
**POSITIVE
ORGANIZATIONAL
SCHOLARSHIP**

**Foundations of a
New Discipline**

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they have heard, reaffirm that the group collectively may know more than they do, that the group will think better if it gets into motion and thinks while doing, and that strength in dynamic environments comes from an assurance that watchiness and alertness are deployed reliably. If individual safety remains the one uncontested element in Maslow's otherwise much criticized hierarchy of needs (1970), then it seems reasonable to argue that collective safety, both psychological and physical, is just as crucial for groups if they are to strive for virtue, extraordinary performance, and lives that are worth living. Enacting that safety is virtuous organizing.

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Chapter 6

Acts of Gratitude in Organizations

Robert A. Emmons

In ordinary life we hardly realize that we receive a great deal more than we give, and that it is only with gratitude that life becomes rich.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Why include a chapter on gratitude in a volume dedicated to positive organizational functioning? Because gratitude is a universal human virtue, and this volume is about virtues. Park and Peterson (Chapter 3) include gratitude among the “transcendent virtues”—those inner qualities that strengthen bonds and connections with entities beyond the self. Religions and philosophies around the world have long acclaimed the inner state of gratitude and its outward manifestation in thanksgiving as an indispensable manifestation of virtue, and an integral component of health, wholeness, and well-being (Carman & Streng, 1989; Emmons & Hill, 2001). Gratitude expresses a fundamental value of human existence that was known and acknowledged from the Roman philosopher Seneca up to contemporary thinkers, from the oldest religions and cultures to modern expressions of thanksgiving customs and rituals around the world. Cicero, in *Oratio Pro Muro Plancio* (XXXIII) deemed it “not only the greatest of the virtues, but

the parent of all others." Gratefulness is a highly prized human disposition in Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu thought (Ermons & Hill, 2001).

My primary purpose in this chapter is to sketch the possibility of a psychology of gratitude for organizational studies. In order to accomplish this goal, the chapter is organized around the following: defining gratitude; providing a brief overview of gratitude in the history of ideas; identifying the key benefits of gratitude in organizations; and articulating key areas of research that organizational scholars should pursue. The argument to be developed is that gratitude is a wellspring of trust and goodwill that can serve as a hallmark of positive organizational performance.

ON THE MEANING OF GRATITUDE

What is gratitude and how does it relate to organizational functioning? Park and Peterson define gratitude as "being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen." We are all familiar with the feeling of gratitude—we receive a gift, and we are grateful to the person who has provided this kindness to us. We recognize that they need not have made this gesture, but did so out of goodwill toward us. In psychological parlance, gratitude is the positive recognition of benefits received. In this analysis, there are three components: a benefactor, a gift or benefit, and a beneficiary. The beneficiary realizes the value of the gift, the intention of the benefactor, and thus experiences the positive emotional state of gratitude. The word *gratitude* is derived from the Latin *gratia*, meaning "grace," "graciousness," or "gratefulness." All derivatives from this Latin root have to do with kindness, generosity, gifts, and the beauty of giving and receiving. At the cornerstone of gratitude is the notion of *undeserved merit*. The grateful person recognizes that he or she did nothing to deserve the gift or benefit; it was freely bestowed. This core feature is reflected in one definition of gratitude as "the willingness to recognize the unearned increments of value in one's experience" (Betrocci & Millard, 1963: 389).

It is important to note that gratitude is an approach to life that can be freely chosen for oneself. It does not depend upon objective life circumstances such as health, wealth, or beauty. To quote the late Catholic priest and psychologist Henri Nouwen:

—Gratitude as a discipline involves a conscious choice. I can choose to be grateful even when my emotions and feelings are steep and hurt and resentful. It is amazing how many occasions present themselves in which I can choose gratitude instead of a complaint. I can choose to be grateful when I am criticized, even when my

heart responds in bitterness. . . . I can choose to listen to the voices that forgive and to look at the faces that smile, even while I still hear words of revenge and see grimaces of hatred. (1992: 84)

