

---

## 33 Establishing positive emotional climates to advance organizational transformation

*Leslie E. Sekerka and Barbara L. Fredrickson\**

---

### **Introduction**

This chapter describes how positive emotional climates can help create and support transformation in organizations. With prominent contributions from positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), academics and practitioners across scholarly disciplines have turned their attention toward the emotional dimensions of workplace enterprise. Emotions, as an integral part of human experience, are inextricably linked to social interaction. We are therefore drawn to examine the impact that positive emotions have on how people relate to others to create new and useful relationships in organizational environments.

Our discussion explains how the broadening and building capacities of positive emotions can sustain organizations as they purposively evolve. We consider how strength-based organizational development and change (ODC) processes can be used to evoke positive emotions in support of a particular form of transformation. Such efforts, heretofore referred to as ‘transformative cooperation’, are believed to emerge through collectively beneficial processes. We begin with a description and definition of this phenomenon and continue with an explication of the term. To do so, we use research that applies the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2000a). Our summary concludes with implications for practice and questions for future research that will advance positive psychology and associated fields such as positive organizational scholarship and positive organizational behavior.

### **Transformation and cooperation**

As people engage in ODC, they are a part of a unique experience, given the moment, context, circumstances, and individuals involved. We turn our attention toward a particular form of organizational change, one that is distinct from those set forth in existing typologies (e.g., Golembiewski, 1976; Bartunek & Moch, 1987). This form, referred to as ‘transformative cooperation’, emerges when efforts to infuse organizational rejuvenation and evolution are employed. It involves a unique kind of cooperation, marked by the continuous flow of ongoing growth and development toward new and dynamic organizational forms. Prior descriptions of organizational transformation have referred to this phenomenon as ‘second-order’, ‘radical’, or ‘gamma’ change (Golembiewski et al., 1979). In general, transformation is portrayed as a fundamental shift in how people view, understand, interpret, or make sense of their organization and job role. We too consider transformative cooperation as second-order change, contributing to a shift in how people see their organization and their function within it. But unlike prior descriptions, we view transformative cooperation as sustained or ongoing movement.

The dynamic nature of this process is manifest in the establishment of new relationships and social connections that create emergent and evolving associations, which continue to progress over time and provide ongoing positive change. As people participate in events that stimulate transformation, they must continually work to suspend judgment and let go of prior assumptions. Instead of employing reactionary measures to problem solve, alleviate dysfunction, and overcome barriers that thwart goal achievement, a focused *mindfulness* is directed toward strengths already present within the system (for a definition, see Bishop et al., 2004). Targeting these positive forces serves as the focal point to stimulate awareness and evoke interest. In so doing, appreciation and the desire to create more goodness becomes a resource to generate well-being and innovation.

This form of organizational change is kindred to deep change (Quinn, 2000), transformation viewed from a positive psychological perspective. In this chapter we speak about the relational aspect of this process and consider its sustainability. Transformative cooperation is a shared act of co-creation rather than an effort aimed at changing individuals or existing practices and routines. To understand how this cultivates and benefits from positive emotions and the associated factors that help drive transformation (e.g., engagement, interest, determination), we must define our term more fully. What exactly do we mean by transformative cooperation?

To advance a deep change that stimulates collective innovation, workers must apply their knowledge, skills, and passion to the art of conceptualizing something novel. This implies a deliberate new approach to work. Therefore, events must be generated that signal a major shift from existing processes and that alter the nature and function of their pre-existing behaviors. This is not a change made through diagnosis and remedy application. Nor is it declared, ordered, or implemented via mandate and then labeled as transformation. It is change established through the development of value that stimulates new growth, performed in concert with others.

*Operari*, the Latin root word for cooperation, describes it as the act of working together. But the meaning goes further, in that the shared actions must establish mutual benefit (Agnes & Laird, 1996). Thus, collaborative inquiry with shared meaningful engagement involves an association of people who come together to produce output that provides everyone involved with something of value. Central to this effort is that the process is deemed worthwhile by its participants. Combining cooperation with what we know about second-order change, transformative cooperation is therefore defined as: a dynamic process that brings organizational members together to create innovation through social interaction, where positive change emerges through new organizational forms that provide benefit for all who participate. With this as our starting-point, we now describe how positive emotions contribute to this process, explicating their benefits. To relate this to the workplace, we discuss how generating positive emotions promotes ODC by stimulating useful cognitive and social capabilities, setting forth propositions to illustrate our claims. We argue that positive emotions foster transformative cooperation in the workplace by building relational strength, thereby expanding capacity at both the individual and organizational levels.

### **Benefits of positive emotions**

Central to many current theorists' models is the proposition that emotions are associated with specific action tendencies – urges to act in particular ways (Frijda, 1986; Lazarus,

1991). It has been argued that this is what made emotions evolutionarily adaptive – in that their promotion of specific life-preserving actions in life-threatening situations served to increase the odds of our ancestors' survival. While models based on specific action tendencies provide sound descriptions of the form and function of many negative emotions, Fredrickson (1998) has argued that many positive emotions do not fit such models. While negative emotions and their functions have been well researched, the functions and benefits associated with positive emotions have generally received less scholarly attention. Thus, Fredrickson asked, 'What good are positive emotions?', and introduced the broaden-and-build theory (1998, 2000a).

