THE ROLE OF A POSITIVE TRIGGER EVENT IN ACTIONING AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Authenticity can best be understood in context, and context implies action (Payne, 1996). For the purpose of this study, leadership in general, and authentic leadership in particular, were explored in terms of the actions of former mayor of New York City, Rudolph Giuliani, who displayed authentic leadership in action during the tragic aftermath of the World Trade Centre attacks. Authentic leadership development tends to be triggered by a negative event (as in the case of 9/11 for Giuliani, for example). Since there is limited knowledge of how a positive event may trigger authentic leadership development, the aim of this study was to explore the potential of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) - an affirmative mode of action research - as a positive trigger event for authentic leadership development. The results indicated that this positive approach to change could indeed be implemented for this purpose.

Key words
Authentic leadership, authentic leadership development, positive trigger events, action research, appreciative inquiry

... to be authentic is literally to be your own author, to discover your native energies and find your own way of acting upon them. Not existing simply to live up to an image posited by the culture or some other authority.” (Bennis, 1993, p. 4).

Authenticity in action

On 11 September 2001, the world watched as Rudolph Giuliani, the mayor of New York City, led the city and the American nation in the aftermath of the tragic World Trade Centre attacks. 9/11 had a significant impact on the world both economically, socially, emotionally, and psychologically.

Giuliani was hailed by some in the press as an exceptional leader in the face of this tragic event. The question is: what made this man so exceptional, and how did he show up in the world, during such a chaotic, dark and negative experience? Leadership theories advocate an array of possibilities. According to the trait theories (Covey, 2005; Avery, 2004; Nelson & Quick, 2004; Sharma, 1998), Giuliani had various physical attributes and personality characteristics in his favour, such as age, adaptability, optimism and emotional control. On the other hand, during his career as a Federal prosecutor, one could argue that Giuliani devoted much of his time in developing his leadership abilities such as speech fluency, social skills and insight, as proposed by the behavioural theories of leadership (Covey, 2005; Nelson & Quick, 2004; Avery, 2004). As a leader he was strong and direct, yet still remained responsive, interactive and collaborative in his actions with his administration (Nelson & Quick, 2004; Shipka, 1997).

The contingent leadership theories advocate that situational favourableness contributed to Giuliani’s effective leadership during 9/11, namely that there was a structured task for him and his administration, he had a strong position of power as mayor, and he maintained excellent relationships with members of his team as well as the people at large (Nelson & Quick, 2004). However, the complexity of Giuliani’s leadership effectiveness cannot be limited to these leadership theories.

Giuliani understood how to convert his vision and desires for the people of New York City into a reality, and he inspired his administration and close work colleagues to perform ‘above and beyond the call of duty.’ “The stunning number of deaths after 9/11 meant I could not attend every funeral; and this was unacceptable. I decided to establish a triage to make sure that a city representative attended every funeral, and I told everyone at the meeting that I expected them not just to attend, but to make their presence felt, speaking to and comforting the victim’s survivors” (Giuliani, 2002, p. 262).

This kind of action resonates with leadership often referred to as transformational. Giuliani had an innate ability and talent to influence his environment and he inspired those around him to pursue the greater vision, and thus the people of New York warmed to his charismatic nature at the most crucial point in his career – during the fear and uncertainty of 9/11 (Nelson & Quick, 2004; Sharma, 1998; McCauley, Moxley & Van Velson, 1998).

Giuliani’s great leadership capabilities tend to be a melange of the above mentioned leadership views. However, a common thread underlying all of these theories is that no matter what the situation, Giuliani acted consistently with his beliefs and core values – i.e. he was authentic.

In his autobiography, Leadership, Giuliani describes how the events of September 11 affected him more deeply than anything he had ever experienced, but he did not feel that he became a different person on that day. The “pre-September 11 Rudy” and “post-September 11 Rudy” was the same person (Giuliani, 2002, p. x). During this time, Giuliani made a decision that he would implement the same leadership he had used throughout two terms as mayor of New York and five years as a U.S. Attorney. In other words, Giuliani made a conscious decision that he would remain authentic to his core, fundamental values, and allow this authenticity to guide his actions and decisions in the weeks ahead of him.

Giuliani depicts the type of positive leadership needed presently, where the environment is dramatically changing, the rules are changing, and where leaders want to live out a natural link between their espoused values, actions and behaviours (Luthans & Avolio, 2003).

