
Application of Positive Organizational Scholarship in a University Setting

(Understanding the long term impact of
Strength and Asset-Based Approaches to
Building Leadership Capacity)

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Where we're coming from....

Historically, the concept of leadership has been associated with deficits and gaps to prepare the leader to think critically, and exercise leadership.



Why focus on strengths and asset-based approaches?



“The task of leadership is to create an alignment of strengths, making our weaknesses irrelevant”.

-- Peter Drucker

We live in worlds our
questions create.



Inviting Conversations that Matter
Disrupting Automatic Thinking Patterns
Developing Positive Leadership Identity

Introductory Interview

- ❑ Pair up with someone beside you – look for someone you think might be a bit different from yourself – someone you don't already know
- ❑ Take 2 minutes each to ask the question on your handout
- ❑ Alternate after **3 minutes**

REFLECTION

What did you notice?

- What were you aware of emerging with respect to your understanding of the relationship, in your body, new insight, the language that was being shared?
- Anything else?

How might you take something from this experience and make it meaningful within your context?

New paradigms require new metrics

- ❑ Rapport
- ❑ Energy
- ❑ Insight
- ❑ New language

What we are starting to understand organizationally

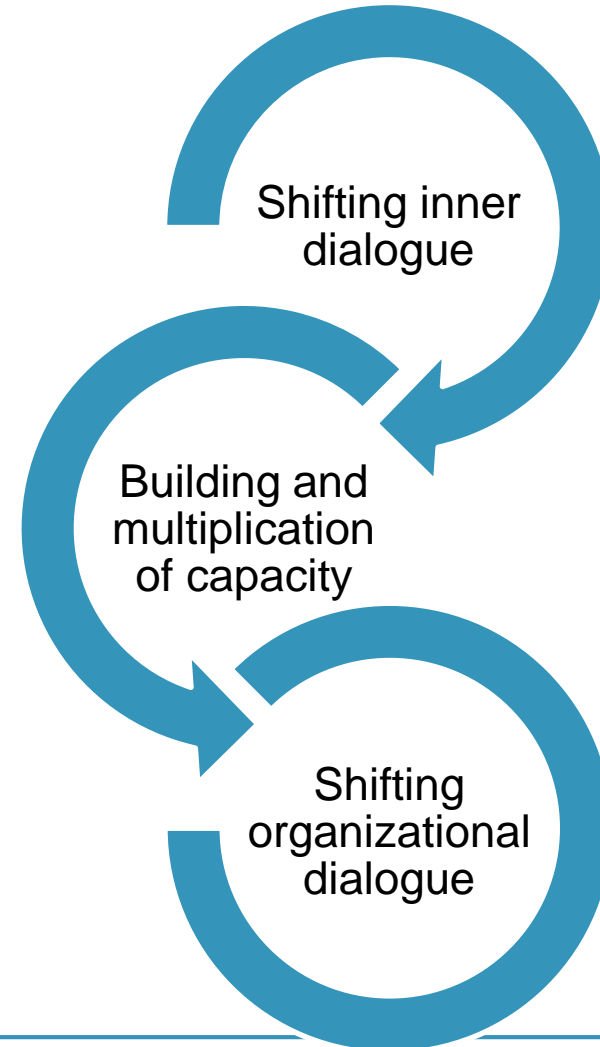
- We notice the insights and awareness first
- Then we recognize the potential of a different kind of relationship
- Level of consciousness and value of what's happening somatically shifts
- We develop the capacity to sustain the difference through the emergence of new language and shared intentionality

Positive Affective Cycle

Building Individual capacity to disrupt negativity bias

Multiple individuals and teams adopt new ways of interacting and generate conversations

Impact on the organizational values, drivers, and leadership capacity



Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS)

Firmly rooted in social constructionism, this shift in focus helps us examine and leverage the positive aspects at play in a learning environment

(Cameron and Caza, 2004).

