PERIODIC POSITIVE SELF-AFFIRMATION: THE EFFECT OF DIRECTED REFLECTION OF POSITIVE EVENTS ON EMPLOYEE WORK STRESS AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Dr. Webster Baker
Saint Leo University

Overview

The negative aspects of stress in the workplace have detrimental effect on an employee’s physical health and psychological well-being (Pfeffer, 2010). Employee stress is a leading contributor to increased turnover, absenteeism, and health complaints (Schnall, Dobson, & Rosskam, 2009); all which cost the organization in lost productivity (Goetzel et al., 2002). Likewise, increased levels of stress diminish employee job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and work-life balance to include social relationships (Begley & Czajka, 1993). A well settled principal of positive psychology indicates that traditional affect symmetry of positive events leading to positive emotions will result in positive outcomes such as enhanced job satisfaction and organizational commitment behavior (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001; Thoresen, et al., 2003). Recent research confirms that such symmetry may be found among employees in the workplace. Additionally, reflection on such events at the end of the day has a positive moderating effect in reducing stress and improving overall health (Bono, et al., 2013).

The strength of the emotional relationship between the positive event and the positive outcome for employees may be enhanced through periodic reflection throughout the day rather than consolidated examination of events at the end of the day (Bandura, 1977). Furthermore, random prompting for reflection of positive events will likely lead to optimistic behavioral and
cognitive changes in holistic perception of the workplace that are more difficult to extinguish (Worsdell, et al., 2000). Wherein previous research indicates a positive change in employee health and generalized affect through reflective intervention of positive events, greater reduction in generalized stress and health complaints may be generated with induced sharing as well as savoring of positive work events (Gable, et al., 2004).

Prompted review of periodic positive reflections at the end of the day will not only enhance the positive outcomes experienced by employees through enhanced job satisfaction and organizational commitment, but will also exploit the psychological tendency to enhance the effects of positive events by induced sharing of such events through automated resonance of the employee’s own reflections on the positive events (Langston, 1994). Similarly, additional savoring of the positive events during the transitional period between work and personal life may have a compounding positive effect on improved employee work-life balance (Ilies et al., 2011).

The anticipated outcome of proposed research will not only be confirmation of previous recent research indicating positive psychological processes are applicable in the workplace setting, but also that the overall effect may be heightened through application of traditional concepts of reinforcement in learned behavior. Similarly, the prompted examination at the end of the work day will have an improved utility over mere reflection of events, contributing to greater reduction of negative outcomes to work stress as well as enhanced positive outcomes. Further, the prompted review of positive work events is anticipated to significantly contribute to improved work-life balance.

Further research may focus the value of such periodic positive self-affirmations through directed reflective intervention throughout the work day. Although randomization of prompting wherein the employee generates a reflection on a positive event during the preceding
standardized period of time, inexpensive biometric feedback hardware may have an even greater effect on employee learned behavior due to positive psychological processes (Nolan, et al., 2005). Determination of enhanced employee stress level through blood pressure, blood sugar, heart rate and other indicators, acting as prompt for positive reflective intervention, will predictably strengthen the association between positive event and positive emotions for the employee, resulting in enhanced positive outcomes through learned behavior and positive affect further moderating the negative aspects of work stress.

The Problem

Stress is not a new phenomenon, and likely evolved in prehistoric times as a manner of environmental interaction during a time of need. The “flight or fight” physiological response to stress allowed our ancestors to avoid being eaten, or as hunters to feed themselves as well. The acute stress responses of enhanced heart rate and blood pressure, along with shunting blood from extremities and enhanced production of adrenaline from the body’s endocrine system may be useful at times, however, the physiological responses to stress cannot be differentiated between acute and chronic stress situations (Matteson & Ivancevich, 1987, p. 55). Chronic stress in the workplace is a function of the many factors which may be best summarized as a sense of urgency to act, much like in origination of the acute stressor response.

The negative aspects of stress in the workplace have a detrimental effect on employees going beyond the increased physical ailments correlated with self-reports of employee stress. The psychological well-being of the employee is adversely affected as well, leading to the cognitive dissonance of internal strife through role conflict, caused by conflicting expectations between work and personal values (Hammer, Bauer, & Grandey, 2003) or between conflicting expectations within the employee task demands (Nelson & Quick, 2011, p. 224). Likewise, role
ambiguity, or confusion experienced related to the expectations of others (Matteson & Invancevich, 1987, p. 44) is a source of internal strife for the employee. The theory of cognitive dissonance explains the shift in employee behavior to minimize these internal conflicts imposed by the work environment (Festinger, 1957). Often, employees is such a state of distress experience depression, burnout, and emotional exhaustion within the work demands (Schnall, Dobson, & Rosskam, 2009)). Under such circumstances, managers must deal with employee behavioral problems such as aggression in the workplace, substance abuse, and enhanced incident of accidents in the workplace (Nelson & Quick, 2011, p. 231).

