50 per cent of the data; all are highly statistically significant.

The response scale is: 1 = 'Definitely false', 2 = 'Mostly false', 3 = 'Mostly true', 4 = 'Definitely true'.

Item	Regression weight
Autonomy	
Management let people make their own decisions much of the time	0.585
Management trust people to take work-related decisions without getting permission first	0.556
People at the top tightly control the work of those below them*	0.528
Management keep too tight a reign on the way things are done around here*	0.516
It's important to check things first with the boss before taking a decision*	0.513
Integration	
People are suspicious of other departments*	0.699
There is very little conflict between departments here	0.719
People in different departments are prepared to share information	0.719
Collaboration between departments is very effective	0.728
There is very little respect between some of the departments here*	0.766

Continues

Appendix. Continued

Item	Regression weight
Involvement	
Management involve people when decisions are made that affect them	0.633
Changes are made without talking to the people involved in them*	0.752
People don't have any say in decisions which affect their work*	0.739
People feel decisions are frequently made over their heads*	0.738
Information is widely shared	0.695
There are often breakdowns in communication here*	0.744
Supervisory Support	
Supervisors here are really good at understanding peoples' problems	0.749
Supervisors show that they have confidence in those they manage	0.712
Supervisors here are friendly and easy to approach	0.715
Supervisors can be relied upon to give good guidance to people	0.807
Supervisors show an understanding of the people who work for them	0.851
Training	
People are not properly trained when there is a new machine or bit of equipment*	0.765
People receive enough training when it comes to using new equipment	0.804
The company only gives people the minimum amount of training they need to do their job*	0.741
People are strongly encouraged to develop their skills	0.649
Welfare	
This company pays little attention to the interests of employees*	0.729
This company tries to look after its employees	0.907
This company cares about its employees	0.918
This company tries to be fair in its actions towards employees	0.823
Formalization	
It is considered extremely important here to follow the rules	0.676
People can ignore formal procedures and rules if it helps get the job done*	0.640
Everything has to be done by the book	0.591
Its not necessary to follow procedures to the letter around here*	0.650
Nobody gets too upset if people break the rules around here*	0.581
Tradition	
Senior management like to keep to established, traditional ways of doing things	0.688
The way this organization does things has never changed very much	0.469
Management are not interested in trying out new ideas	0.645
Changes in the way things are done here happen very slowly	0.714
Innovation & Flexibility	
New ideas are readily accepted here	0.715
This company is quick to respond when changes need to be made	0.702
Management here are quick to spot the need to do things differently	0.701
This organization is very flexible; it can quickly change procedures to meet new conditions and solve problems as they arise	0.702
Assistance in developing new ideas is readily available	0.682
People in this organization are always searching for new ways of looking at problems	0.716
Outward Focus	
This organization is quite inward looking; it does not concern itself with what is happening in the market place*	0.774
Ways of improving service to the customer are not given much thought*	0.677
Customer needs are not considered top priority here*	0.767
This company is slow to respond to the needs of the customer*	0.652
This organization is continually looking for new opportunities in the market place	0.588

Continues

Appendix. Continued

Item	Regression weight
Reflexivity	
In this organization, the way people work together is readily changed in order to improve performance	0.551
The methods used by this organization to get the job done are often discussed	0.747
There are regular discussions as to whether people in the organization are working effectively together	0.664
In this organization, objectives are modified in light of changing circumstances	0.482
In this organization, time is taken to review organizational objectives	0.707
Clarity of Organizational Goals	
People have a good understanding of what the organization is trying to do	0.664
The future direction of the company is clearly communicated to everyone	0.795
People aren't clear about the aims of the company*	0.659
Everyone who works here is well aware of the long-term plans and direction of this company	0.842
There is a strong sense of where the company is going	0.839
Efficiency	
Time and money could be saved if work were better organized*	0.768
Things could be done much more efficiently, if people stopped to think*	0.605
Poor scheduling and planning often result in targets not being met*	0.657
Productivity could be improved if jobs were organized and planned better*	0.829
Effort	
People here always want to perform to the best of their ability	0.660
People are enthusiastic about their work	0.692
People here get by with doing as little as possible*	0.604
People are prepared to make a special effort to do a good job	0.688
People here don't put more effort into their work than they have to*	0.637
Performance Feedback	
People usually receive feedback on the quality of work they have done	0.639
People don't have any idea how well they are doing their job*	0.629
In general, it is hard for someone to measure the quality of their performance*	0.635
People's performance is measured on a regular basis	0.629
The way people do their jobs is rarely assessed*	0.702
Pressure to Produce	
People are expected to do too much in a day	0.583
In general, peoples' workloads are not particularly demanding*	0.647
Management require people to work extremely hard	0.722
People here are under pressure to meet targets	0.585
The pace of work here is pretty relaxed*	0.672
Quality	
This company is always looking to achieve the highest standards of quality	0.791
Quality is taken very seriously here	0.811
People believe the company's success depends on high-quality work	0.649
This company does not have much of a reputation for top-quality products*	0.592