Innovative Positive Organizational Development (*IPOD*)

“IPOD is presented as both a radical break from the problem solving approaches that have come to dominate (OD), as well as a homecoming to OD’s original affirmative spirit”

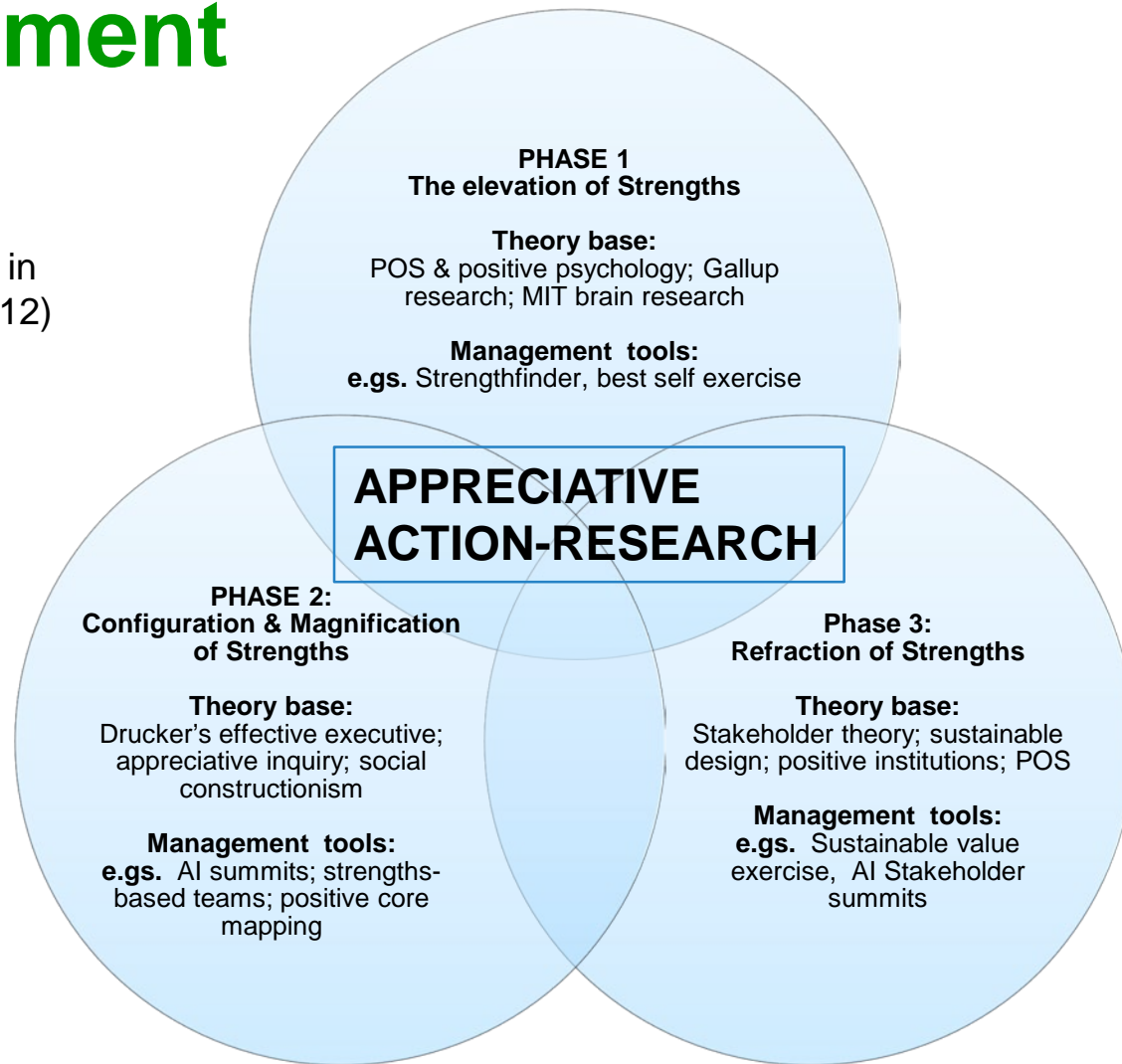
(Cooperrider & Godwin, in Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012; Cooperrider, 2012)

