



A Third Party Perspective on POS

By Alex Jona¹

At approximately 5:00 p.m. on Thursday December 4th, eighty-five scholars from all over North America and beyond beat the snow and made their way to the Michigan League in Ann Arbor. The initial conversational buzz about bad weather and travel hassles didn't last long—by 6:00 p.m., the Hussey Room was full of anticipation and excitement. The chatter transformed into genuine exchanges—some among old friends, others with strangers—conversation peppered with words like “thriving”, “well-being”, and “energy” filled the room. A group tuned in to such a generative common purpose (building POS research) was not going to let the bad weather get in the way. Long before they arrived at the League, this group of people was bound together by a magnetic force: Positive Organizational Scholarship.

At approximately 6:00 p.m. the community of scholars sat down to dinner for just that—The Magnetic Forces of POS 2008 Conference. The dinner kick-started a three-day conference held by the Center for Positive Organizational Scholarship at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business. The Center for POS, established in 2002, is a community of organizational scholars dedicated to research on the theory and practice of positive organizing and leadership. Six years later, the Center for POS attracts scholars to its 4th bi-annual conference, eager to share their research among an established POS community. One attendee said she came to the conference “to get reinvigorated about positive organizational psychology,” another doctoral student said, “I would like to get some feedback on some ideas I had, and also to get to know some people in this field.” Over the next three days, organizational scholars engaged in *Magnetic Fields* rounds designed for “sharing and energizing” each other's work. The fields included Energy; Identity; Relationships and Networks; Resilience; Virtues, Values, and Ethics; Culture Change; Diversity; Emotions and Well-Being; Leadership; Practices and Routines; and Work Design and Meaning. While the conference served its purpose as a solid research expansion opportunity, attendees went further to express how POS is more than a common theoretical lens. One attendee emphasized, “It's a resource, a community of us that is more than a common approach.”

Along with a private dinner hosted at the famous Zingerman's Roadhouse (which is also the subject of a POS teaching case), symposia, and Wayne Baker's concluding *Iron Chef POS!* Challenge, the conference gave its first bi-annual Award for Best Paper in Positive Organizational Scholarship. Adam Grant, Elizabeth Campbell, Grace Chen, Keenan Cottone, David Lapedis, and Karen Lees' “*Impact and the Art of Motivation Maintenance: The Effects of Contact with Beneficiaries on Persistence Behavior*”² and Ingrid Nembhard and Amy C. Edmondson's “*Making It Safe: The Effects of Leader Inclusiveness and Professional Status on Psychological Safety and Improvement*

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² Grant, A.M., Campbell, E.M., Chen, G., Cottone, K., Lapedis, D., & Lee, K. (2007). Impact and the art of motivation maintenance: The effects of contact with beneficiaries on persistence behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 103, 53-67.

Efforts in Health Care Teams”³ were awarded for their submissions with \$2,500 for each paper and special recognition by the Center. Adam Grant and Ingrid Nembhard each presented a keynote talk.

So after three days of “getting P.O.S.ed” as some insiders like to call it, attendees left up-to-date on the most recent directions of Positive Organizational Scholarship, and will have to wait until 2010 for another conference. But until then, this unique scholarly community remains bound by the “magnetic forces” which bring them together and keep them united while exploring new boundaries across the world.



Michael Pratt & POS Best Paper Award winner
Ingrid Nembhard



Gretchen Spreitzer & Dana McDaniel “Mapping
Research Resourcefulness”



Award for Best POS Paper winner Adam Grant



Christine Ann Sprigg presenting her work on resilience

³ Nembhard, Ingrid M. and Edmondson, Amy C. (2006). Making it safe: The effects of leader inclusiveness and professional status on psychological safety and improvement efforts in health care teams. *J. Organiz. Behav.* 27, 941-966.