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GEE, THANKS: THE EMOTIONAL AND STRUCTURAL FORCES THAT  
INFLUENCE SUBORDINATES' UPWARD GRATITUDE EXPRESSIONS

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Recently, relationship scholars have demonstrated the importance of expressions of gratitude in cultivating relational bonds and relational satisfaction between close friends and romantic partners. Although there is growing evidence that gratitude facilitates improved relationships, organizational scholars have largely ignored the importance of gratitude in the workplace. What little we know indicates that expressions of gratitude in organizations may be rare. Indeed, a recent national survey revealed that 74% of the participants rarely, if ever, expressed gratitude to their supervisors (Kaplan, 2012). What might explain this apparent lack of gratitude?

Research demonstrates that when individuals feel grateful for the generosity of a benefactor, they are motivated to acknowledge the benefactor's efforts and this typically manifests in a desire to express thanks or appreciation. Thus, in order to understand why subordinates may be unlikely to express gratitude towards their supervisors for benefits received, we must understand why they may not feel grateful in the first place. In this dissertation, I review the extant research on gratitude expressions and theorize about the factors that may influence subordinates' emotional reactions to benefits received from supervisors. Using a cognitive-emotion framework, I explain how subordinates' attributions can elicit divergent emotional responses that exert differential influences on upward expressions of gratitude and how supervisors' behavior influences these attributions. Across two studies, I find mixed support for my hypotheses.

*To my father, Russell Britton, who inspired my curiosity and desire to understand the world around me, and to my mother, Donna Britton, and sister, Beverly Sexton, for their unyielding love and support. I owe you my deepest gratitude. To my husband, Brandon Sheridan, who encouraged and supported me in this most demanding adventure, and to my beautiful sons, Parker and Grayson, you three are the gifts that keep on giving.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Theologians, philosophers, psychologists, and even self-help gurus have called attention to the many virtues of gratitude. Feeling grateful can improve individuals' well-being (Jarrett, 2016; Wood, Froh, & Geraghty, 2010) and mitigate the tendency to experience negative emotions (e.g., resentment, regret, envy) (Roberts, 2004). Expressing gratitude is a behavior that many of the world's oldest religions hold as righteous (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000; Krause, Evans, Powers, & Hayward, 2012) and one that appears to socially reinforce prosocial behavior (McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons, & Larson, 2001; Tsang, 2006, 2007). Empirically, gratitude functions as a facilitator of improved relational bonds (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Gordon, Impett, Kogan, Oveis, & Keltner, 2012). Despite wide acceptance of gratitude as an important, fundamentally adaptive human emotion (Bartlett, Condon, Cruz, Baumann, & Desteno, 2012; DeSteno, Bartlett, Baumann, Williams, & Dickens, 2010; Trivers, 1971), and the relatively recent surge of research on gratitude in personal relationships, we know very little about the social functions of gratitude in organizations.

To date, organizational accounts of gratitude could hardly be characterized as a research stream. A recent search on the Web of Science database for articles with gratitude as a topic in five of the leading management journals revealed the following statistics: zero articles in the *Journal of Management* and the *Academy of Management Journal*, one article each in the *Academy of Management Review* (Fehr, Fulmer, Awtrey, & Miller, 2016) and *Personnel Psychology* (Spence, Brown, Keeping, & Lian, 2013), and

two in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* (Gino & Schweitzer, 2008; Grant & Wrzesniewski, 2010).

Although academic findings on gratitude in organizations are sparse, some data on workers' attitudes about gratitude exists and the evidence suggests that employees desire to receive more gratitude at work. In a recent national poll 70% of respondents indicated they would feel better if their boss was more grateful to them and over three-quarters responded that they would exert more effort at work if it were so. Interestingly, however, 74% admitted they almost never expressed gratitude to their supervisor (Kaplan, 2012). Anecdotal evidence from supervisors indicates that they notice a lack of gratitude from subordinates and it impacts them negatively (Perkins, 2014).

To understand the role of gratitude as it is expressed between people in organizations—and more specifically, why those expressions appear to be lacking—attention towards the antecedents of this behavior is needed. Thus, in this dissertation, I am interested in the experience and expression of gratitude in work relationships. In Chapter 1, I highlight the various treatments of gratitude in the psychological literature (e.g., state, trait) and discuss the theoretical origins for each operationalization of the construct and its associated antecedents and consequences. Second, I focus explicitly on the accumulated knowledge surrounding the behavioral expression of gratitude and speculate about potential conditions that motivate and inhibit individuals from expressing gratitude. Although a large literature exists on the efficacy of gratitude for improving clinical outcomes (Wood et al., 2010), the individualistic nature of that literature is not the focus of this dissertation. Neither is the debate about the standing of gratitude as a moral virtue (Carr, 2015; Emmons & McCullough, 2004), nor the distinctiveness of

gratitude from other moral emotions (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Carlisle & Tsang, 2013; Haidt, 2003).

Building upon the findings from Chapter 1, in Chapter 2, I use an experimental methodology and examine the role of attributions and emotions in subordinates' upward expressions of gratitude towards their supervisors. I consider a boundary condition to these relationships as well. In Chapter 3, I use an experience sampling methodology (ESM) to investigate the influence of supervisors' leadership decision-making style on subordinates' attributions and their reactions to benevolence. In Chapter 4, I discuss the overall findings and implications of the research.



## CHAPTER 1: GRATITUDE IN THE LITERATURE

Scholarly attention on gratitude has been largely focused on its status as a prosocial emotion. The literature reflects attempts to understand what elicits the emotion (e.g., the conferral of benefits from a benefactor to a beneficiary), what its characteristic expression is (e.g., to repay the benefactor), and if some individuals are prone to feeling grateful across a variety of circumstances (e.g., trait gratitude).

There have been two main perspectives to conceptualizing gratitude in the literature: the economic approach and the caring approach. In the economic perspective, “the sender of gratitude is a (less powerful) beneficiary receiving something valued, and the receiver is a (more powerful) benefactor who gives up something valued” (Buck, 2004, p. 101). This perspective is concerned with the variation of inputs from benefactors to the outcomes for beneficiaries, and the extent to which beneficiaries feel grateful. Most of the scholarly work on gratitude has focused on the economic perspective (Algoe & Haidt, 2009). In the past decade, however, the caring approach has gained traction. In this approach, the giving and receiving of benefits is mutually supportive (Buck, 2004). Thus far, the evidence suggests that a caring (as opposed to an economic) perspective on gratitude may explain the relational benefits that have emerged in the empirical literature. It appears that in close relationships, the giving of benefits is a signal of the benefactor’s responsiveness to the beneficiary’s needs and the expression of gratitude for benefits received is an acknowledgement of the benefactor’s value and importance to the beneficiary (Algoe, Fredrickson, & Gable, 2013; Algoe, Haidt, & Gable, 2008; Algoe & Stanton, 2012; Algoe & Way, 2013; Algoe & Zhaoyang, 2015; Gordon et al., 2012).

Work on the characteristic expression of grateful emotion has most often come from the clinical psychology and positive psychology literatures. This body of work has been chiefly interested in the relationship between feeling grateful and enhanced well-being (Wood et al., 2010). Somewhat less explored are the moral implications of gratitude (McCullough et al., 2001) and whether gratitude should be considered a “moral emotion” akin to that of anger, compassion, and elevation (Haidt, 2003). Although implicit in much of the theoretical work on gratitude as an emotional state (McCullough et al., 2001; Tesser, Gatewood, & Driver, 1968), the empirical examination of the link between receiving benefits, feeling grateful, and expressing gratitude has been limited. As with other emotions, “one may feel grateful without showing it, and...one may express gratitude without feeling it” (Buck, 2004, p. 101). Nuances in the experience, expression, and omission of gratitude within personal relationships have only recently begun to garner the attention of scholars (Algoe, 2012). Thus, the interpersonal dynamics of expressing gratitude may be more complex than a cursory assessment of benefactor’s intentions, costs incurred, and perceived value of the benefit to the beneficiary.

Before diving into a detailed review on the focus of this dissertation—expressed gratitude—I first review the literature on gratitude as a state and a trait. In so doing, I review the antecedents of felt gratitude, a focus that has, to a large extent, been ignored by gratitude researchers in favor of exploring the consequences. This is important because gratitude research has accelerated in the years since the last review with important findings that clarify prior understandings (McCullough et al., 2001). Understanding the antecedents of felt gratitude and the research that has recently accumulated on the consequences of felt gratitude is important for understanding what

drives expressions of gratitude. Thus, I explain each form of gratitude and discuss its antecedents and consequences. I conclude with an overall summary of the empirical findings and discuss what questions remain.

### **Felt Gratitude**

Emotion theorists have suggested that the experience of an affective state is an intense arousal that stems from an appraisal of the situation at hand and that dissipates fairly quickly (Rosenberg, 1998). Rosenberg suggests emotion states direct our attention to the cause of our feelings and help to coordinate our response, like running when we are fearful. What does it mean to experience gratitude? The experience of gratitude directs attention to the kindness bestowed by a benefactor (Algoe, 2012; Algoe & Zhaoyang, 2015). Specifically, felt gratitude has been described as “benefit-triggered.” It “is an affect that occurs after a person has been helped and that motivates the reciprocation of aid” (Wood, Maltby, Stewart, Linley, & Joseph, 2008, p. 281). From a phenomenological perspective, felt gratitude has also been shown to be more significantly associated with the recognition that one was benefitted by someone else and the desire to give back than other emotions with positive valence: amusement, awe, contentment, interest, joy, pride, and love (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Campos, Shiota, Keltner, Gonzaga, & Goetz, 2013).

Some of the earliest work on gratitude collapsed grateful affect into the same construct as the emotion of indebtedness (Greenberg, 1980; Tesser et al., 1968). Indebtedness is the feeling of obligation to repay a benefactor. It is an unpleasant emotional state which contrasts with the experience of gratitude—a positive emotional state (Mathews & Green, 2010; Watkins et al., 2006). Indebtedness results from a

beneficiary's recognition of the need to restore equity in the exchange relationship and to repay the benefactor in-kind (Greenberg, 1980). In contrast, feelings of gratitude motivate beneficiaries to engage in relationship-building behaviors with the benefactor (Algoe, Gable, & Maisel, 2010; Algoe et al., 2008).

Work by Watkins and colleagues (2006) suggests that gratitude and indebtedness are distinct constructs. Watkins et al. manipulated the perceived reciprocity expectations of a benefactor for a benefit provided. In one of their hypothetical scenarios, an acquaintance who showed up unannounced to assist the student with moving was portrayed as being one who typically does not expect anything in return for favors rendered, one who typically expects a clear verbal or written expression of thanks, or one who not only expects a clear expression of thanks but also expects a return favor. In the last condition, the student also knew that the acquaintance was planning to move the following weekend. In their study, both feelings of indebtedness and gratitude resulted from the conferral of benefits by the benefactor, but the feelings of gratitude diminished as the perceived expectations from the benefactor escalated. This was not so with indebtedness (Watkins et al., 2006). Indebtedness demonstrated the opposite pattern. As expectations increased, so did feelings of indebtedness. Furthermore, gratitude was associated with approach motivations and indebtedness was associated with motivations to avoid the benefactor (Watkins et al., 2006).

Thus, gratitude not only exhibits differential patterns of relationships with post-benefit reactions than other relevant emotions (indebtedness), but it is also distinct from other emotional states with similar valence.

## **Antecedents of Felt Gratitude**

### **Situational appraisals**

Some of the earliest scholarly work on gratitude focused on characteristics of situations that induce gratitude. For example, Tesser et al.(1968) found that beneficiaries' perceptions about the benefactor's intentions and cost in providing the benefit along with the value of the benefit were jointly associated with felt gratitude. They hypothesized that gratitude would be greater when the beneficiary perceives the benefactor acted altruistically and expects little in return, that the benefactor incurred a cost in bestowing the benefit, and that the beneficiary values the benefit provided. University students read several hypothetical vignettes with levels of each of the three variables manipulated and imagined they were the beneficiary in each scenario. For example, to manipulate the intentionality of the benefactor, one story involved an aunt who gave a picture to the beneficiary just out of good will to the beneficiary (high-intentionality), to benefit the beneficiary and to increase her own reputation with the family (medium-intentionality), and to purely benefit her own reputation (low-intentionality). The results revealed that each factor (intentions, cost, and value) positively related to participants' gratitude. Furthermore, the factors did not interact, suggesting each were independently responsible for participants' emotional reactions. Later work on emotions supported the importance of the benefactor's causal role in inducing gratitude. The experience of feeling grateful depends on one's attributions about the outcome experienced (Weiner, 1985). Gratitude is more likely to occur when one attributes a positive outcome for the self to the actions of a benevolent benefactor (Weiner, Russell, & Lerman, 1979). While attributions about the causal role of a benefactor are important in eliciting gratitude, attributions about the

intentions of benefactors in providing benefits has received limited attention from scholars.

The findings in Tesser et al. (1968) sparked further inquiry into variations of the perceived intentions, costs, and value of the benefit and the associated impact on beneficiaries' felt gratitude. For example, both the intensity of a benefactor's intentions to help and the importance of the benefit to the beneficiary were jointly considered by participants when determining how grateful a typical beneficiary would feel in a hypothetical situation (Lane & Anderson, 1976). Although the value, or perceived liking of the benefit are important considerations a beneficiary takes into account when appraising a situation (Algoe et al., 2008), experimental evidence suggests that the objective value of the benefit matters less than simply perceiving that one has received a favor (Tsang, 2006, 2007). In her experimental manipulation, Tsang (2007) led participants to believe they were bestowed raffle tickets worth potentially either \$100 (high value) or \$10 (low value), but this objective amount resulted in indistinguishable differences in grateful emotion for those in either the high value or low value conditions. Importantly, just being in the favor condition resulted in significantly more grateful emotion than receiving the same objective values by chance. However, in the manipulation by Tsang the participants received the high and low value raffle tickets from the supposed other participant (the confederate) making it unclear as to what extent it was the perceived value of the tickets or the incurred cost (by giving up one's own tickets) of the benefactor that drove participants' grateful feelings.

Recent work suggests that the situational antecedents identified by Tesser et al. (1968) form a latent factor of "benefit appraisals" (Wood, Maltby, Stewart, Linley, et al.,

2008). In a set of three studies using both experimental and longitudinal methods and structural equation modeling procedures, the perceived value of the help provided, the sincerity of the benefactor's motivations to help, and the perceived cost incurred by the benefactor in terms of time, effort, and money, loaded onto a latent factor that strongly predicted felt gratitude (Wood, Maltby, Stewart, Linley, et al., 2008). Interestingly, 64% of the variance in felt gratitude was accounted for by the situational appraisals, providing strong support for the link between attributions about the situation and grateful emotion.

As an alternative explanation to the economic perspective described thus far, dyadic studies of gratitude as it unfolds between friends and couples in everyday life suggests factors beyond intentions, costs, and value may drive the experience of gratitude. Algoe et al. (2008) proposed that another appraisal—perceived responsiveness of the benefactor—was critical in eliciting grateful responses to benefits. These authors argued that when benefits convey that a benefactor understands, values, and cares for the beneficiary, this thoughtfulness drives beneficiaries to feel grateful. These authors examined gifts exchanged in newly formed friendships and perceived thoughtfulness of the benefactor was a significant predictor of beneficiaries' grateful emotion. On the basis that perceived partner responsiveness acts as a mechanism to promote intimacy and connection, Algoe and her colleagues (2010) investigated the role of perceived partner responsiveness in providing every day benefits within romantic couples. Perceived partner responsiveness for benefits provided was associated with changes in partner-beneficiaries' felt gratitude the next day and with relationship satisfaction. This led Algoe to contend that gratitude binds people together by increasing their relational connection (Algoe, 2012).

In all, the experience of gratitude in interpersonal interactions appears to stem from beneficiaries' cognitive appraisals about the situational circumstances in which the benefits are bestowed. As with any attributions, the benefit appraisals that precede gratitude do not occur in a vacuum. I discuss the factors known to influence these appraisals next.

### **Role-based obligations**

Although attributions about the situation appear to be especially relevant to the experience of grateful affect, beneficiaries' expectations about the relationship with the benefactor also appear to matter for subsequent emotional responses after help is (or isn't) rendered. In a series of experimental vignettes, researchers manipulated the degree of closeness between the benefactor and the beneficiary in a hypothetical helping scenario (Bar-Tal, Bar-Zohar, Greenberg, & Hermon, 1977). Participants felt more gratitude when they were helped by a hypothetical stranger or acquaintance than when the help was provisioned by a hypothetical parent or sibling. When the provision of a favor or help is seen by the beneficiary as required based on the nature of the relationship with the benefactor, gratitude is much less likely to result (McCullough et al., 2001). Thus, to be seen as possessing truly altruistic intentions, it may help if the benefactor does not have a very close relationship with the beneficiary.

### **Power differences**

Other factors about the social context in which beneficiaries and benefactors interact also appear to influence beneficiaries' grateful feelings. Drawing upon a social



interactionist approach to emotions (Kemper, 1978), Hegtvedt (1990) investigated whether structural factors such as power and status influenced emotional responses to rewards bestowed in an exchange relationship. She used an experimental vignette where adult college students imagined themselves to be a typist who was either desperately seeking to offer typing services to fund tuition or was not in immediate need of money and was either offering services that were highly scarce (only typist around) versus highly prevalent. Hegtvedt found that individuals in the power-disadvantaged conditions felt more gratitude when equitably or over rewarded for their services than their higher powered counterparts. Status, operationalized in her study as sex, did not affect grateful responses.

### **Summary**

The approach to studying the experience of gratitude as an emotional state has largely focused on what has been called an economic or exchange perspective (Buck, 2004). Only recently have scholars begun to focus on the caring perspective of gratitude (Algoe, 2012). The inputs put forth by benefactors, in terms of quantity and extent of resources they expended to bestow the benefit, how valuable the benefit is perceived to be, and how generous and thoughtful they were in providing it, contribute to beneficiaries' appraisals that they were on the receiving end of some benefit. In general, research shows the greater the inputs, the greater beneficiaries' gratitude.

## **Consequences of Felt gratitude: Gratitude as a Moral Emotion**

Although gratitude is often thought of in terms of its effects on individual well-being, like other emotions, it also demonstrates action tendencies (Frijda, 1986). The action tendency most commonly examined with feeling grateful is prosocial behavior (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; McCullough et al., 2001). The majority of the work on the consequences of gratitude has examined its role as a moral emotion. McCullough et al. likened gratitude to other moral emotions (e.g., guilt), and posited it had three distinct functions: moral barometer, moral motivation, and moral reinforcement. I discuss each of these in turn.