□ The 3 Circles

- Elevation of Strengths
- Magnification of Strengths
- Refraction of Strengths

Innovative Positive Organizational Development

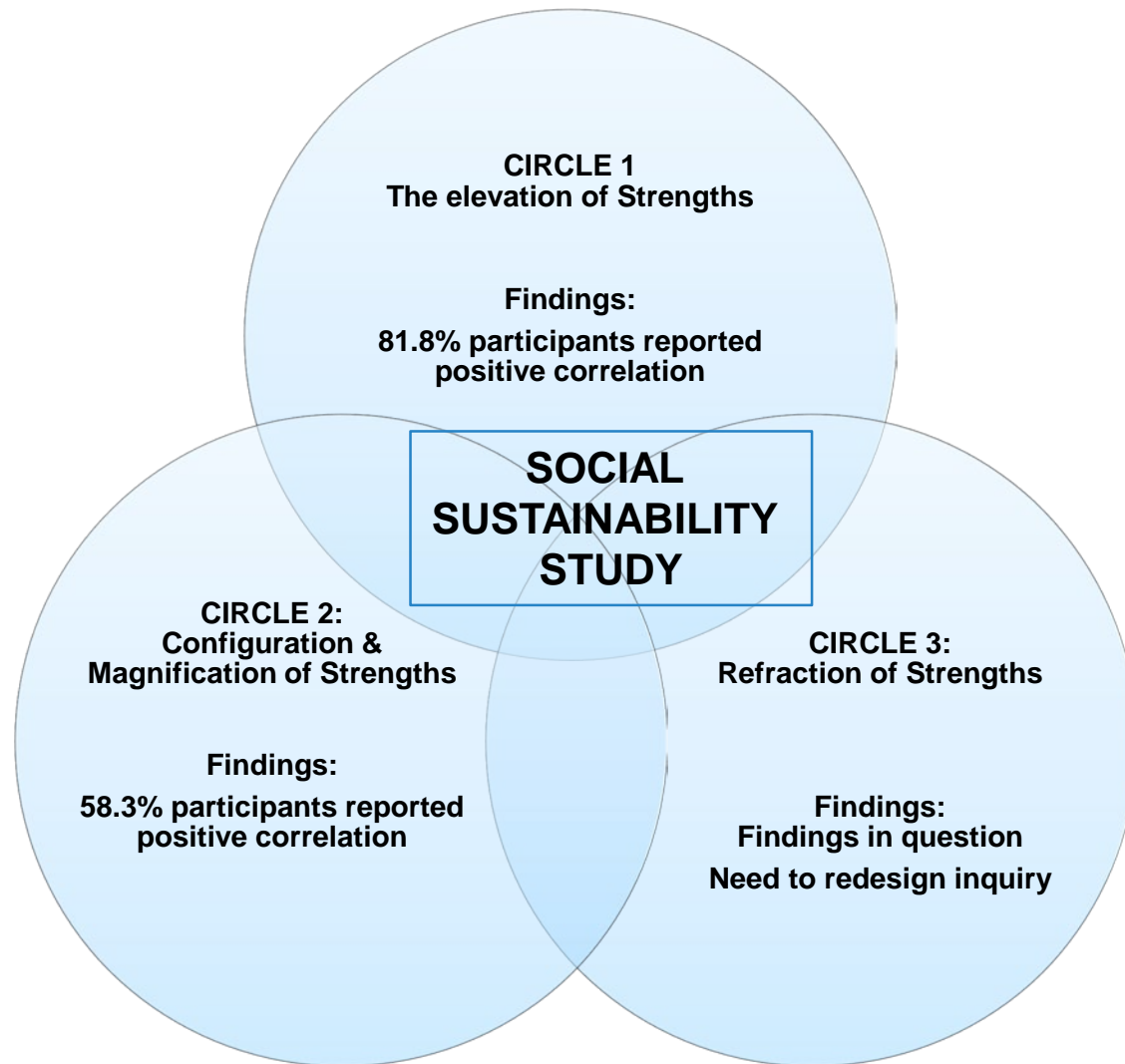
(Cooperrider & Godwin, in
Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012)