Authenticity is not a static state located in a moment of time (Quinn, 2004; Lewin & Regine, 1999; Quinn, 1998), but flows from being truthful and open in a relationship. Authenticity can be illustrated through descriptive words such as “genuine, reliable, trustworthy, real and veritable” (Luthans & Avolio, 2003, p. 242). According to Quinn (2004), authentic leaders are other focused, externally open, internally directed and purpose centred. Giuliani displayed these characteristics and may therefore be defined as an authentic leader: As a leader, Giuliani pursued purpose in the face of ambiguity and the unknown...
Giuliani took the risk of being authentic during a very chaotic and sombre time, knowing that being authentic would connect him to those around him, and help him and others to truly be present in a trying moment. Being authentically connected to his administration, rather than being disconnected, was his unique way of approaching the daunting task of calming not only New York City, but the global village at large. Giuliani, in addition to fulfilling great leadership resilience and action, acted upon his personal authenticity. There are four relational practices, according to Lewin and Regine (1999), which were enacted by the then mayor of New York – he expressed his authentic self as a leader, he acknowledged others, he was accountable, and lastly, he was attentive to the needs of the city and the people within it. This is what made Giuliani so authentic. His conversations and interactions with people generated positive connections and rewarding relationships. His emphasis on connecting with people nurtured trust, affiliations and constructive conversations. Just hours after the attack on the World Trade Centre, Giuliani had a meeting with his administration, where he discussed the 9/11 events openly and frankly with his team, sharing with his group the impact of the attack instead of soft-peddling. He made personal phone calls to all the CEOs in the World Trade Centre who had lost employees, and enriched connectivity and unity by holding a major interdenominational prayer service. Furthermore, he personally talked with families who had lost loved ones, and addressed thousands of families in the armoury and family assistance centres. Thus Giuliani acted authentically, by transcending the ego and putting the common good and welfare of others first (Quinn, 2004). “Like you, I have people in there I know, care about and love; so please, work with us, and we’ll work with you” (Giuliani, 2002, p. 16). Giuliani embodied what authentic leadership is, as proposed by Avolio and Luthans (2006) in that he displayed confident, hopeful, optimistic, moral/ethical and resilient behaviour.

### Triggering authentic leadership development

The notion of being a connected and authentic leader resonates with the emerging connection-based society where a premium is placed on leadership that embraces spirituality, emotion, context, creativity, empathy and meaning making (Pink, 2005). Traditional leadership development appears to pay much attention to fixing ‘bad leadership’ (Avolio, 2004). The focus of leadership development is therefore to identify and diagnose the problem areas and possible causes, and ultimately treat the weak areas to create a more effective leader.

On the other hand, in developing authentic leadership, the emphasis is not on the analysis and adoption of prescriptive techniques and practices; it is not about imitating the thinking, principles and behaviour of people who have already been perceived and branded as effective leaders. Authentic leadership is about uniqueness. The reason why the development of authentic leadership is so unique is because one is encouraged to first look, learn and unleash the unique self as an expression of value and authenticity so that his/her behaviours and thinking emanate from within (Quinn, 2004; Wheatley, 1999). This is done only when an individual courageously and consciously chooses to take the responsibility of becoming more purpose-centred, internally directed, other focused, and externally open (Quinn, 2004).

### Positive Psychological Capacities

- **Life experiences**
- **Confidence**
- **Hope**
- **Optimism**
- **Resiliency**

### Positive Self-development

- **Self-awareness**
- **Self-regulation**
- **behaviours**

### Authentic Leadership

- **Confident**
- **Hopeful**
- **Optimistic**
- **Resilient**
- **Transparent**
- **Moral/Ethical**
- **Future-oriented**
- **Associate building**

Luthans and Avolio (2003) would consider 9/11 a trigger, which they suggest is a prerequisite for growth and ALD. Luthans and Avolio (2003) propose a model for ALD, and central to this model is the trigger event (see Figure 1). They describe a trigger similarly to what Goleman (2002) describes as a “wake up call”. These triggers can be sudden, shocking discoveries about one’s self that may shake people into action or can be longer in duration. The triggers may be planned or unplanned events that provoke that “A-ha!” moment, where a person confronts a stark truth or realisation and thus gains new insight and perspective about his/her life. At such moments a leader may discover “this is the real me” (George, 2003, p. xvi). Some leaders may ignore the awakening; others may deny it. However, an authentic leader hears the wake-up call and takes the proactive first step in self-directed learning. Luthans and Avolio (2003) primarily focus on the impact a negative trigger has on ALD, however, these authors recognise and explore the concept of planned positive triggers through rigorous design (Avolio & Luthans, 2006).