The theory proposes that positive emotions serve to 'broaden' an individual's momentary thought-action repertoire, which, in turn, over time, has the effect of 'building' that individual's physical, intellectual, and social resources (Fredrickson, 1998, p. 300). According to this model, the form and function of positive and negative emotions are distinct, yet complementary. Negative emotions narrow an individual's momentary thought-action repertoire toward specific actions that served the ancestral function of promoting survival. By contrast, positive emotions broaden an individual's momentary thought-action repertoire, which in turn can build his/her enduring personal resources. The implications are that positive emotions can enlarge people's capacity to generate ideas, increase their alternatives for action, and contribute to their overall well-being. Moreover, positive emotions have an undoing effect on negative emotions. A range of intervention and coping strategies have been presented and tested, showing how positive emotions can contribute to optimized health and well-being. Cultivated positive emotions not only counteract negative emotions, but also broaden individuals' habitual modes of thinking and build their personal resources for coping. Research reflects the fortitude of positive emotions, fueling resiliency in times of stress, difficulty, or peril (Fredrickson et al., 2003) and in helping people build enduring personal resources (Fredrickson and Joiner, 2002), which can be particularly useful for coping and recovery (Tugade et al., 2004) and to support individual change (Fosha, 2004).

The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions provided a catalyst for scholars to advance the field of change management. Rather than focusing on the influences of negative reactions and how to alter them, both researchers and practitioners began to examine positive emotions, finding that their adaptive benefits go beyond survival mechanisms (Sekerka et al., 2006). Important for transformative cooperation, positive emotions signal both present-moment (Diener et al., 1991) and long-term optimal functioning (Fredrickson, 1998, 2000a). However, a key corollary of the broaden-and-build theory is that the benefits of positive emotions extend beyond simply feeling good at any given moment. Positive emotions and their associated cognitions and behaviors are not simply end-states: rather than merely signaling optimal functioning, they actually help to generate individual and organizational growth and enduring improvements in performance over time.

Scholars have already linked positive emotions with work achievement and high-quality social environments (Staw et al., 1994) and continue to investigate how positive approaches are associated with enhanced satisfaction, motivation, and productivity (Martin, 2005). Positive emotions have been associated with multiple favorable outcomes, such as greater persistence, favorable reactions to others, and helping actions (Haidt, 2000). Wadlinger and Issacowitz (2006) have even shown how the broaden-and-build

theory is demonstrated via visual perception. They found that people with positive moods, generated from positive emotions, experienced a broadened visual acuity toward peripheral images and movement to seek out the positive. This illustrates how positive feelings at work may help guide people to experience their environment in a different manner, finding that it is more positive and 'staying happy because of what they find' (p. 99).

The influence of a positive affective disposition has also been linked longitudinally to higher income and job satisfaction and less likelihood of unemployment in later years. Diener et al. (2002) explain how positive mood is likely to be linked to motivational factors that help individuals anticipate success and be more willing to tackle challenges. For example, cheerful people might interpret obstacles or failures as temporary setbacks with external causes; hence they are more prone to persevere. This is important in the workplace, as positive demeanor combined with persistence and a 'can-do' spirit are highly valued, typically reflected in favorable performance ratings. We know that positive affect is not only associated with greater work achievement but authentic positivity is also associated with having an extensive and high-quality social milieu. The positive emotional climates generated by these people are known to contribute to enhanced performance, with their presence increasing customer and company sales (George, 1998). Given that positive emotions are the means to achieve such organizational performance-related outcomes, we believe that their capacity to broaden and build may also be influential in creating transformative cooperation.

With the extensive benefits of positive emotions, cultivating their presence in the workplace is warranted. But this is easier said than done. In part, this is because people generally consider themselves mildly positive, providing for their adaptation and long-term survival (Cacioppo et al., 1999). Given that this is so, how much positive emotion is needed to generate the benefits to broaden and build? To answer this question, studies show how the ratio of people's experiences of positive to negative emotions in daily life predict their overall level of subjective well-being (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005). Overall, high ratios of positivity to negativity are associated with doing well, whereas low positivity ratios (lower than 1:1) are associated with doing poorly. Examining the ratio of people's good to bad feelings – positivity ratios – bears direct application to the workplace. For example, high positivity relates to health and well-being (Schwartz et al., 2002), more stable relationships (Gottman, 1994), and profitability (Losada, 1999). Losada, for example, found that profitable and well-regarded business teams have positivity ratios of over 5:1 in their meetings, whereas less profitable and regarded teams have ratios have less than 1:1.

While people tend to be positive, seeing most moments as good, they also carry a strong negativity bias that considers bad as stronger than good. This helps explain why positivity ratios for doing well and doing badly tend to emerge as 5:1 and 1:1, respectively. What does this mean? Consider that if negative states hold more power than positive states, although a ratio may be near 1:1 (representing equal time for the opposing state), this does not translate into the same or equal impact. Rather, such ratios actually portend a downward spiral toward doing poorly. Taken together, researchers have learned that positivity ratios must be demonstratively increased if we intend to develop upward spirals toward optimal functioning in the workplace. Therefore, to create transformative cooperation, we need a vigorously positive event followed by workplace routines that bolster positive

emotions through ongoing activities. What can be done to engender such an immediate infusion of positivity, followed by recurrent positive emotional experiences in workplace settings?

### **Building a positive workplace**

Dehler and Welsch (1994) describe work as an emotional experience. Yet management theorists have tended to neglect the impact of emotions, moods, and feelings in their analyses, with cognitive perspectives dominating much of the field (Tichy & Sherman, 1993). That is, until recently. In the past several decades, emotions have become a legitimate topic of inquiry (Kemper, 1990). A pronounced focus on positive emotions has become a feature of many studies, spurred by the advent of positive psychology in the late 1990s (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). As Fineman (1993, p. 1) remarked, when we remove the 'façade of rationality' from organizational goals, purposes, tasks, and objectives, we can find a 'veritable explosion of emotional tones'. With scholars showing a greater willingness to go beyond the scientific management paradigm, both managers and practitioners continue to garner a deeper understanding of organizational dynamics.