### **The moral barometer hypothesis**

As a moral barometer, individuals' experience of grateful feelings is triggered by the awareness that they were the beneficiary of another's help, support, or otherwise benefit (McCullough et al., 2001). That is, gratitude is a result of a change in a beneficiary's social atmosphere—a change that indicates someone has sought to enhance one's well-being. Like the other theorists before them (Tesser et al., 1968; Weiner, 1985), McCullough et al. proposed that gratitude was most likely to occur when a beneficiary receives a valuable benefit, the benefactor puts forth significant resources (e.g., time and money) to bestow the benefit, the benefactor's intentions were benevolent, and the benefit was freely given or not born out of some role-based duty to the beneficiary. Thus, when these social cognitions signal that the beneficiary has been the recipient of a benevolent gift, they indicate that the benefactor has acted to further the well-being of the beneficiary. In this way, gratitude has been discussed as a profoundly interpersonal

emotion; although we can be grateful for *something* we are almost always grateful to *someone*. Indeed, when a beneficiary feels grateful toward their benefactor, they are more likely to feel closer to their benefactor and want to spend time with the benefactor (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Bartlett et al., 2012). This tendency on the part of grateful beneficiaries goes above and beyond the economic or “tit for tat” explanations of interpersonal exchanges and is more characteristic of high quality social exchange relationships (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). It explains why beneficiaries repay their benefactors with interpersonal resources (commitment, attention) and why disentangling gratitude from indebtedness was an important conceptual step to understanding the unique contributions of gratitude to interpersonal interactions between beneficiaries and benefactors.

### **The moral motivation hypothesis**

Beneficiaries’ desire to repay their benefactors fits under the moral motivator function of gratitude described by McCullough et al. (2001). When beneficiaries feel grateful towards a benefactor, they are motivated to not only positively interact with their benefactor but they are also more likely to act prosocially towards others. From an evolutionary standpoint, some have suggested that gratitude evolved to make humans especially sensitive to the degree of resources expended by others who commit acts of altruism to non-kin (Trivers, 1971). Indeed, McCullough et al.’s theorizing fits with that of early sociological theories on the norm of reciprocity in that beneficiaries will be more inclined to act prosocially towards benefactors and to refrain from acts that would harm them (Gouldner, 1960). But in arguing that gratitude motivates more than just reciprocity

behavior, McCullough et al. suggest that gratitude expands beneficiaries' moral motivations such that they not only discharge their obligations to repay their benefactors—satisfying their obligations to the norm of reciprocity—but they are further inclined to behave in ways that benefit others (Fredrickson, 2004; Roberts, 2004). This hypothesis represents an alternate account of the relationship between positive treatment by a benefactor and the beneficiary's prosocial response than is often portrayed in the organizational literature. That is, gratitude as opposed to reciprocity obligations (or feelings of indebtedness), may be more strongly related to beneficiaries' prosocial motivations and behaviors than is typically assumed by exchange-based theories of prosocial behavior in organizations (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986; Rousseau, 1989; Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983).

Several experiments and some field studies have demonstrated that grateful beneficiaries are more likely to help their benefactors and others. For example, Bartlett and DeSteno (2006) experimentally induced gratitude in beneficiaries and then compared whether participants in the gratitude condition were more likely than those in the neutral condition to provide help to their benefactor and to a stranger. They found a main effect for gratitude. That is, grateful beneficiaries spent more minutes helping their benefactor and helping a stranger than those in the neutral condition. If gratitude simply was a manifestation of the norm of reciprocity, then grateful beneficiaries should have been no more likely to spend time helping a stranger—one who had provided no favor to them and thus had created no obligation—than those in the neutral condition. This tendency on the part of grateful beneficiaries to act prosocially to third-parties was demonstrated in another experiment where DeSteno and colleagues used the same experimental paradigm

as their previous study. Participants completed an onerous task on a computer which they believed subsequently “crashed,” losing their work, only to be saved by a benefactor who ostensibly fixed the computer issue (DeSteno et al., 2010). After the first part of the experiment, participants then played an economic game with a participant they were told was either the benefactor who fixed their computer or a stranger. Participants in the gratitude condition were more likely to give money (tokens) to both the benefactor and the stranger than their counterparts in the control condition. However, their prosocial behaviors were not moderated by the identity of the partner in the economic game. That is, participants in the gratitude conditions did not significantly vary their giving based on the identity of their exchange partner. Further, felt gratitude mediated between receipt of a favor and tokens given to partners.

Other experimental work pitting different positive emotions (e.g., joy, admiration, pride, happiness) against gratitude revealed that grateful beneficiaries desire to help others more and are more likely to actually choose to interact with others described as prosocial than others described as purely social (eager to meet new friends) (Algoe & Haidt, 2009). Recent work in an organizational setting has also supported these experimental findings. Spence et al.’s (2013) diary studies showed that workers who feel grateful during the day are more likely to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors later that day both towards their superiors and towards their coworkers.

### **The moral reinforcement hypothesis**

The last moral function of gratitude discussed by McCullough et al. (2001) is the moral reinforcement hypothesis. The moral reinforcement idea traverses the landscape

between felt gratitude and expressed gratitude. Although the link between beneficiaries' felt and expressed gratitude is implicit in their theorizing, McCullough and colleagues specify that benefactors are reinforced when beneficiaries express their gratitude either verbally, in writing, or through some other demonstration of appreciation. The authors theorized that when benefactors are thanked for their efforts, they feel both reinforced ("My kind deeds were appreciated" and "What I've done was important and valuable") and motivated to enact more prosocial behaviors in the future because they anticipate more positive acknowledgement. Experimental evidence demonstrates the reinforcement hypothesis for benefactors who are thanked (rather than punished) for their efforts (Clark, 1975; Crano & Sivacek, 1982). I explore the moral reinforcement hypothesis further in the section where I discuss the consequences of expressed gratitude from beneficiaries.

In sum, the accumulated research has been largely focused on prosocial behavior as the primary consequence of grateful affect. However, recent research from the close personal relationships literature suggests that grateful beneficiaries may also act on their gratitude by increasing their commitment and bonding themselves further towards their benefactor. Before discussing the findings from the personal relationships literature, I review the research that has explored gratitude as a dispositional trait.

### **Trait Gratitude**

Cultivating the habit of being grateful for benefits received is something most societies regard as desirable. Indeed, this is why gratitude is often considered a virtuous trait (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000; Roberts, 1991, 2004), and why parents tend to prompt young children to say "thank you" at appropriate times in order to illustrate the situations

in which gratitude should be felt and expressed (Becker & Smenner, 1986). In contrast, to be ungrateful is generally viewed as having one of the worst character traits (Emmons & McCullough, 2004). To possess the trait of gratitude is to present a proneness to respond with grateful emotion across situations (Roberts, 1991; Rosenberg, 1998; Watkins, Woodward, Stone, & Kolts, 2003). Researchers have approached the empirical study of trait gratitude somewhat differently. Although operating independently, three groups of authors have developed and validated survey-based measures to assess trait gratitude (see Appendix A for each scale). I discuss each of these developments below.

### **The Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6)**

McCullough, Emmons, and Tsang (2002) suggested that trait gratitude consisted of four facets that co-exist to form the grateful disposition: intensity, frequency, span, and density. Intensity refers to the amount of gratitude a grateful person is expected to feel in a situation as compared to a person who is less prone to experience grateful emotion. Grateful people should feel more gratitude when they receive a positive outcome. Regarding the frequency facet, McCullough et al. posited that grateful people are more likely to report feeling gratitude multiple times each day—for even the simplest pleasures—as compared to individuals lower in trait gratitude. Span refers to the breadth of circumstances for which a person may feel grateful at any given time (e.g., grateful for family, friends, a job, life itself, etc.). Grateful people are expected to feel grateful *about* more things at the same time than less grateful individuals. The facet of density describes the depth of individuals that a grateful person feels grateful towards for an outcome. For example, a student who is higher in trait gratitude might feel grateful towards his parents,

siblings, classmates and teachers upon his graduation from college whereas another student with lower trait gratitude would be expected to identify fewer sources of gratitude for her college graduation. Furthermore, McCullough and colleagues drew upon Weiner's (1985) attribution theory and hypothesized that dispositionally grateful people would be more likely to attribute positive outcomes for the self to others' contributions.

Across four studies using both student and non-student samples and both self and other ratings of grateful disposition, trait gratitude was empirically distinct from other similar constructs (e.g., satisfaction with life, subjective happiness, optimism, and hope), was correlated modestly with informant ratings of trait gratitude, negatively with trait envy and materialism, correlated with positive emotional outcomes such as vitality and lack of depression and anxiety, and demonstrated positive correlations with informant ratings of prosocial characteristics. Furthermore, McCullough et al.'s (2002) measure of trait gratitude, referred to as the GQ-6, could not be subsumed by the Big 5 taxonomy of personality dimensions (John & Srivastava, 1999). Although individuals with higher trait gratitude were more extraverted, agreeable, and less neurotic than those lower in trait gratitude, those traits only accounted for approximately 30% of the variance in the grateful disposition.

### **The Gratitude, Resentment, and Appreciation Test (GRAT)**

Shortly after the publication of the GQ-6, Watkins et al. (2003) introduced the GRAT, the Gratitude, Resentment, and Appreciation Test. This measure was based on the authors' assessment that grateful people were likely to possess four characteristics: a sense of abundance, appreciation for the contributions of others, appreciation for simple



pleasures, and an acknowledgment of the importance of experiencing and expressing gratitude. A sense of abundance was believed to result from grateful individuals' belief that they were not lacking in life. Second, they argued that grateful people would be more likely to recognize the efforts of others in contributing to their well-being. Their third dimension—appreciation for simple pleasures—is conceptually similar to the frequency facet described by McCullough et al. (2002). Watkins et al. argued that grateful people would be more inclined to appreciate simple pleasures in life because they would feel that they received benefits more frequently in their day to day lives. Finally, the last characteristic of grateful people was that they would be more likely to hold feeling and expressing gratitude as highly important.

After administering a 53-item questionnaire to a sample of students, the authors shortened the list to 44-items which reduced into three factors. In their analysis, the items relating to the importance of feeling and expressing gratitude loaded more significantly with the items relating to the appreciation of others, which they argued made sense because appreciating others' contributions often leads to the expression of gratitude. Like the GQ-6, the GRAT correlated positively with measures of subjective well-being and satisfaction with life and negatively with depressive symptoms. The GRAT also correlated positively with intrinsic religiosity (those who practice religion for themselves and not for the sake of others) and trait positive affect.

### **The Appreciation Scale**

The only other validated measure of trait gratitude comes from a clinical psychology approach, where scholars were interested in the associations between trait

gratitude (or appreciativeness) and individuals' well-being (Adler & Fagley, 2005). In the development of the Appreciation Scale, Adler and Fagley conceptualized trait appreciativeness as broader than the construct of trait gratitude. Notably, the authors do not cite the GQ-6 nor the GRAT in their scale development paper. They define trait appreciation as consisting of eight dimensions: a focus on what one has (“have focus”), awe, ritual, present moment, self/social comparison, gratitude, loss/adversity, and interpersonal (Adler & Fagley, 2005).

The “have” focus dimension concerns the appreciative individual's predilection to focus on both intangible and tangible possessions as well as things one feels connected to (Adler & Fagley, 2005). Awe refers to a tendency to feel appreciative of an experience based on its overwhelming sense of specialness (e.g., a beautiful view, birth of a child, etc.). Ritual is a tendency to make time to consciously acknowledge and give thanks for things on a regular basis. The present moment dimension is the tendency to be able to feel appreciative for experiences as they occur. The self/social comparison dimension represents a tendency to generate appreciation from downward social comparisons (e.g., “I'm better off than I was before”), as downward comparisons provide a reference point that is perceived to be worse than the current state. The gratitude portion of their eight dimensions reflects the “benefit-triggered” gratitude conceptualization (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000). In this dimension, appreciative individuals are more likely to perceive and express gratitude to others for their kind deeds. The loss/adversity dimension consists of the tendency to realize how worse off one could have been—and to feel thankful as a result—as well as a tendency to shift one's focus to the positive in the midst of loss or

adversity. Finally, the interpersonal aspect of their dimensions refers to the tendency to feel grateful for the positive relationships one has in life.

Adler and Fagley's (2005) multidimensional scale demonstrated shared but not overlapping relationships with trait optimism and spirituality as well as emotional self-awareness. Both the long and short-form of their scale correlated with subjective well-being (life satisfaction, trait positive affect and trait negative affect) in the expected directions. Of the eight dimensions, the "have" focus element exhibited the strongest correlations with each dimension of well-being.

### **Construct Clarity and Correlates of Trait Gratitude**

Despite the differing approaches of scholars pursuing the study of trait gratitude, it appears that the various scales may reflect a higher-order latent factor of trait gratitude (Wood, Maltby, Stewart, & Joseph, 2008). Wood et al. subjected all 12 scales from the GQ-6, GRAT, and Appreciation Scale to factor analysis across multiple samples. The results demonstrated that each scale was a significant indicator of a higher order latent construct of trait gratitude and that the scales operated consistently across gender. In later work, Wood and his colleagues argued that the latent construct of trait gratitude reflects a broader conceptualization than the individual scales alone and suggested the grateful personality reflects a "life orientation" towards the positive in life (Wood et al., 2010).

Some empirical work suggests that the strong correlations between trait gratitude and life satisfaction may create a ceiling effect whereby it is difficult for individuals high on trait gratitude to attain further increases in well-being. Indeed, in a longitudinal experiment where participants practiced thinking about people, objects, or events for

which they were thankful, only individuals who self-reported lower levels of trait gratitude (as measured by the GQ-6), demonstrated increases in life satisfaction after the intervention (Rash, Matsuba, & Prkachin, 2011).

In keeping with the findings on felt gratitude, trait gratitude appears to exhibit different patterns of responses than trait indebtedness. In a sample of college students, self-reported responses on both the GRAT and the GQ-6 correlated positively with an internal state of awareness and negatively with indebtedness and social anxiety (Mathews & Green, 2010). Indebtedness demonstrated the opposite relationship with social anxiety and correlated positively with a public self-consciousness.

As with other dispositional traits, trait and state are linked (Rosenberg, 1998). The trait of gratitude makes it more likely that beneficiaries recognize when benefits have been provided and view them more positively and feel more intensely grateful as a result (Spence et al., 2013). In two daily diary studies with working professionals, Spence et al. found trait gratitude (as measured by the GQ-6) was positively related to the daily experience of felt gratitude.

In sum, trait gratitude has modest correlations with the Big 5 personality facets but represents a theoretically and empirically distinct construct. Although scholars have posited many different facets of the grateful disposition, to date, it seems that established measures of the construct reflect a higher-order latent factor of trait gratitude. Finally, individuals who are higher in trait gratitude are expected to have more frequent and intense experiences of gratitude and to be more likely to express their gratitude than those with lower levels of the trait.

## **Expressed Gratitude**

To this point, I have discussed gratitude as a discrete emotion, a moral emotion, and a disposition. In this section, I discuss the expression of gratitude. First, I discuss the antecedents to expressing gratitude that have been identified in the literature, bridging some of the findings from my earlier discussion about state and trait gratitude, as well as potential barriers to its expression. Second, I describe the consequences for both the benefactor (who receives the gratitude) and the beneficiary (who expresses it) as well as for their relationship.

### **Antecedents of Expressed Gratitude**

By now I have hinted at some of the factors that affect beneficiaries' benefit appraisals. Perceptions that the benefactor has an ulterior motive ("She must want something in return that I do not want to/cannot provide") and that the benefactor is obligated to provide the help ("It's my sister's obligation to drop everything and pick me up; we are family") can cause beneficiaries to attribute less altruism to any benefits rendered. Alternatively, occupying a position with less power may make the benefits bestowed by a more powerful benefactor seem *more* altruistic since the higher power holder is not needy and cannot expect to extract many resources from someone in a lower power position (of course a malevolent power holder could have different expectations). Given the positive relationship between felt and expressed gratitude, lower (or higher) benefit appraisals should trigger less (or more) expressed gratitude as well. The empirical findings largely support these links. As I explain below, some of the very same factors that influence grateful emotion have been shown to affect beneficiaries' expressions of

gratitude. I begin with the influence of role-based expectations and power differences between beneficiary and benefactor before turning to individual factors of beneficiaries that may alter their appraisals.

### **Role-based expectations**

As with felt gratitude, beneficiaries' expectations about a benefactor's duties and obligations may also influence expressed gratitude. Although I am not aware of any empirical findings, theorists argue that one of the preconditions for gratitude is that the beneficiary views the benevolence as independent of any role-based relationship with the benefactor (McCullough et al., 2001). Some qualitative work in an organizational context supports the view of McCullough and colleagues. In one study, scholars observed that subordinates assumed a dependent-like state in their relationship with their supervisors and tended to attribute parental powers to these managers. Managers who provided emotional support in the form of listening to their subordinates' personal problems and offering advice to help them deal with their personal issues were viewed by subordinates as acting within the bounds of their role as "parents." Therefore, the subordinates viewed the help as undeserving of gratitude (Toegel, Kilduff, & Anand, 2013). In contrast, supervisors viewed the help as discretionary and were disappointed in the lack of acknowledgement they received for their efforts. In this organization, subordinates rationalized the emotional support given by supervisors as obligated by their role and their power.

Ironically, subordinates in Toegel et al.'s (2013) study attributed leadership qualities to supervisors who provided emotional support, suggesting that these

supervisors who felt they were going out of their way to provide support were doing the right things but that those things were expected and unappreciated. Notably, Toegel et al. reiterated the divergence of expectations between supervisors and subordinates with regards to the “parental authority” of supervisors. In contrast to subordinates, supervisors did not see themselves as parental figures. Attributing the emotional support provided by supervisors to a duty inhibited subordinates’ experience of gratitude and absolved them of any requirement to express it, at least from their point of view. Of consequence however, is that supervisors did not see it that way and this disagreement could portend negative interpersonal outcomes for both parties.

### **Power and status**

Theorists have suggested that an individuals’ appraisal of their power and general status may influence their experience and expression of gratitude (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994). Power has been defined in many ways (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003). Following Keltner et al. (p. 265), I define power as the “capacity to modify others’ states by providing or withholding resources or administering punishments.” Thus, to understand power and how it affects individuals and people in relationships, one must consider access to, and possession of resources, and the inequities that may exist between relationship partners.

From a theoretical standpoint, being one who needs help (i.e., resources) can be psychologically stressful and can stir up negative emotions towards others one sees as better off (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994). Indeed, needy people may experience resentment, an emotion that inhibits their ability to experience and express genuine gratitude

(Roberts, 2004). Therefore, people may sometimes refuse gifts or help from others. They may view it as demeaning or as creating an undue burden (Algoe et al., 2010; Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994). At other times, they may reluctantly express gratitude, while they swallow their resentment.

From an empirical perspective, there has been limited research on the influence of power on expressed gratitude. However, understanding how children learn to use common socially expected phrases such as “thank you” at the appropriate times and in the appropriate context has been of interest to child psychologists and this research offers some important insights about the influence of power. For example, Becker and Smenner (1986) randomly assigned three and four-year olds attending a daycare center to receive a reward from either a peer or an adult who was not related to the children. Overall, children were more likely to express gratitude to the adult benefactor than they were to the peer benefactor. Thus, in that sample, it appeared that children were more likely to express gratitude to a higher power benefactor.