![Figure 1: An Authentic Leadership Development Model (Luthans & Avolio, 2003, p. 251)](image-url)
The question therefore is whether a positive trigger event, as opposed to a negative trigger event, can play a fundamental role in developing the authentic leader. Trigger events serve as powerful learning curves. It is questionable whether ALD which is aimed at solving one’s leadership deficiencies would necessarily create sustainable authentic leaders. An alternative to deficit-based leadership development is a strength-based approach (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2003; Quinn, 2004). A need for an approach that is embedded in the relational and contextual, which is congruent with the zeitgeist of the connection-based economy (Pink, 2005) is required. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a positive alternative approach. AI is a relational and connective process, which should encourage conversation, meaning making, and mutual reciprocal relationships (Wheatley, 2002). The power of AI is that it focuses on the possibilities of developing authentic potential and talent, rather than focusing on one’s weaknesses and shortcomings, or perhaps something that is not natural to his/her leadership style (Cooperrider et al., 2003). Appreciative Inquiry

AI is a bold shift in the way leadership development is viewed and approached (Schiller, Holland & Riley, 2002). AI does not aim to change a person’s leadership style. The aim of this leadership development approach is to uncover and bring forth existing strengths, hopes and awareness to identify the positive core and inner voice within every leader. In so doing, it transforms the individual, and therefore the organisation, the family, the community. In fact, the ripple effect even impacts on the world as a whole (Wheatley, 1999).

The following four principles have been adapted from AI (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003) to form the touchstones of authentic leadership development:

- Authentic leadership development focuses primarily on the whole person;
- Authentic leadership development leverages the power of culture and the potential positive impact it has on an organisation;
- Authentic leadership development takes place within a context that is unique and inimitable; and
- Authentic leadership development is captured through powerful and engaging imagery, visions and positive emotions.

For the purpose of this study, AI was selected as an approach to leadership development because it is both a philosophy (a way of thinking) and a practice (a way of doing) (Van Vuuren & Crous, 2005). As a way of thinking, it is relational and reflective. As a way of doing, it is a collaborative and participatory exercise grounded in affirmation and appreciation of natural leadership strengths (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003). AI is the only validated positive approach to action research.

As a method for affirmative leadership development, AI is collaborative, yet methodical and practical in the way it identifies and leverages strengths. There is no one best way of facilitating an AI, and multiple models have been developed (Magruder & Mohr, 2001). However, the most dominant model is the AI 4-D Cycle, a systematic and workable process (Van Vuuren & Crous, 2005). It begins with the selection of an affirmative topic, followed by Discovery (appreciating what is), Dream (imagining what might be), Design (what should be), and Destiny (learning, making the dream real and sustainable).

Affirmative topic choice

An affirmative topic is always affirmative, desirable and directional, in that it leads the group where they want to go (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2003). Selecting a topic choice is premised by the principle that human systems grow in the direction of their deepest and most frequent inquiries. The AI process truly begins when a conscious choice is made to focus on affirmative positive leadership development (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2003). Instead of focusing on the severity of leadership deficiencies, AI focuses on peak experiences, best practices and noble accomplishments (Ludema, Cooperrider & Barrett, 2001).

![Figure 2: The 4-D Cycle (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2003, p. 5).](image-url)

**Discovery**

The discovery phase is founded on the essential component of the power of conversation. The AI interview is a tool for exploring the life-giving forces at the core of each person’s leadership strength (Avital & Cooperrider, 2004). The interviews are embedded in what is at the heart of AI - the “art of the positive question”. The questions asked, and the focal points of conversation determine what the leader will find and develop. These dialogues form the basis of the data that will be used to envision the future. According to Wheatley (2002), real change begins with the simple act of people talking about what they care about, and this gives birth to powerful actions that are able to restore hope to the future.

**Dream**

As leadership is given a new voice, a unique conversation and understanding begins to emerge. Because these perspectives have been unearthed from unconditional positive questions, the vocabulary is rooted from a strength-based story-telling process. Therefore participants are able to envision their reality of authentic leadership in a creative, alternative and positive manner (Ludema, Cooperrider & Barrett, 2001). By generating words, phrases and stories that mirror the leader at his/her best, coupled with visual drawings of what one could and should become in terms of authentic leadership, the dream phase liberates one from a traditional deficit-based/problem solving paradigm to one of positive imagery and hope.

