

## **Working Positively toward Transformative Cooperation**

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This chapter describes how positive emotions can help create transformative cooperation 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 the human design, are inextricably linked to social interaction. We are therefore drawn to examine the impact that positive emotions can have on people's daily life experiences in a variety of ways, including how people relate to others and create new and useful relationships in the workplace.

Our discussion begins to show how cooperation can be created through the broadening and building capacities of positive emotions as organizations undergo attempts to evolve. We consider how strength-based organizational development and change (ODC) processes can be used to evoke positive emotions in support of collaborative growth and deep change (Quinn, 2002). Such efforts, referred to as transformative cooperation, evolve through collectively beneficial processes. We begin with a description and definition of this phenomenon and continue with an explication of transformative cooperation by using current research that applies the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2000a). We summarize our discussion with some implications for practice and suggest future research that we believe will advance Positive Organizational Scholarship.

### **Transformative Cooperation**

As people engage in organizational change, they are a part of a unique experience, given the

moment, context, circumstances, and who is involved. We turn our attentions toward a distinctive form of organizational change, one that is a bit different from those set forth in existing typologies (for example, Bartunek & Mock, 1987; Golembiewski, 1976). This form, referred to as transformative cooperation, emerges when efforts to infuse organizational rejuvenation are employed. But it involves a unique kind of cooperation, one that is marked by the continuous flow of ongoing growth and development toward new and dynamic organizational forms. Prior descriptions of organizational transformation have been referenced as second-order, radical, or gamma change (Golembiewski, Billingsely, & Yeager, 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. Unlike prior descriptions, we view transformative cooperation as sustained 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 this process they must continually work to suspend judgment and let go of prior assumptions. This includes reactionary measures to problem solve, alleviate dysfunction, and the desire to overcome barriers that thwart goal achievement. Instead, a focused *mindfulness* is directed toward strengths already present within the system (for a definition see Bishop, Lau, Shapiro, Carlson, Anderson, Carmody, et al., 2004). Targeting these positive forces serve 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 ODC. This form of transformation is kindred to deep change (Quinn, 2000) viewed from a positive

psychological perspective. In this chapter we speak to the relational aspect of this process in the workplace and consider its sustainability.

Transformative cooperation is a shared act of co-creation, rather than a process to change existing practices and routines. Traditional ODC techniques usually begin with diagnostics to determine the source of dysfunction. From here, a causal analysis is deployed to improve the system (Kotter, 1998). These efforts target “what’s wrong” as the starting point and driver for change. The burning platform motif and infused sense of urgency motivates people to resolve issues; however, this can also escalate anxiety to energize movement, which may increase worker stress, worry, resentment, and fear.

Conversely, positive, or strength-based processes, initiate ODC by having people collectively focus on what they value most. Unlike diagnostics that target deficits, processes such as Appreciative Inquiry (AI) direct attention toward what gives the most meaning and life to their work (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1999). Here, people consider what they find most worthwhile about their work and organization, which creates a salient connection to positive experiences with one’s job, coworkers, and stakeholders. This is frequently accompanied by positive emotions that can promote sustained interest in the activity. As people work together to discover what they value most, they build upon their shared strengths to create more strength (Cooperrider & Sekerka, 2006). What emerges is often a novel evolutionary form of change, which is not only growth, but innovation as well. In short, strength-based collaborative activities help create new value.

This shared act of valuing and creating value contributes to capacity building that serves to expand the enterprise as a whole. Practitioners have found that techniques that draw attention to the best of human functioning facilitate positive change. When people look to their strengths, this

coming together to elevate a common goal lays a foundation for transformation through cooperation. It begins with discovery of strengths and fusion of shared value, which in turn can activate positive energy to fuel the creation of additional capacity (Cooperrider & Sekerka, 2003). Each stage is triggered by further inquiry into what is most valued that continues to expand workers' relatedness. To understand how this taps positive emotions and their associated factors that help drive transformation (e.g., engagement, interest, determination), we must define our term more fully. We exactly do we mean by transformative cooperation?

To advance 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 that alter the nature and function of 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 (Webster's New World Dictionary and Thesaurus, 1996). But the meaning goes further, in that the shared actions must establish mutual benefit. Thus, collaborative inquiry with shared meaningful engagement is an association of persons who come together to produce output that provides everyone involved with something of value. Cooperation can start with a simple act of working in relation with others, but the results of this activity must also provide advantages for all those engaged. Central to this effort is that the process is deemed worthwhile by participants. Combining cooperation with what we know about second-order change, transformative cooperation can be defined as: a process that brings organizational members together to create

innovation through social interaction, with advantages for all who participate. With this as our starting point, we can move to describe how positive emotions contribute to this process, setting forth propositions to illustrate our claims. To relate this to the workplace, we discuss how generating positive emotions promotes ODC by stimulating useful cognitive and social capabilities. We argue that positive emotions foster transformative cooperation in the workplace by building relational strength, adding capacity and expansion at both the individual and organizational levels.