The negative implications of work stress extends beyond the individual employee as well. Mismanaged stress in the workplace leads to organizational distress in the form of low morale, job dissatisfaction, and breakdowns in communication (Begley & Czajka, 1993). Participation problems among employees increase organizational costs through increased absenteeism, tardiness, strikes, and turnover (Goetzel, et. al., 2002). The replacement costs for valued employees otherwise in a state of distress due to the chronic demands within the organization can range in value from five to seven months of the individual employee’s salary (Nelson & Quick, 2011, p. 231). Additionally, the organizational costs from lost productivity due to dwindling organizational commitment behaviors may likely rival the mere cost of employee turnover.

Stress in the workplace has become an organizational problem worthy of continued management investigation and understanding in attempt to minimalize organizational costs as well as improve employee engagement and work-life balance, a fundamental value among the newer Millennial generation which seems to be transposing up the genealogical ladder to Generation X and even the Baby Boomers remaining in the workforce. The primary research focus on stress management thus far has centered around the reduction of stressors leading to employee distress and negative organizational outcomes. Although having a larger immediate
impact of perceived stress for the employee, the removal of stressors may not have the same long-term effect on overall reduction of employee stress. Possibly of greater consideration, the work demands that aggravate the stress response may only be diluted to a finite level due to economic environments and globalization of competition.

Human nature has tendency to focus attention on the negative aspects of daily life (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), whether as an evolutionary function or psychological coping mechanism, individuals often fixate on what has gone wrong in daily activities rather than what has gone right. The manifestation of this phenomenon may often be seen in daily communication between work colleagues or even in family interactions after the work day is complete. In fact, the implications of work stress upon negative psychological impact have risen so great that organizations have begun to measure effectiveness in terms of various Genuine Wealth Accounting Measures to include community rates of child and spousal abuse, suicide, criminal mischief, homicide and substance abuse, among others (Anielski, 2009).

Prior Research Basis for Study

Alternative solutions to stress management have recently been investigated for greater, longer-reaching impact upon the employee perception of stress in the workplace. The precepts of positive psychology have been applied with success in other psychoanalytic fields of behavior modification. Traditional affect symmetry of positive events leading to positive emotions will result in positive outcomes has been utilized with great success in the intervention of depression, substance abuse, and other addictive behaviors (Fredrickson, 1998). Likewise, positive organizational outcomes such as enhanced job satisfaction and organizational commitment behaviors may be seen through application of positive psychological intervention techniques (Bono, et. al., 2013).
Recent research indicates that prompted, end of work day reflection on positive job events reduces perceived levels of employee stress as well as improving overall health (Bono, et. al., 2013). The research found that an intervening phone consult at the end of the work day, wherein participants were asked to reflect on three positive job events of the day not only reduced heart rate and blood pressure measures over the long-term, but also reduced the perception of work stress at the end of the day, possibly improving perceptions of work-life balance (Bono, et. al., 2013). Participants were encouraged to savor the positive daily events through prompted personal reflection, as well as celebrate the positive events through mechanisms of sharing with the researcher. The constructs of “savoring” and “sharing” may be responsible for some of the moderating effect to perceived work stress, and these findings might be further exploited to facilitate behavior modification through operant conditioning strategies.

The positive psychology precepts may not require outside intervention, however, but rather have moderating effect when individual behaviors are reformed to focus on positive life events rather than the negative. The goal of operant conditioning is to modify behavior through the use of reward for positive behavior (Skinner, 1953). Positive emotions act as the employee’s reward, whereas the focus on positive work events is the behavior sought to be enhanced. Many different reinforcement schedules may be utilized to effectuate behavior modification among employees. Most managers would agree, however, that the continuous reinforcement schedule with application of a positive consequence following every desirable behavior may lead to early satiation, wherein the positive reward holds little motivating value for modifying employee behavior, as well as rapid extinction of behavior when reinforcement is withheld (Luthans & Kreitner, 1985).