**Design**

The core feature of the design phase is a set of provocative propositions which are built on the notion that words create worlds. They build the bridges between the best of ‘what is’ and the best of ‘what might be’. They are statements that stretch the realm of the status quo, challenge common leadership routines, and suggest tangible actions (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003). The provocative proposition is a statement of intention that is grounded in the realities of what was authentic in the past. This phase involves the collective construction of positive images of future authentic leadership in action, based on a chosen social architecture (Cooperrider et al., 2003). The social architecture consists of certain ‘design elements’, which guide a person to enact his/her future image of an authentic leader. For this study the design elements were, purpose, principles, people and practices (see Table 7).
The destiny phase asks from each participant a commitment to “sustain the design from the dream that was discovered” (Cooperrider et al., 2003, p. 182). It is a series of inspired actions that support ongoing learning and innovation (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003). During this phase leadership commitments are discussed and mobilised, and it’s an invitation for deep change. When applying the AI process, the future is consciously constructed upon its positive core strengths – that which gives life and vitality to the leader (Cooperrider et al., 2003).

Aim of the study
As a result, the AI process is meaningful, engaging, life giving, and it unleashes the positive core and a deep calling within the leader in his/her context. It is a relational, interactive, multidimensional and energising process. The manner in which AI was applied in creating a planned positive trigger event for ALD is subsequently illustrated by means of a descriptive case study (Yin, 2003). The aim of the descriptive case study is to illustrate the process and application of the Appreciative Inquiry method as a positive trigger event in the development of authentic leaders.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research approach
Action research was seen as the most apt methodology for this study because it is a form of inquiry that is collective, collaborative, self-reflective, and undertaken by the participants of the inquiry (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). For the purpose of this study, the role of the primary researcher was to record and observe to what extent AI could be applied in creating a positive planned trigger event for ALD.

Action research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile meaning-making, grounded in a participative and connecting worldview which is emerging at this historical time (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). Considering that authenticity is a positive construct, AI was identified as an appropriate and rigorous procedure for analysis, synthesis and reporting within a qualitative paradigm.

Participants
As part of an organisational development initiative, managers from an on-line marketing and advertising company based in Cape Town were invited to participate in a one-day AI workshop on authentic leadership development. Participants were informed that the intervention formed part of a research project.

The sample consisted of 22 self-nominated managers (fifteen females and seven males). The average age of the participants was 33. The assumption was that self-nominated managers were more inclined to make a conscious decision to participate, learn, and contribute to the process of the one-day appreciative workshop.

Procedure
The workshop took place at an independent conference venue off site from the organisation. An experienced, accredited AI practitioner facilitated the AI workshop. The group of 22 were divided into three functional sub-groups of six to eight people each. The participants remained in these groups for the duration of the workshop.

Data collection, analysis and synthesis
For the purpose of data collection, each participant received a workbook. The workbooks contained an appreciative interview guide, as well as space to record the outcomes of each phase within the AI process. No personal particulars were disclosed on the workbooks. This ensured anonymity. For every step of the 4-D model, each sub-group would generate and co-construct meaning, and thereafter, share this new meaning with the larger group. All ideas and thoughts were recorded on flip chart paper by the team’s appointed scribe, and then transferred to their workbooks. At the end of the workshop, the workbooks and the flip chart papers were collected and coded, and this material formed the basis for data reporting. The ethics of AI is grounded in its constructiveness and positive approach in that it encourages a search for common ground.

In an AI process narrative analyses take place (Watkins & Mohr, 2001) but also results in a synthesis of meaning making through collaborative dialogue amongst participants. The role of the primary researcher, and the facilitator of the process, was to ensure that the participants followed and gave expression to the AI 4-D process and to ensure that the participants gave content to the construction of positive authentic leadership development.

CASE STUDY REPORTING

Introducing the workshop, the facilitator sensitised the group to what the essence of Appreciative Inquiry and Authentic Leadership Development is. For the purpose of this intervention, an interview guide was developed as part of the workbook. This interview guide consisted of ten unconditional positive questions adapted from the Encyclopaedia of Positive Questions (Whitney, Cooperrider, Kaplan & Trosten-Bloom, 2002). This served as the data collection instrument for the discovery phase of this study. (See Table 1).