### **Benefits of Positive Emotions**

In general, emotions are associated with action tendencies (Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991; Levenson, 1994). Fredrickson (2000a) describes how positive emotions broaden people's momentary thought-action repertoires, widening the array of thoughts and actions that come to mind. For example, enjoyment creates the urge to have fun and push the limits; interest, the urge to inquire and probe; gratitude, the urge to help others; and so on. Emotions provide us with inputs and ideas about ways to behave. Therefore, they serve as useful internal guides to suggest possible alternative courses for action. Typically these sets of behavioral options narrow as we create a path toward action. We tend to choose or adopt, consciously or unconsciously, specific responses that result from experienced emotions. Central to this thesis is that action tendencies are what make emotions evolutionarily adaptive. That is, certain actions have proved effective in the preservation of life—our survival.

While negative tendencies and responses have been well researched, the benefits associated with positive emotions have generally received less scholarly attention. When Fredrickson first asked, "What good are positive emotions?" she introduced the broaden-and-build theory (1998,

2000a). This theory provided a catalyst for scholars to revise their understanding of organizational development and change. 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, Brumbaugh, Rosa, & Cooperrider, 2006). Specifically, positive emotions can broaden peoples' capacity to generate ideas, increase their alternatives for action, and contribute to their overall well-being. Research reflects the fortitude of positive emotions; specifically, fueling resiliency in times of stress, difficulty, or peril (Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003) and in helping people change. Positive affective markers are actually used to signal the operation of healing and transformational processes (Fosha, 2004). Because of these features, we know that positive emotions help build enduring personal resources (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002), particularly useful for coping and recovery (Tugade, Fredrickson, & Barrett, 2004).

Important for transformative cooperation, positive emotions signal both present-moment (Diener, Sandvik, & Pavot, 1991) and long-term optimal functioning (Fredrickson, 1998, 2000a). Daily optimal functioning is supported on an ongoing basis as we work with, interact, and relate to others. As most of us spend many of our waking hours engaged in work-related activities, the benefits of positive emotions extend beyond simply feeling good at any given moment. We know that actions associated with positive emotions are not simply end-states. They help stimulate individual and organizational growth and performance over time.

Scholars have already linked positive emotions with work achievement and high-quality social environments (Staw, Sutton, & Pelled, 1994) and continue to investigate how positive approaches are associated with enhanced satisfaction, motivation, and productivity (Martin, 2004/2005). Positive emotions have been associated with favorable outcomes in multiple ways,

such as greater persistence, favorable reactions to others, and helping actions (Haidt, 2000). Wadlinger and Issacowitz (2006) demonstrated the broaden-and-build theory through positive visual perception. People with positive moods, generated from positive emotions, experienced a broadened visual acuity towards 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 been linked longitudinally to higher income and job satisfaction and less likelihood of unemployment in later years. Diener and his colleagues (2002) explain how positive mood is likely to be linked with 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 customers and company sales (George, 1998). Given that positive emotions are the means to achieve organizational performance-related outcomes, we believe that their capacity to broaden-and-build are also be influential in creating transformative cooperation.

With the benefits of positive emotions it may be apropos to pursue or cultivate their presence. But this is easier said than done. A paradox emerges in how affect is experienced, presenting a

particularly interesting challenge to researchers. People generally consider themselves mildly positive. This helps to ensure their adaptive success (Cacioppo, Gardner, & Berntson, 1999). Given 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.

Thus, 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, we have learned that positivity ratios must be demonstratively increased if we intend to develop upward spirals toward optimal functioning. Therefore, to create transformative cooperation, we need a vigorously positive event. But this must be followed by workplace routines that bolster positive emotions through sustained efforts. What can be done to engender such an immediate infusion of positivity, followed by recurrent positive emotional experiences in

workplace settings?

