

# HOW MIGHT A CULTURE OF APPRECIATION BE CULTIVATED AT JIBC?

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## INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

An appreciative workplace culture has been demonstrated to increase the health of its employees which in turn increases the health of the organization by reducing absenteeism caused by sick leave, stress leave, and turnover (Chapman & White, 2011). Although limited, all previous literature demonstrated positive impacts for organizations that develop and sustain a culture of appreciation. By exploring appreciation within JIBC through employee dialogue, the opportunity existed to enhance the health and functioning of the organization. JIBC was in a unique position to endorse exploration of this topic in order to meet the goals and objectives of JIBC's 2015-2020 Strategic Plan as well as JIBC's 2016-2020 Educational Plan which included staff engagement, development, and celebration as priorities. The 2017 JIBC Employee Engagement Survey revealed further evidence to explore this topic as only 56.6% of employees who took the survey, stated they felt valued at work.

## METHODS

This project followed the action research methodology which is a collaborative process of engaging stakeholders impacted by change, in the change process. For this reason, two qualitative methods were used to gather data. The first method was a World Café. A World Café is a large group method which creates space for dialogue in order to share perspectives, develop new relationships, and discover new directions for action. The second method was an online survey. The questions posed during both were based on appreciative inquiry as an organization's potential can be best discovered through appreciation. A literature review was also conducted to compliment the two qualitative methods.

The project participants invited to participate in this study included all full-time employees of the British Columbia Government Employees Union (BCGEU) and Fair Comparison employee groups at JIBC.