GRATITUDE IN THE HISTORY OF IDEAS

In philosophical writings throughout history, gratitude has been portrayed as a vital civic virtue (see Harpham, in press, or Simmons, 1979, for reviews). Classical writers generally viewed gratitude toward one's benefactors as an obligation, and stressed its dutiful aspects rather than its emotional quality. Kant (1963), for instance, saw it as duty that we honor a person for a benefit that they have provided us. Thomas Aquinas (1981) understood gratitude as a secondary virtue associated with justice, which entails rendering to others that which is their right or due. It is right and appropriate to express gratitude for benefits received. Persons who regularly respond with gratitude to the benevolence of others would be said to possess the virtue of thankfulness. Contemporary writers (cf. White, 1996) view gratitude as an integral element of good citizenship. In each of these cases, gratitude is more than a pleasant feeling—it is a virtue that contributes to living one's life well. Even more compelling from a moral framework, ingratitude to one's benefactor is seen as a profound moral failure, and is one of the strongest accusations that can be made against another person. For Kant, ingratitude was one of the vices that are "the essence of villainy and wickedness," and David Hume (1968) wrote, "Of all the crimes that human creatures are capable, the most horrid and unnatural is ingratitude."

Adam Smith (1976) proposed that gratitude is an essential social emotion—on par with emotions such as resentment and affection. Gratitude is, according to Smith, one of the primary motivators of benevolent behavior toward a benefactor. To this point, Smith wrote, "The sentiment which most immediately and directly prompts us to reward, is gratitude" (p. 68). Smith observed that society can function purely on utilitarian grounds or on the basis of gratitude, but he clearly believed that societies of gratitude were more attractive in large part because they provide an important emotional resource for promoting social stability. Following Smith, Simmel (1950) argued that gratitude was a cognitive-emotional supplement to sustain one's reciprocal obligations. Because formal social structures such as the law and social contracts are insufficient to regulate and ensure reciprocity in human interaction, people are socialized to have gratitude, which then serves to remind them of their need to reciprocate. Thus, during exchange of benefits, gratitude prompts one person (a beneficiary) to be bound to another (a benefactor), thereby reminding beneficiaries of their reciprocity obligations. Simmel referred to gratitude as "the moral memory

of mankind . . . if every grateful action . . . were suddenly eliminated, society (at least as we know it) would break apart" (1950: 388). In line with Simmel's conclusion, Trivers (1971) viewed gratitude as an evolutionary adaptation that regulates people's responses to altruistic acts. In this sense, gratitude could be a key element in the emotional system underlying reciprocal altruism. Recent research indicates that gratitude may be a psychological mechanism underlying reciprocal exchange in human and nonhuman primates (de Waal, 2000). As early as 1932, the anthropologist Edward Westermarck (1932) antedated the discussion of gratitude as underlying reciprocal altruism. He depicted gratitude as a kindly retributive emotion, in a class of emotions characterized by "a desire to give pleasure in return for pleasure received" (p. 86).

In that issues of justice, equity, and reciprocity—of giving and receiving—permeate the workplace, even the cursory overview presented above would suggest that opportunities abound to study gratitude in organizational settings. Yet surprisingly, there is virtually no hard research on gratitude in organizations. Searches of organizational journals using the keywords "gratitude," "grateful," or "thankful" yield references mainly to brief exhortatory columns and op-ed type pieces encouraging employers to express appreciation more often to their employees and encouraging employees to adopt an attitude of gratitude in order to be happier with their jobs. Beyond these platitudes, however, there is no scientific research that is designed to document ways in which gratitude, either as a virtue or as an emotional state, might lead to more optimal organizational functioning. Even a recent handbook devoted to exploring the role of emotional intelligence in organizational life (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001) is curiously silent about the emotion of gratitude. Elsewhere (Emmons & Shelton, 2002) we have provided some reasons for psychology's neglect of gratitude despite its acknowledged value in world ethical and religious systems for centuries, reasons that are also relevant to understanding the neglect of gratitude within organizational scholarship. For example, scholars may have equated gratitude with indebtedness, reduced gratitude to mere expressions of politeness or to strategies in the reciprocity game, or seen the concept as too tightly linked with spiritual and religious traditions to warrant objective study.

Gratitude as a Moral Emotion

Following the line of thought initiated by Smith, Simmel, Westermarck, and others, McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons, and Larson (2001) theorized that gratitude is a moral emotion. Moral emotions are those emotions that are linked to the interests of either society as a whole or at least to persons outside the agent (Haidt, in press). McCullough and colleagues hypothe-