The workbooks were distributed, and participants were asked to engage in interviews with each other for 45 minutes, according to the interview guide. These interviews sparked energising conversations which were embedded within an affirmative framework of positive questions and sense making.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1 THE APPRECIATIVE INTERVIEW GUIDE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about a time you worked with someone you considered to be an authentic leader. Describe the situation. What made it authentic for you? What did the leader do that made him/her authentic? Tell me your story. What did you learn about authentic leadership from this situation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about a time you worked with someone you considered to be an authentic leader. Describe the situation. What made it authentic for you? What did the leader do that made him/her authentic? Tell me your story. What did you learn about authentic leadership from this situation?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What do you most value and appreciate about leadership at X?

When people are being authentic leaders, what two or three things can they do that will help you to be the best you can be?

What do you think customers admire and value about X? What makes X unique and cutting edge compared with its competitors?

As you continuously seek to develop into the best leader you can be, can you share with me how you generate your own inspiration to lead authentically? [Mention what personal, spiritual, and developmental practices you have found most useful.]

What is the core factor that ‘gives life’ to X?

What are the three most important hopes you have to heighten the health and vitality of X for the future?
From these conversations, 31 appreciative, life-giving leadership-related themes were identified (see Table 2). Each sub-group shared their themes with the greater group (plenary feedback). These themes were written on the flip charts and then hung up on the walls of the training venue. All the participants had an opportunity to vote, and proceeded to assign stickers to the themes they felt were most compelling and relevant to authentic leadership.

Table 2: Scattergram chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life-giving themes</th>
<th>Number of stickers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Becoming balanced</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of us is greater than the one of us (servant leadership)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You will never find a good leader at the head of the table (servant leadership)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning culture</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People, not employees</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication as the foundation of growth</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge sharing</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being goal focused</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Feel good” – proud</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genuine collaboration</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earning respect</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The impact of positive actions</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders allow you to succeed or fail</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork/collaboration</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building towards vision</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognising different approaches to achieving common goals</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adversity contains learning and opportunity</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty and open communication</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders lead without leading</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders create “mimi’s”</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapting leadership to accommodate different needs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing 100 things 1% better</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders encourage ownership of vision</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders are infectious</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being assertive not aggressive</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning from others</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsuspecting leader</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalised service</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the end of the discovery phase the participants prioritised six themes as crucial constructs to take into their future as authentic leaders (dream). These were: balance; integrity; the sum of us is greater than the parts; servant leadership; learning culture; people not employees. (See Table 3 derived from Table 2.). The outcomes of the discovery phase are deemed valid due to the emphasis on dialogue, participation and the democratic nature of the AI process.

For the dream phase, participants imagined how they would like authentic leadership to emerge within the organisation by 2010. Each group captured their dreams with words that expressed their vision of the characteristics of an authentic leader (see Table 4).

Images have a strong emotional appeal to intuitive knowledge and logical thoughts (De Liefde, 2005), and therefore concluding the dream phase the participants were challenged to become artists by generating a metaphor in visual form which resonated with their vision of an authentic leader. The metaphors and their meanings are presented in Table 5.
From appreciating ‘the best of what is’ (discovery), to ‘imagining bold possibilities’ (dream), to exploring ‘what should be’, the design phase encouraged the participants in crafting their own provocative proposition as a collective and authentic expression of what they as leaders, and as an organisation, should become. Each of the following propositions was collectively crafted within the three groups, and inspired and guided by the discovery and dream phase.

**Table 6**

**Provocative propositions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group One</td>
<td>“We embrace freedom to discover potential and we contribute positively in every interaction. We are cohesive” (FC/GP1/04).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Two</td>
<td>“We keep our fingers on the pulse and our feet on the ground to grow towards being best of breed in entertainment.” (FC/GP2/04). I am energy giving. I talk with you. I accept your feedback and facilitate growth. I make a positive contribution to every interaction and I give you freedom to discover your potential” (FC/GP2/04).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Three</td>
<td>“We walk the talk. We let our passions create performance. We are free to play and energise those around us. We see self belief as the highest business achievement” (FC/GP3/04).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the design phase, as reflected in Table 7, the participants considered their organisation’s social architecture by focusing on four elements that facilitate the creation of sustainable alliance: purpose; principles; people and practices (Hock, 1999). This social architecture gave the participants space to enact their dream in an optimal, tangible manner as authentic leaders.