The broaden-and-build theory, and studies testing it, have deeply affected the ODC community, providing a more informed starting-point for change. But scientific management-based programs, characterized by the restructuring and engineering processes of strategic change, are still used as the frequent response to instill ODC. While prevalent change strategies tend to employ functional and structural solutions, they have come up short, never fully achieving projections of optimal efficiency or effectiveness (Miles et al., 1993). Such survival tactics in response to competitive pressures are unlikely to improve organizational performance over time (Dehler & Welsch, 1994). In part, this is because they are not really intended to be transformational, but are reactions to dysfunction.

As a result, scholars and practitioners have continued to press for the means to generate enduring positive change in the workplace. While traditional practices tend to achieve short-term goals for survival, structural approaches to ODC represent a limited perspective toward addressing the complex challenge of transformation. The role that emotions play in this process offers the missing link between the rational and non-rational dimensions of behaviors that support change. While both are integral components in successfully creating, accepting and implementing change, we view positive emotions as key resources to energize and sustain transformation. Therefore, if transformative cooperation is desired, the power to create deep change resides in the emotional dimension of the workplace enterprise.

Research to understand positive emotions has deepened our understanding of the importance of affect in the workplace, providing clues about how their cultivation contributes to positive emotions in organizations (Sekerka & Goosby Smith, 2003). We know that positive emotions are associated with helping individuals establish positive meaning in their job and organizational role (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) and to stimulate competence, achievement, involvement, significance, and social connection (Folkman, 1997; Ryff & Singer, 1998; Fredrickson, 2000a). We know that when individuals support others to seek positive meaning in their work, bringing forward what they value most, gratitude and enthusiasm emerge. And, by creating experiences that foster collective positive emotional environments, practitioners can stimulate cooperation in route to change (Sekerka et al., 2006).

But what type of change? Two fundamental levels of change were distinguished by Watzlawick et al. (1974), referred to as first and second order. A distinction was made between adjustments to the system and a deeper or more qualitative level of change to the system itself. Given that first-order functional changes are not sufficient for establishing a transformational shift, second-order processes are necessary to alter how the organization and one's work are perceived, construed, or understood (Bartunek & Moch, 1987). However, even if some form of transformation is achieved, sustaining this change, altering the way people feel about their work, is rare (Bushe & Kassam, 2005). In part, this is because full adoption of any kind of change is very difficult. For second-order change, the creation and assimilation of new routines and practices are essential. So how might transformative cooperation become ongoing, self-directed and adopted as a continuously perpetuated effort? How can we frame organizational change as a process of ongoing growth and development, a process that is designed for evolution – even after the initial shift occurs? We believe that sustained transformational movement requires the impacts derived from individual and collective positive emotional experiences, ensuring that workplace environments support an atmosphere conducive to producing a 5:1 or greater positivity ratio. How do we create this very positive emotional climate in the workplace?

We argue that strength-based collaborative inquiry is a pathway to cultivate positive emotional experiences, which can be used to build relational strength within the organization (Cooperrider & Sekerka, 2006). Such engagements embolden collectively experienced positive emotions that support personal and organizational growth and expansion. A robust positive emotionally charged effort such as an appreciative inquiry (AI) summit, followed by ongoing practices that support positive interactions, can be used to build capacity on a sustained basis. Given that positive emotions are associated with well-being and effectiveness, participation in a whole-scale organizational intervention such as AI (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1999), can vitalize positive emotions to commence transformative cooperation. From there, strength-based processes can become part of the workplace routine by linking to strategy, inculcating a focus on positive change into employees' organizational objectives and goals.

Through a variety of collaborative exercises, strength-based ODC techniques encourage people to share positive memories through stories, testimonials, and discussions that outline what they appreciate about their work life. With AI, workers engage in conversational activities in pairs, small groups, and in organization-wide forums, bringing every stakeholder into the process. Sekerka and her colleagues found that engagement in AI conversations produce immediate positive psychophysiological changes in participants, including a reduction in negative affect, lowered heart rate, and favorable changes in heart rate variability (Sekerka & McCraty, 2004). When engaged in AI, people collaboratively highlight, observe, and define their organization's positive core. By identifying what is most valued, workers cooperatively develop new strategies to design their shared vision for the future. Building from existing strengths, the positive core of the organization, they begin a process of self-directed organizing (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001).

Throughout this process, workers align themselves in new ways by forming groups and taking on new roles and functions. They rally around shared strengths, generating positive energy (via emotions such as enthusiasm, appreciation, hope) and, as a result, new forms of organizational relationships emerge. The action of working collaboratively, using positive experiences as levers for ODC, supports the creative thinking nec-

essary for envisaging an innovative future. This process is explicit, establishes joint ownership from the onset, and initiates transformative cooperation. Cooperrider (2001) explains that such events are triggered by the duality of positive images and positive action. By elevating the positive, fostered by mutual inquiry into what workers collectively value, there is an expansion of relating to others. This process is described in the theory of positive change (Cooperrider & Sekerka, 2003), with positive emotions serving as the initiators.

Because many positive emotions have distinctive social origins, people generally experience them as they interact with others (Watson et al., 1992). It is no surprise, then, that AI participants feel good during the engagement. We believe that it is the generation of positive emotions in community with others that initiates this process of deep change. Moreover, to the extent that workplace practices inculcate an ongoing strength-based process, sustainability is also achievable. This is especially visible during later phases of AI, when self-identified groups emerge around mutual areas of interest, as new roles emerge. From here, enthusiasm and creativity build, as a cascade of ideas stimulate activity and innovation, which contributes to the development of new organizational forms and the new roles that are associated with them.