Whether the influence of power on beneficiaries’ tendency to express gratitude to non-kin generalizes to adults remains to be seen; however, as mentioned previously, adults who occupied a power-disadvantaged position felt more gratitude than their higher-powered counterparts when they were equitably or overrewarded in a hypothetical role-play scenario (Hegtvedt, 1990). In fact, individuals in the power-advantaged conditions felt more deserving for their rewards than those in the lower power conditions. The findings from child psychologists and from social scientists studying power and felt gratitude are important for organizational researchers because power is generally positively correlated with hierarchy. As individuals move up or down the hierarchy, their



access to resources is impacted. Subordinates inherently occupy a lower position in the hierarchy than their superiors, and power may affect their expressions of gratitude to higher powered benefactors (and similarly situated peers). Despite the evidence that power can affect gratitude and may explain when beneficiaries are likely to express gratitude to benefactors, I am not aware of any studies that have empirically assessed these hypotheses.

Research on status is also relevant for understanding what influences the expression of gratitude. Becker and Smenner (1986) were also interested in whether there were differences in children's spontaneous expression of gratitude due to socioeconomic differences. They found that children from lower socioeconomic households as compared to their higher economic status counterparts were more likely to express gratitude to both the unfamiliar four-year old peer benefactor and the unfamiliar female adult benefactor. Although the authors were unable to measure the children's cognitions, the first author (who played the role of unfamiliar adult benefactor) observed that children of lower socioeconomic status appeared to be more excited about the reward (a sticker) than did the other children, leading the authors to speculate that these children may have valued the sticker more and their expression of gratitude reflected the magnitude of their appreciation for the gift. More empirical work is necessary to understand how status may influence beneficiaries' reactions.

In summary, there is some evidence that the social context in which benefits are bestowed may influence beneficiaries' tendencies to express gratitude. Of import is the role of power differences between these actors as well as beneficiaries' actual and

perceived status. These variables may directly influence the likelihood that a beneficiary expresses gratitude to a benefactor.

### **Beneficiaries' humility**

From an individual differences perspective, persons who are higher in trait gratitude should be prone to recognize situations where they have been the beneficiary of someone's kindness and to respond with gratitude (Adler & Fagley, 2005; McCullough et al., 2002; Watkins et al., 2003). But in order to express gratitude, some argue a beneficiary must first be comfortable acknowledging that he or she is indebted to the benefactor (Roberts, 2004). This has led some to argue that for beneficiaries to be open to the benefits from benefactors, humility is required (Kruse, Chancellor, Ruberton, & Lyubomirsky, 2014; Roberts & Wood, 2003). Indeed, recent work by Kruse et al. suggests that gratitude and humility may be mutually reinforcing. As gratitude increases one's focus on others, it paves the way for the reduced-self focus that is characteristic of humility. Additionally, humility appears to facilitate the experience of greater gratitude by increasing one's focus on others' values. These scholars had participants complete a measure of state humility and then either write a letter expressing their gratitude to someone who had been kind to them or write about what they did in the hours before coming to the lab. Participants in the gratitude condition who were already in a humble state experienced greater gratitude after the experimental task than their lower humility counterparts. Some recent work on the manifestations of humility in the workplace have also identified expressing appreciation for others' efforts as an expected behavior of humble leaders (Owens & Hekman, 2012). Thus, beneficiaries who are prone to

experiencing humility may also be open to the assistance of benefactors, be more comfortable acknowledging their efforts, and may even feel more grateful for the benefits they receive.

### **Beneficiaries' perspective-taking**

Theorists have also posited that the ability to take the perspective of others into account facilitates gratitude (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994; McCullough et al., 2001). By understanding the intentions of benefactors, beneficiaries are better able to appraise their efforts and to express gratitude when it is deserved. Perspective-taking has been described as both a general tendency of individuals to adopt the perspective of another person (a trait perspective) and as an activity that individuals can be encouraged to enact (Davis, 1980; Davis, Conklin, Smith, & Luce, 1996). The general tendency to engage in perspective-taking is significantly correlated with dispositional gratitude (McCullough et al., 2002). That is, individuals who are prone to spontaneously empathize with another person also tend to be more grateful. Thus, perspective taking may also relate to the tendency to express gratitude. Unlike humility, however, no study has directly reported on the facilitative influence of perspective-taking on expressions of gratitude.

### **Attachment orientations**

Gratitude has been linked to improved relational bonding (Gordon et al., 2012). Expressing gratitude to a relationship partner signals that one desires to be close to the partner, and that the partner is valued for who they are and for what they do. For people that prefer not to get close to their partners, the experience and expression of gratitude

may be in conflict with their attachment preferences. For example, attachment theory suggests that avoidant individuals tend to not be comfortable trusting their partners, worry about getting too close to them, and would prefer to not be dependent on their partner (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Not trusting the intentions of one's partner may cause avoidant individuals to be suspicious about the generosity of their partner. They may view benefits from this "benefactor" as loaded, in the sense that an ulterior motive is really driving the gracious behavior. As such, their appraisals about the benefits received from their relationship partner should result in less felt gratitude. In turn, their preference to avoid intimacy would also result in less gratitude expressed to their partner.

In contrast, those that are anxious about their desires to be closer than they believe their partner prefers are more likely to feel insecure about how much the partner values them and appreciates what they do. These individuals worry that when their partners do nice things for them, they are generally unworthy of that type of treatment and may feel anxious about their ability to respond. The pervasive worries of these people may weaken their ability to feel appreciated by their partners, as they may be overcome with anxious feelings (Mikulincer, Shaver, & Slav, 2006). However, their strong preference for closeness should not inhibit their expressions of gratitude to their partners.

Some research suggests that in romantic couples, attachment preferences are associated with gratitude felt and expressed towards partners (Gordon et al., 2012; Mikulincer et al., 2006). For example, both Gordon and Mikulincer and their colleagues found individuals with avoidant orientations were less likely to feel and express gratitude towards their partners. Furthermore, Gordon et al. found that while individuals with attachment anxiety orientations were less likely to feel appreciated by their partner, their

attachment orientation was not significantly associated with their appreciation (expressed gratitude) towards their partners. Finally, attachment theorists have also investigated the role of attachment orientations in employees' experiences at work (Hazan & Shaver, 1990). Consistent with attachment theory, Hazan and Shaver found that employees who possess an anxious attachment orientation are more likely to feel that their work is misunderstood and unappreciated by their coworkers. Feeling unappreciated could lead to negative consequences for these employees as perceptions of ungratefulness can breed resentment (Roberts, 2004). In contrast, they found that avoidant employees were more dissatisfied with coworkers and more likely to endorse work as more important than cultivating relationships. Given the reciprocal nature of gratitude—feeling appreciated ignites expressions of appreciation (Gordon et al., 2012)—it seems that avoidant workers, like avoidant spouses (Mikulincer et al., 2006), will be less likely to express gratitude to their benefactors.

### **Consequences of Expressed Gratitude**

Until recently, scholarly work on gratitude has been predominantly focused on how it is induced and its contribution to individuals' well-being. Renewed interest in gratitude sprang from the positive psychology movement, where theorists pointed out the relative lack of attention to gratitude as compared to other emotions (cf. anger, guilt, shame) (Emmons & McCullough, 2004). Psychologists interested in relationship functioning turned to gratitude as a means by which people in relationships foster relational closeness and satisfaction. Evidence is accumulating on the positive implications of expressions of gratitude for both parties of a dyad as well as their

relationship more generally (e.g., relationship duration). In the next few sections, I will describe the research findings in terms of how expressing gratitude benefits the benefactor, the beneficiary, and their relationship.

### **Benefactors' prosocial behaviors**

Consistent with the moral reinforcement hypothesis, researchers have investigated whether benefactors' behavioral reactions to expressed gratitude are prosocial. Evidence suggests that they are, both towards strangers and towards romantic partners. Moss and Page (1972) explored whether positive reinforcement (via an expression of thanks) as compared to negative reinforcement (abruptly cutting off the benefactor and expressing displeasure with their assistance) were associated with increases or decreases in subsequent helping as compared to a neutral condition. After requesting directions in a public shopping area, the confederate either expressed gratitude (reinforced) or expressed frustration with the benefactor (punished). Then, a second confederate dropped a bag they were carrying in front of the benefactor. Benefactors who were reinforced with gratitude were more likely to pick up the bag than those that were previously punished for helping. These findings were replicated by Clark (1975). Employing the same paradigm as Moss and Page, confederates in Clark's study approached individuals entering a university library and asked for directions. The individuals (benefactors) attempted to provide directions and were either reinforced with gratitude or rebuffed with frustration. Subsequently, another confederate either walking normally or using crutches dropped a book. Clark measured whether benefactors helped verbally, physically, or not at all. Nearly three quarters of the participants in the gratitude/reinforcement condition helped

the confederate who was walking normally. It was over 90% in the condition where the secondary confederate was using crutches (highly dependent). Overall, a main effect for reinforcement indicated that subjects who received gratitude for their help were more likely to help both low-dependent and high-dependent strangers than were those in the punishment condition. These authors speculated that participants weigh the costs and benefits of helping, and prior success (or reinforcement) in one scenario influences their beliefs about acting graciously in a subsequent scenario.

Subsequently, scholars hypothesized that reinforcement of helpers might occur because of changes in their self-perceptions (“I am a helpful person”). They argued that these enhanced self-perceptions could later influence benefactors’ altruistic behavior. Indeed, although self-perceptions were not directly measured in some of the early experimental work, the findings suggested that reinforcement either by expressing thanks directly and/or adding a reinforcement label (helpful/not helpful) were associated with benefactors’ acquiescence to later requests for assistance (Crano & Sivacek, 1982; Goldman, Seever, & Seever, 1982). Consistent with the self-perception theories of earlier studies, a waitress’ written expression of thank-you on a customer’s bill increased tips by over 11 percent (Rind & Bordia, 1995). Thank-you notes also influenced the frequency with which case-managers visited their charges on a weekly basis during an intervention, before returning to baseline levels (Clark, Northrop, & Barkshire, 1988).

Extending these findings to the organizational literature, Grant (2008) drew upon self-determination theory and hypothesized that perceived social worth mediated between the task significance of one’s work and subsequent helping behaviors. Lifeguards who read stories about the meaningfulness of their life saving duties demonstrated increased

perceptions of social worth and subsequently volunteered to take on extra shifts. Notably, in his measure of social worth, Grant included the items “I feel that others appreciate my work” and “I feel that other people value my contributions at work,” items that indirectly assess the extent to which the lifeguards felt appreciated or felt that others were grateful for the work they performed. In a more direct test, Grant and Gino (2010) had student participants provide resume critiques for a confederate over email who either responded with gratitude and a request for additional help on a cover letter or simply requested additional help. Participants in the gratitude condition were more likely to provide subsequent help to the confederate (beneficiary) who thanked them. These findings were replicated in another experiment in the same article but this time, benefactors in the gratitude condition were also more likely to help another person after being thanked by the first beneficiary. Increases in perceived social worth mediated these relationships. In all, the evidence suggests that when benefactors are reinforced with gratitude for their kind deeds, they are more prosocial in the future.

Do these prosocial findings extend to benefactors in close personal relationships? Some research suggests the answer is yes. In a study of college students who were in romantic relationships, participants who reported feeling more appreciated by their partners during the day also reported being more responsive to their partner’s needs the following day (Gordon et al., 2012). Gordon and colleagues refer to these responsive behaviors as relationship maintenance behaviors or pro-relationship behaviors. These responsive behaviors involve putting the partner’s needs first, being there for the partner, and being thoughtful. Although they did not directly assess gratitude expressed between the partners, their theorizing was rooted in the idea that feeling appreciated by a partner



represents the extent that people feel their partners are grateful for who they are and for what they do. Thus, as benefactors in these relationships, feeling appreciated signals that one's efforts are acknowledged and valued. As individuals in relationships feel that their partners are grateful for them, they tend to focus on positive attributes of their partners. In turn, they begin to appreciate their partners more. Indeed, the associations between feeling appreciated and being more responsive to the partner were mediated by the partner-benefactor's own appreciative feelings. Thus, feeling appreciated by a partner ignites a virtuous cycle whereby partner-benefactors further invest in the relationship through enacting pro-relationship behaviors which signal their own gratitude to the partner-beneficiary. This cycle of gratitude has been theorized to draw benefactors closer to their partners by signaling the desire for a communal relationship characterized by strong norms of care and concern for one another's well-being (Algoe, 2012).

### **Benefactor's attitudes**

As I discussed earlier, when benefactors are thanked for their efforts, they may experience increases in their perceived social worth and positive perceptions about who they are (a helpful person) (Goldman et al., 1982; Grant & Gino, 2010). Beyond these internal cognitions, there is mounting evidence that benefactors who receive gratitude are more committed in their relationships (Algoe, 2012). This is why in her "find, remind, and bind" theory of gratitude in relationships, Algoe argues that expressed gratitude to a benefactor "may act as a hook to keep the benefactor intrinsically interested in being part of the dyadic relationship" (Algoe, 2012, p. 463). In support of the theory, individuals

who report their partners are grateful for them are more committed to their partners in terms of their attitudes and relationship tenure (Gordon et al., 2012).

Thanked benefactors are more satisfied with their relationships as well (Algoe & Way, 2013; Berger & Janoff-Bulman, 2006; Kogan et al., 2010). In a study on the perceived costs and benefits of family chores and partner favors, benefactors who felt gratitude from their partners were more satisfied in their relationship. The more costs they incurred (measured as family chores or favors), the more satisfied they were when they also felt appreciated by their partners (Berger & Janoff-Bulman, 2006). Even when providing benefits they did not really want to give or had to prioritize over something they would have rather done, benefactors who feel appreciated by their partners for their efforts are more satisfied (Kogan et al., 2010).

Why does gratitude make benefactors more satisfied? The “love hormone” oxytocin could be at play. In a combined lab and daily diary study, Algoe and Way (2013) measured the oxytocin secretion levels of partners in the lab after expressing gratitude towards one another. They found that a biological marker for oxytocin expression was significantly associated with relationship satisfaction for both benefactor and beneficiary of gratitude. In another study on romantic couples, there was no link between expressed gratitude and the spouse-benefactor’s relationship satisfaction (Gordon, Arnette, & Smith, 2011). However, as mentioned in Algoe et al. (2013), the null findings for satisfaction in Gordon et al.’s study may have been a result of confounds in the measurement of expressed gratitude. Gordon et al. included two items tapping the beneficiary’s own feelings about expressing gratitude in their measurement of expressed gratitude towards the partner. Thus, their measure of expressed gratitude confounded the

behavior with feelings about the behavior, making it difficult to know if the null effect on the partner's satisfaction was due to the behavior or the emotions. Furthermore, a link between beneficiaries' gratitude and benefactors' satisfaction was found in newly formed friendships between sorority sisters participating in a ritualized gift-exchange (Algoe et al., 2008). Beneficiaries' gratitude for their gifts affected benefactor's ratings of relationship satisfaction one month later.

Finally, some studies looked at benefactors' perceptions about the way the beneficiaries expressed gratitude and the evidence is mixed. Beneficiaries who appear truly responsive when they are expressing gratitude, in terms of conveying a genuine understanding and connection to the benefactor, have benefactors that report greater relationship satisfaction 6 months after the gratitude interaction (Algoe et al., 2013). However, experimental evidence by Algoe and colleagues failed to replicate these findings (Algoe & Zhaoyang, 2015). Although the association between expressed gratitude in the lab and benefactors' daily emotions and resilience were moderated by perceived partner responsiveness, benefactors' satisfaction with the relationship and with their life overall were not. Benefactors in this study demonstrated no significant increases or decreases in satisfaction over the study period. Considering these findings, Algoe and Zhaoyang speculated that interventions with artificial inducements of gratitude expressions may fall short of being authentic and meaningful enough to affect relationship outcomes.

### **Beneficiaries' attitudes and behaviors**

When beneficiaries express gratitude to their benefactors, the find-remind-and-bind theory suggests that beneficiaries will be reminded about the quality of their relationship partner (their benefactor) and will be motivated to pursue pro-relationship goals (Algoe, 2012). Consistent with this theory, correlational, longitudinal studies and experimental studies have demonstrated positive associations between expressing gratitude to a benefactor and beneficiaries' positive perceptions and behaviors towards the benefactor.

In a multi-method paper, researchers found that beneficiaries who expresses gratitude come to see their friendships and romantic relationships as more communal in nature (Lambert, Clark, Durtschi, Fincham, & Graham, 2010). The authors had participants either express gratitude towards their friend, think grateful thoughts about their friend, think about their daily activities, or interact with their friend in a positive manner. Participants in the expressed gratitude condition rated communal strength more strongly after the diary period than participants in the other conditions. Communal relationships are defined in contrast to exchange relationships. Whereas exchange relationships are governed by reciprocity norms, communal relationships are governed by norms of responding to the partner's needs—an accounting of who has done what is not critical as benefits are given non-contingently (Mills, Clark, Ford, & Johnson, 2004). The relationships one has vary in regards to their communal strength. While people can feel a strong sense of communal strength towards close others (spouses, best friends), they may feel comparatively less communal strength towards distant others (acquaintances, second cousins). Being the beneficiary of another person's kindness is an indication that the

benefactor cares for the beneficiary's well-being (Emmons & McCullough, 2004) and presents an opportunity to get closer to the benefactor through the responsive behavior of expressing gratitude. In turn, when beneficiaries express gratitude, they may convince themselves that they not only desire to be closer to their partners but they are closer, in terms of their motivation to care for their partner's needs. Although mediating mechanisms were not examined by Lambert et al., the associations between expressing gratitude and beneficiaries' enhanced communal strength towards the benefactor were robust across different methodological designs.

Beneficiaries who experience and express gratitude to their benefactors can also find themselves to be more satisfied in their relationships and more committed. Couples in the early stages of their relationship completed daily diaries of felt gratitude for the partner, whether the participant and the partner did something thoughtful that day, and how connected and satisfied they felt that day (Algoe et al., 2010). Although the authors did not measure the expression of each person's grateful emotion, the results indicated that people who felt grateful towards their partners also felt more satisfied and connected to the partner the following day. This preliminary evidence fueled later research that examined the impact of actual expressions of gratitude on relationship satisfaction. Gordon et al. (2011) asked long-term married couples to complete daily diaries of their felt and expressed gratitude towards their partners and measured marital satisfaction. Partner-beneficiaries who expressed gratitude to their partner-benefactors experienced greater marital satisfaction and those that felt more gratitude also tended to express it more. The implied model in these studies is that partner-beneficiaries recognize and are grateful for the benefits provided by the partner-benefactor and in turn express gratitude

and experience greater connection and motivation to invest in the relationship. That is, felt gratitude mediates between perceived partner-benefactor relationship investments and partner-beneficiary outcomes. In a direct test of this model, couples completed a three-part study consisting of baseline measures of relationship quality, daily measures of perceived partner investments as well as own investments, and a follow-up survey to measure appreciative behavior towards the partner, relationship commitment and satisfaction (Joel, Gordon, Impett, MacDonald, & Keltner, 2013). The results revealed expressed gratitude towards the partner mediated the positive relationship between perceived partner-benefactor investments in the relationship and increases in partner-beneficiary relationship commitment three-months later. Importantly, the authors were able to rule out reverse causality explanations within these data as it was gratitude and not commitment that mediated the link between partner-benefactor behavior and partner-beneficiary relationship commitment (Joel et al., 2013).