sized that by experiencing gratitude, a person is motivated to carry out prosocial behavior, energized to sustain moral behaviors, and inhibited from committing destructive interpersonal behaviors. Because of its specialized functions in the moral domain, they liken gratitude to empathy, sympathy, guilt, and shame. Like empathy, sympathy, guilt, and shame, gratitude has a special place in the grammar of moral life. Whereas empathy and sympathy operate when people have the opportunity to respond to the plight of another person, and guilt and shame operate when people have failed to meet moral standards or obligations, gratitude operates typically when people acknowledge that they are the recipients of prosocial behavior. Specifically, they posited that gratitude serves as a *moral barometer*, providing individuals with an affective readout that accompanies the perception that another person has treated them prosocially. Second, they posited that gratitude serves as a *moral motive*, stimulating people to behave prosocially after they have been the beneficiaries of other people's prosocial behavior. Third, they posited that gratitude serves as a *moral reinforcer*, encouraging prosocial behavior by reinforcing people for their previous prosocial behavior. McCullough and colleagues adduced evidence from a wide variety of studies in personality, social, developmental, and evolutionary psychology to support this conceptualization.

Gratitude Leads to Positive Outcomes

Gratitude is important because of its demonstrated causal link with positive outcomes, including mood and prosocial behavior. Recent psychological research suggests that a grateful response to life circumstances may be an adaptive psychological strategy and an important process by which people positively interpret everyday experiences. The ability to notice, appreciate, and savor the elements of one's life has been viewed as a crucial determinant of well-being (Emmons & Shelton, 2002). Experimental research has recently demonstrated (Emmons & McCullough, 2003) that there are measurable benefits to regularly focusing on one's blessings, and that an effective way to make oneself aware of benefits received is to engage in a self-guided gratitude thought-listing procedure.

In one study (Emmons & McCullough, 2003), undergraduate participants were asked to keep gratitude journals in which they wrote up to five things for which they were grateful or thankful. Those who kept gratitude journals on a *weekly* basis exercised more regularly, reported fewer physical symptoms, felt better about their lives as a whole, and were more optimistic about the upcoming week compared to those who recorded hassles or neutral life events. In a second experiment, students kept *daily* gratitude journals. The gratitude condition resulted in higher reported levels of the

positive states of alertness, enthusiasm, determination, attentiveness, and energy compared to a focus on hassles or a downward social comparison (ways in which participants thought they were better off than others). Participants in the daily gratitude condition were more likely to report having helped someone with a personal problem or having offered emotional support to another, relative to the hassles or social comparison conditions. In other words, gratitude leads not only to feeling good, but also to doing good. We also found that in a sample of persons with neuromuscular disease (Emmons & McCullough, Study 3, 2003), writing blessings on a regular basis resulted in higher reported levels of alertness and energy, longer sleep duration and better sleep quality, and a sense of feeling more connected to others.

Non-self-report data indicate positive correlates and consequences of gratitude. The informants of people with strong dispositions toward gratitude reported that these grateful friends engaged in more prosocial behaviors (e.g., loaning money, providing compassion, sympathy, and emotional support) in the previous month than did the informants of less grateful individuals. Grateful individuals were also rated by their informants as engaging in such supportive behaviors more frequently in general than did the informants of less grateful individuals (McCullough et al., 2001). Data on the interpersonal consequences of gratefulness are scarce. All in all, however, it is reasonable to hypothesize that expressions of gratitude and appreciation are vital to successful, vital, and thriving long-term relationships.

Further, gratefulness is an attitude underlying successful functioning over the life course. In his longitudinal study of male adult development, Vaillant (1993) theorizes that a key to mature adaptation to life is the ability to replace bitterness and resentment toward those that have perpetrated harm with gratitude and acceptance. Gratitude is part and parcel of a creative emotional process whereby self-destructive emotions are transformed into ones that permit healing and restoration. According to Vaillant, "mature defenses grow out of our brain's evolving capacity to master, assimilate, and *feel grateful* for life, living, and experience" (p. 337).

Given that gratitude has potentially important consequences for individuals and society, it is curious that psychologists specializing in the study of organizational issues, by and large failed to explore its contours. Only a handful of research studies are directly relevant for the study of gratitude in organizational contexts. Only one published study (Baron, 1984) is directly relevant to the second corollary of the moral motive hypothesis (i.e., that feeling grateful inhibits people from engaging in destructive interpersonal behavior). In Baron's study, undergraduate students were paired with confederates in a task in which they were instructed to simulate a conflict about a work-related matter. Confederates were trained to provide persua-

sive arguments that allowed them to disagree cogently with participants' views regardless of their content. During a break in the experiment, the confederate engaged in one of four conditions. In the control condition, the confederate simply sat quietly during the break. In a gift condition (presumed to elicit gratitude), the confederate offered the participant a piece of candy. In the sympathy condition, the confederate attempted to explain that if he had seemed "uptight" during the first part of the simulation, it was because of school-related stress. Finally, in the humor condition, the confederate showed the participant several amusing cartoons.