Quadrant	Scales
Human Relations	Autonomy Integration Involvement Supervisory Support Training

Continues

Appendix. Continued

Quadrant	Scales
	Welfare
Internal Process	Formalization
	Tradition
Open Systems	Innovation & Flexibility
	Outward Focus
	Reflexivity
Rational Goal	Clarity of Organizational Goals
	Efficiency
	Effort
	Performance Feedback
	Pressure to Produce
	Quality

Appendix B

Interview Guide

Positive Work Experiences

Interview Guide

1. Introduction (prior to the interview, ensure participant is 18+ years old and has worked for at least 12 months)

2. Interview Questions
    a. I'm interested in your positive work experiences and wonder if before you begin talking about them you would describe the organization or organizations in which they occurred.
        1. Size of organization, workgroup, division, department, etc.
        2. Type of structure (traditional hierarchy, flat, group-led, etc.)
        3. Organization purpose, goals
    b. Thinking back on your working career, what is the most positive experience you've had on the job? Being as detailed as possible, describe that experience to me.
        1. Position
        2. Time in position
        3. Length or work experience at the time
        4. Age when experience occurred
    c. Has this positive experience had any long-term effects on you or how you work? If so, could you describe these for me?
        1. How you manage others
        2. How you see work overall
        3. How you treat others
        4. How you approach tasks
    d. Has this experience affected your non-work life in any way? If so, could you describe these for me?
    e. Is there another particularly positive workplace experience you'd like to share? (describe organization, describe situation)
    f. And what long-term effects do you think this has had on you, your approach to work, or your non-work life?

3. Closing
    a. Is there anything else you'd like to share before we end our time together?
    b. Would you like a copy of the findings when we are finished with the analysis?

Appendix C

Demographic Data of Participants

Name	Gender	Age at Positive Exp	Industry	Structure	Country/Culture of Origin	Country of Employment	Years Since Positive Exp	Job Description
Alex	M	57	Info Technology	Matrix	UK	US	3	Manage teams and customer relationship
Barry	M	40	Info Technology	Matrix	Canada	US	13	Manage sales engineering team/technical sales
Bernie	M	40	Manufacturing	Hierarchical	US	US	38	Manage construction of manufacturing facility
Bruce	M	30	Manufacturing	Team	Turkey	Turkey	6	Manage construction of manufacturing facility
Carol	F	37	International NGO	Participatory	US	Indonesia	10	Manage reconciliation program
Donna	F	28	Financial Services	Hierarchical	US	US	5	Marketing and communication
Eric	M	18	Sports Club	Flat	Russia	US	3	Front desk, data entry
Harry	M	30	Info Technology	Matrix	India	US	6	Manage teams and customer relationship

Name	Gender	Age at Positive Exp	Industry	Structure	Country/Culture of Origin	Country of Employment	Years Since Positive Exp	Job Description
Heidi	F	22	Banking	Hierarchical	Czech Republic	US	20	Credit Union teller
Hugh	M	32	Electrical Equipment	Matrix	US	US	1	HR manager for plant
Jack	M	55	Government	Hierarchical	Canada	Canada	20	Deputy Secretary to cabinet
John	M	40	International NGO	Hierarchical	US	China	6	Program manager
Marilyn	F	29	Healthcare	Hierarchical	US	Saudi Arabia	30	Assistant to clinic administrator
Martin	M	50	Telecom	Hierarchical	Germany	Germany	1	HR partner – corporate university
Mary	F	19	Construction	Hierarchical	Puerto Rico	Puerto Rico	31	Secretary, construction site
Michael	M	40	Education	Hierarchical	US	Denmark	20	Elementary school teacher
Nancy	F	27	Info Technology	Hierarchical	US	US	22	Branch office manager
Peter	M	38	Info Technology	Matrix	Canada	US	4	Account manager
Ron	M	17	Payment Card Services	Hierarchical	Mexico	US	6	Customer service representative
Sara	F	29	Banking	Hierarchical	Romania	Romania	2	Senior lending specialist
Steven	M	42	Mining	Hierarchical	Australia	Australia	7	General manager, Asia Pacific