In the final phase of the 4-D Cycle, i.e. destiny, participants were invited to generate ideas for action, and make the future real. Plans and actions were divided into organisational and personal commitments. As a collective endeavour towards authentic leadership, the group decided on the steps of action reflected in Table 8.

At the end of the workshop, and in the positive spirit of AI, participants were asked to complete a valuation of the workshop (as opposed to an evaluation of the day). The participants were asked to what extent they valued the AI process. The feedback was captured in the form of an individual reflective exercise. The participants recorded their valuations in the workbooks, and then returned the workbooks to the researchers. Eighteen of the participants were prepared to share their positive experiences of the day. These are presented in Table 9.
Discussions, from the Discovery phase all the way to its also able to change). According to the workshop group kaleidoscope, where they are able to retain the shape, but are create value, energise and convert values into consistent actions). The group perceived authentic leadership as a co-evolution of purpose centred (design phase – an ongoing commitment to optimistic and resilient – refer to Figure 1: ALD model) and internally directed, purpose driven and externally open (Quinn, 2005), to its positive nucleus, is capable of being other focused, transcending the ego; putting the common good and welfare of others first); externally open (dream phase - participants to explore the best of what is (Discovery phase). Hence, the workshop was used as a form of development, helping the participant build a more complete sense of his/her authentic self through personal and collective exploration. Furthermore, the workshop also disclosed that being an authentic leader is a personal virtue (discovering the substantial self with attributes distinctly one's own) as well as a social virtue, (authenticity thrives in context, where individual talents and strengths are respected, valued and acknowledged).

This study has shown that leaders can be sensitised to leadership development by appreciating the best in themselves and in others. Furthermore, it explored how a strength-based trigger was useful in discovering their authentic selves, thereby eliminating the need to emulate others. The group felt that although this was an effective trigger event, sustainability would depend on a combination of coaching, planned and unplanned triggers, a supportive and developed culture, and a personal commitment to unleash the authentic self. These, they felt, were some elements for an effective revelation.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the stories and valuations of this workshop, the managers of the workshop group recognised that authentic leadership is initiated by human relatedness. Furthermore, relationships and performance levels thrive when there is an appreciative eye, when people see the best in one another, and when they share their dreams and ultimate concerns in affirming ways (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2003). This resonates with the idea of *Ubuntu* which is based on the idea of "I am because we are", in contrast to Descartes' view of "I think, therefore I am" (De Lieffe, 2005, p. 52).

Although the focus of AI is to value and appreciate the best of what is, there were nevertheless challenges and limitations inherent to the study. One of the factors that disrupted the fluidity of the research was the element of distance. While the participants were based in Cape Town, the researchers were based in Johannesburg which complicated the data verification process. In order to overcome any existing doubt or inconsistency, one of the researchers would follow up on inconsistencies by telephonic discussions with the relevant participant(s). The nature of the working environment at the case organisation was a second challenge. Although every effort was made to conduct the workshop off-site at a tranquil location, the workshop was continuously disrupted with phone-calls and participants leaving the room to take business related queries. This disrupted the flow of the AI workshop.

In order for ALD to reach its full potential, a trigger event should be perceived and understood as a fundamental way of living, and therefore, veritable sustainability is a question of integrating a myriad of follow up interventions, such as one-on-one interviews, coaching and/or similar AI workshops. This is in line with Avolio and Luthans' (2006) view of an authentic leadership development journey.

This study pitched an unplanned negative trigger event (as in the case of Giuliani) against a positive planned trigger event (as...
seen in the workshop). Both triggers unleash a leader’s positive core to authenticity; however, the benefits of capitalizing on planned positive “moments that matter” can be used as a positive leverage in developing authentic leaders. Furthermore, the Appreciative Inquiry intervention created an opportunity for self-definition through dialogue (Taylor, 1991). Despite the variance and nature of the triggers, a recurring theme of being “other focused” emerged in both cases. This demonstrated that when the ideal of authenticity is understood, being authentic is not just a matter of concentrating on one’s self, but involves deliberation about how one’s commitments make a contribution to the good of the public world in which one is a participant (Guignon, 2004).

It is recommended that future research longitudinally investigates to effect of Appreciative Inquiry on authentic leadership development.

REFERENCES


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