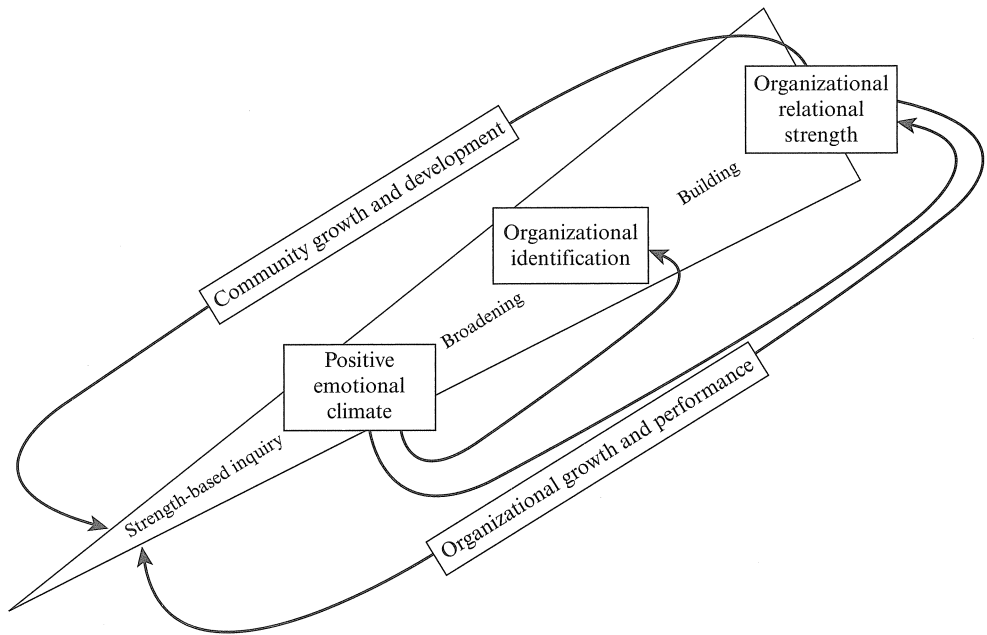
As workers use their own experiences as fodder for building the future, the process affirms, empowers, and encourages self-efficacy and the valuing of others. The concept of 'energy in action' (Quinn & Dutton, 2005) can be observed as people talk about when they were most effective and then take ownership of their collaboratively driven plan for change. The positive emotions that surface in the initial phases of strength-based inquiry are not static, but spread throughout the organization. This is similar to the phenomenon of emotional contagion (Hatfield et al., 1994). In this sense, positive emotions move via sequential events that carry positive meaning for others. Therefore, when strength-based inquiry, conversations, practices, and interactive work continue to be cultivated after the ODC event, we expect the following:

*Proposition 1* Workers who come together to achieve a shared goal with mutual benefit will experience positive emotions that contribute to a more positive organizational emotional climate.

Figure 33.1 illustrates our propositions. The figure depicts how transformative cooperation can be started with strength-based inquiry, followed by the beneficial influences of broadening and building that stem from positive emotional climates.

### **Cognitive broadening**

Because positive emotions broaden our scope of attention (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005) and habitual modes of thinking and acting (Isen, 1987), they influence how we see ourselves, giving us a broader scope of self-perception. In this way, positive emotions help people come together and grow closer. And, as this occurs, the line between the self and others can become blurred and harder to delineate (Vaughn & Fredrickson, 2006). To the extent that people view co-workers or their organization as a part of themselves, resource allocation can be perceived as shared ownership, and the differences between self and others can become less pronounced. As this happens, people adopt the characteristics of others internally and begin to view those characteristics as their own.



Source: Sekerka and Fredrickson (2008), by permission of Oxford University Press.

*Figure 33.1 Positive emotional climates and transformative cooperation*

The inclusion of others in how we see ourselves offers us a wider perspective and, when we focus on others appreciatively, people are more at ease in social contexts. Conversely, when we focus on organizational problems, negative emotions may be elevated and an ‘us-versus-them’ mindset can be promulgated (Gilmore et al., 1997). This is often followed by blaming and finger-pointing as people try to target the causes of problems (Sekerka & Smith, 2003). A positive approach using AI helps facilitate a reframing process (Bolman & Deal, 1997), which is necessary for prompting the shift required for transformation. In short, it helps people alter the way they currently see their organization and how the roles they previously assumed can be recast in a meaningful and favorable light.

For example, those who may currently use a political frame, in which resources are scarce and generate competition, can shift perceptual understanding by adopting different assumptions. Beliefs that were once associated with competition can shift to alternative views, now based on valued assumptions that see achievements as providing benefits to all involved. The cognitive broadening that positive emotions trigger may contribute to this process, bringing a wider view into focus, one that is more inclusive and represents a more cooperative stance. This can also be a turning-point, with the organization moving from the reactive stance – where problem solving and a functional orientation are directed toward survival – to a more generative one. Positive emotions coupled with collaborative values can help an organization thrive, in that its members are motivated to create new organizational forms that benefit both the individuals and their organizations. Given that positive emotions contribute to an expansion of self-concept, experiences associated with



gratitude, appreciation, and other positive emotions may be linked to people increasing their identification with their co-workers and organization (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Dutton et al., 1994). This expectation is expressed as:

*Proposition 2* A positive organizational emotional climate will contribute to increases in organizational identification.

This increased organizational identification may be a catalyst that helps to extend relational support in the workplace, which we now describe.