Beneficiaries also seem to demonstrate positive behavioral reactions to their partner-benefactor after expressing gratitude (Gordon et al., 2012; Lambert & Fincham, 2011). Beneficiaries who express gratitude to their partners see themselves as more responsive and are judged by external observers as actually being more responsive and committed to their partners in lab interactions (Gordon et al., 2012). In keeping with the evidence that beneficiaries who express gratitude come to feel closer to their benefactors, beneficiaries who expressed gratitude showed increased comfort in voicing relationship concerns (Lambert & Fincham, 2011). Importantly, these authors experimentally tested for an alternative explanation to these findings. Participants were told to either express gratitude (verbally or in writing) to their friend, think about and record things their friend

did that they were grateful for, think about and record positive memories about the friend, or to simply think about and record what happened to them during the three-week study. Expressed gratitude participants demonstrated improvements in sharing their concerns with their friends as compared to participants in the other conditions. Thus, simply experiencing grateful feelings may not be as beneficial as expressing grateful emotion to one's benefactor (Algoe & Stanton, 2012).

In all, it appears that beneficiaries, like their benefactors, experience positive attitudinal and behavioral reactions from expressing gratitude. The findings suggest that beneficiaries who express gratitude to their benefactors not only engage in behavior likely to positively impact the benefactor, but they themselves experience greater closeness to their partners and more satisfaction in their relationships. This is why some have theorized that gratitude, like other positive emotions, broadens individuals' outlook such that it helps them build better personal (well-being) and social (relationships) resources (Fredrickson, 2004).

### **Relational outcomes**

Given the accumulating evidence of expressed gratitude's positive influence on both beneficiaries' and benefactors' attitudes and behaviors towards one another, it seems logical that couples who express gratitude in their relationships also have relationships that endure. Indeed, evidence suggest that this is the case (Gigy & Kelly, 1992; Gordon et al., 2012). With a time lag of 9 months between assessments, expressed gratitude was positively associated with still being in the relationship at follow-up for participants in Gordon et al.'s (2012) study.

In sum, the findings for individuals in both platonic and romantic relationships suggests that expressed gratitude signals to both parties that the relationship is worth maintaining and that prosocial acts towards one another are likely to be rewarded with future appreciation. Gratitude, it seems, binds the two parties closer together (Algoe, 2012).

### **Overall Summary and Directions for Future Research**

Interest in gratitude has been diverse, spanning multiple scholarly disciplines. The evidence supports the concept of gratitude as an attribution dependent emotion (Weiner, 1985). A beneficiary evaluates the benevolence of a benefactor's intentions, the costs he or she incurred on the beneficiary's behalf, the thoughtfulness of the benefactor and the subjective value of the benefit. Jointly, these factors influence a beneficiary's benefit appraisal and felt gratitude. Felt gratitude then motivates beneficiaries to act in ways that bring them closer to the benefactor and to others through enacted prosocial behaviors. Often, these prosocial behaviors manifest in expressions of gratitude to benefactors (McCullough et al., 2001). Expressions of gratitude further bond the beneficiary and the benefactor closer together and promote prosocial behavior from benefactors, both reciprocally towards beneficiaries but to others as well. Accordingly, gratitude is thought to serve a socially adaptive purpose of facilitating high quality human relationships and creating a virtuous cycle of prosocial behaviors.

High quality relationships and prosocial behaviors are important areas of research for organizational scholars, yet nearly all of the gratitude research has been conducted outside of organizational life. Research on expressed gratitude, in particular, is



predominately limited to studies of romantic couples, and research on gratitude more broadly has only recently garnered the attention of organizational scholars and most of that work has been theoretical. Consequently, we do not know if organizations simply represent another context where gratitude is expressed or if they represent a context where the assumptions and expectations about gratitude must be suspended or altered based on the unique characteristics of organizations and the dynamics that occur within them. Thus, organizational scholars need to investigate gratitude as it occurs within organizations.

Although there are many different avenues that still need to be pursued before we understand the nuances of gratitude in organizations, findings from the broader literature on gratitude reveal factors that may motivate or inhibit the experience and expression of gratitude that are particularly relevant within organizations. Exploring these factors requires the field to move beyond the important but limited empirical focus on the intentions, cost, and perceived value of a benefit—factors known to influence benefit appraisals—and focus on the situational, relational, and individual factors that affect beneficiaries' expressions of gratitude. Below, I outline the areas that should be explored.

### **Situational factors**

Situational factors that make a benefit seem less altruistic, costly, or valuable could affect how much the beneficiary thinks the benefactor is deserving of gratitude. Yet, the research on benefit appraisals experimentally manipulated benevolence in situations devoid of potential internal factors of the beneficiary that may have caused the benevolent behavior, reasons why the benevolence might not be considered as

particularly altruistic (as compared to behavioral norms in that context), or if the beneficiary had reasons to expect the benevolence based on prior history with the benefactor. Examining beneficiaries' reactions in more complex situations is needed to understand how situational factors influence expressed gratitude. Below I outline three situational factors that should be considered: leaders' influence on subordinates' attributions, organizational norms, and beneficiaries' acclimation to benefits.

Weiner's work on attributions was focused on achievement-related contexts and on how people make sense of their successes and failures and respond emotionally (Weiner, 1985; Weiner et al., 1979). Just as in the achievement-related contexts examined by Weiner, in organizations the attributions people make about outcomes they receive are relevant to whether they will feel and then express gratitude. If people tend to attribute good things that happen to something they did, will subordinates who receive benefits from supervisors interpret these benefits as acts of benevolence—which deserve gratitude—or interpret the benefits provided to them from their supervisors as the result of their own hard work and competence? How might leaders influence these attributions?

To the extent that supervisors empower their subordinates through delegation and instill reasons why supervisors' generosity is really an affirmation of subordinates' efforts, subordinates are less likely to make external attributions. The less external (and more internal) the attributions about a positive consequence for the self, the more individuals feel positive affect towards the self for their achievements. In other words, the more individuals feel a sense of pride in their accomplishments. Consequently, pride, rather than gratitude, may be a more dominant emotional reaction to benevolence if individuals believe the benevolence was caused by their own efforts or characteristics

(e.g., trustworthiness) and not primarily by the generosity of their benefactor. Thus, understanding what drives and inhibits attributions about benevolence in an organizational context can be informed by examining how leaders' own behaviors influence employees' attributions.

Just as there are norms in society (Okamoto & Robinson, 1997) and in families (Becker & Smenner, 1986) for expressing gratitude, norms within organizations may influence employees' expressions of gratitude. For example, the backdrop of how things typically occur in an organization provides information that is important for forming benefit appraisals. How generous benefactors are in providing benefits, how costly their behaviors seem to be, and how valuable the benefits are to beneficiaries may be perceived as drastically different depending on the contextual circumstances. If employees perceive their organizational climate as fair or prosocial, should the benefits provided to one another be viewed as benefits at all? Alternatively, in some organizations business units may operate independently or even be adversarial, making it uncommon for peers in one department to work together with peers in another department. Coworkers who go out of their way to help one another, even when it is atypical or even discouraged, may be seen as worthy of great gratitude for their kindness.

The organizational context may also suggest reasons why people become accustomed to the benefits they do (or do not) receive. Acclimation has implications for the gratitude beneficiaries feel but has rarely been studied (Fehr et al., 2016; Tedeschi, 1974). This would be a natural phenomenon to study within interpersonal relationships over time and organizations should be no exception. Within departments, some teams may be highly cohesive, so much so that they anticipate one another's needs and provide

assistance automatically (Porter et al., 2003), making benefits exchanged between team members appear routine and expected. In these situations, people may get accustomed to the benefits and feel less grateful (Fehr et al., 2016; Tedeschi, 1974).

In all, examining how features of the organizational context influence beneficiaries' interpretations and reactions to benevolence would provide a richer understanding of when gratitude is likely to be felt and expressed within organizations.

### **Relational factors**

Not only has there been limited empirical research on the influence of factors such as role expectations and power dynamics on expressed gratitude, but the literature suggests these variables would be particularly important to investigate in organizational settings. For example, expectations about a benefactor's role obligations in caring for a beneficiary's well-being are prominently discussed but rarely examined in the gratitude literature (Bar-Tal et al., 1977; McCullough et al., 2001). Some research suggests that employees, in particular, are apt to attribute what supervisors see as discretionary behaviors such as lending an ear to subordinates' personal problems as required, expected, of instrumental value to the supervisor and unworthy of gratitude (Toegel et al., 2013). I am not suggesting that treating employees well is not of value to supervisors. However, treating employees well and going the extra mile on their behalf may lead to less gratitude for those behaviors if subordinates view them as obligatory.

Additionally, the distinctiveness of a benefactor's behavior has been alluded to but not explicitly examined. In the moral affect theory (MAT) of gratitude McCullough and colleagues (2001) suggest that gratitude from unlikely sources, such as those who

have no formal obligation to care for a beneficiary based on their relational status, stand out when they go out of their way to bestow a benefit. The fact that much of the research on gratitude has explored how it occurs in interactions between strangers, close friends, and romantic couples highlights the importance of examining gratitude in the context of other relationships where obligations may be less clear. That is, in organizations, employees can have lateral (e.g., coworkers), upward (e.g., supervisors), downward (e.g., subordinates) and boundary-spanning (e.g., customers) relationships. The provisioning of discretionary benefits within different relationship contexts is unlikely to be prescribed and officially rewarded by the organization and employees' expectations may vary across these relationship contexts. As a result benefits may seem more or less obligatory and may stand out more or less as circumstances change.

There is also some evidence that beneficiaries' experience of grateful emotion depends on the power dynamics between the benefactor and beneficiary, but much more needs to be done to fully understand the role of power in beneficiaries' benefit appraisals. Will the evidence with young children and adults hold for subordinate-beneficiaries who occupy power-disadvantaged positions (Becker & Smenner, 1986; Hegtvedt, 1990)? Employees' own self-reports indicate there are reasons to believe it will not (Kaplan, 2012). Beyond the power differences implicit in hierarchical relationships, perceived power may also influence beneficiaries' reactions to benevolence. Thus, the level of empowerment individuals feel as a result of power in their relationships with others at work is an important avenue for future research.

In all, we do not have a full understanding of the relational factors that may influence individuals' gratitude. Organizations provide a rich context in which these

factors are likely to vary considerably across the relationships individuals possess. Future research should explore the nature and degree of their influence.

### **Individual factors**

From an individual differences perspective, several possible factors may influence beneficiaries' expressions of gratitude. Whereas individuals' humility and tendency to engage in perspective-taking may facilitate gratitude, an entitlement mindset and avoidant attachment-orientations should decrease gratitude. I discuss each of these below.

The importance of humility for expressing gratitude has been speculated about in the literature, but no study has examined if humility makes gratitude expressions more likely. Humility is interesting in the context of employees working for an organization. If the act of being humble signifies an implicit acknowledgement in the power and importance of others, humility may be especially needed for gratitude expressions to occur in organizational contexts that value individual achievement.

Perspective-taking is also interesting when considered in the context of an organization. In organizations, it is not uncommon for hierarchies or physical distance to cause information asymmetry. That is, it may be more difficult for employees who are lower on the hierarchy from their benefactors or who work in distal locations from their benefactors to know about the specific efforts benefactors undertook to assist them. Learning about those costs will take more effort and beneficiaries who are higher in perspective-taking may be more motivated to obtain that understanding. As a result, they may be more likely to obtain crucial information that leads them to feel and express more gratitude.

In contrast to humility and perspective-taking, an entitlement mindset and avoidant orientation are expected to reduce expressed gratitude. Individuals who adopt an entitlement mindset—because they view themselves as victims or because of their perceptions of their own efforts (Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004)—may view rewards or benefits received at work as owed to them and undeserving of their gratitude (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994). Additionally, some evidence demonstrates that preferences on forming close attachments with others at work may be at odds with expressing gratitude (Hazan & Shaver, 1990). Those who prefer to avoid close connections with others may see benefits from another person at work as an effort to draw them into a relationship they would prefer to keep as distant. For these potential beneficiaries, their disposition may dampen their tendency to express gratitude despite the situational circumstances.

### **Summary**

Research on grateful emotion has yielded important insights into understanding what may drive the emotion of gratitude. But this research has only included limited inquiry into the links between the emotion and behavior of gratitude. While important, felt gratitude is only one piece of the gratitude phenomenon. If we want beneficiaries and benefactors to receive the positive benefits of expressed gratitude, we need to know more about when and why gratitude is expressed. Future research should explore the situational, relational, and individual factors I outlined as a starting point for a broad agenda on exploring expressed gratitude in organizations.

To that end, in this dissertation I focus specifically on an individual factor and on a situational factor that may influence gratitude in organizations. As noted at the outset of this review, some evidence suggests people are less prone to express gratitude at work than in any other facet of their lives (Kaplan, 2012). To understand why this is so I explore whether attributions about what caused a benefactor to bestow a benefit (i.e., internal or external attributions) lead to different emotional responses (pride and gratitude) from subordinates and differential influences on expressed gratitude. I also investigate if leadership behavior provides an informative backdrop that can make it less likely subordinates will express gratitude to their supervisors. Specifically, I examine if leadership decision-making style (delegation vs. directive/autocratic) moderates the relationship between supervisors' generosity and subordinates' attributions.



**CHAPTER TWO: IS IT ME? OR, IS IT YOU? HOW SUBORDINATES’  
ATTRIBUTIONS OF SUPERVISORS’ GENEROSITY INFLUENCE  
FEELINGS OF PRIDE, FELT GRATITUDE, AND  
SUBORDINATES’ EXPRESSED GRATITUDE TOWARDS  
SUPERVISORS**

Gratitude is a fundamentally adaptive human emotion that facilitates high quality human relationships (Algoe, 2012; Trivers, 1971). Gratitude stems from beneficiaries’ acknowledgement that they were the recipient of a benefactor’s kindness (McCullough et al., 2001). Recently, there has been a resurgence of interest in gratitude in the broader psychological literature where scholars lamented psychologists’ ignorance of gratitude as compared to other important emotions (Emmons & McCullough, 2004). A survey of the literature on gratitude indicates that expressions of gratitude yield benefits for beneficiaries, benefactors, and others. Notably, some organizational scholars have also begun to take interest in gratitude (Fehr et al., 2016). Yet most work on gratitude in organizations has been theoretical (e.g., Fehr et al.) or qualitative in nature (Toegel et al., 2013).

What little we do know, however, suggests that the expression of gratitude in organizations may be rare (Kaplan, 2012; Perkins, 2014; Toegel et al., 2013; Unsworth, Turner, Williams, & Piccin-Houle, 2010). In particular, a recent national poll indicated that while employees are very interested in their supervisors displaying more gratitude to them, they rarely, if ever, express gratitude towards their supervisors (Kaplan, 2012). Managerial perspectives on the matter suggest that managers consider gratitude from subordinates to be important and they experience negative consequences when it is lacking (Perkins, 2014; Toegel et al., 2013). Given the long history of philosophical

musings on gratitude and its antithesis—ingratitude—it is no surprise that a lack of gratitude from subordinates evokes negative responses from supervisors (Buck, 2004). Consequently, exploring what influences subordinates' expressions of gratitude towards their supervisors deserves theoretical and empirical attention. This is the purpose of this study.

Many different paths to expressing gratitude may exist. Indeed, expressing gratitude is a normative behavior in that it is the polite and expected response to benevolence. This is why children are instructed from an early age on the importance of expressing thanks in appropriate contexts (Baumgarten-Tramer, 1938; Becker & Smenner, 1986). Despite these normative influences, expressions of gratitude are also preceded by grateful emotion (though not always). That is, beneficiaries are motivated by a desire to repay their benefactors when they feel grateful (McCullough et al., 2001), and expressing gratitude for the benefits received is a form of repayment (Roberts, 2004). I am interested in understanding what inhibits expressed gratitude. Thus, to understand why subordinates may be unlikely to express upward gratitude to their supervisors, we must understand why they may not feel grateful in the first place. Integrating attribution theory with the MAT of gratitude provides a framework for understanding how this may occur.

Attributions about a supervisor's benevolence (a good outcome) can influence subordinates' emotional reactions (Weiner, 1985), and if gratitude is the emotional response, the MAT theory explains why subordinates may desire to express gratitude to their supervisor-benefactors for the benevolence (McCullough et al., 2001). When a positive outcome is perceived to be the result of another person's benevolence (an

external attribution), gratitude is the expected emotional reaction. In contrast, if the outcome was the result of one's hard work and competence (an internal attribution), pride is the ensuing reaction. Although both gratitude and pride are emotions with positive valence, they each have distinct action tendencies. Whereas gratitude is linked with a desire to repay a benefactor and is characterized as an other-praising emotion (McCullough et al., 2001), pride is linked with a desire to engage in more of the behavior that elicited it and is a self-praising emotion (Haidt, 2003). When people feel prideful, they believe they are deserving of their outcomes and are unlikely to express gratitude (Hegtvedt, 1990). When people feel grateful for their outcomes, they are more likely to acknowledge and express appreciation to their benefactor. Thus, subordinates' attributions about supervisors' behavior drive their emotional reactions, and these emotional reactions in turn drive their likelihood of expressing gratitude toward the supervisor. The conceptual model is displayed in Figure 1.

What little empirical research exists on expressed gratitude in organizations has focused on downward expressions from superiors to subordinates (Grant & Gino, 2010). But there is some evidence that upward gratitude is important for supervisors (Sheridan, Ambrose, & Crossley, 2015). This study seeks to offer theoretical and empirical insight into why people rarely express gratitude to their bosses (Kaplan, 2012). If organizations are to reap the rewards of gratitude seen in the broader psychological literature (e.g., better relationships between supervisors and subordinates and prosocial behaviors), we need to understand why expressions of gratitude in organizations are so rare and this research attempts to fill that void. In investigating the antecedents of subordinates' upward gratitude, I link attribution theory with the MAT theory and offer some of the

first insights into the antecedents of expressed gratitude in organizations. In so doing, I demonstrate how attributions can lead to divergent emotional reactions. These intervening reactions help explain when and why subordinates may or not repay their supervisors with expressed gratitude.

The remainder of this chapter unfolds as follows. I draw on attribution theory to discuss the cognition-emotion framework that underlies the first half of the model (Weiner, 1985), and then I discuss how the resulting emotions influence subordinates to respond to supervisors' benevolence (McCullough et al., 2001).

### **Theoretical Development**

Early work on the cognition-emotion linkage indicated that in achievement related contexts, individuals' emotional experiences could be lumped into two categories: attribution-independent and attribution-dependent emotions (Weiner, 1985). Attribution-independent emotions are those that people tend to experience based purely on the valence of the outcome itself. For successful outcomes like passing a test, the positive result leads to positive emotions such as feeling happy or satisfied. In contrast, unsuccessful outcomes like failing a test lead to negative emotional reactions such as feelings of displeasure and sadness. Thus, the reason *why* one succeeded or failed is irrelevant to the general affective response people tend to experience. Attribution-dependent emotions are those that are linked to specific outcome attributions or specific reasons "why" the outcome occurred. Weiner and colleagues (1979, 1985) had participants read short stories about situations like taking an exam or being picked for a team. Each story contained information about why the hypothetical protagonist passed or

failed the test or was picked for the team. For example, if passing or failing the test was due to the amount of studying or competence in the subject, the cause of the outcome was due to something internal. If passing or failing the test was due to the teacher writing an easy or difficult exam, the attribution was external and caused by the teacher. In the team selection scenario, the team captain could either pick the protagonist because the rules dictated it, or because he wanted to be nice—both external causes. Participants read multiple scenarios and provided information about the emotional reactions they believed the protagonist would have in each situation. When success was caused by the actions of others, participants felt grateful and thankful. Attributing success to one's ability or personality resulted in feelings of pride. Importantly, Weiner et al. noted that ascriptions of one's persistence or stable effort as the cause of one's success also yielded a positive relationship with the feeling of pride that nearly matched the magnitude of the relationship between ability and pride. However, the relationship was not statistically significant in their study, which they suggest was because of a small sample size. When failure was caused by something internal participants indicated the protagonist would feel ashamed, and when the cause was external there would be anger.