We view collaborative strength-based inquiry as a means to promote positive emotional experiences, which can be used to build relational strength within the organization. Such engagements embolden collectively experienced positive emotions that support growth and expansion. A robust positive emotionally charged effort is needed to trigger first trigger this process. But such events must then be followed by ongoing practices that support ongoing positive strength-based interactions, exercises that continue to build the organization's capacity on a sustained basis. Given that positive emotions are associated with well-being and organizational effectiveness, participation in a whole scale organizational intervention such as AI, can vitalize positive emotions to commence transformative cooperation. From there, strength-based inquiry can become part of the workplace routine by linking it directly to strategy, inculcating positive change into members' organizational objectives and goals.

### **Positive Emotions and Positive Change**

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 emerged as 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 “facade 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 will continue to garner a deeper understanding of organizational dynamics.

The broaden-and-build theory and studies testing it, have explicated the benefits of positive emotions. This work has deeply affected the ODC community, providing a more informed starting point for change. Reliance on scientific management-based programs, characterized by the restructuring and engineering processes of strategic change, are still the first response to instill organizational change. While this is likely the result of survival tactics surfacing quickly in response to competitive pressures, studies reflect that such tactics simply do not improve organizational performance (Dehler & Welsch, 1994). As a result, scholars and practitioners continue to press for the means to generate enduring positive change in the workplace. While traditional practices tend to achieve short-term goals, structural approaches to ODC represent a limited view 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 accepting, implementing, and change, we view positive emotions as key resources to energize and sustain transformation. Therefore, we believe that if transformative cooperation is desired, the power to create such deep change resides in the emotional side of the workplace enterprise.

Positive Psychology and the work to understand positive emotions in the workplace have deepened our understanding of affect in the workplace. It has provided clues as to how positive emotions support positive change (Sekerka & Smith, 2003), help individuals' establish positive meaning in their job and organizational role (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), and cultivate competence, achievement, involvement, significance, and social connection (Folkman, 1997; Fredrickson, 2000a; Ryff & Singer, 1998). When individuals help others seek positive meaning

in their work, bringing forward what they value most, emotions such as gratitude and enthusiasm emerge, this can stimulate further cooperation in route to change (Sekerka et al., 2006).

One way to instill this positive meaning, worth, and value in organizations is through strength-based approaches to change. While prevalent ODC change strategies tend to employ functional and structural solutions, as suggested, they have come up short, never fully achieving projections of optimal efficiency or effectiveness (Miles, Snow, & Sharfman, 1993). 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). But even if some form of transformation is achieved, sustainability is rare (Bushe & Kassam, 2004). In part, this is because sustainability is difficult to evoke and quantify. How can you measure ongoing change; more specifically, sustainable transformative cooperation? Perhaps a more important question is: how can this form of transformation become ongoing, self-directed, and adopted as a continuously perpetuated effort? How can we consider organizational change as a process of ongoing growth and development, one that is nurtured for ongoing 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 positivity ratio.

Workers engage in these conversational activities in pairs, small groups, and in organization-wide forums, bringing every stakeholder into the process. Through a variety of collaborative exercises, people share positive memories through stories, testimonials, and discussions that outline what they appreciate about their work life. Use of AI has been shown to have positive psychophysiological outcomes, such as a reduction in negative affect and lowered heart rate

(Sekerka & McCraty, 2004). Sekerka and her colleagues have found that workers experience favorable impacts to heart rate variability when they reflect on and share appreciative thoughts about their organization. Moreover, that outward-focused appreciation may have more pronounced links to positive psychophysiological effects than inward-focused appreciation. This finding helps to show how the act of valuing others in the workplace can contribute to broader thinking, which may contribute to idea generation. As such, outward-focused appreciation may help support revisions to the meaning of one's job and the organization, essential in transformational change. In this process, 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 positive future. Building from existing strengths, the positive core of the organization, they begin a process of self-directed organizing (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001). People literally move to align themselves in new ways by forming groups that agree to take on new functions. They rally around shared strengths, generating enthusiasm, appreciation, hope, and interest. As a result of this movement, new relationships and new forms of organizational relating emerge. The action of working collaboratively, using positive experiences as levers for change, supports the creative thinking necessary for envisioning an innovative future. This process is explicit and 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. It starts with an experience of elevating the positive that is fostered by mutual inquiry into what workers collectively value. It continues with the process of extension, as people expand their relatedness to others. This process is described in the theory of positive change (Cooperrider & Sekerka, 2003), with positive emotions described as the initiators of

transformation.

Because many positive emotions have distinctive social origins, people generally experience them as they interact with others (Watson, Clark, McIntyre, & Hamaker, 1992). It is no surprise, then, that AI participants, along with other techniques that promote positive cooperation, feel good during the engagement. We believe, that it's the positive emotions generated in collectives that helps instill change and sustains the process, because of their enduring and expansive qualities. This is 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 innovation.