### **Relationship building**

As positive emotions help broaden the mindset of workers, they may also affect social interactions and ultimately contribute to transformative cooperation through increases in relational strength. For example, during an AI intervention, this form of transformation is visible in the creation of self-organized project teams, coalitions, and opportunity circles, all of which cultivate new ideas and learning. Broadened mindsets carry short-term benefits, but they also instill indirect and long-term adaptive benefits. We propose that the act of cognitive broadening, cultivated by positive emotions, helps to build enduring relational resources.

We know that assets accrued during positive emotional states are durable and outlast the transient state that led to their acquisition (Fredrickson, 2000b). Consequently, the incidental effects of positive emotional experiences serve to increase personal resources. Individuals can draw from these stores in subsequent moments and while in different emotional states. This describes the link between positive emotions and their known role in helping to transform individuals to become more creative, knowledgeable, resilient, socially integrated, and healthy over time. People who regularly experience positive emotions are not stagnant. Instead they continually grow toward further optimal functioning (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002; Fredrickson, 2003). We suggest that this same principle holds true when using strength-based approaches to instill organizational efforts to establish transformative cooperation.

Evidence from social psychological experiments have shown that people induced to feel positive emotions become more helpful to others than those in neutral emotional states (Isen, 1987). Subsequent organizational studies have demonstrated that salespeople who experience more positive emotions at work are more helpful (George, 1998). This occurs because people experiencing positive emotions are more flexible, creative, empathic, and respectful. But being helpful not only springs from positive emotional states, it can also produce them. For example, those who give help may feel proud of their actions, and this experience not only creates a momentary boost in self-esteem but can also prompt people to envisage future achievements in similar domains (Fredrickson, 2000b). Thus, to the extent that helping others instills positive emotions, it may motivate people to help again in the future.

Just as the person who gives help experiences positive emotions, the one who receives it is also likely to feel gratitude. Gratitude not only feels good but also produces a myriad of beneficial social outcomes (McCullough et al., 2001). According to McCullough et al., gratitude motivates and reinforces social actions in both the giver and the receiver of help. It motivates positive action because grateful people often feel the urge to repay those who

have helped them. And, gratitude reinforces positive action because giving thanks or acknowledgment rewards help-givers, making them feel appreciated and more likely to help others in the future. These findings reflect a robust reciprocal association between positive emotions and social support, which serves to build social and relational strength. This expectation is expressed as:

*Proposition 3* A positive organizational emotional climate will contribute to increases in organizational relational strength.

The scenario on helping also illustrates how positive emotions can spread throughout organizations, among members, and to customers, and how the effects of positive emotions can accumulate, compound, and add value to the collective. Add to this rich picture studies that show how positive emotions curb conflict by promoting constructive interpersonal engagement and encourage trust, predicting effective and integrative negotiations (e.g., Anderson & Thompson, 2004). This gives us a sense of the capacity-building potential, outcomes associated with positive emotional experiences. Important to note, positive emotions propagate within organizations not simply via facial mimicry, but because these emotions stem from and create meaningful interpersonal encounters. Accordingly, the broaden-and-build theory predicts that positive emotions in the workplace serve to support both individuals and organizations in their ability to function at higher levels. Thus, positive emotions are both an individual and a collective resource that reinforces the promotion of social interaction, instills responsibility, and advances achievement.

With the use of nonlinear dynamics to depict a model of team performance, we previously described how positivity ratios at or above 2.9 characterize flourishing health (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005). Such findings suggest that there are principles to describe relationships between positive emotion and individual and organizational flourishing. These principles relate to the movement toward optimal organizational functioning in that positive emotions fuel individuals to contribute to the effectiveness of their organization (Fredrickson, 2000b). A range of empirical evidence supports this prediction, albeit indirectly. For instance, researchers at the Gallup Organization frequently examine links between employee engagement and favorable business outcomes, such as employee turnover, customer loyalty, net sales, and financial revenues (Fleming, 2000a, 2000b; Harter, 2000). Evidence continues to emerge, reflecting how employee engagement is associated with positive emotional experiences.

Given that positive emotions contribute to the relational strength of the organization (Proposition 3), this adds value to the organization by increasing relational expansion, which in turn increases social capital. The presence of this resource can contribute to growth and favorable performance outcomes, an antecedent for organizational effectiveness. This expectation is expressed as:

*Proposition 4* Increases in organizational relational strength will contribute to organizational growth and performance.

### **Building strong community**

An underlying assumption in our work is that organizations are uniquely positioned to help build a better society. At present we view their role and associated contribution, previously known as 'corporate responsibility', as going through a transformation of its own.

We see movement away from a problem-centric approach as the motivational driver for corporate social action. Our contention is that this transformation is fueled by the positive emotional climates of organizations where transformative cooperation has extended outward to include the greater community.

The frames that previously drove organizational change looked at resources as scarce commodities. But today's strength-based approaches use relational assets as levers for creating more value and capacity, and the edification of new resources. It is therefore expected that when organizations set aside their former win-lose survivalist modalities for a more dynamic, collective capacity-building focus, strengths can be leveraged ubiquitously and limitations become outdated social constructs. This transformation alters the view of the organization from being a fixed, concrete, and finite entity where self-preservation is the reality. It shifts prior underlying assumptions so that a novel view can emerge; one that depicts workers and the organization as images of the greater good – the larger whole. In short, organizational identities are broadened to a unified collective that extends beyond the confines of traditional organizational boundaries. No longer is social action based on the need to resolve issues and problems; rather, it is based on actions resulting from the view that the community is part of the organization and vice versa.

