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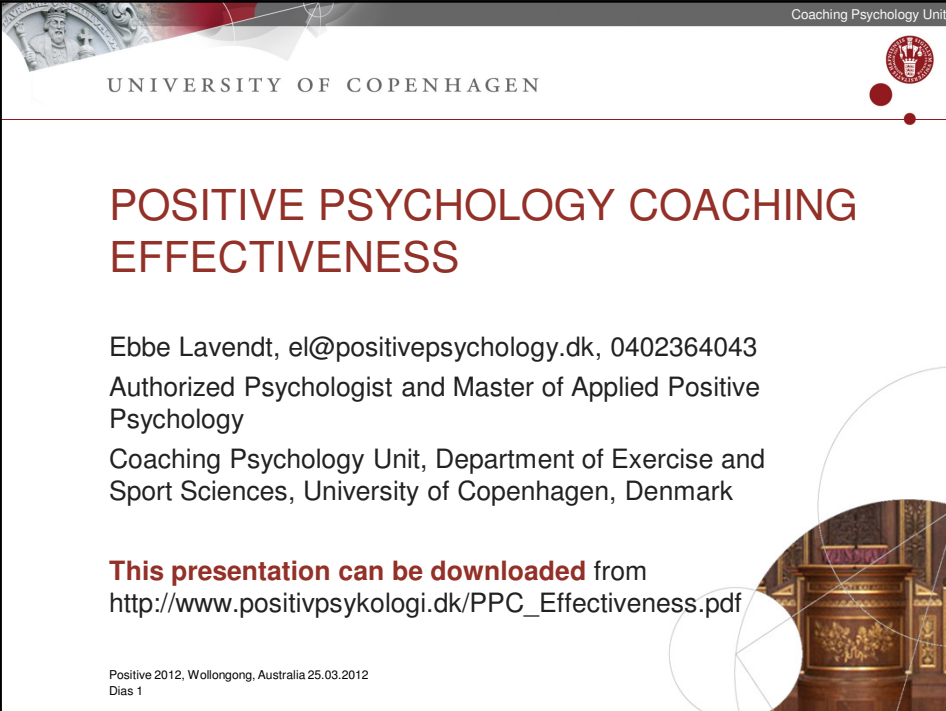
Coaching Psychology Unit

**POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY COACHING  
EFFECTIVENESS**

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**ABSTRACT**

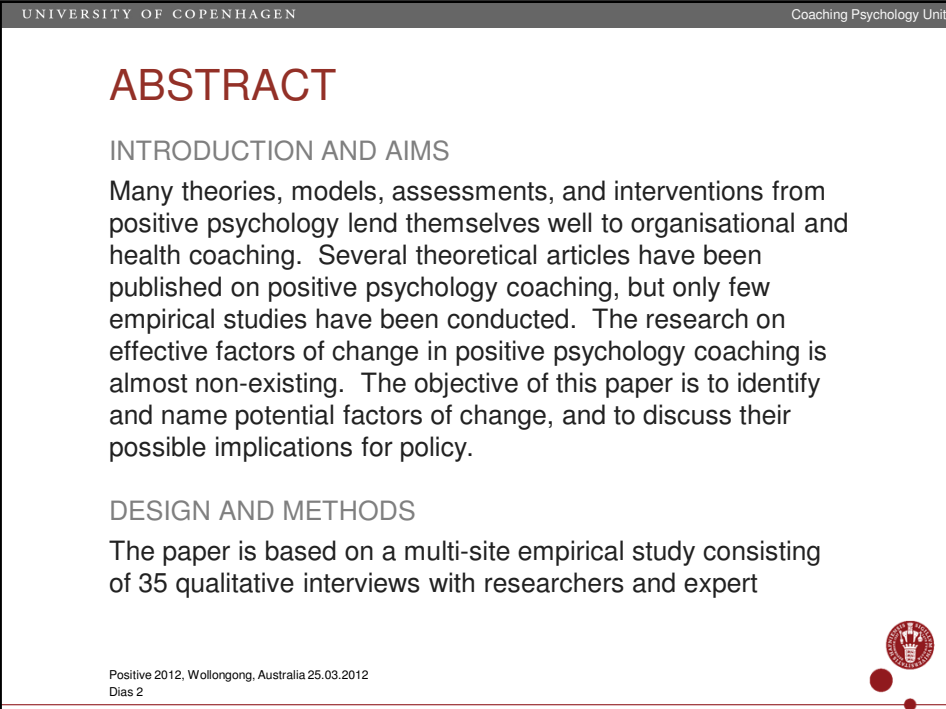
INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