Regarding the modification of employee behavior to focus on positive events through reflection upon those events, thus employing the precepts of positive psychology, it is neither
possible, not practical, for an employee to reflect on every single positive event. In fact, such would not be the goal, but rather, through the use of reward in the form of positive emotions, the employee’s behavior is modified to focus more on the positive work events rather than the negative, thus encouraging a shift of mindset for the employee with a subsequent alteration in the perception of stress and the accompanying negative health and organizational implication. Similarly, a well-recognized concept from the early days of Pavlovian research (Pavlov, 1927; Skinner, 1938) is that the strongest behavior modifying effect may be found where the reward is close in time to the stimuli. The prior research applied the personal reflection on positive work events following the end of the work day, producing a significant reduction in employee stress (Bono, et. al., 2013). Theoretically, application of the personal reflection close in time to the positive event should, if not have greater moderating effect on the perception of stress, act to moderate stress levels throughout the workday thus reducing the compounding stressor effect as well as re-train the cognitive response to be mindful of positive events as they happen rather than in reflection at the end of the day.

Proposition of New Research

The process envisioned for the proposed research is one of a variable ratio of reinforcement capable of producing a high rate of behavior response (in that, an overall shift in employee focus away from the negative stressors to the positive accomplishments during the work day) that is vigorous, steady and resistant to extinction (Luthans & Kreitner, 1985). Important to contemplate is the reinforcement being the positive emotions that come from positive events, and the induced modification mechanism is the request to reflect on the positive event. The accomplishment of a variable reinforcement ratio then must also rely upon a random schedule of prompted reflection upon the positive event. Here, the proposed research need not
attempt to identify every positive event and then set forth a random schedule to prompt reflection; but rather, reliance upon the employee to identify positive events at a random time interval greatly simplifies the research design. Likewise, such a design will likely have the added benefit of allowing the subject employee to define the event and thus the value of the reward to be derived in the form of positive emotions. Employees randomly prompted to reflect on a positive event close in time to the stimulus will likely focus on positive events, and possibly reframe events into positive context, whereas upon inquiry such event may be recalled quickly in reflection.

The questions to be examined may be expressed as follows:

*Hypothesis 1:* Periodic contemplation by employees of positive events throughout the work day will have a greater moderating effect on the cognitive and physiological responses to work stress than mere reflection by employees at the end of the work day.

(Assessment measures may include heart rate, blood pressure and perceptions of stress)

*Hypothesis 2:* A random schedule of reflection will improve employee ability to identify the quantity of positive daily events, as well as enhance employee focus on individual positive events.

(Assessment inquiry may include: How often throughout the day did you find yourself identifying positive work related events? How often did you find yourself contemplating various work events to determine if they were positive or negative as you defined them? Did you attempt to reframe events into a positive light for the purposes of this study?)

*Hypothesis 3:* Reflective affirmation of identified positive events at the end of the work day will moderate the negative effect of work stressors, as well as improve the perception of positive work-life balance.

(Assessment may include: Third party evaluation of subject’s stress and/or affect toward work, and subject self-evaluation of same.)
The proposed research design for the current study is duplicative of prior research (Bono, et. al., 2013), as well as adaptive to accommodate the new questions to be answered. Four test groups would be needed to evaluate significant differences among the proposed interventions. The number of total participants may be reduced by elimination of a control group receiving no intervention by establishing a base line of measures for each participant over a two week period prior to test phase intervention. All participants should have a general manager’s evaluation of performance for comparison with post-intervention levels such that organizational improvements may be noted in implication of proposed intervention. Likewise, all participants will have personality profiles developed using The Big Five personality measures (Digman, 1990) for further investigation into the moderating effects individual personality may have on proposed positive psychological intervention. Similarly, for further investigation, manager leadership profiles will be assessed using a Competing Values Framework (Quinn, 1988), chosen for simplicity as well adaptability to a variety of organizational settings.

Test Group 1 will attempt to replicate the results from prior research (Bono, et. al., 2013). Measures of blood pressure, heart rate, and self-report of perceived stress will be taken in similar fashion to the previous research. Third-party assessment of the effects of the intervention will also be taken with attempt to assess improvements in work-life balance. The primary modality of intervention will be similar to that of the previous research, such that participants will be contacted at the end of the work day and asked to recall three positive events that happened at work during the day. The end of day positive reflection is anticipated to generate results statistically similar to that of the previous research (Bono, et. al. 2013).