UBC Examples of Elevation...Magnification...Refraction at a Programmatic Level

- ❑ Coaching and Strengths-based development conversations (Elevate)
- ❑ Appreciative Inquiry Summits, Group coaching, leadership programs sparking new conversations throughout (Magnify)
- ❑ Creating new conversational tools at a unit level (Magnify)
- ❑ Shift in Leadership Identity (Magnify)
- ❑ Bullying/Harrassment  Respectful Environment & Conflict Engagement (Magnify)  Legislation (retro-Refract??)
- ❑ At a programmatic level of coaches working as a system throughout the UBC community – Appreciative Leadership Initiative (Refract)
- ❑ Community Leadership Program (Refract)

UBC Research Findings



Questions as reflected in responses:

ELEVATE 81.8%

- exposure to strengths and AI approach
- Become aware of positive leadership identity
- More aware of strengths
- Strengths contribution to leadership style

MAGNIFY 58.3%

- Respond positively and affirmatively to clients
- Strengths based team and committee building
- Performance systems and hiring processes based in strengths
- Organize work to leverage strengths

Questions as reflected in responses:

REFRACT (56.8%)

- Engagement in programs to foster social change
- Better notice the positive virtues of my wider community
- Understand how strengths make a difference in wider community

QUESTION SET
NEEDS REDEFINITION

RESULTS IN
QUESTION

FURTHER RESEARCH
REQUIRED

Next steps for Research

- Attempt to triangulate the Refract data, by analyzing the qualitative data from focus groups and interview guides
- Establish the themes by which we'd triangulate as
 - Rapport
 - Energy
 - Insight
 - New language adoption



The conductor of an orchestra never makes a sound. He depends for his power on his ability to make other people powerful and so his job is to awaken possibility in others. -B. Zander

Benjamin Zander

Our hopes and dreams of the future....

*A possibility to live in to,
not an expectation to live up to!*



We invite you to....

1. Notice and name what makes others feel strong
(Elevate)
 2. Support it to happen more often
(Elevate/Magnify)
 3. Engage others to develop strengths (Magnify)
 4. Ask questions that promote new ways of possibility thinking that encourage positive social change beyond our individual sphere of influence
(Refract)
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REFLECTION

Based on our conversations today, what is the one thing that would allow you to explore and/or strengthen asset and positive based approaches to leadership development?

Literature Review



- Social constructivism (Holmes, 2001; Hunt, 2006; Block, 2008)
- Adult Learning Theory (Knowles 1993; Kolb, 2005)
- Reflective Practice and Meta cognition (Schön, 1987; Castelli, 2011, Jacobson, 1998; Halpern, 1999)
- Workplace Learning (Illeris, 2010; Livingstone, 2001; Brotherton, 2011; Littlejohn et al, 2012)
- Authentic Assessment (Ambrose et al, 2010; Bamber, 2011; Svinicki, 2004; Palm, 2008)
- Action Research (Schön, 1983; Bentz & Shapiro, 1998; Ash & Clayton, 2004; Kosnik, 2005)
- Positive Organizational Scholarship (Dutton, 2003; Cameron & Quinn, 2003; Cameron, Dutton and Quinn, 2003; Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012; Cooperrider & Godwin, in Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012; Buckingham, 2011; Spreitzer and Porath, 2012)
- Positive Psychology (Seligman, 2007)
- Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider et al, 2003; Anderson et al., 2001)