Many theories, models, assessments, and interventions from positive psychology lend themselves well to organisational and health coaching. Several theoretical articles have been published on positive psychology coaching, but only few empirical studies have been conducted. The research on effective factors of change in positive psychology coaching is almost non-existing. The objective of this paper is to identify and name potential factors of change, and to discuss their possible implications for policy.

DESIGN AND METHODS

The paper is based on a multi-site empirical study consisting of 35 qualitative interviews with researchers and expert

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## ABSTRACT

practitioners from the US, Canada, Mexico, UK, Denmark, Finland, Israel, China, New Zealand and Australia. The interviews focus on the application of empirical research, theories, models, assessments and interventions from positive psychology in coaching practice. The interviews were analysed using thematic analysis based on Duncan, Miller, Wampold, and Hubble's (2009) concepts from "The Heart & Soul of Change".

### RESULTS

The results from the study support the notion that several effective factors contribute to outcome in coaching engagements - factors such as coachee engagement, the working relationship, accountability and techniques etc.

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## ABSTRACT

### DISCUSSION

The paper discusses what positive psychology training programs could look like, if they were to be based on the currently best available research on positive psychology coaching effectiveness. It is claimed that many coaching training programs focus too much on teaching practitioners techniques, and too little on other factors, presumably, contributing more to the variance in outcomes.

### CONCLUSIONS

The paper includes recommendations for alternative routes for future research and future coaching and training practice.

### PRESENTATION

The presentation will include short segments of video recordings from the interviews not previously published.

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## BACKGROUND

Many theories, models, assessments, and interventions from positive psychology lend themselves well to organisational and health coaching

Several theoretical articles have been published on positive psychology coaching, but only few empirical studies have been conducted

The research on effective factors of change in positive psychology coaching is almost non-existing



## OBJECTIVE

**The aim of this research project** is to:

- Describe how practitioners apply research from positive psychology in coaching
- Describe possible effective factors contributing to positive outcomes
- Formulate plausible explanations for causal relations

**The objective of this paper** is to:

- Identify and name potential factors of change
- Discuss their possible implications for policy

In this presentation, I will give you a brief overview of the research design, methods and analysis, and spend most of the time on the results and the discussion



## RELATION TO POSITIVE POLICY

My research does not focus on positive policy, but it can have implications for policies – particularly, in the coaching industry

It can have implications for:

- Coach training
- Coaching certifications

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## DESIGN AND METHODS

This paper is based on a multisite empirical study consisting of 35 qualitative interviews

Potential informants were selected based on a few objective criteria (such as, type of training, years of experience, publication/presentation, etc.), and by using snowballing

The interviews were semi-structured and followed an interview guide based on themes (i.e. concepts) from Duncan, Miller, Wampold, and Hubble's (2009) "The Heart and Soul of Change"

The interviews explored the application of empirical research, theories, models, assessments and interventions from positive psychology in coaching practice

All interviews were video recorded to make future sharing of data possible (through YouTube and Vimeo)

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## ANALYSIS

In “The Heart & Soul of Change” the authors describe and explain several of the effective factors discovered in psychotherapy research

I assume, that many of the effective factors in psychotherapy are the same as in coaching

At the time of writing, I consider the research summaries of effective factors in psychotherapy as some of the best available research