In all, attribution theory proposes that attribution-independent emotions (happy, sad) are determined by the valence of the outcome itself (success, failure). Cognitions about the cause of the outcome lead to internal or external attributions. Internal causes generate self-focused emotional responses (shame, guilt, pride). External causes generate other-focused emotions (gratitude, anger). A feeling of pride results when one believes a successful outcome is the result of something he or she did (effort, ability), or who he or she is (personality). That is, pride results from successful outcomes and internal causal

attributions. Gratitude is felt when one believes a successful outcome is the result of something external to the self; gratitude occurs when someone else is responsible for one's positive outcome. To understand when individuals are likely to act on their emotions by expressing gratitude I turn to the MAT theory.

### **The Moral Affect Theory of Gratitude**

McCullough and colleagues (2001) reviewed the existing literature and proposed that gratitude can serve as a moral motivator for beneficiaries. McCullough et al. argued that when beneficiaries experience gratitude, they are motivated to repay their benefactors. Indeed, compared to other positive emotions (elevation, admiration, and joy), felt gratitude is significantly associated with a desire to acknowledge the good deed of a benefactor by expressing thanks or even wanting to hug them, and to repay them in some way, even materially (Algoe & Haidt, 2009).

The empirical research on gratitude has most often examined repayment in the form of prosocial behavior. For example, De Steno and colleagues used an experimental paradigm where participants were led to believe the confederate recovered and saved their work after the computer they were using supposedly crashed, relieving them from having to redo the onerous activity again (Bartlett & DeSteno, 2006; DeSteno et al., 2010). Across their studies, those in the gratitude condition acted more prosocially, in terms of providing help or distributing resources than those in the control condition, regardless of the identity of the recipient (benefactor or a stranger). In one of the studies, felt gratitude was hypothesized and found to mediate between condition and prosocial behavior (DeSteno et al., 2010). Similar findings drawing on the MAT have been

demonstrated in organizational settings where feeling grateful is positively associated with employees' citizenship behaviors towards their superiors and towards coworkers (Spence et al., 2013).

Notably, researchers have largely ignored repayment for benevolence in the form of expressing gratitude or appreciation to a benefactor, arguably a less effortful form of expressing thanks than "doing" something for the benefactor. (McCullough et al., 2001). Indeed, in the MAT, the authors suggest that beneficiaries in lower status positions than their benefactors may be in possession of fewer resources and may find it more difficult to act on their motivations to repay their benefactor's benevolence in ways other than expressing gratitude verbally. Some research in children supports the notion that intention to express gratitude is a common reaction to benevolence for these (typically) lower status beneficiaries (Baumgarten-Tramer, 1938). Although status is not always positively correlated with position on the hierarchy, subordinates do occupy lower positions than their supervisors and presumably fewer resources. Accordingly, the MAT suggests that when subordinates experience gratitude for benevolent acts committed by their supervisors, they may express that gratitude through prosocial acts (i.e., helping) or by other means (i.e., verbal thanks, appreciation).

In sum, the MAT provides a framework for understanding when and why grateful subordinates express gratitude towards their supervisor-benefactors. However, felt gratitude may not be the dominant response to supervisors' benevolence. Thus, in the next few sections I discuss how subordinates' attributions about the cause of a supervisor's behavior drive their emotional reactions to benefits before turning to the consequences of those divergent emotional responses for subordinates' upward gratitude.

### **Subordinates' Attributions, Pride, and Felt Gratitude**

Achievement related settings were the dominant focus of early work on attributions (Weiner, 1985). Organizational settings also present a context where individual achievement can be the result of one's own efforts at overcoming obstacles or one's general competence. They may also be settings where the generosity of others is critical for achieving successful outcomes for the self. Thus, when subordinates are the beneficiaries of a supervisor's benevolence (a positive outcome), at least two plausible explanations exist: (1) the outcome is a reward or acknowledgement for something the subordinate did (i.e., hard work) or who he or she is (i.e., competent), and (2) the outcome stems purely from the supervisor's benevolence. Importantly, each attribution should lead to a different emotional response—pride when they are more internal and gratitude when attributions are more external. More is the operative word, as attributions are likely to reflect the *extent* to which subordinates believe the cause to be internal or external and are unlikely to be interpreted unilaterally as either internal or external.

The perceived benevolence of the benefactor in providing the benefit is the informational cue that signals the beneficiary's outcome was driven by the benefactor's desire to help or be kind to the beneficiary (Emmons & McCullough, 2004). By definition, benevolence implies an absence of both selfishness and obligation. That is, a benefactor who acts benevolently has no ulterior motive and no formal obligation to assist a beneficiary. This is why people tend to be more grateful to strangers and acquaintances who go out their way for them than they are for close friends and family members (Bar-Tal et al., 1977). According to the MAT, the more altruistic a benefactor is, the more it appears to the beneficiary that the benefactor's intentions of good will are



the reason for the beneficiary's outcome. A great deal of empirical research beginning with the early work by Tesser et al. (1968) demonstrates this is the case. Tesser et al. (1968) explicitly described a benefactor's kind deed as motivated by three different levels of intentions including purely self-serving, partially self-serving, and purely unselfish. Participants' gratitude increased in a positive linear fashion as intentions became more altruistic.

Even when a benefactor's intentions are ambiguous, beneficiaries who believe the benefactor was sincerely motivated to help them have more favorable appraisals of the situation and feel more gratitude (Wood, Maltby, Stewart, Linley, et al., 2008). For example, Wood and colleagues presented several different vignettes to participants where they either imagined themselves receiving benefits such as a benefactor's offer to skip ahead in line at the grocery store, allowing the participant to get somewhere faster. Among other factors, participants were asked to rate how much they believed the benefactor was motivated by a sincere desire to help them. Participants' ratings of benefactors' altruistic motivation were positively associated with how grateful they believed they would feel in that situation. Had it not been for the benefactor's benevolence in allowing the participant to skip the line, the participant could have been late. Thus, the benefactor's generosity, specifically, enabled the participant to achieve a positive outcome (not being late). When an individual's positive outcome appears to be caused by another person's good intentions, the causal attribution is more external and the beneficiary is likely to feel grateful (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Campos et al., 2013; Weiner, 1985). Based on the above, I propose the following:

*Hypothesis 1: External attributions for a supervisor's generosity are positively related to a subordinate's felt gratitude.*

In the example line skipping scenario created by Wood and colleagues (2008), no internal reasons why the participant could skip the line were supplied. Had the scenario instead described the participant as being highly attractive, participants may have conjured up different reasons why the benefactor offered to let them skip and felt less gratitude. The contexts in the scenarios Wood and colleagues described were not achievement-related; they were “clean” scenarios in that there would be little room for participants to believe something they did caused the outcome. In achievement-related settings though—of which organizations are just one example—there is usually opportunity for outcomes to be both internally and externally caused.

When individuals have at least *some* reason to believe they played a role in their positive outcomes, a preponderance of evidence from social psychology points to a hedonic bias. This bias reflects the tendency of people to ascribe successful outcomes to something internal and unsuccessful outcomes to something external (Weiner & Graham, 1989). Thus, when individuals experience a positive outcome at work, the tendency will be to ascribe internal causes (ability, effort, personality) to the event. In contrast, when the outcome is negative, like losing a valued customer, an employee may tend to blame their leader or organization for a lack of support (Dobbins & Russell, 1986). Many reasons why individuals engage in these self-serving attributions have been proposed—defense mechanisms, to boost self-esteem, etc.—but the emotional responses are consistent. Pride and increased self-esteem occur when internal attributions are made (Weiner, 1985; Weiner & Graham, 1989). In sum, when subordinates' attributions about

a supervisor's generosity are more internal rather than external, they will feel proud. I propose:

*Hypothesis 2: External attributions for a supervisor's generosity are negatively related to a subordinate's pride.*

### **The Mediating Roles of Felt Gratitude and Pride**

According to the MAT, beneficiaries who feel grateful for the benefits they receive are motivated by a desire to repay their benefactors. Beneficiaries' desire to repay benefactors reflect the prosocial action tendency associated with gratitude in the psychological literature and why gratitude is considered an "other-praising" emotion (Frijda, 1986; Haidt, 2003; Watkins et al., 2006). Often, this leads to a desire to express thanks or to acknowledge the benefactor's actions in some way. Indeed, in one of the oldest and largest studies on gratitude, over 1000 Swiss students were asked what they would do in response to someone who granted them their greatest wish. Expressing their thanks verbally was a dominant response, especially in older students (Baumgarten-Tramer, 1938). Consistent with prior research I propose the following:

*Hypothesis 3: Felt gratitude is positively related to subordinates' expressed gratitude towards supervisors.*

Pride has been referred to as a self-praising emotion (Haidt, 2003) because it demonstrates a robust relationship with improvements in self-esteem (Tracy & Robins, 2007a). Indeed, pride's relationship with self-esteem is the reason some have suggested the hedonic bias acts as a defense mechanism or self-preservation motivation to protect the ego. By attributing successful outcomes to an internal cause and failures to external

causes, self-esteem is preserved. Whereas feelings of gratitude motivate expressions of gratitude towards the benefactor, feelings of pride motivate the behaviors that elicited pride in the first place (e.g., achievement, effort, etc.) (Tracy & Robins, 2007a; Verbeke, Belschak, & Bagozzi, 2004). These divergent outcomes occur because the emotion of gratitude directs one's attention outward towards the benefactor and pride directs one's attention inward towards what one can do to recapture the feeling of pride in the future. Because pride results from the belief that one was the cause of one's outcome and the tendency is to direct one's attention inward, the desire to express gratitude outward to a benefactor should be significantly muted. Thus, I propose:

*Hypothesis 4: Pride is negatively related to subordinates' expressed gratitude towards supervisors.*

Taken together, the causal ascriptions subordinates make for supervisor's generosity lead to divergent emotional experiences and differential effects on expressions of gratitude. The more external the attributions, the more subordinates will feel grateful for the supervisor's generosity. The less external, the more subordinates attribute the cause of the supervisor's behavior to something within themselves and the more they experience the emotion of pride. Although both pride and gratitude are positive emotions with positive consequences, they should elicit different responses: pride directs attention inward and gratitude directs attention outward. The influence of causal ascriptions on these two emotional reactions explains why subordinates may be likely to express gratitude towards their supervisors. Thus, I propose

*Hypothesis 5: The relationship between external attributions and subordinates' expressed gratitude towards supervisors is dually mediated by (a) pride and (b) felt*

*gratitude. The more external the subordinates' attributions are, the more likely they are to express gratitude towards supervisors.*

## **Method**

### **Sample and Procedures**

Students enrolled in upper-division courses at a large Southeastern university were invited to participate in the study in exchange for course credit. Of the 189 invited to participate, 175 were in attendance on the day the experiment was conducted and agreed to participate. I excluded 8 participants because they did not provide complete data and 12 because they failed to correctly answer the attention check question (“In the scenario you just read, what did the supervisor provide you?”). Thus, the final sample included 155 participants. Participants were split among the conditions as follows: control ( $n = 52$ ), high external attributions (benevolence;  $n = 51$ ), and low external attributions (personal accomplishment;  $n = 52$ ).

On average, participants were 22.8 ( $SD = 3.3$ ) years old and 36.1% were female. Participants had 4.2 ( $SD = 3.6$ ) years of work experience on average and at the time of the study 64.5% were employed and worked an average of 23.7 ( $SD = 12.4$ ) hours per week. The sample was mostly Caucasian (68.4%), with African-Americans and Hispanics or Latinos each representing 11.6% of the sample.

The study was announced in class and participants were provided a link to the online experiment in Qualtrics. Participants who did not wish to participate electronically or did not have an electronic device were offered a hard copy of the survey. Hard copies were also distributed randomly.

To assess my hypotheses, I used an experimental vignette methodology and manipulated the causal attributions for a supervisor's generosity. Experimental vignettes are commonly used in research on attributions and in examinations of gratitude and pride (Tesser et al., 1968; Verbeke et al., 2004; Weiner & Graham, 1989; Wood, Maltby, Stewart, Linley, et al., 2008). To strengthen the likelihood that my manipulations would induce the desired attributions, I also included a priming task used in prior research that was designed to induce self vs. other thought (Fenigstein & Levine, 1984). The priming task was presented as part one of a two-part study and participants were told that each part was independent. As part of the priming task, participants were instructed to use as many words as possible from a list of provided words and construct a story about an event that described its antecedents, consequences, and the thoughts and feelings of the person(s) taking part in the event. The words that were provided have been used in prior research that has used the same priming task (Fransen, Fennis, Pruyn, & Vohs, 2011) and were the same across conditions (this morning, park, candy, walking, lamp, forgetting, throwing, solve, case, shampoo, never, face, alarm clock, bike) with the exception of the inclusion of self-related (i.e., I, myself, me, my, alone) or other-related (i.e., he/she, himself/herself, his/hers, him/her, together) pronouns in the low external attribution (i.e., personal accomplishment) and high external attribution (i.e., benevolence) conditions, respectively. After completing the priming task, participants were informed that they had completed part one of the study and were instructed to proceed to part two which required them to read a hypothetical scenario. Participants were instructed to adopt the role of the person in the vignette and to really try and immerse themselves in the

situation. The experimental vignettes for each condition are provided in full in Appendix B.

The vignettes described a situation where an employee who has only been with an organization for a little over a year is notified by the supervisor that the supervisor has obtained an approval for them to attend a training course designed to help advance the employee's career and one that the employee had desired to go to. In the low external attribution condition, the employee is a top performer (i.e., in the 96<sup>th</sup> percentile) among their peers, and is aware that only employees who have been with the organization much longer and those that are considered "rock stars" have previously been granted this opportunity. Additionally, context is provided to suggest that the employee has put forth considerable effort and made sacrifices to focus on work, and the training opportunity is portrayed as a validation of the employee's dedication. In contrast, in the high external attribution condition, the employee is ranked in the 51<sup>st</sup> percentile among their peers and is provided context that suggests it is very abnormal for someone in their position (e.g., average performance and less tenure) to be granted this opportunity. Thus, the high external attribution scenario portrays the training opportunity as caused by the supervisor's generosity and sincere desire to help the employee advance. The control condition does not indicate anything about the employee's performance ranking and omits the extra detail provided in the experimental scenarios.

After reading the scenario, participants were asked to rate the extent of their emotions at the present moment. Subsequently, participants were asked to indicate how likely they would be to engage in a set of behaviors (i.e., expressions of gratitude towards the supervisor, prosocial behavior, self-reward, goal effort, and withdrawal) and to

respond to the hypothetical scenario with an email back to the supervisor. Although expressions of gratitude were of primary interest, I included the additional behavioral variables to reduce demand characteristics. I included the open-ended email task as an alternate way to assess participants' expression of gratitude. The order of the behavioral ratings and the email task was counter-balanced<sup>1</sup>.

After the experiment, participants were asked to respond to two manipulation-check questions. These questions have been used in prior research where participants rated the causal attributions (internal/external) after reviewing hypothetical vignette scenarios (Fenigstein & Levine, 1984). Specifically, participants were asked to allocate a percentage out of 100 across the two items, "In the scenario you read, please indicate how much you think the training opportunity was caused by...my actions/supervisor's actions." "My actions" represented an internal attribution and "supervisor's actions" represented an external attribution. Participants' allocations were required to sum to 100 percent.

## Measures

Participants' emotional states were measured on a five-point scale (1 = *Not at all*; 5 = *A great deal*).

**Felt gratitude.** Felt gratitude was measured with three items (thankfulness, appreciation, and gratitude). These three words have been used in prior research assessing felt gratitude (Algoe et al., 2010; Algoe & Stanton, 2012).

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<sup>1</sup> For fifteen respondents who received paper-pencil surveys the order of the behavioral ratings and the email task were not counter-balanced. The email task preceded the ratings for these participants.



**Pride.** Pride was measured with three words: proud, competent, and confident. These words were chosen to reflect the authentic expression of pride found in the literature (Tracy & Robins, 2007b).

Although participants were not expected to feel negative emotions because of the experimental scenarios, I assessed three other-directed (angry, frustrated, hostile) negative emotions and three self-directed (guilty, ashamed, humiliated) negative emotions.

**Expressed gratitude.** Participants' rated how likely they would be to engage in five different behavioral expressions of gratitude on a scale from (1 = *extremely unlikely*, 7 = *extremely likely*)<sup>2</sup>. Sample items were, "I would tell my supervisor I appreciated him/her," "I would thank my supervisor," "I would tell other people about how nice my supervisor was to me," "I would try to do something nice for my supervisor to express my thanks," and "I would write my supervisor a hand-written note or buy a card to express my thanks."

**Prosocial behavior.** Prosocial behavior (helping), which has been shown to result from gratitude and to a lesser extent, pride, was assessed with the item "I would spend time helping others with their work tasks" (McCullough et al., 2001; Tracy & Robins, 2007a).

**Self-reinforcing behaviors.** Two self-reinforcing behaviors, "I would treat myself to something nice for a 'job well done'," and "I would work really hard to meet my goals at work" were used to assess behavioral reactions to feeling proud.

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<sup>2</sup> In the paper-pencil surveys, the scale anchors were 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

**Withdrawal.** Intent to psychologically withdrawal was measured with the item “I would intentionally work slower than I could work.”

**Demographics.** Participants were asked to respond to several questions assessing demographics (e.g., age, sex, race, education, years of work experience, and current employment information).

## **Results**

The means, standard deviations, and correlations are displayed in Table 1. I performed a one-way ANOVA on the manipulation check questions. The results revealed a significant difference between conditions,  $F(2,152) = 5.78, p < .01$ . Planned contrasts revealed that the differences occurred between the high external and low external attribution conditions and not between the experimental conditions and the control group. Participants reported greater external attributions in the high external attribution condition ( $M = 41.42, SD = 17.41$ ), than did participants in the control ( $M = 35.96, SD = 17.66$ ) and in the low external attribution ( $M = 30.04, SD = 15.83$ ) conditions. Notably, although the manipulation check indicated the manipulations were successful in eliciting significantly higher external attributions in the high external attribution condition than in the low external attribution condition, participants made greater internal attributions than external attributions across conditions.

### **Test of Hypotheses**

My hypotheses were about the influence of external attributions and my control condition was designed to be attribution-neutral. Therefore, I proceeded to test my

hypotheses with only participants in the high external and low external attribution conditions. I created a dummy variable for which participants in the high external attribution condition were coded (1) and participants in the low external attribution condition were coded as (0).