Test Group 2 will also have blood pressure and heart rate measures taken hourly throughout the day, similar to Test Group 1. Alternatively, Test Group 2 will also require self-report stress perception measures taken periodically throughout the day rather than merely at the
end of the day. The additional procedure is required to establish significant reduction in perceived stress resulting from Test Group 2 intervention. Third-party assessment of the effects of the intervention will be taken in similar fashion as Test Group 1 with continued attempt to assess improvements in work-life balance. The method of intervention for Test Group 2 will be prompted periodic reflection on positive events at 3 random time intervals throughout the day rather than positive reflection inquiry at the end of the day. The anticipated observable differentiation between participants of Test Group 1 and Test Group 2 will be of statistical significance resulting from applying the positive psychology techniques close in proximity to event occurrence.

Test Group 2, similar in fashion to the other participants, will have hourly assessments of blood pressure and heart rate. Like Test Group 2, Test Group 3 will also have periodic measure of self-report stress perception throughout the day, as well as Test Group 2 intervention of prompted periodic reflection on positive events at random intervals during the work day. The test intervention for Test Group 3 will be a prompted period of self-affirmation at the end of the work day, consisting of the positive events reflected upon throughout the day. A key measure of Test Group 3 will be the third-party measure of change in work-life balance as a result of the intervention of positive self-affirmation. The anticipation of outcome will be that statistically significant differentiation in not only stress but work-life balance will be observed over Test Group 1 or Test Group 2.

The necessity for such a research design will be to automate the data gathering process for as many functions as possible. Validation of the proposed research against the prior studies will require the collection of synonymous physiological measures of stress, such as heart rate and blood pressure. Similarly, the perceptual context of work stress among participants will be measured utilizing similar, self-report constructs as implemented in the previous research (Bono,
et. al., 2013). Conceptualized, the participant would wear a wrist device that would collect periodic data on heart rate and blood pressure, with such device being tethered to the participant’s smartphone via blue-tooth technology. The device will record physiological measures each hour for 2 weeks prior to the study to develop a base-line predicated upon daily work stressors encountered. The participant will continue to where the device for additional 6 weeks of trials until the completion of experimentation. Technology has only recently provided the opportunity for such automated research with the new Samsung Health Gear wristwatch (Edwards, 2014).

During the phase of experimentation, and at random intervals no more than 3 to 4 times during the participant’s work day and no less than 40 minutes between intervals, the participant will be prompted by the smartphone applications software to indicate a positive event they have experienced since the time of the previous prompted inquiry. Ideally, the participant response will be restricted to 160 characters or less, and request to focus on a positive event from the preceding 40 minutes. The limitations in phraseology length allows the identification of positive event to be limited to a single SMS text message for future technological link with a variety of other existing services, such as Twitter. Additionally, the 40 minute condition precedent, despite not knowing the true timing of the next random prompt, will likely encourage participants to be more alert to positive events during the day through inherent motivation to record a recent event in positive reflection. The emphasis to achieve here is to encourage timely proximity of the conditioned reinforcement reward of reflection on positive events with the unconditioned event action to solicit the outcome of positive emotions in the participant.

The secondary aspect of the research is to capitalize on prior studies by offering end-of-day review of the positive work events. Unlike the implementation of reflection of the positive event, the proposed research attempts to invoke the intrinsic value of savoring and sharing
through induced self-affirmation. The smartphone application will be triggered approximately 2 hours after the completion of the work day (7pm for a normal 5pm close of business day) to provide the participant affirmative feedback about the positive events from work that day. The technology need not do more than sound an alarm to gain the participants attention, and once the participant silences the alarm the smartphone will display, in random order one per page, the reflections of positive events previously entered during the day by the participant. In practice, capitalizing on the same positive aspects recognized in prior research regarding reflection of positive events, but doing so in a manner to induce not only reflection but affirmation as well. The timing of the affirmations is chosen to coincide with family or personal time after work in effort to induce further positive emotions about work, further reducing work stress while not at work, enhancing participant’s positive emotions with anticipation of improving the perceptions of post-work life activities.