Participants in the three experimental conditions (i.e., gift, sympathy, and humor) reported more positive moods following the experiment than did subjects in the control condition (however, the gift condition was only marginally different from the control condition). Participants in the three experimental conditions reported liking the confederate more than did participants in the control condition, and also rated the confederate as more pleasant. Finally, participants in the gift condition and the humor condition reported that they would be more likely to use collaboration to resolve conflict in the future than did participants in the control condition.

These data indicate that the "incompatible response" manipulations enhanced positive mood and seemed to facilitate positive resolutions to organizational conflict. What is *not* clear, however, is whether the gift condition's effects on enhancing participants' perceptions of the confederate (i.e., liking him and viewing him as pleasant) specifically were mediated by feelings of gratitude. The effects of all three experimental conditions could be evidence for the general effect of positive mood on helping behavior (Carlson, Charlin, & Miller, 1988). Thus, although the conclusion that inducing gratitude helps to inhibit destructive organizational conflict is consistent with the data, the assumption that the gift-giving manipulation elicited feelings of gratitude was not formally tested.

Applied researchers also have found that expressions of gratitude can reinforce moral behavior. Clark, Northrop, and Barkshire (1988) attempted to increase the frequency with which case managers visited their adolescent clients in a residential treatment program. During a twenty-week baseline observation period, 43 percent of the adolescents were visited weekly by their case managers. After the observation period, the residential units began to send thank-you letters to case managers after they visited their clients. During the twenty-week period during which the residential units sent thank-you notes, nearly 80 percent of clients were visited by their case managers each week. During a ten-week reversal period (during which no thank-you letters were sent following visits), the rates of weekly visitation dropped back to roughly their initial levels (i.e., approximately 50 percent of clients were visited weekly).

Other field experiments indicate that the reinforcement effects of gratitude expressions extend into the economic arena also. Restaurant bills on which the server writes "thank you" produce tips that are as much as 11 percent higher than do bills without an expression of gratitude; including thank-you notes in mail surveys typically increases response rates; and customers of a single jewelry store who received a telephone call to thank them for their business spent more money in the store during the next month than did customers who did not receive such a call (each of these studies is described at length in McCullough, Kirkpatrick, Emmons, and Larson, 2001). Interestingly, the customers who were called to be thanked also spent more money than customers who received a call both to thank them for their business *and* to announce that the store would be having a sale (20 percent off) during the next two months.

Gratitude and Positive Emotions in Organizations

Making the personal commitment to invest psychic energy in developing a personal schema, outlook, or worldview of one's life as a "gift" or one's very self as being "gifted" holds considerable sway from the standpoint of positive organizational functioning. Building up virtue capital in the workplace has been systematized and formalized through the "appreciative inquiry" (AI) approach to change management, a movement that has gained increasing momentum in recent years (see Chapter 15). To appreciate, in this context, is to "deliberately notice, anticipate, and heighten positive potential" (Kaczmarski & Cooperider, 1999). Its goal is not to focus on what is lacking in organizations, but rather to seek and create the positive core of organizational life in a manner that will affirm the strengths and potentials of individuals so that they might realize their greatest good (Whitney & Cooperider, 1998). AI is based on the premise that mutual valuing and affirmation is necessary for collaborative learning and social transformation (Tenkasi, 2000). Gratitude is not an explicit ingredient in AI interventions, and gratitude and appreciation are related, though distinct constructs. Yet common definitions of *appreciation* include "the act of estimating things according to their worth," "grateful recognition," and "sensitive awareness and enjoyment" (McCraty and Childe, in press). Empirically, the emotion of gratitude appears to be part of a higher-order construct of appreciation (Adler, 2002). The primary difference is that appreciation is not necessarily evoked in response to specific benefits received from another.