With this expansion comes the creation of a reality in which everyone is viewed as a part of the larger whole (Barros & Cooperrider, 2000). It is a picture that continually evolves through sustained rejuvenation. We propose that this evolution is resourced by positive emotions, which energize a more holistic stance through acts of kindness, compassion, giving, and helping others. It is sustained by renewed belief, focus, and trust in the goodness of the universal infinite whole. We believe that as this cycle – one of continuous value creation – is established, individuals, organizations, institutions, and governments can be transformed into more compassionate and harmonious environments, as reflected in new designs of transformative cooperation.

The benefits of positive emotions and their association with expansion of relational capacities are boundary free. This is the very essence of creating new designs in transformative cooperation: positive emotions provide the foundation for optimal organizational functioning, which have unlimited potential to extend outward to society. The expansion of relatedness is not bound by the confines of an organization. It is a capacity unconstrained by time or space. Our contention is that positive emotions energize new organizational forms that emerge from transformative cooperation, which sets the stage for growth and development that can move outwardly into the community at large. We express this idea as:

*Proposition 5* Increases in organizational relational strength will contribute to the community's growth and development.

Taken together, our propositions edify the theory of positive organizational change (Cooperrider & Sekerka, 2006) by explicating how positive emotions serve as the cornerstone for transformative cooperation.

### **Implications and future research**

In this chapter we described how transformative cooperation can be created through ODC techniques that stimulate, generate, and support positive emotions. As people work

together to create change through strength-based techniques such as AI, value is tapped to expand existing strengths. The implications of the research cited and the propositions we set forth suggest that transformative cooperation can broaden and build workplace capacity. More specifically, when positive emotion climates are generated in the workplace, they can potentially increase:

- individuals' organizational identification;
- individuals' organizational relational strength;
- organizational growth and performance; and
- community growth and development.

The overarching implication of this discussion is that the positive emotions of workers' momentary experiences can be both long-range indicators *and*, generators of optimal organizational functioning. Once initiated, as cycles of transformative cooperation continue, we believe that nurturing positive emotional experiences in the workplace will help generate outcomes that contribute to upward spirals of growth, reverberating outward, beyond the confines of the organization. This progression, as represented in individual well-being and organizational optimal functioning, is expected to continue to expand, toward the edification of stronger communities.

To potentially achieve such robust outcomes, we must not only support the cultivation and extension of positive emotions in the workplace, but also understand how to effectively address and draw strength from negative emotions as well. As Linley et al. (2006) comment, if positive psychology and its specialized disciplines hope to achieve long-term success, we must examine how to integrate disorder and dysfunction with achievement, aspirations, and performance. This suggests a research path to create and test techniques that not only build value from strength, but also cultivate strength from weakness.

How might we address this concern? Drawing from strength- and deficit-based change management theory, practices can be woven together to create a more balanced approach (Sekerka, 2007). To generate sustainable transformative cooperation, hybrid techniques need to be developed that generate positive emotions while also educating individuals on how to manage negative ones (Cryer et al., 2003). Research is needed to study hybrid forms, to ascertain how strength-based interventions can be woven with diagnostics to generate the necessary positive emotions for transformative cooperation, while also attending to immediate concerns for survival. If we want to understand how positive emotions are associated with the relational capacity to broaden and build, it seems likely that workers must leverage both strengths and weaknesses if upward spirals of positive change are to endure. This presents a variety of research questions, such as:

- What inquiry strategies are effective in drawing upon organizational strengths, evoking positive emotions while managing negative ones, given the organizational context and situation?
- What quantifiable practices can be inculcated into workplace routines that help build and sustain positive emotional experiences over time?
- What ODC techniques are useful to instill transformative cooperation, given worker attitudes, personalities, gender, and cultural differences?

- How can we measure transformative cooperation, demonstrating short- and long-term impacts?

Perhaps the greatest challenge is to directly link positive emotions with sustainable transformative cooperation. To begin this research trajectory, studies can employ a variety of techniques and methodologies to explore how individuals work together to achieve a shared goal with mutual benefit. Both short- and long-term performance objectives can be tracked, along with employee emotions and affective experiences. Because the act of recording positive events or reframing negative ones can be used both as an intervention and as a measurement tool, perhaps this is a viable means to impact on and track mood and attitudes over time. This underscores the need for fieldwork and cross-disciplinary efforts to fully understand the benefits of positive emotions, and how they can be sustained for optimal health, functioning, and well-being in the workplace. Positive psychology along with its associated disciplines will be enriched as we learn more about how positive emotions and performance are intertwined.

In conclusion, we see that the goal of transformative cooperation holds great promise for creating sustained positive change. If we develop this capacity within our organizations, it can then extend beyond the confines of our workplace settings, and into the life of the community. Such efforts portend an unlimited capacity and sustainable resource to serve the greater good.

## Note

- \* Special thanks to Michael A. Cohn who provided thoughtful insights that added value toward the development of Figure 33.1.