Assumptions and Complications to Proposed Research

The proposed research makes several assumptions about both the participants as well as the interaction between negative stressors and positive emotional outcomes. First, the research assumes that all participants are experiencing negative work stressors, wherein these stressors translate to negative emotional outcomes for employees. A plethora of research has been done to solidify that such is the case in the normal distribution of the employed population, and as such the Central Limit Theorem would allow prediction of similar among the proposed research sample of participants. Further evidence of such associations offer validation of this relationship wherein correlation between community factors and organizational distress are abrogated.
through implementation of Genuine Wealth Accounting Measures (Anielski, 2007). The possibility remains, however, that such assumptions about the inverted relationship between work stressors and positive psychology are not consistent as observed outside the realm of the work relationship.

A second assumption made in the proposed research may be that the constructs of operant conditioning, wherein a behavior is modified by induction of a stimulus, will not hold valid where the participant seeks to accomplish this without outside intervention. The foundation of the research here assumes that a participant who is asked to reflect on a positive recent event will be conditioned to focus on positive events once the trigger stimulus inquiry is removed. In fact, the proposition is that the participant will quickly modify behavior to focus on the positive events in satisfaction of the random prompted request, however, this assumption may not fully describe the relationship to be observed in this form of “reverse” operant conditioning. The term “reverse” is used to more accurately describe that the reward is the positive event that the prompted inquiry is attempting to provoke the participant to see this as a reward. Synonymous to training a child that the cookie they received earlier was the reward for the good behavior they display now, absent removal of the cookie to solidify the relationship, cognitive learning may not take place. The proposed research attempts to utilize modeling behavior concepts of Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) as applied to a society of one. Such assumption about the nature of learned behavior may not prove accurate, in that participants may only seek to identify a positive relationship upon the prompted inquiry rather than learn to identify positive events (thus seek out the reward of positive emotions leading to reduced work stress) without such a prompt.

The third assumption of the current research is that all participants will have utility of a Samsung Galaxy S5 smartphone, currently the only device to support the technology and
hardware proposed by the research. The assumption here, although one of facility limitation, is
great because the stated devices have not been on the market but a matter of months, or not yet
released to the public. The cost of providing such hardware to the participants is realistically
unattainable. Simple, but more cumbersome, solutions do exist, which may prove the theory for
research purposes and then marketed at a later date to those with specific hardware capabilities.
The design of the research has attempted to account for some user limitations but making
available an alternate web-based platform. A self-contained blood pressure and heart rate
monitor worn on the wrist which will record up to 60 measures can be provided to each
participant through import vendors at a cost of approximately $12 per participant. A prompt
broadcast in group form through SMS text from the researcher could be utilized to receive reply
from each participant regarding the reflection of a positive event. Participants could be reminded
by simple alarm to press the measure and record button of the wrist device each hour, and the
researcher might then make record of each incoming message of positive event. The positive
events might then be re-broadcast in similar fashion for affirmation to the participant at the end
of the day. Such coordination, however, limits the number of participants merely by logistical
constraints upon a single researcher. Implementation of further web-based technology may
moderate these logistical constraints, however, participation commitment may be limited do to
the extended individual participant requirements.

Fourth, the proposed research makes the assumption that each participant will have a base
line of work stressors that translates to negative implications upon the participant’s physiology.
The research design sought to establish a base-line psychological and physiological assessment
of each participant, with anticipation that the participant responses to stress change. The
assumption that a stressed individual will reduce and improve through utilization of positive
psychology techniques was found in the prior research (Bono, et.al). Here, the research may
anticipate replication of such results, however, the replication is dependent upon the research label that the base-line is negative. Wherein a participant self-reports no perception of stress, and the physiological indicators fall within a normal range (heart rate and blood pressure are normal by American Medical Association standards) the research results may be skewed, or even lack relevancy, as no independent improvement can be ascertained. Additionally, as the perception of a stressor becomes key in determining individual stress levels, and the research has not differentiated between acute and chronic stress, the initial base-line assessments are likely to skew the trial assessments as less significant.

A fifth assumption made in the proposed research is a limitation of positive psychology theory, in that a reflection on a positive event will not merely lead to the positive emotions but will also lead to the positive outcome of modified behavior. Participants may require instruction as to the anticipation of modified behavior in the form of enhanced focus on positive events over negative events as being the positive outcome, and such intervention has propensity to limit the accuracy of the assessment measures. Although prior research has established that reflection on positive events can lead to positive emotions about work, and thus reduce work stress, the assumption made here is further removed by projecting that the positive emotions, and resultant stress reduction, will act as a motivator to encourage a participant to identify greater quantity of positive events in satisfaction of the prompted request. A determination of this limitation may only be addressed in longitudinal study of participants at periodic times post research.