The cultivation of gratitude may be important in organizations not only because of the direct effects of improving organizational climate, but also because as a cognitive strategy, gratitude can improve individual well-being and lower toxic emotions in the workplace, such as resentment and

envy. Moods are important determiners of efficiency, success, productivity, and employee loyalty. A number of recent studies have demonstrated that employee happiness and well-being are positively associated with performance, morale, commitment, and negatively associated with absenteeism, turnover, and burnout (e.g., Wright & Staw, 1999). Thus, methods and means for cultivating positive emotions are understandably sought after. As we have seen, an effective strategy for producing reliably higher levels of pleasant affect is to lead people to reflect, on a daily basis, to write about those aspects of their lives for which they are grateful. Individuals who regularly practice gratitude, then, will not stagnate. Instead, they continually grow toward optimal functioning. Positive emotions generate what has been referred to as an "upward spiral" toward optimal functioning and enhanced emotional well-being (see Fredrickson, 2001, and Chapter 11). Positive emotions achieve these beneficial outcomes by broadening individuals' habitual modes of thinking and action. Gratitude can build personal (cognitive, emotional, spiritual) and interpersonal resources. For example, to the extent that gratitude broadens the scope of cognition and enables flexible and creative thinking, it also facilitates coping with stress and adversity. Grateful people may have more psychic adaptability than the ungrateful, enabling them to be less defensive and to consciously take control of stressors by choosing to extract benefits from challenge and even suffering.

Prosocial Consequences

Gratitude not only feels good for the individual, but also produces a cascade of beneficial social outcomes as it reflects, motivates, and reinforces moral social actions in both the giver and the recipient of help (McCullough, Kirkpatrick, Emmons, & Larson, 2001). The feeling of gratitude, McCullough and colleagues argue, reflects or identifies moral action because it surfaces when individuals acknowledge that another has been helpful to them. It motivates moral action because grateful people often feel the urge to repay in some manner those who have helped them. Finally, gratitude reinforces moral behavior because giving thanks or acknowledgment rewards help-givers, making them feel appreciated and more likely to give help in the future.

By experiencing and expressing gratitude, people can transform themselves and, by extension, the larger units within which they are embedded, becoming more creative, knowledgeable, resilient, socially integrated, and healthy (see Chapter 11). Social and community transformation occurs because each person's positive emotions can reverberate through others. Because an individual's experiences of positive emotions can reverberate in

other members of an organization and across interpersonal transactions, positive emotions such as gratitude fuel optimal organizational functioning, helping organizations to thrive and prosper.

Organizational and community transformation occurs because each person's positive emotions can reverberate through others. In part, this is because emotions are contagious (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1993). Experimental studies have shown that one person's expression of positive emotion, through processes of mimicry and facial feedback, can produce experiences of positive emotion in those with whom they interact (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1993; Lundqvist & Dimberg, 1995). Organizational leaders' positive emotions may be especially contagious. Studies have shown, for instance, that a leader's positive emotions predict the performance of their entire group (George, 1995). Another, and perhaps more critical way that positive emotions spread through groups and organizations is by creating chains of events that carry positive meaning for others. When people act on their experiences of gratitude, for instance, they create meaningful situations for others. The original benefactors may feel reinforced for their initial prosocial act (McCullough, Kirkpatrick, Emmons, & Larson, 2001) and anyone else who receives an altruistic gift may themselves feel gratitude. For example, the grateful cherishing of coworkers provides a motive that helps sustain loving relationships at work. To quote White (1996): "The beneficiary . . . is perceived as the repository of someone's good will and the good things that have flowed to him or her as a result of another's efforts. This can call forth an appreciative, celebratory attitude towards a benefactor which sets up a beneficent circle of concern" (p. 48). This beneficent circle of concern could continue indefinitely. In this manner, positive emotions, attitudes, and behaviors tend to beget subsequent positive emotions, attitudes, and behaviors. Thus, the amplification effect described by Cameron (Chapter 4) appears to be one likely route by which gratitude leads to positive outcomes.

Gratitude as an Antidote to Toxic Workplace Emotions

Some of the power of gratitude in organizations may stem from its ability to offset toxic workplace emotions and attitudes. Positive emotions broaden and build (see Chapter 11); conversely, negative emotions narrow and tear down. By experiencing gratitude, could a person control anger, envy, or other interpersonally destructive emotions? A number of theorists have argued that gratitude is prophylactic for harmful impulses of envy and greed (e.g., Solomon & Flores, 2001). Conversely, envy is a breeding ground for ingratitude. The core problem with envy is a nonawareness of the blessings