## References

- Agnes, M. and C. Laird (eds) (1996), *Webster's New World Dictionary and Thesaurus*, New York: Macmillan.
- Anderson, C. and L. Thompson (2004), 'Affect from the top down: how powerful individuals' positive affect shapes negotiations', *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, **95** (2), 125–39.
- Barros, I.O. and D.L. Cooperrider (2000), 'A story of nutrimental in Brazil: how wholeness, appreciation, and inquiry bring out the best in human organization', *Organizational Development Journal*, **18** (2), 22–9.
- Bartunek, J. and M. Moch (1987), 'First order, second order and third order change and OD interventions', *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, **23**, 483–500.
- Bishop, S., M. Lau, S. Shapiro, L. Carlson, N.D. Anderson, J. Carmody, Z.V. Segal, S. Abbey, M. Specia, D. Velting and G. Devins (2004), 'Mindfulness: a proposed operational definition', *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, **11** (3), 230–41.
- Bolman, L.G. and T.B. Deal (1997), 'The power of reframing', in L.G. Bolman and T.B. Deal (eds), *Reframing Organizations*, 2nd edn, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, pp. 1–15.
- Bushe, G.R. and A.F. Kassam (2005), 'When is appreciative inquiry transformational? A meta-case analysis', *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, **41** (2), 161–82.
- Cacioppo, J.T., W.L. Gardner and G.G. Berntson (1999), 'The affective system has parallel and integrative processing components: form follows function', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **76** (5), 839–55.
- Cooperrider, D.L. (2001), 'Positive image, positive action', in D.L. Cooperrider, P.F. Sorensen Jr, T.F. Yaeger and D. Whitney (eds), *Appreciative Inquiry: An Emerging Direction for Organization Development*, Champaign, IL: Stipes, pp. 29–53.
- Cooperrider, D.L. and L.E. Sekerka (2003), 'Elevation of inquiry into the appreciable world: toward a theory of positive organizational change', in K. Cameron, J. Dutton and R. Quinn (eds), *Positive Organizational Scholarship*, San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, pp. 225–40.
- Cooperrider, D.L. and L.E. Sekerka (2006), 'Toward a theory of positive organizational change', in J.V. Gallos (ed.), *Organization Development: A Jossey-Bass Reader*, San Francisco, CA: John Wiley, pp. 223–38.
- Cooperrider, D.L. and S. Srivastva (1999), 'Appreciative inquiry in organizational life', in S. Srivastva and D.L. Cooperrider (eds), *Appreciative Management and Leadership: The Power of Positive Thought and Action in Organization*, rev. edn, Cleveland, OH: Lakeshore Communications, pp. 401–41.

- Cooperrider, D.L. and D. Whitney (2001), 'A positive revolution in change', in D.L. Cooperrider, P. Sorenson, D. Whitney and T. Yeager (eds), *Appreciative Inquiry: An Emerging Direction for Organization Development*, Champaign, IL: Stipes, pp. 9–29.
- Cryer, B., R. McCraty and D. Childre (2003), 'Pull the plug on stress', *Harvard Business Review*, **81** (7), 102–7.
- Dehler, G.E. and M.A. Welsch (1994), 'Spirituality and organizational transformation: implications for the new management paradigm', *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, **9** (6), 17–27.
- Diener, E., C. Nickerson, R.E. Lucas and E. Sandvik (2002), 'Dispositional affect and job outcomes', *Social Indicators Research*, **59**, 229–59.
- Diener, E., E. Sandvik and W. Pavot (1991), 'Happiness is the frequency, not the intensity, of positive versus negative affect', in F. Strack (ed.), *Subjective Well-Being: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, Oxford: Pergamon, pp. 119–39.
- Dutton, J.E. and J.M. Dukerich (1991), 'Keeping an eye on the mirror: image and identity in organizational adaptation', *Academy of Management Journal*, **34** (3), 517–54.
- Dutton, J.E., J.M. Dukerich and C.V. Harquail (1994), 'Organizational images and member identification', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, **39**, 239–63.
- Fineman, S. (1993), *Emotion in Organizations*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Fleming, J.H. (2000a), 'Relating employee engagement and customer loyalty to business outcomes in the financial services industry', *Gallup Research Journal*, **3**, 91–101.
- Fleming, J.H. (2000b), 'Relating employee engagement and customer loyalty to business outcomes in the retail industry', *Gallup Research Journal*, **3**, 103–15.
- Folkman, S. (1997), 'Positive psychological states and coping with severe stress', *Social Science Medicine*, **45**, 1207–21.
- Fosha, D. (2004), 'Nothing that feels bad is ever the last step: the role of positive emotions in experiential work with difficult emotional experiences', *Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy*, **11** (1), 30–43.
- Fredrickson, B.L. (1998), 'What good are positive emotions?', *Review of General Psychology*, **2**, 300–319.
- Fredrickson, B.L. (2000a), 'Cultivating positive emotions to optimize health and well-being', *Prevention and Treatment*, **3**, <http://journals.apa.org/prevention>.
- Fredrickson, B.L. (2000b), 'Why positive emotions matter in organizations: lessons from the broaden-and-build model', *The Psychologist-Manager's Journal*, Special Issue: 'Positive Psychology and Its Implications for the Psychologist-Manager', **4** (2), 131–42.
- Fredrickson, B.L. (2003), 'The value of positive emotions', *American Scientist*, **91**, 330–35.
- Fredrickson, B.L. and C. Branigan (2005), 'Positive emotions broaden the scope of attention and thought–action repertoires', *Cognition and Emotion*, **19**, 313–32.
- Fredrickson, B.L. and J. Joiner (2002), 'Positive emotions trigger upward spirals toward emotional well-being', *Psychological Science*, **13**, 172–5.
- Fredrickson, B.L. and M.F. Losada (2005), 'Positive affect and the complex dynamics of human flourishing', *American Psychologist*, **60** (7), 678–86.
- Fredrickson, B.L., M.M. Tugade, C.E. Waugh and G.R. Larkin (2003), 'What good are positive emotions in crises? A prospective study of resilience and emotions following the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11th, 2001', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **84**, 365–76.
- Frijda, N.H. (1986), *The Emotions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- George, J.M. (1998), 'Salesperson and mood at work: implications for helping customers', *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, **17** (3), 23–30.
- Gilmore, T.N., G.P. Shea and M. Useem (1997), 'Side effects of corporate cultural transformations', *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, **33** (2), 174–90.
- Golembiewski, R.T. (1976), *Approaches to Planned Change Part II: Macro-Level Interventions and Change-Agent Strategies*, New York: Marcel Dekker.
- Golembiewski, R.T., K. Billingsely and S. Yeager (1979), 'Measuring change and persistence in human affairs: types of change generated by OD designs', *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, **1**, 143–55.
- Gottman, J.M. (1994), *What Predicts Divorce? The Relationship between Marital Processes and Marital Outcomes*, Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Haidt, J. (2000), 'The positive emotion of elevation', *Prevention and Treatment*, **3**, <http://journals.apa.org/prevention>.
- Harter, J. (2000), 'The linkage of employee perception to outcomes in a retail environment: cause and effect?', *Gallup Research Journal*, **3**, 25–38.
- Hatfield, E., J.T. Cacioppo and R.L. Rapson (1994), *Emotional Contagion: Studies in Emotion and Social Interaction*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Isen, A.M. (1987), 'Positive affect, cognitive processes, and social behavior', *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, **20**, 203–53.
- Kemper, T.D. (1990), 'Themes and variations in the sociology of emotions', in T.D. Kemper (ed.), *Research Agendas in the Sociology of Emotions*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, pp. 3–23.