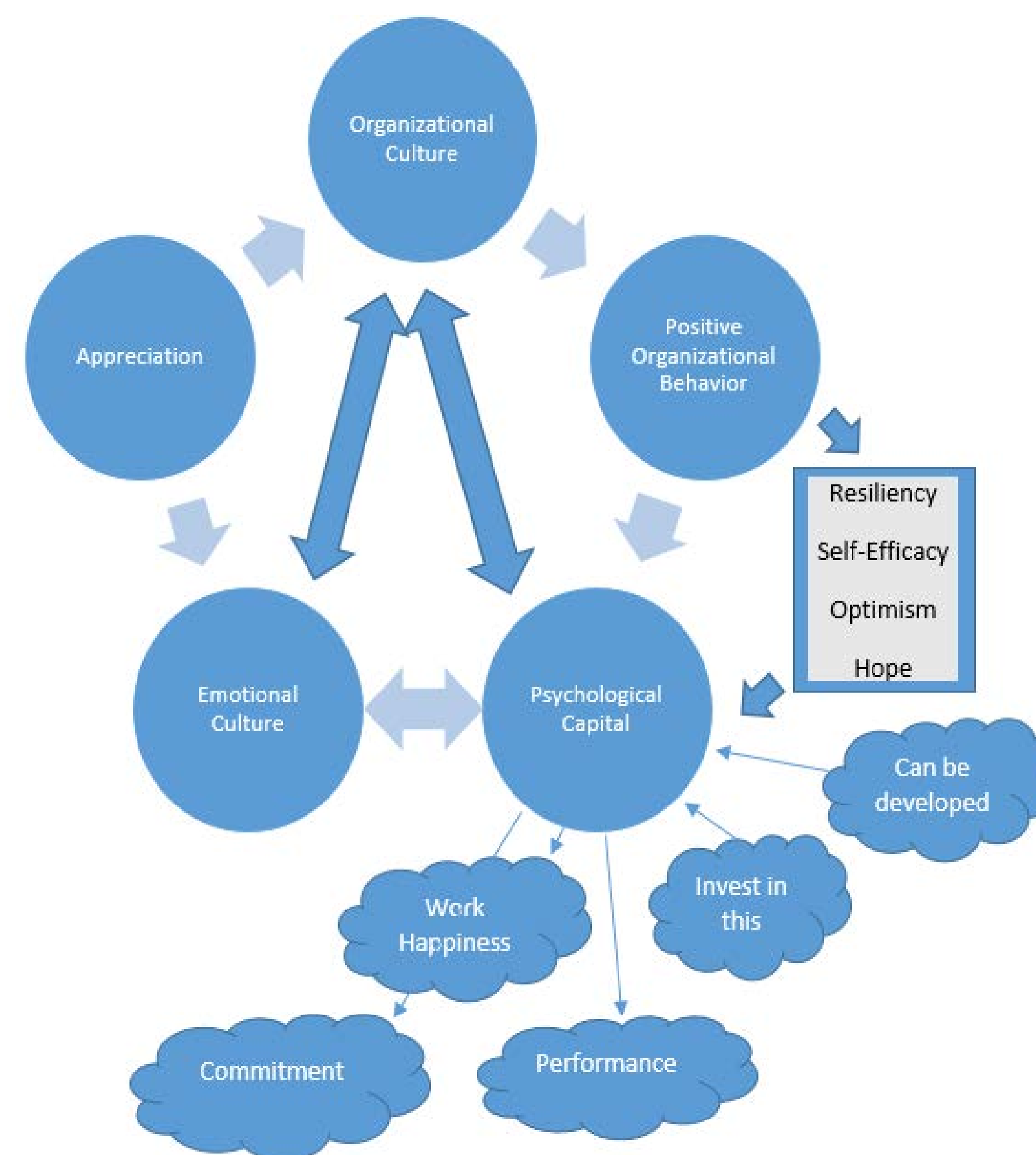
## RESULTS

Of the 264 BCGEU and Fair Comparison members at JIBC, 17 members participated in the World Café and 61 members participated in the online survey which was open for a one week period after the World Café had completed.

The most significant theme gathered from the participant data during the World Café and online survey, was that appreciation made employees feel valued. The online survey respondents (96.3%) indicated it was important to feel appreciated within the workplace and 81.5% of the online survey respondents stated they showed appreciation to others in the workplace most of the time.

The data gathered during the World Café and online survey support the following 5 statements:

1. An appreciative culture is characterized by healthy employees who contribute to a healthy organization.
2. Appreciation makes employees feel valued.
3. Increased positivity and strength-based approaches are the building blocks of an appreciative culture.
4. Appreciation can be given or received by anyone at any level of the organization.
5. Meaningful forms of appreciation are different for everyone.



The impact of appreciation on organizational and emotional culture.



## DISCUSSION

A literature review was conducted on organizational culture, the impact of emotions on organizational culture, strategies to develop an appreciative culture, and the roles of individuals in cultivating an appreciative culture.

The literature suggested the positive emotion of appreciation enhanced an employee's psychological and physical health which in turn created healthy organizational cultures. Investment in developing an employee's psychological capital (self-efficacy, resiliency, optimism, and hope) gives the organization a competitive edge which may include reduced employee absenteeism and increased employee productiveness (Avey, Patera, & West, 2006; Chapman & White, 2011).

Although appreciation can be given or received by anyone in the organization, the literature suggested leadership with an appreciative mindset had the greatest impact on cultivating a culture of appreciation (Whitney, 2010). When the organizational culture is interpreted as being appreciative, employees take pride in their work, feel valued, and are more committed to the organization (Bushe, 2005; Fagley & Adler, 2012). The results of this study confirmed these benefits and the organizational culture of JIBC would be enhanced with a commitment to the recommendations provided.

## APPLICATION

Personal values that align with expressing appreciation and a time commitment to this practice are needed to cultivate a culture of appreciation. These values and practices serve to enhance the health of the employee and the organization, particularly when demonstrated by senior management.

## CONCLUSION

The following three recommendations were developed through the literature review, World Café, and online survey:

1. Develop organization-wide appreciation initiatives.
2. Incorporate positivity, strength-based language, and strength-based practices into conversation.
3. Create and support opportunities for employee engagement through meaningful conversations.

## KEY REFERENCES

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

This Organizational Leadership Project was the final element of the Masters of Arts in Leadership program at Royal Roads University.