I utilized Hayes' (2013) process model 6 with 10,000 bootstrap samples to test my hypotheses. Per Hayes, in choosing a multiple mediator model the researcher should consider whether relations between the mediators are independent or related. In model 4, relations are constrained to be independent, whereas in model 6 they are not. Thus, model 6 is preferable to model 4 when there is not an assumption of independence between the mediating variables. I chose model 6 as participants might feel some level of both emotions and there could be relations between them that were important to factor into the model. As displayed in Table 1, the correlation between pride and felt gratitude was positive and significant ( $r = .50, p < .01$ ).

As shown in Table 2, external attributions had a significant positive effect on felt gratitude ( $B = .37, p = .04$ ). Thus, as compared to participants in the low external attribution condition, participants in the high external attribution condition felt greater gratitude, supporting Hypothesis 1. Hypothesis 2 predicted that external attributions would be negatively related to pride. As compared to the low external attribution condition, participants' in the high external attribution condition demonstrated significantly less pride ( $B = -.35, p = .02$ ). These results indicated support for Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3 predicted a positive relationship between felt gratitude and expressed gratitude. As displayed in Figure 2, the relationship between felt gratitude and

intentions to express gratitude was positive and marginally significant ( $B = .16, p = .054$ ), providing some support for Hypothesis 3. Hypothesis 4 proposed a negative relationship between pride and expressed gratitude. Contrary to expectations, pride exhibited a positive and significant relationship with intentions to express gratitude ( $B = .25, p = .02$ ). Notably, the strength of the relationship between pride and expressed gratitude was stronger than the relationship between felt gratitude and expressed gratitude. Participants exhibited a stronger intent to express gratitude when their pride increased than when their felt gratitude increased.

My final hypothesis predicted that the influence of attributions on expressed gratitude would be mediated by pride (a) and felt gratitude (b), and that the stronger the external attributions the greater likelihood of expressing gratitude to supervisors. As displayed in the lower half of Table 2, pride was a significant mediator between external attributions and intentions to express gratitude. The indirect effect ( $ab$ ) was significant ( $ab = -.09, CI_{95}[-.249, -.010]$ ). Felt gratitude was also a significant mediator, ( $ab = .06, CI_{95} [.003, .180]$ ). These results provide mixed support for Hypothesis 5. As external attributions increased, participants were more likely to say they would express gratitude towards their supervisor and this effect was mediated by an increase in their felt gratitude. However, the indirect effect through pride was negative and this indirect effect was stronger and statistically different than the indirect effect through felt gratitude (planned comparison =  $-.15, CI_{95}[-.297, -.046]$ ). As external attributions increased, pride decreased, but pride was positively related to intentions to express gratitude, rendering the indirect effect negative.

The direct effect of external attributions on intentions to express gratitude was also significant ( $B = .38, p = .01$ ).

### **Supplementary Analyses**

Given my choice to allow pride and gratitude to be related, I also examined a serial mediation model where external attributions affect expressed gratitude through their effect on pride and pride's effect on felt gratitude. I chose to include pride as the predictor of gratitude (and not the reverse) because some research suggests that pride makes people feel appreciative of their current circumstances (Campos et al., 2013). Although not hypothesized, there was a significant positive relationship between pride and felt gratitude in the model ( $B = .69, p < .01$ ) and this serial mediation path also was a significant mediator between external attributions and intentions to express gratitude  $CI_{95}[-.125, -.003]$ . However, these results should be interpreted cautiously, as pride and felt gratitude were measured directly after the experimental manipulation, both are positive emotions, and my theory did not address directional effects between these two mediators. Thus, making causal conclusions about the directionality of the relationship between pride and felt gratitude would be inappropriate in this study.

In order to understand how external attributions about a supervisor's benevolence may affect additional behaviors beyond expressed gratitude, I examined separate mediation models with the additional behavioral variables as outcomes. The first model examined whether external attributions were related to intentions to engage in prosocial behavior through pride and felt gratitude. As displayed in Table 3, there were no significant indirect effects on prosocial behavior through pride  $CI_{95}[-.351, .016]$  or felt

gratitude  $CI_{95}[-.165,.081]$ . There was a significant indirect effect on intentions to self-reward  $CI_{95}[-.570,-.053]$  and on intentions to increase goal effort  $CI_{95}[-.207,-.006]$  through pride but not through felt gratitude. There were no significant indirect effects on intentions to withdrawal. Further, there were no direct effects from external attributions to these outcomes, indicating that pride fully mediated between external attributions and both self-reward and goal effort.

To assess the level of gratitude participants expressed in the email tasks, I used computer-aided text analysis (CATA) software to content analyze the text that participants wrote in their email responses (McKenny & Short, 2012). The CATA software enables researchers to measure constructs by transforming text into quantitative measures according to the frequency of construct-related words within the text (McKenny, Aguinis, Short, & Anglin, 2016). Construct-related words are identified by construct dictionaries created by researchers and are designed to include all possible conjugations of words that reflect the construct of interest as well as its synonyms (e.g., thank, thanks, thanked, thanking, and thankful).

Currently, there is no published dictionary for the expressed gratitude construct, nor for any derivation of the construct (e.g., state or trait). However, I was able to use a gratitude dictionary that is currently in development with the permission of the author L. Locklear (personal communication, February 20, 2017). The words included in this dictionary are displayed in Appendix D.

On average, participants wrote 41.37 words ( $SD = 21.53$ ) in the email responses. Inspection of the means across conditions revealed that participants in the control condition wrote the highest amount of construct-related words ( $M = 1.94$ ,  $SD = .85$ ),

followed by the high external attribution condition ( $M = 1.75$ ,  $SD = .91$ ), and finally, the low external attribution condition ( $M = 1.58$ ,  $SD = .82$ ).

I conducted a Poisson regression to predict how much gratitude participants' expressed in their email responses based on condition and how proud and grateful participants felt. There were no significant effects.

## **Discussion**

In this study, I was interested in the effect of external attributions about a supervisor's generosity on subordinates' attribution-dependent emotions. Although theory suggests grateful feelings are a result of external attributions for one's positive outcomes and pride is a result of internal attributions, I believe this is the first study to assess these emotions simultaneously, within an organizational context, and to examine their relationship with expressed gratitude.

I created three conditions designed to produce higher (benevolence), neutral (control), and lower (personal accomplishment) external attributions for the cause of the supervisor's beneficial behavior. The manipulation check demonstrated that the participants' external attributions aligned with expectations. However, as noted above, participants made greater internal attributions than external attributions within each condition. Indeed, in the high external attribution condition where external attributions were manipulated to be the strongest (e.g., participants were primed to make external attributions and the vignette described a subordinate who was an average performer, had struggled some at work, and had not attained seniority that was typical of others who had been to the training), participants indicated that the supervisor's actions were 41.42%

responsible for the training opportunity. This amount suggests even in this condition, participants did not view the supervisor as the primary factor influencing the benevolent act. Rather, they rated “my actions” as the primary determinant of the outcome. This evidence is consistent with the hedonic bias towards ascribing positive outcomes for the self to one’s own actions (Weiner, 1985). Despite this hedonic bias, the evidence indicated that participants’ external attributions did influence their emotional reactions in the hypothesized direction. The more participants believed the supervisor’s actions were responsible for the outcome, the less they felt proud and the more they felt grateful. Overall, these findings are supportive of the distinct emotional reactions suggested by Weiner’s (1985) cognitive-emotional theory.

As I predicted, emotions were significantly associated with behavioral intentions to express gratitude. Gratitude has been described as an emotion that results from a positive outcome that is self-relevant but caused by a benevolent other. In contrast, pride has been described as a self-relevant emotion resulting from a positive outcome caused by one’s own actions or characteristics (Campos et al., 2013). I expected feelings of gratitude to be positively related to intentions to express gratitude as the action tendency most often cited for grateful feelings is a desire to give back to the benefactor, an action that often takes the form of verbal gratitude (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Baumgarten-Tramer, 1938; Campos et al., 2013). My measure of expressed gratitude also captured other ways of expressing gratitude (i.e., external praise and repayment by doing something for the supervisor). The results were supportive of this hypothesis. There was a positive and marginally significant relationship between felt gratitude and intentions to express gratitude towards the supervisor.



I had expected pride to be negatively related to intentions to express gratitude. Pride has generally been linked with action tendencies that seek to reward the self and to further one's goals (Weiner, 1985; Weiner & Graham, 1989). Contrary to expectations, pride was significantly positively associated with intentions to express gratitude to supervisors. Indeed, the strength of the path between pride and intentions to express gratitude was stronger than the path between felt and expressed gratitude (.25 vs. .16, respectively). Whereas there is strong theory linking pride with self-focused action tendencies, I am unaware of theory that asserts a relationship between pride and expressed gratitude. Rather, theory most often discusses differences in pride and gratitude with regards to their distinct causal antecedents and unique action tendencies (Weiner, 1985). It does not address how levels of pride influence other-focused behavior in comparison to grateful feelings.

Some research finds that pride is related to a feeling of contentment with one's present circumstances (Campos et al., 2013). Indeed, in Campos et al.'s work, they found that participants who wrote about a time they experienced the emotion of pride not only wrote about feeling they had accomplished something and were able to take on new challenges, but they were also likely to write about being appreciative of their current circumstances. It may be that being appreciative of one's present circumstances would motivate intentions to express gratitude. Indeed, that premise forms the basis of clinical psychology interventions aimed at improving individuals' well-being through grateful contemplation or gratitude journals (Wood et al., 2010). As people deliberately think about or write down things that they appreciate they feel more gratitude. In so far as feeling proud enables people to be content with who they are and what they have

achieved, they may feel grateful for their present circumstances and may express gratitude towards those they feel have played a role in their success. Additionally, it may be that the desire to pursue greater achievement and to work towards one's goals that stems from feelings of pride (and as confirmed in the supplementary analysis), are facilitated by expressing appreciation to a benefactor. That is, expressing gratitude or appreciation may be motivated by a desire to retain the supportive structure that enabled one's positive outcomes to begin with—the “bind” part of Algoe's theory (Algoe, 2012).

### **Limitations**

By employing an experimental design I was able to test the causal relationship between external attributions and emotional reactions. However, there are limits to the conclusions that can be drawn from this study. For example, my theoretical model also asserts that the emotional reactions to external attributions have a causal effect on subordinates' expressed gratitude. Yet, causal inferences about this link are limited because the emotions were measured not manipulated and therefore correlational in nature. Future research might employ a causal-chain methodology whereby pride and felt gratitude are manipulated (Spencer, Zanna, & Fong, 2005). Such a design, if paired with this study, would provide further confidence in the directionality specified in my theoretical model.

Additionally, as mentioned above, participants were more likely to make internal attributions across conditions. Thus, the high external attribution condition achieved *higher* external attributions than the other conditions but even in this condition the supervisor's benevolence was not considered the primary causal factor. Although this

finding is supported by the attribution literature's evidence of the hedonic bias, it raises a concern. It is unclear if my high external attribution condition truly reflects a scenario where external attributions are "high." The manipulation in this condition may not have been strong enough for participants to truly believe supervisors' benevolence was the causal factor and this could have tempered the effect of external attributions on emotions. A manipulation that results in external attributions as the primary causal factor would allow for a better comparison between "high" and "low" external attributions.

Finally, my theoretical model represents a within-person psychological process, but inferences from this study are limited to between-person differences. Yet, subordinates are likely to experience supervisors' benevolence within organizational contexts that vary. Exploring how subordinates react to supervisors' benevolence in the field would provide an opportunity to examine how the proposed within-person cognitive-emotional process unfolds and how this process is affected by contextual circumstances. This limitation will be addressed in Chapter 3.

### **CHAPTER THREE: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP AND SUBORDINATES' EXPRESSED GRATITUDE**

In Chapter 2, I tested a multiple mediator model in which subordinates' causal attributions about supervisors' generous behavior were hypothesized to influence upward expressions of gratitude via divergent emotional reactions. Implicit in this model was the link between supervisors' generosity and external attributions. When benefactors behave benevolently, beneficiaries should view the benefactor's generosity as the causal force behind the behavior. That is, a benefactor's benevolence influences beneficiaries' to make external attributions about why benefits were given (McCullough et al., 2001). In this chapter I suggest that the context within which benefits are provided can influence the attributions individuals make. One feature of the organizational context that is directly relevant to subordinates' attributions about supervisors' behavior is supervisors' themselves. The way supervisors generally relate to their subordinates provides critical information that shapes how subordinates interpret and react to supervisors' actions. Thus, in this study I expand the model to include a boundary condition on the relationship between supervisors' benevolent behavior and subordinates' attributions: leaders' decision-making style.

How does a supervisor's decision-making style influence a subordinate's attribution about the supervisor's behavior? By signaling information about how deserving a subordinate is. When supervisors adopt a delegation style of decision-making, it indicates the supervisor has a strong level of trust for the subordinate and a belief in their competence (Leana, 1987). By delegating, subordinates can make decisions

autonomously and trouble-shoot independently. Delegation arises from the goal of empowering subordinates and empowerment is an important characteristic for work motivation (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Moreover, delegation suggests that something *within* the subordinate or something he or she *did* earned the supervisor's confidence. Thus, when the supervisor goes out of his or way for the subordinate, it is likely because the subordinate has earned that benefit through his or her actions and performance at work. Thus, an internal factor was the reason for the supervisor's generosity.

In contrast, a supervisor who has an autocratic or directive decision-making style makes decisions unilaterally and does not elicit the input or opinion of a subordinate. Autocratic leaders monitor subordinates' behavior closely, allowing minimal autonomy, and they have relationships with subordinates that are less warm and trusting (Bass, Valenzi, Farrow, & Solomon, 1975). Whereas delegation should make subordinates feel trusted, competent, and proud, autocratic decision-making should make them feel comparatively less trusted and less confident in their achievements at work. Importantly, this style indicates that the supervisor does not view them as deserving of greater freedom, voice or warmth from the supervisor. Having limited reason to think a supervisor would display generosity because of something the subordinate *did* leads to the belief that it is the supervisor's good intentions that drives the benevolent behavior. In this context, an external factor is the cause of a supervisor's behavior.

As discussed in Chapter 2, when subordinates attribute internal causes to a supervisor's generosity, they feel a sense of pride and they should express less gratitude. If subordinates believe it was the supervisor's good intentions (an external factor) that drove the generosity, they are likely to feel and express gratitude. Because supervisors'

decision-making style provides information about the cause of supervisors' generosity, the attributions subordinates make may depend on this contextual cue. That is, I expect supervisors' leadership decision-making style to moderate the relationship between supervisors' generous behavior and subordinates' attributions. The full conceptual model is displayed in Figure 3.

The idea that by delegating to a subordinate, supervisors are less likely to be acknowledged and thanked presents a conundrum. On the one hand, supervisors that delegate to subordinates through their decision-making style may be demonstrating care and concern and a desire to help the subordinate acquire leadership skills. This leadership approach may lead subordinates to feel that their hard work and competence is recognized and valued by the supervisor, leading them to have a better relationship. On the other hand, these same reasons may explain why subordinates devalue the benevolence of supervisors' behaviors and instead of feeling grateful, feel pride because they assume the supervisor is only engaging in the behavior because of the subordinate's successful behavior at work. As a result, when these supervisors do generous things they may be less appreciated. Over time, a lack of gratitude could cause supervisors to resent ungrateful subordinates (Buck, 2004). Research suggests that when people are unappreciated for their efforts they are less helpful in the future (Clark, 1975; Crano & Sivacek, 1982; Goldman et al., 1982; Moss & Page, 1972). Therefore, investigating how leaders contribute to the gratitude they receive based on their style of leadership is an important first step in understanding the interpersonal nuances of gratitude in organizational relationships.

This study makes several contributions. As with the study described in Chapter 2, I explore a research area that until very recently has been largely ignored by organizational scholars. Gratitude research has exploded in the past decade, largely outside of the purview of management scholars. But this important interpersonal emotion is associated with a plethora of positive outcomes for beneficiaries, benefactors, and others. It deserves attention. Further, much of the gratitude literature has largely ignored the broader context within which benefactors and beneficiaries exchange gifts and gratitude. While we know that situational appraisals are key for eliciting gratitude (Tesser et al., 1968), we know very little about what moderates that relationship (Wood, Maltby, Stewart, Linley, et al., 2008). By identifying how the organizational context affects gratitude, I advance an understanding of the boundary conditions. Prior research indicates gratitude and pride are distinct emotions (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Weiner, 1985), and pride has been described as the “ultimate self-praising emotion” whereas gratitude is clearly other-praising (Haidt, 2003). Based on the outcomes associated with different leadership styles, there is reason to believe these styles will lead to different attributions about benefits supervisors give to subordinates, different emotional responses, and differential effects on expressed gratitude. By integrating perspectives on leadership, gratitude, and attributions, I offer one of the first theoretical explications of how the organizational context influences the cognitive-emotional process and affects upward gratitude. In what follows I elaborate on the moderating role of supervisors’ leadership decision-making style and present an empirical field study.

### **The Moderating Role of Supervisors' Leadership Decision-Making Style**

Most of the early focus on leaders' decision-making styles was concerned with their efficacy across situations (Bass et al., 1975; Sauer, 2011; Schriesheim, Neider, & Scandura, 1998). Out of this research, we learned that delegation generates feelings of warmth and trust between supervisors and subordinates. Indeed, delegation empowers subordinates to take ownership of decisions and tasks (Schriesheim et al., 1998). When supervisors delegate, they step back from the minutia and allow subordinates to take over. No micro managing occurs. By comparison, research shows that directive/autocratic leadership is aimed at attaining compliance from subordinates, setting clear directions for tasks, and closely monitoring subordinates' activities (Bass et al., 1975). Directive leaders develop less warm and trusting relationships with subordinates (Sauer, 2011). The relationships that directive leaders develop with subordinates are more economic in nature and less grounded in the communal norms of demonstrating care and concern for one another's well-being (Mills et al., 2004). According to MAT theory, a directive supervisor would be an unlikely source of benevolence in the subordinate's work life (McCullough et al., 2001). By being uninterested in developing a close relationship with the subordinate, being unconcerned with eliciting the subordinate's point of view on matters of importance to the subordinate, and appearing unwilling to trust the subordinate to accomplish tasks independently, the directive supervisor does not give the subordinate any reason to believe his or her actions have warranted the supervisor's discretionary generosity. This is not dissimilar to research on gratitude as a function of relationship closeness. People feel less deserving of kindness or help and more grateful when they receive it from strangers and acquaintances than from friends



and family because strangers neither love them, care for them, nor exchange benefits with them (Bar-Tal et al., 1977). Likewise, directive supervisors give subordinates limited reasons to believe they are particularly deserving so when they provide benefits, it should suggest a benevolent motive and the attribution should be more external.

In contrast, delegation to subordinates provides many reasons for subordinates to attribute positive outcomes to something they did. Supervisors tend to adopt this style when they believe subordinates are capable, trustworthy, and focused on the same goals as the supervisor (Bass et al., 1975; Leana, 1987; Scandura, Graen, & Novak, 1986). Indeed, subordinates believe supervisors' positive view of their performance is a critical factor prompting more delegation from the supervisor (Scandura et al., 1986). Thus, when subordinates work for a supervisor that adopts a delegation style of leadership with them, it signals that the subordinate has *earned* it. Something the subordinate did (hard work, performance) and who he or she is (trustworthy) has led to positive outcomes. As a backdrop through which subordinates come to interpret future outcomes at work, a delegation style of leadership suggests that when a supervisor goes out of his or way to be kind to the subordinate, it is because the subordinate has worked hard, has displayed dependability, and because the supervisor wants to keep him or her around.