- Lazarus, R.S. (1991), *Emotion and Adaptation*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Linley, P.A., J.S. Harrington and A.M. Wood (2006), 'Positive psychology: past, present, and (possible) future', *Journal of Positive Psychology*, **1** (1), 3–16.
- Losada, M. (1999), 'The complex dynamics of high performance teams', *Mathematical and Computer Modeling*, **30** (9–10), 179–92.
- Martin, A.J. (2005), 'The role of positive psychology in enhancing satisfaction, motivation, and productivity in the workplace', *Journal of Organizational Behavior Management*, **24** (1–2), 111–31.
- McCullough, M., S.D. Kilpatrick, R.A. Emmons and D.B. Larson (2001), 'Is gratitude a moral affect?', *Psychological Bulletin*, **127** (2), 249–66.
- Miles, G., C.C. Snow and M.P. Sharfman (1993), 'Industry variety and performance', *Strategic Management Journal*, **14** (3), 163–77.
- Quinn, R.E. (2000), *Change the World: How Ordinary People Can Achieve Extraordinary Results*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Quinn, R. and J. Dutton (2005), 'Coordination as energy-in-conversation', *Academy of Management Review*, **30** (1), 36–57.
- Ryff, C.D. and B. Singer (1998), 'Contours of positive human health', *Psychological Inquiry*, **9**, 1–28.
- Schwartz, R.M., C.F. Reynolds, III, M.E. Thase, E. Frank, A.L. Fasiczka and D.A.F. Haaga (2002), 'Optimal and normal affect balance in psychotherapy of major depression: evaluation of the balanced states of mind model', *Behavioral and Cognitive Psychotherapy*, **30** (4), 439–50.
- Sekerka, L.E. (2007), 'Moral action in everyday life: an ethics process to foster interest and determination in the workplace', paper presented at the conference on Business Ethics in a Global World: China, India, and Beyond, Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA, March.
- Sekerka, L.E. and B.L. Fredrickson (2008), 'Working positively toward transformative cooperation', in A. Linley, S. Harrington and N. Page (eds), *Handbook of Positive Psychology and Work*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sekerka, L.E. and R. McCraty (2004), 'Understanding the psychophysiology of appreciation in the workplace', in D. Cooperrider and M. Avital (eds), *Constructive Discourse and Human Organization: Advances in Appreciative Inquiry*, Oxford: Elsevier Science, pp. 217–39.
- Sekerka, L.E. and J. Goosby Smith (2003), 'Appreciative change processes in groups: impacts on emotion and well-being', paper presented at the American Psychological Association Annual Meeting, Toronto, Canada, August.
- Sekerka, L.E., A. Brumbaugh, J. Rosa and D. Cooperrider (2006), 'Comparing appreciative inquiry to a diagnostic technique in organizational change: the moderating effects of gender', *International Journal of Organization Theory and Behavior*, **9** (4), 449–89.
- Seligman, M.P. and M. Csikszentmihalyi (2000), 'Positive psychology: an introduction', *American Psychologist*, **55** (1), 4–14.
- Staw, B.M., R.I. Sutton and H. Pelled (1994), 'Employee positive emotion and favorable outcomes at the workplace', *Organization Science*, **5** (1), 51–72.
- Tichy, N.M. and S. Sherman (1993), *Control Your Destiny or Someone Else Will*, New York: Currency Doubleday.
- Tugade, M.M., B.L. Fredrickson and L.F. Barrett (2004), 'Psychological resilience and positive emotional granularity: examining the benefits of positive emotions on coping and health', *Journal of Personality*, **72** (6), 1161–80.
- Wadlinger, H.A. and D.M. Issacowitz (2006), 'Positive mood broadens visual attention to positive stimuli', *Motivation and Emotion*, **30** (1), 87–99.
- Watson, D., L.A. Clark, C.W. McIntyre and S. Hamaker (1992), 'Affect, personality, and social activity', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **63**, 1011–25.
- Watzlawick, P., J.H. Weakland and R. Fisch (1974), *Change: Principles of Problem Formation and Problem Resolution*, New York: Norton.
- Vaugh, C.E. and B.L. Fredrickson (2006), 'Nice to know you: positive emotions, self-other overlap, and complex understanding in the formation of new relationships', *Journal of Positive Psychology*, **1** (2), 93–106.
- Wrzesniewski, A. and J.E. Dutton (2001), 'Crafting a job: revisioning employees as active crafters of their work', *Academy of Management Review*, **26** (2), 179–201.