A final assumption the proposed research relies upon not only infers great association with, but also great value upon, the utility of the research findings. The assumption that reduction in work stress has causal effect on improved home life may be difficult to assess beyond the individual participant. Prior research has provided measures of work-life balance (Bono, et. al. 2013), however, absent individual participant tendency toward maladaptive
behaviors such as suicide, homicide, or child abuse, it may be difficult to substantiate a true improvement to work-life balance. The proposed research attempts to address this somewhat in a similar manner as prior research, by soliciting third-party assessment of the participant. The participant’s spouse, family or close friends may be a better information source regarding the participant improvement in balance of work stress to post-work life. The limitation may be of nominal consequence in the large scale, as where the participant emotions about work-life balance improve then such may be seen as a success, even where personality differences may not translate these perceptions to behaviors viewable by other associations.

Projected Implications

The anticipated outcome for the proposed research includes a reduction in the general perceptions of work stress. Much as observed in prior research, periodic reflection upon positive events should result in lowered heart rate and blood pressure measures of work stress. Participant self-report of work stress is expected to be reduced through implementation of the positive psychology techniques. Furthermore, the proposed research should produce stress indicator reduction measures with greater correlated significance than the preceding study, according to the constructs of behavior modification through operant conditioning. Wherein the proposed research shows no greater modification of the variables than the previous research design, Hypothesis 1 may still hold true, however, the utility of the additional efforts for interactive reflection on positive events throughout the day, rather than at the end of the day, is limited to redesign of application within the organizational setting.
Additionally, in accordance with Hypothesis 2, the proposed research is anticipated to capture a cognitive shift in learned behavior identifying positive events. Participants will quickly grow to recognize and retain for recording upon prompt, a variety of positive experiences. Not only is the quantity of positive events anticipated to be identifiable by participants, but also it is expected that the enhanced time spent in contemplation of reflection will encourage participants to savor each event, modifying the natural human behavior to focus on the negative. Finally, it is anticipated within Hypothesis 3 that a noted shift in work-life balance will be observable among participants. The alteration of a participant’s cognitive focus to positive work events through the thought provoking post work-day affirmation is projected to further solicit positive emotions.

Prior research noted a reduction in stress levels as a result of the post-day reflection, however, in the proposed research such may not be significant. The goal of the post-work affirmation is not only to solidify and enhance the learned behavior, but also to facilitate improvement in the work-life balance. Third-party observation for behavior change may be the best measure of improvement upon this construct.

The application of the proposed research is envisioned to be utilized at the organizational level to reduce costs due to lost productivity through improved organizational commitment behaviors. Lowered rate of absenteeism and turnover, together with higher levels of job satisfaction, should be the immediate result to application of these positive techniques to reduce work stress. The method of implementation may be customized to the technology and needs of the organization, however, the implementation costs should be low. Key to successful implementation will likely be relating the reward of positive emotion from positive events to effective organizational outcomes. Typically, managers must utilize strategic rewards tied to organizational outcomes when implementing employee motivation techniques. True value to the proposed research may only be accomplished under similar constraints. Unifying the
employee’s account of a positive event, thus leading to a positive emotion, with the organizational outcome may come naturally as employees inherently frame the events in terms of work tasks. Managerial intervention, however, will likely be required to facilitate building the relationship within the employee.

Conclusions

The use of positive psychological techniques is a proven method of behavior modification, despite marginal application to the work related environment. Work stressors are inevitable where competition, globalization, and economic needs grow across all organizational settings. The removal of stressors has been a successful approach to reducing employee distress, however, improvements to employee perceptions of work stress are not long-lasting and organizational productivity limits the number of stressors which might be eliminated while remaining industry competitive. Positive techniques, the addition of a new construct, implements an alternate mechanism for employees to moderate the effects of work stress, further reducing the cognitive dissonance between the employee’s perception of the work environment and the desired emotional outcome. Applying positive psychology techniques such as reflection upon positive work events will reduce work stress and improve organizational commitment behaviors. Likewise, application of such reflection close in proximate time to the event should improve identification of the event and balance perceptions of work stress throughout the day. Utilization of post, work-day affirmations to refresh employee recollection of positive events is anticipated to further aid in learned behavior modification, as well as improve work-life balance. Future research may examine the interplay between the proposed research findings and individual personality as well as scrutinize the relationship between the intrinsic reward of
positive employee emotions and the extrinsic rewards to be tied to measurable organizational outcomes.

References