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. Conversations appear to instill “energy in action” (Quinn & Dutton, 2005) as people talk about when they were most effective and then own their collaborative effort—a positive future. While enthusiasm becomes prominent in this process (Sekerka & Smith, 2003), we believe they are not static, but spread throughout the organization. This is similar to the phenomenon of emotional contagion (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1993, 1994). In this sense, positive emotions move via sequential events that carry positive meaning for others. When these conversations and interactive work are supported, continuing on after the AI event ends, we expect the following:

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

### **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 (Waugh & Fredrickson, 2005). To the extent that people view coworkers 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.

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* mind-set can be promulgated (Gilmore, Shea, & Useem, 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 alter the way members 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 engendering different assumptions. Beliefs that were once associated with competition can shift to alternative views, now based on 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 a more 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.

As positive emotions widen self-perspectives, they may also motivate people to enter and maintain relationships, thus promoting their inclusion of resources, attitudes, and characteristics of others into their repertoire of self. We suggest that collective strength-based processes that bring people together to co-create their present and future, positive emotions are generated in groups that encourage individual cognitive broadening that may increase the desire for organizational identification. Dutton and her colleagues found that when people adopt the attributes of their organization into their self-concept, the connection is defined as organizational identification (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). Given that positive emotions contribute to an expansion of self, experiences associated with gratitude, appreciation, and other positive emotions may be linked to people increasing their identification with their coworkers and organization. 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 mind-set of workers, they may also affect interactions and ultimately contribute to transformative cooperation through increases in relational strength. During an AI, this transformation is visible in the creation of self-organized project teams, coalitions, and opportunity circles, all of which cultivate new ideas and learning (Cooperrider &

Srivastva, 1999). Broadened mind-sets obviously carry short-term benefits, but they also instill indirect and long-term adaptive benefits. We propose that the act of cognitive broadening actually 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. Individuals who regularly experience positive emotions are not stagnant. Instead they continually grow toward further optimal functioning (Fredrickson, 2003; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002). 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 envision 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 will experience 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, Kilpatrick, Emmons, & Larson, 2001). According to McCullough and his colleagues, 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. This result reflects a robust 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 further studies that show how positive emotions curb organizational conflict by promoting constructive interpersonal engagement and we see their capacity-building qualities (Baron, 1992). 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 at work 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 reinforce the promotion of social interaction, instill responsibility, and to advance achievement.

With the use of nonlinear dynamics to depict a model of team performance, positivity ratios

at or above 2.9 characterize flourishing health (Losada & Heaphy, 2004). 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, 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 to infuse change 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 moves the corporation beyond viewing itself as a fixed, concrete, and finite entity where self-preservation is the reality. It shifts prior underlying assumptions so that a novel view emerges; 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 may 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 new organizational forms that emerge from transformative cooperation are energized by positive emotions, which sets the stage for growth and development that can move outwardly into the community and society 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 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 and propositions we set forth suggest that transformative cooperation can broaden and build workplace capacity. More specifically, when positive emotions are generated in the workplace, they can potentially increase:

- Individuals' organizational identification.
- Individuals' and organizational relational strength.
- Organizational and community growth and performance.

The overarching implication is that the positive emotions of workers' momentary experiences can be long-range indicators 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, are 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 we must also understand how to draw strength from negative emotions as well. As Linley et al. (2006) entreat, 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 perhaps be woven together, not to privilege the positive (Fineman, 1996), but creating a more holistic approach. 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 (Sekerka, 2007). Research needs to study hybrid forms of inquiry to see how strength-based can be woven with diagnostics to generate the necessary positive emotions for transformative cooperation, while addressing issues that require resolution 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 evoking positive emotions while managing negative ones, given the organizational context?
- What exercises can be inculcated into workplace routines that help build and sustain positive emotional experiences over time?
- What inquiry strategies are useful to instill transformative cooperation, given worker attitudes, personality, and gender 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. So, 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 collective 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 as an intervention and a measurement tool, perhaps this may be the actual means to impact mood and attitudes over time.

This underscores the need for field work and cross discipline 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 feelings and performance are intertwined. In conclusion, we see that goal of transformative cooperation holds great promise for serving the greater good. If we extend this capacity within our organizations, it will go beyond the confines of our workplace settings, and into the lives of community. Such efforts portend an unlimited capacity and sustainable resource to serve the greater good.

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**Figure 1. Positive Emotional Climates and Transformative Cooperation**