In sum, the full conceptual model I have outlined suggests that supervisors' leadership decision-making style not only moderates the positive relationship between supervisors' generosity and external attributions but also exerts a direct negative influence on subordinates' external attributions. As supervisors' decision-making styles reflect more delegation than direction, subordinates are more likely to attribute their outcomes at work to their own efforts or characteristics. Therefore:

*Hypothesis 1: A delegation style of decision-making is negatively related to subordinates' external attributions.*

Furthermore, the relationship between supervisors' generosity and subordinates' external attributions becomes weaker under delegation styles of leadership. This moderating effect decreases the likelihood that subordinates make external attributions for a supervisors' generosity. Formally:

*Hypothesis 2: Supervisors' leadership decision-making style moderates the relationship between supervisors' generosity and subordinates' external attributions such that the relationship is weaker when supervisors' styles reflect higher levels of delegation.*

Bridging together the full model, I propose that supervisors who adopt a delegation style may receive less gratitude when they go out of their way for their subordinates. I propose:

*Hypothesis 3: The sequentially mediated relationship between supervisors' generosity and subordinates' expressed gratitude through subordinates' attributions and the emotions of pride (a) and felt gratitude (b) is moderated by supervisors' leadership decision-making style. When supervisors' styles reflect higher (lower) levels of delegation subordinates are less (more) likely to make external attributions, more (less) likely to feel pride than gratitude, and less (more) likely to express gratitude towards the supervisor.*

## **Method**

### **Sample and Procedures**

Because I was interested in a within-person cognitive emotional process and in mediation, I adopted an experience sampling methodology (ESM). This allowed me to assess the way this hypothesized process unfolds for subordinates daily. Capturing levels of affect and behavior as close as possible to the situations that induced those responses is more ideal than a cross-sectional or even time-separated approach. Thus, consistent with prior research that examined gratitude as a within-person process (Gordon et al., 2012; Gordon et al., 2011), I recruited subordinates from two MBA courses at a large Southeastern university to participate in a 10-day diary study as part of an in-class assignment on sleep, stress, and work behavior.

There were 146 students enrolled across the two MBA courses. Thirteen of the students were either unemployed or self-employed and completed an alternate assignment for course credit. Thus, the final sample consisted of 133 subordinates. At the outset of the study, the subordinates completed a baseline survey containing questions about basic demographic information, perceptions of their supervisors' leadership style, and control variables.

One week after completing the baseline survey, participants entered the ESM portion of the study. Participants were sent an email around 4pm each day that contained the link to the daily survey. Participants who had not responded by 9pm each evening were sent a reminder. The ESM portion of the study included two consecutive work weeks (Monday through Friday); a ten-day period. I received 1,192 completed surveys from the 1,330 possible (89.6%). I reviewed the data to identify participants who failed to

complete the survey by midnight each night, those who incorrectly responded to the randomly placed attention check item, and those who indicated that either their boss or they themselves were absent from work that day. The final sample consisted of 1,019 cases.

### **Participants**

The sample was 49.6% female and on average, participants were 29.6 years old ( $SD = 6.79$ ). Slightly more than half of the sample was Caucasian (50.4%) and on average, participants had 2.9 years ( $SD = 3.46$ ) of tenure with their current employer and had reported to their current supervisor for 1.5 years ( $SD = 2.61$ ). Participants worked in an array of industries, with Finance/Insurance/Real Estate/Public Policy (16.5%) and Education/Training/Library (15.8%) representing the largest percentages of the sample.

### **Measures**

**Supervisor benevolence.** To assess the daily generosity of supervisors, subordinates rated the extent to which they perceived their supervisors behaved benevolently towards them that day. Specifically, subordinates rated the extent of their agreement (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) with three items. The sample items were “My supervisor went out of his/her way for me today,” “I benefitted today because of something my supervisor did for me,” and, “My supervisor went above and beyond to do something nice for me today.”

**Leadership decision-making style.** Leadership decision-making style was assessed in two ways during the baseline survey. First, participants completed Schriesheim et al.’s

(1998) six-item measure of perceived delegation. The items are (1) "My supervisor lets me make decisions by myself, without consulting with him/her," (2) "My supervisor gives me the authority to make my own decisions, without any input from him/her," (3) "I ask my supervisor for information and then make job-related decisions for myself," (4) "My supervisor gives me areas where I decide on my own, after first getting information from him/ her," (5) "My supervisor permits me to get needed information from him/her and then make my own decisions," and (6) "My supervisor does not require that I get his/her input or approval before making decisions." Second, participants completed a five-item measure of their perceptions about decision-making in their organization on a scale from (1 = *definitely false*) to (4 = *definitely true*). The items are "I have to ask my boss before I do almost anything," "Any decision I make has to have my boss' approval," "There can be little action taken here until a supervisor approves a decision," "A person who wants to make his own decisions would be quickly discouraged here," and, "Even small matters have to be referred to someone higher up for a final answer" (Aiken & Hage, 1966).

**External attributions.** Participants rated how much they perceived their supervisors' actions that day reflected something about themselves (internal attribution) or something about the supervisor or situation (external attribution). Two items used in prior research assessing the locus of causality for attributions were used (Russell, 1982). Participants responded on a scale from 1-5 with the anchors of each items as follows: "Reflects on you (e.g., your competence, likeability)/reflects your situation," and, "Reflects something about you/Reflects something about your supervisor."

**Felt gratitude.** Gratitude was assessed with the three items used in the study described in Chapter 2: thankfulness, appreciation, and gratitude (Algoe et al., 2010). Participants rated how much they felt each emotion word on a scale from (1 = *none at all*; 5 = *a great deal*).

**Pride.** Pride was also assessed in the same way as in Chapter 2. Participants used the same scale as was used to rate felt gratitude and indicated the extent they felt each of three items used in prior research (proud, competent, and confident) (Tracy & Robins, 2007a; Williams & DeSteno, 2008).

To balance out the positive emotions and to reduce demand characteristics, participants were also asked to respond to the negative emotions used in the study described in Chapter 2. These items were chosen because attribution theory contends that anger is the opposing emotional response to gratitude when another person is responsible for a negative outcome for the self and guilt and shame are opposing emotions to feeling prideful (Weiner, 1985). Emotion items were randomized to prevent careless responding.

**Dependent variables.** Expressed gratitude was measured with five items. Subordinates rated their level of agreement on a scale from (1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*) with the following items, “I told my supervisor I appreciated him/her,” “I thanked my supervisor,” “I told other people about how nice my supervisor was to me,” “I tried to do something nice for my supervisor to express my thanks,” and “I wrote my supervisor a hand-written note or bought a card to express my thanks.”

As with the experiment in Chapter 2, I gathered other theoretically relevant daily behaviors on a 7-point agreement scale. Helping is a prosocial behavior associated with feeling grateful and to a lesser extent feeling prideful. Helping was assessed with the item

“I spent time today helping others with their work tasks” (Christian, Eisenkraft, & Kapadia, 2015). Psychological withdrawal was assessed with the item, “I intentionally worked slower than I could have worked today (Christian et al., 2015).” Given the characterization of pride as a self-praising emotion, I also asked participants the extent to which they rewarded themselves with the item, “I treated myself to something nice for ‘a job well done’.” Finally, I asked participants about their effort to meet their goals at work that day with the item “I worked really hard to meet my goals at work.”

**Control variables:** Subordinates’ trait gratitude was measured with the GQ-6 (McCullough et al., 2002) (See Appendix A for the items). An important feature of the organizational context that could influence subordinates’ reactivity to leader benevolence is how consistently the leader behaves from day to day. If subordinates perceive leaders’ behavior to be unpredictable from one situation to the next, that unpredictability could influence their attributions about the leaders’ behavior and their resulting reactions. I captured leader consistency with a four-item measure used in prior research (Butler, 1991). A sample item is “My supervisor does things consistently from one time to the next.

## **Results**

### **Analytical Approach**

I analyzed these data with Mplus, version 7.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2015), which allows researchers to assess nested regression equations simultaneously, providing advantages over other software packages. In order to focus the analysis on the within-person relationships, I centered my predictors such that the parameter estimates represent

the deviation of the  $j^{\text{th}}$  person's score on the predictor on day  $i$  from person  $j$ 's cluster mean over the course of the study (Algina & Swaminathan, 2011). The between-person variable deviation, was grand mean centered<sup>3</sup>.

Observation of the intraclass correlation for the mean of the external attribution items, felt gratitude, pride, and the expressed gratitude items revealed that 36%, 70%, 65% and 50%, respectively, of the variance was accounted for at the person level.

Given the nature of the items for the expressed gratitude variable (e.g., "I thanked my supervisor," and "I wrote my supervisor a hand-written note or bought a card to express my thanks"), I assumed that subordinates may engage in one but not all forms of expressing gratitude. That is, subordinates could rate one of the expressed gratitude items highly and rate the others lower to indicate that they did not engage in each type of behavior. Thus, an average of this variable may not reflect whether subordinates expressed gratitude to their supervisor on a given day. Consequently, I analyzed expressed gratitude as a count-variable. To do this, I recoded each expressed gratitude item such that a response of 1-4 (i.e., *strongly disagree* to *neither agree nor disagree*) was coded as "0" and a response of 5-7 (i.e., *somewhat agree* to *strongly agree*) was coded as "1". Then I created a sum of the recoded items to represent the expressed gratitude score for that day<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> I also conducted the analysis using the directive/autocratic leadership measure (Aiken & Hage, 1966). However, this variable did not demonstrate significant relationships with external attributions nor did it moderate the relationship between supervisor benevolence and external attributions. Thus, I report the effects of the analysis using the measure of delegation by Schriesheim et al. (1998).

<sup>4</sup> To be thorough, I also analyzed the data using the mean of the expressed gratitude items as well as the maximum of expressed gratitude items. Neither approach altered the pattern of results.



Table 4 displays the descriptive statistics, inter-correlations, and scale reliabilities for the focal variables. For the variables measured daily, coefficient omega ( $\omega$ ) was calculated to assess reliability (Shrout & Lane, 2012). This analysis revealed that the measures for external attributions and pride exhibited within-person reliability slightly below desired thresholds (i.e., external attributions = .67 and pride = .69).

### **Tests of Hypotheses**

Table 5 displays the results of the path analysis. Before proceeding to analyze the full model, I analyzed a model predicting the relationship between supervisor benevolence and external attributions in order to assess the influence of potential between-person control variables on this primary relationship. Neither leader consistency nor subordinates' grateful disposition affected subordinates' external attributions. That is, neither variable was a significant predictor of subordinates' external attributions nor did they moderate the influence of supervisor benevolence on external attributions. Consequently, I excluded these controls from further analysis. However, consistent with recommendations for ESM research, the linear influence of time on each outcome variable was accounted for in the analysis (Bolger & Laurenceau, 2013).

It is also recommended that researchers using an ESM approach allow relationships between variables to randomly vary across persons (Bolger & Laurenceau, 2013). Yet, this analytical approach increases the convergence criterion and for complex models, such as the one I hypothesized, the number of random slopes can lead to convergence problems. To address if this was a concern for these data, I analyzed the individual paths in my model as fixed and then as random, noting whether or not the path

coefficients were impacted and the extent to which the model fit was altered by reviewing the AIC and BIC criteria. Allowing the paths between the two emotional states and expressed gratitude to randomly vary did not demonstrate an improvement over a fixed slope. Given I made no hypotheses to explain random variation across people for these two paths, I determined that constraining these slopes to be fixed was appropriate. Thus, I analyzed a model where the paths between supervisor benevolence and external attributions and between external attributions and pride and felt gratitude could randomly vary across people while all other paths were fixed. See Figure 3.

Although the primary interest of this chapter was the moderation and sequential moderated mediation hypotheses, I discuss the significance of each path in the model. As displayed in Table 5, supervisor benevolence was significantly negatively related to external attributions ( $B = -.09, p = .01$ ). Consistent with the trend in attributions from the experiment in Chapter 2, subordinates in this study were more likely to view supervisors' behavior as caused by the subordinate, not the supervisor. Hypothesis 1 proposed a direct negative effect on subordinates' external attributions. The results revealed there was a significant main effect of delegation on subordinates' external attributions ( $B = -.12, p < .01$ ). Delegation did reduce the average level of external attributions made by subordinates. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that the relationship between supervisor benevolence and external attributions would be moderated by supervisors' leadership decision-making style. I proposed that as leaders delegated more, subordinates would react to benevolence with attributions that were more internal than external. The cross-level interaction of

supervisors' delegation on the path between supervisor benevolence and external attributions was not significant ( $B = .02$ , n.s.). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

The next part of the model was the relationship between external attributions and the two emotional states. As expected, external attributions were significantly negatively related to pride ( $B = -.05$ ,  $p < .05$ ). However, external attributions were not significantly related to subordinates' felt gratitude ( $B = -.03$ , n.s.). Although not specified, there were significant main effects of supervisor benevolence on pride ( $B = .06$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and felt gratitude ( $B = .07$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and pride was itself a significant predictor of felt gratitude ( $B = .51$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

The final part of the model depicted the paths between the emotional states and expressed gratitude. Neither pride ( $B = .05$ , n.s.) nor felt gratitude ( $B = .03$ ,  $p < n.s.$ ) were significantly related to subordinates' expressed gratitude. However, there was a significant positive main effect for supervisor benevolence on subordinates' expressed gratitude ( $B = .40$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

The bottom half of Table 5 displays the test of the indirect effects. In the sequential mediation model, multiple indirect effects are possible and each indirect path was examined. None of the indirect effects were significant. Hypothesis 3 predicted that the sequential indirect effects from supervisor benevolence to expressed gratitude through external attributions and pride or felt gratitude would be moderated by supervisors' leadership decision-making style. Contrary to expectations, the conditional indirect effects through pride ( $\text{low}_{\text{delegation}} = 0.00$ , 95% CI [-.001, .001];  $\text{high}_{\text{delegation}} = 0.00$ , 95% CI [.000, .001]) and through felt gratitude ( $\text{low}_{\text{delegation}} = 0.00$ , 95% CI [.000, .000];

$high_{delegation} = 0.00$ , 95% CI [.000, .000]) were essentially zero and not significant. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

### **Supplementary Analysis**

I conducted a secondary analysis of a path model that included the four other dependent variables I collected (prosocial behavior, self-reward, goal effort, and withdrawal) as well as expressed gratitude. Essentially, this model adds paths from the two emotion variables to these additional dependent variables. It also includes direct paths from external attributions and supervisor benevolence to each of these outcomes. The results of the path model are displayed in Figure 4. Felt gratitude did not demonstrate any significant relationship with the dependent variables. In contrast, pride demonstrated significant positive relationships with prosocial behavior ( $B=.33, p<.01$ ) and goal effort ( $B=.23, p<.05$ ). In terms of the more distal effects, external attributions were not significantly related to any of the dependent variables but supervisor benevolence was. Supervisor benevolence was significantly positively associated with prosocial behavior ( $B=.13, p<.05$ ) and self-reward ( $B=.17, p<.05$ ). Indirect effects for each possible path were calculated and are displayed in Table 6. None of the indirect paths reached conventional levels of significance.

### **Discussion**

In this chapter, I studied the daily experiences of subordinates to understand how the influence of supervisor benevolence on subordinates' attributions, emotions, and expressed gratitude might depend on the context in which it occurs. I predicted that

subordinates who were more empowered because of their supervisor's decision-making style would react to supervisor benevolence with attributions that were less external, and that these attributions would stoke more pride than gratitude, resulting in less gratitude for empowering supervisors. However, instead of a moderating effect from the context, I found two main effects on attributions. First, there was a significant effect for leadership style on attributions. Subordinates who perceived their supervisors as using a delegation style of decision-making were, on average, more likely to make attributions that were less external. Second, there was a significant effect for supervisor benevolence on attributions. Subordinates were also more likely to react to supervisors' benevolence with attributions that were less external.

Empowering subordinates through delegation makes them feel trusted and competent and in this study, it also makes them believe supervisors' actions towards them are more a reaction to their own achievements or characteristics than about their supervisor. Regardless of how individuals' daily experiences with their supervisors may vary, when supervisors employ a delegation style of leadership their subordinates are more likely to believe supervisors' benevolent behaviors are caused by the subordinate and not by the supervisors' generosity. This finding is consistent with the experimental results from Chapter 2. In the low external attribution condition, participants were given more reasons than in the other conditions to believe in the subordinates' competence and achievement as the primary driver of the successful outcome. In that condition, participants rated external attributions as lower than any other condition. Delegation, as an indicator of trust and competence in the subordinate, reduces the likelihood that subordinates make external attributions about supervisors' behavior.

The main effect of benevolence on external attributions is consistent with the hedonic bias and with the experimental results from Chapter 2. Recall that the hedonic bias means people are more likely to attribute causality for positive outcomes to the self. Across Study 1 and Study 2, people were more likely to make attributions about benevolence that were more internal than external. Regardless of the contextual information, participants rated themselves as the primary cause of supervisors' benevolent actions and in the field study there was a significant negative relationship between benevolence and external attributions. Subordinates believed they did something to *earn* the benevolence.

Even though subordinates' attributions about benevolence were opposite my prediction, the influence of benevolence on emotions occurred as expected: benevolence positively influenced felt gratitude and pride and the effect on felt gratitude was slightly stronger (.07 vs. .06, respectively). On days that subordinates indicated their supervisors behaved benevolently towards them, they were likely to feel more grateful and prouder than their daily average throughout the study period.

The effects of benevolence on emotional reactions could not be explained by causal attributions. Subordinates' attributions did not mediate between benevolence and the emotions (see Table 6). My measurement of external attributions was comprised of two questions used in prior research and offered two potential external causes for the supervisor's behavior (supervisors' characteristics or the situation). Inclusion of the possibility that the supervisor's benevolence was caused by an aspect of the situation makes it more difficult to understand what subordinates were thinking regarding the locus of causality for the supervisor's behavior. If subordinates ascribed the cause as mostly

due to the situation, their rating on the second semantic differential scale might be neutral but the overall score would still reflect an attribution that was more external than internal. If the attributional cause was perceived to be about the situation, it would not be surprising for the relationship between external attributions and felt gratitude to be null. That is, if a subordinate believes the supervisor acted benevolently largely because the situation demanded it, research suggests that felt gratitude would not be the emotional reaction. This is because grateful feelings are strongest when the benevolent behavior of others appears volitional (Tesser et al., 1968). To address this concern, I also analyzed a model using only the attribution item that indicated the cause as due to the subordinate's or supervisor's actions. The relationship between external attributions and felt gratitude remained non-significant and the pattern of relationships in the rest of the model were largely the same. Subordinates felt pride and gratitude in response to benevolence but not because of their attributions.