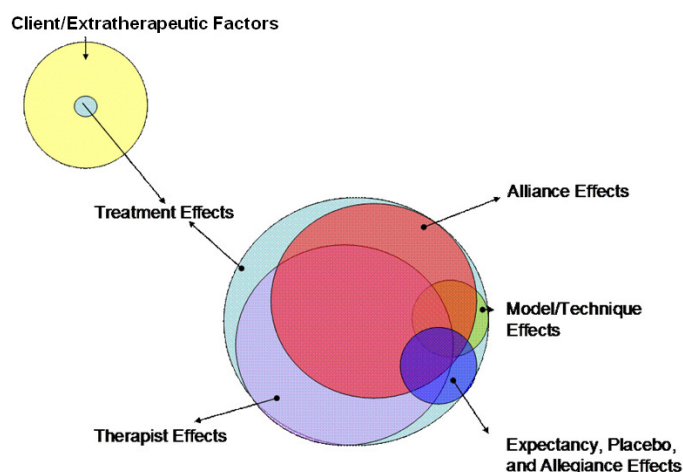
Concepts from “The Heart & Soul of Change” were used as themes in thematic analysis of the interviews

Transcripts were coded in NVivo using focused coding and selective coding – focusing on effective factors and their properties and dimensions

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## POSSIBLE EFFECTIVE FACTORS



HUBBLE, MILLER, DUNCAN, WAMPOLD, IN PRESS

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## PRELIMINARY RESULTS

The preliminary results from the study support the notion that several effective factors contribute to positive outcomes in coaching engagements - factors such as:

- Getting more self-confidence
- Experiencing positive emotions
- Clarifying what you want
- Becoming energized
- Changing beliefs
- Etc.

These results are to be understood as the perceptions of researchers and practitioners in the field

This study cannot provide empirical evidence of the effectiveness of positive psychology coaching as such

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## DISCUSSION

Several coaching organisations have policies for coach training programs and coaching certifications

These policies are often not evidence-based

Based on my data, reading of the literature on positive psychology coaching, and my professional experience from the coaching industry, I suspect that we might be:

- Training coaches in the “wrong” subjects/skills
- Certifying coaches based on the “wrong” criteria

There is not one right way of doing positive psychology coaching. But there are ways of doing coaching, coach training, and measurement of outcomes that are more aligned with research on effective factors than others

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## IMPLICATIONS FOR COACH TRAINING

Many coach training programs put a lot of emphasis on teaching techniques and models – and spend less effort:

- Screening training course participants
- Differentiating between coachees
- Teaching coaches how to engage coachees
- Teaching relationship skills
- Etc.

### RECOMMENDATION FOR POLICY

Future coach training could probably benefit from focusing more on factors empirically shown to be related to outcome (in coaching and/or related disciplines) – for instance coaching talent, coachee readiness, coachee engagement, coaching relationship, allegiance, hope, etc.

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## IMPLICATIONS FOR COACHING CERTIFICATIONS

Most coaching certifications rely heavily on input-based criteria (hours of training, experience, supervision, etc.) – not outcome-based criteria (increases in well-being, performance, etc.)

The quantity of input does not guarantee the quality of the output!

Especially if the criteria chosen have little or no relation to the variance in outcomes

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY

Future coaching certifications could be based on:

- - Input-based criteria documented to have an effect on outcomes
- - And/or output-based criteria for progress on outcome measures of well-being, performance, etc.

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## CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATIONS

There seem to be several effective factors contributing to positive coaching outcomes

Presently, several of these factors are apparently neither being given much attention in coach training programs, nor do they seem to be evaluated in relation to certification processes


### GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Future research could focus more on exploring and testing possible effective factors and mechanisms

Future coach training and certifications could incorporate more of the research on efficacy and effectiveness

Future coaching practice could probably be improved by integrating more of the best available research from positive psychology and other related areas

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## THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!

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If you want more information on upcoming research on positive psychology coaching, send an email to [el@positivepsychology.dk](mailto:el@positivepsychology.dk)

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