that one is consistently surrounded by. The practice of gratitude as a mental discipline has been suggested as a cure to excessive materialism and its attendant negative emotions of envy, resentment, disappointment, and bitterness. From the time of Adam Smith, the symmetry between gratitude and resentment has been noted, which stem from diametrically opposite appraisals. Just as gratitude results from the perceptions of the goodness of a benefactor, resentment is the result of perceptions of malevolence from a malefactor (Roberts, in press). In support of this line of reasoning, McCullough, Emmons, and Tsang (2002) found that dispositional gratitude was negatively correlated with materialistic attitudes and with trait envy. Adopting a position of personal injustice and victimization feeds resentment. Of course, unfair treatment abounds in organizations and must be dealt with on its own terms. My concern here is with perceptions of unfairness that undermine the individual's ability to contribute productively to his or her organization. Absenteeism, sabotage, theft, and other deviant workplace behaviors are typically the result of resentment and envy (Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2001; Scabright & Schminke, 2002); thus the cultivation of emotions and attitudes incompatible with these poisons might offset some of their destructiveness. In this regard, some of the power of gratitude stems from its ability to inoculate individuals against negative states and behaviors (see also Chapter 4, on the buffering hypothesis).

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The question for organizations, then, becomes how attitudes of gratefulness can be cultivated. Research on gratitude and positive life outcomes suggests that gratitude training can have sustained personal and interpersonal benefits. Perhaps gratitude "modules" can be incorporated into existing leadership and management training programs (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001).

Shelton (2000) has framed gratitude as one of four key ingredients that make up a daily moral inventory that individuals can use to foster personal growth and, by implication, produce benefits in organizations. According to Shelton, developing a healthy moral life involves, first of all, self-awareness that one is a moral being. Self-talk ("I am a moral person" or "I have a conscience") is a critical first step down the path toward moral growth. The theme of gratitude occupies the second step in his model, where one contemplates the gifts that one has been given. The third step is a self-examination of one's day, and the fourth step encourages the moral resolve to initiate at least some minimal behavioral change with an eye toward increasing, over the long run, one's moral maturity. It may be possible to identify organizational equivalents to Shelton's ingredients. For example, self-talk may be similar to identifying visions and values in organizations,

gratitude in the second step may be similar to identifying core competencies and critical resources, the self-examination in the third step might be similar to organizational analyses and measurements, and the fourth step may be similar to a commitment toward organizational improvement.¹ Assuming that one engages in a daily moral inventory with the genuine intention to foster personal moral growth, then experiencing gratitude and the positive feeling states associated with it (e.g., humility and empathy toward others) more than likely inclines one to enter any moral examination of one's life with greater sincerity and resolve. In this regard, gratitude might be conceived of as serving a "buffering" role that allays embarrassment, shame, or other negative emotions that might undermine self-honesty. In order to reap the benefits of grateful living, strategies such as Shelton's for developing gratitude could be devised and incorporated into the everyday ethos of organizations.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

I have sketched a few ways in which gratitude, as both a positive emotional state and an other-regarding virtue, might have implications for organizations and their functioning. Since little substantive research on gratitude in organizations has actually occurred, many more questions than answers exist at this juncture. Among the more urgent questions that need to be addressed are the following:

- What is the best way to measure gratitude as an organizational variable?
- What is distinctive about gratitude, compared to other positive emotions and virtues of personality such as hope, optimism, joy, compassion, empathy, and generosity?
- How does gratitude relate to organizational outcomes, including subjective indicators (job satisfaction, morale, loyalty, citizenship behavior) and objective performance (employee turnover, profitability, customer retention)?
- Are the effects of gratitude in organizations more due to buffering or to amplifying effects (see Chapter 4), or to unidentified mechanisms?
- Do training programs in appreciation that include gratitude as a component affect organizational performance?
- Do grateful supervisors promote more grateful employees?

- How might gratitude buffer negative reactions (envy, resentment) to downsizing?
- How does economic climate affect organizational gratitude?

These are just a few of the questions that constitute a growing agenda for the science of positive organizational scholarship. The ingenuity of researchers and practitioners will determine the ultimate benefits of including the construct of gratitude in organizational studies.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter has been to present a summary of current thinking and research on gratitude, with the conviction that gratitude has earned a legitimate place in any consideration of positive organizational functioning. Gratitude is a virtue that characterizes people who are well fit to living harmoniously among others; it is central to how people negotiate their moral and interpersonal lives. As one of the most typical responses to perceived benevolence from other moral agents, it appears to foster prosocial behavior, positive mood states, and enhanced performance among beneficiaries and benefactors alike. There is thus ample reason to suspect that it improves organizational life as well.

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1. I am indebted to Kim Cameron for drawing my attention to these organizational parallels.