Although I am unaware of any study that has explored the relationship between the emotional experience of gratitude and expressed gratitude, there was good reason to expect that feeling grateful would be positively related to expressed gratitude. After all, the experimental results from Study 1 in Chapter 2 revealed a positive, albeit marginal, significant relationship with expressed gratitude. In these data, however, the path between felt gratitude and expressed gratitude was not significant. An advantage of my analytical approach was that I could analyze the full sequential moderated mediation model simultaneously. A consequence of this approach meant the simple relationship between felt gratitude and expressed gratitude ( $B = .28, p < .01$ ), was eliminated when the full model was analyzed. This was because the full model included the direct path between

supervisor benevolence and expressed gratitude. Inclusion of this direct path in the model reduced the relationship between felt gratitude and expressed gratitude to non-significance, indicating that after accounting for supervisors' benevolence, subordinates' grateful feelings did not explain their likelihood of expressing gratitude towards their supervisors. If feeling grateful is not an explanation for the positive effect of benevolence on expressed gratitude, what else might explain this finding?

There could be several possible reasons for the positive relationship between benevolence and expressed gratitude to persist despite subordinates generally believing that the benevolence was caused by their actions. One is that there are fairly strong norms (even across cultures) for expressing gratitude when one is the recipient of benevolence (Emmons & McCullough, 2004). Indeed, not being seen as ungrateful could be an important motivator, explaining why people might express gratitude without really feeling grateful (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994; Roberts, 2004). At least in these data, felt gratitude did not mediate between benevolence and expressed gratitude indicating that feeling grateful was not required for subordinates to express gratitude when their supervisors behaved benevolently.

Another possible reason is that a reciprocity motive is driving the response to benevolence. Receiving a benefit indicates positive treatment from a benefactor. The norm of reciprocity suggests people should repay the benefactor for the positive treatment. I am aware of one study that pitted a reciprocity motive against felt gratitude. Employees indicated how obligated they felt to their employer and how grateful they felt for fair treatment and then rated a number of outcomes: strain, withdrawal, voluntary turnover and termination (Eisenberger, Zheng, Zagenczyk, Meshdaghinia, & Shoss,



2016). However, gratitude, as opposed to felt obligation was the stronger predictor of employee reactions. Nevertheless, expressed gratitude was not an outcome measured in that study. Thus, more research is needed to tease apart the motivational reactions to benevolence and their influence on expressed gratitude.

A third reason is that expressing gratitude for benevolence has instrumental purposes for the beneficiary. The MAT proposes that expressing gratitude to a benefactor reinforces the benefactor's prosocial behavior, making it more likely that benefactors enact benevolence in the future (McCullough et al., 2001). Research from close personal relationships demonstrates this effect. When partner-beneficiaries express appreciation to their partner-benefactors, the partner-benefactors engage in more pro-relationship behaviors (Gordon et al., 2012). If expressing gratitude for benefits received makes it more likely that supervisors will provide more benefits in the future, subordinates may be inclined to do so. Whether they feel they played some role in instigating the benevolence would not matter.

The nature of my model specified that people would feel some level of pride and gratitude but I did not theorize about a relationship between these two emotions. As with the analyses in Study 1, I included a path from pride to felt gratitude. Consistent with Study 1, pride was a significant positive predictor of felt gratitude. Pride was also predicted by external attributions. As hypothesized, external attributions were negatively associated with pride. Although attribution theory suggests that pride and gratitude are unique emotional reactions to different causal attributions, it is less clear what causal relationship pride should exhibit with felt gratitude when internal versus external attributions are made. In the experimental data from Study 1 and these field data, pride

had a positive relationship with felt gratitude. However, pride did not influence expressed gratitude directly or through felt gratitude. Again, these relationships must be considered in the context of the full model which included the direct path from benevolence to felt gratitude and expressed gratitude. These direct relationships persisted despite pride's effect on felt gratitude. Pride may exert a positive influence on felt gratitude but in the presence of benevolence, pride neither explains nor predicts expressed gratitude. Future research should consider whether pride is a catalyst for felt gratitude and to what end.

Pride did directly influence prosocial behavior and how hard subordinates worked towards their goals. Although I was mainly interested in when subordinates repay supervisors' benevolence with expressed gratitude, subordinates might view prosocial behaviors and work effort as desirable forms of repayment. These represent more active behaviors than expressing thanks verbally or perhaps even in writing, and their effects are likely to positively impact more people than supervisors alone. Perhaps subordinates who feel proud also feel motivated to repay supervisors with behaviors that not only positively affect supervisors but also positively reflect on subordinates.

People who feel proud may also possess more resources to invest in prosocial behaviors and work effort—behaviors that can often be draining (Koopman, Lanaj, & Scott, 2016). Pride reflects a sense of self-esteem and confidence, or internal resources. In contrast, people that are grateful for having received a benefit may have been resource impoverished in the first place (hence why they received benevolence). Rather than overflowing with resources, these individuals may simply be in a replenishment phase that does not enable them to immediately (within the same day) react in ways that require an exertion of further resources. This could explain the lack of a relationship between felt

gratitude, prosocial behavior, self-reward and goal effort. Future research might explore the restorative effects of pride and felt gratitude on individuals' resources and the impact this has on their behaviors.

However, the link between felt gratitude and prosocial behavior is the most surprising, as it has been theorized about and supported with experimental and field research. The difference between this study and the ones that have demonstrated this positive relationship is that benevolence is a measured variable. For example, in the research by Spence and colleagues (2013), the measure of state gratitude that they used includes benevolence (i.e., "I have benefited from the goodwill of others," "Someone has recently gone out of his/her way to help me," and "I have been treated with generosity.") Spence et al. find a positive relationship with state gratitude and organizational citizenship behaviors, but it is unclear if this was driven by the benevolence or grateful emotion.

The idea that acts of expressing gratitude may not immediately follow benevolence or the experience of felt gratitude is an interesting one. One truly humbled by another's benevolence may need time to reflect and determine the appropriate response. Indeed, more effortful forms of expressing gratitude such as writing a letter or doing something nice for the benefactor could take time to plan and execute. How long the effects of benevolence and felt gratitude linger over time is an important question to investigate. In these data benevolence did have a strong relationship with expressed gratitude within day, however, I did not explore delays in this effect or in the effect of felt gratitude. Again, the idea of resources may be an important consideration for understanding lagged effects of benevolence and felt gratitude.

This study is not without its limitations. Subordinates rated the within-person variables once per day but I proposed a mediational model. It is common in diary research to survey participants once per day because researchers are typically interested in individuals' reflections about what occurred over the course of a day and in limiting attrition over the course of a multiday study by reducing the number of questions and the onerousness of the task. However, this approach may introduce common method bias into participants' responses and make it more difficult to infer mediation (Bolger & Laurenceau, 2013). Nevertheless, I expected subordinates' appraisals about supervisors' behavior and their emotional reactions to occur in close succession so capturing these reflections within each person each day was the most appropriate approach (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996).

I also created and used a continuous measure of benevolence. Most of the research on gratitude has either manipulated the benevolence, as with the experimental vignettes (Tesser et al., 1968; Wood et al., 2008) and lab studies (Tsang, 2006, 2007) or left it out of the models entirely (Gordon et al., 2012; Gordon et al., 2011). In the cases where it was manipulated, it is unambiguous that the beneficiary was the recipient of a benevolent act. However, in this study subordinates rated the extent to which they felt supervisors acted benevolently. While this allowed me to capture a wider array of benevolent experiences subordinates had, I was most interested in clear cases of benevolence and how subordinates responded. It is difficult to know how benevolent supervisors' actions were because what I measured was subordinates' perceptions. Although I found effects with the measure I created, future research might explore

alternative means, such as event sampling, where individuals only respond *if* a benevolent event occurred.

In conclusion, this study offered important insights about how subordinates respond to supervisors' benevolence. Consistent with the hedonic bias and with the findings from Study 1 (Chapter 2), subordinates are more likely to believe supervisors' benevolence is caused by themselves, not supervisors' generosity. Additionally, subordinates' beliefs about *why* supervisors acted benevolently do not influence how grateful they feel or how likely they are to express gratitude for the benevolence. When supervisors behave benevolently, despite what subordinates believe about this act and despite supervisors' decision-making style, subordinates express gratitude. Thus, the repayment hypothesis from the MAT was supported, but attributions and emotions were not the mediating mechanisms, leaving the possibility that other mediating mechanisms explain this relationship.

## CHAPTER FOUR: OVERALL DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS

This dissertation explored a phenomenon that theologians, psychologists, organizational scholars and lay persons agree is important to human relationships but has been largely ignored in the management literature. Given the benefits of gratitude for both beneficiaries, benefactors, and others, organizational scholars need to explore whether these benefits accrue in organizational contexts as well.

I adopted a cognitive-emotional framework where I examined the role of causal attributions about a supervisor's generosity on the simultaneous experience of two emotions: pride and felt gratitude. Across two empirical studies, I found that as subordinates' attributions became more external they felt less pride. I found mixed support for the influence of causal attributions on subordinates' felt gratitude. In Study 1 (Chapter 2) I manipulated the causal attributions and found that external causes influenced felt gratitude in the expected direction. That is, when subordinates believed supervisors' generosity was less about them and more about the supervisor, they felt more grateful. In Study 2 (Chapter 3), I measured the cognitive attributions that subordinates make in the field and the findings were inconsistent with Study 1.

In the field study, attributions were not significantly related to felt gratitude. However, this lack of relationship existed in the context of a direct effect of benevolence on felt gratitude as well as a direct effect of pride on felt gratitude. These effects could have masked the relationship with attributions and felt gratitude. I examined the simple relationship between attributions and felt gratitude, without any other variables in the model, and the relationship was significant and negative ( $B = -.07, p < .01$ ), contrary to

what I expected. It is difficult to know why external attributions would be negatively related to felt gratitude in the field study but not in the experiment.

Overall, the sequential cognitive-emotional-behavioral process that I proposed received limited support. In Study 1, both pride and felt gratitude mediated the relationship between external attributions and intentions to express gratitude. Contrary to my predictions, the indirect effect through pride was negative because pride exhibited a positive relationship with intentions to express gratitude. That is, when pride increased, it was associated with intentions to express gratitude towards the supervisor. Future research might explore pride as a facilitator rather than an inhibitor of expressed gratitude towards supervisors.

These findings must be considered in the context of the full scope of the results. The results from Study 2 did not support the mediational processes I proposed but the main effects mirrored the findings from Study 1. When participants responded to the high external attribution scenario (the benevolence condition), there was a significant and positive main effect on intentions to express gratitude. This finding was replicated in the field study. Supervisor benevolence was significantly positively associated with subordinates' reports of expressed gratitude. Given the inconsistent mediation results across these two studies, there may be other psychological processes that explain these relationships. For example, receiving a positive outcome from one's supervisor, whether it was because of their benevolence or one's own effort, indicates a situation where one has been singled out for positive treatment. Normative expectations are that people express thanks when another person has done something positive for them. Thus, there could be normative reasons to react to supervisor benevolence with expressed gratitude.

There may also be motivational reasons to react to benevolence with gratitude. Research suggests that benefactors are reinforced for their efforts when they are thanked (McCullough et al., 2001). In turn, benefactors who are reinforced for their efforts are inclined to engage in more of the behavior that elicited the positive reinforcement. Thus, subordinates may believe that acknowledging and appreciating the supervisor's efforts will afford them more positive benefits in the future, such as stronger relational bonds (Algoe, 2012).

I proposed that supervisors' own behavior would influence the strength of subordinates' causal attributions. That is, supervisors who empowered subordinates through their decision-making style would make subordinates' attributions about a supervisor's generosity more internal than external, resulting in less gratitude for supervisors. The results from Study 2 did not support that prediction. They did, however, demonstrate that supervisors' behavior affects the externality of subordinates' attributions on average in the direction that I hypothesized. Thus, subordinates that feel empowered by their supervisor's delegation towards them may be more biased towards interpreting their supervisor's positive behaviors towards them as reflective of their own contributions, requiring supervisors' behavior to be quite extreme before it is interpreted as benevolence.

From a practical standpoint, supervisors should understand that subordinates are likely to vary in terms of their attributions about benevolent behavior but that attributions will most often be more internal than external. Nevertheless, when supervisors behave benevolently their subordinates are likely to acknowledge the behavior with expressed gratitude, prosocial behaviors, and with more effort towards their work goals



In closing, gratitude is important for organizations because it has demonstrated positive effects on individuals' well-being but also because it facilitates high quality relationships. Despite evidence of these effects accumulating outside of the organizational context (e.g., close personal relationships), inquiries on gratitude within organizations (and organizational relationships) have been rare. This makes it difficult to know if the positive benefits of gratitude extend to peoples' work-lives, if organizational contexts influence gratitude, or if other factors are integral to the experience and expression of gratitude in the workplace.

This dissertation demonstrated gratitude within organizations is complex. It was a first attempt at developing a better understanding of what leads to expressed gratitude towards supervisors and it identified the role of pride as a factor that affects felt and expressed gratitude. Yet there are still more questions about gratitude in organizations than there are answers. It will be important for future research to uncover the factors that influence gratitude and to explain when and how they operate. I intend to be on the forefront of this endeavor.

**APPENDIX A:  
MEASURES OF TRAIT GRATITUDE**

### The Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6)

Using the scale below as a guide, write a number beside each statement to indicate how much you agree with it.

1 = strongly disagree

2 = disagree

3 = slightly disagree

4 = neutral

5 = slightly agree

6 = agree

7 = strongly agree

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. I have so much in life to be thankful for.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. If I had to list everything that I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list.

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. When I look at the world, I don't see much to be grateful for.

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. I am grateful to a wide variety of people.

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. As I get older I find myself more able to appreciate the people, events, and situations that have been part of my life history.

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. Long amounts of time can go by before I feel grateful to something or someone.

**Items 3 and 6 are reverse scored.**

## The Appreciation Scale

Facet	Item – “R” denotes reverse-scored item
"Have" focus	<p>I am very thankful for my degree of physical health.</p> <p>I count my blessings for what I have in this world.</p> <p>I remind myself how fortunate I am to have the privileges and opportunities I have encountered in life.</p> <p>I reflect on how fortunate I am to have basic things in life like food, clothing, and shelter.</p> <p>I really notice and acknowledge the good things I get in life.</p> <p>I am content with what I have.</p> <p>It is important to appreciate things such as health, family, and friends.</p> <p>Although I don't have everything I want, I am thankful for what I have.</p> <p>I remind myself to think about the good things I have in my life.</p> <p>I appreciate my degree of success in life so far. Awe</p>
Awe	<p>I get caught up in the wonderment of life.</p> <p>I have moments when I realize how fortunate I am to be alive.</p> <p>I reflect on how lucky I am to be alive.</p> <p>I feel that it is a miracle to be alive.</p> <p>I feel a positive, emotional connection to nature.</p> <p>When I see natural beauty like Niagara Falls, I feel like a child who is awestruck.</p>
Ritual	<p>I stop to give thanks for my food before I eat.</p> <p>I do things to remind myself to be thankful.</p> <p>I give thanks for something at least once a day.</p> <p>I perform rituals (i.e. pray or “say grace before a meal”).</p> <p>I use personal or religious rituals to remind myself to be thankful for things.</p> <p>I believe it is important to remind myself to be thankful for things on a consistent basis (i.e. daily, weekly, or monthly).</p>
Present Moment	<p>I enjoy the little things around me like the trees, the wind, animals, sounds, light, etc.</p> <p>I stop and enjoy my life as it is.</p> <p>I notice things like the first flowers of spring.</p> <p>I recognize and acknowledge the positive value and meaning of events in my life.</p> <p>I remind myself to appreciate the things around me.</p> <p>I place special, positive meaning into neutral activities like taking a walk, a shower, or a nap.</p> <p>When I stop and notice the things around me I feel good and content.</p>

Self/Social Comparison	<p>I reflect on the worst times in my life to help me realize how fortunate I am now.</p> <p>I think of people who are less fortunate than I am to help me feel more satisfied with my circumstances.</p> <p>When I swerve to avoid a car accident, I feel relieved that I am ok.</p> <p>When I drive by the scene of a car accident, it reminds me to feel thankful that I am safe.</p> <p>When I see someone less fortunate than myself, I realize how lucky I am.</p>
Gratitude	<p>I say “please” and “thank you.”</p> <p>I notice the sacrifices that my friends make for me.</p> <p>Food, clothing, and shelter are basic needs that I do not need to be grateful for because I am entitled to them. <b>R</b></p> <p>I acknowledge when people go out of their way for me.</p> <p>I say “please” and “thank you” to indicate my appreciation.</p> <p>When a friend gives me a ride somewhere when he or she doesn’t have to, I really appreciate it.</p> <p>I say “thank you” in a restaurant when people bring my food to express my appreciation for their help.</p> <p>I am very fortunate for the opportunity to receive an education.</p> <p>I value the sacrifices that my parents (or guardians) have made (and/ or make) for me.</p> <p>Anything that my parents (or guardians) have done for me can be attributed to their responsibility as parents (or guardians), and I do not need to be thankful because that was their job. <b>R</b></p>
Loss/Adversity	<p>I appreciate the things I have now, because I know that anything I have can be taken away from me at any given time.</p> <p>When something bad happens to me, I think of worse situations I could be in to make myself feel better.</p> <p>I use my own experiences of loss to help me pay more attention to what I have now.</p> <p>If I were to lose something I cared about, I would focus on how lucky I was to have had it.</p> <p>The thought of people close to me dying some day in the future makes me care more about them now.</p> <p>Experiences of loss have taught me to value life.</p> <p>The problems and challenges I face in my life help me to value the positive aspects of my life.</p> <p>Thinking about dying reminds me to live every day to the fullest.</p>
Interpersonal	<p>I acknowledge to others how important they are to me.</p> <p>I let others know how much I appreciate them.</p> <p>I recognize the value of my time with friends.</p> <p>I reflect on how important my friends are to me.</p> <p>I remind myself to appreciate my family.</p>

## The Gratitude, Resentment and Appreciation Test (GRAT)

1. For some reason I never seem to get the breaks that others get.
2. More bad things have happened to me in my life than I deserve.
3. I never seem to get the breaks that other people do.
4. There never seems to be enough to go around and I'm always coming up short. .
5. I really don't think that I've gotten all the good things that I deserve in life.
6. Because of what I've gone through in my life, I really feel like the world owes me something.
7. I believe that I've had more than my share of bad things come my way.
8. I think that life has handed me a short stick.
9. I basically feel like life has ripped me off.
10. It sure seems like others get a lot more benefits in life than I do.
11. Life has been good to me.
12. It seems like people have frequently tried to impede my progress.
13. I feel that "someone up there" doesn't like me.
14. I believe that I am a very fortunate person.
15. Although I think that I'm morally better than most, I haven't gotten my just reward in life.
16. At Christmas, I never seemed to get as many presents or presents that were as good as others received.
17. I believe that the things in life that are really enjoyable are just as available to me as they are to Ross Perot or Donald Trump.
18. Every Fall I really enjoy watching the leaves change colors.
19. I think that it's important to "Stop and smell the roses."
20. I really enjoy the changing seasons.
21. Oftentimes I have been overwhelmed at the beauty of nature.
22. I love the green of Spring.
23. I think it's important to enjoy the simple things in life.
24. Often I'm just amazed at how beautiful the sunsets are.
25. Sometimes I find myself overwhelmed by the beauty of a musical piece.
26. I really enjoy a crackling fire on a cold winter's day.
27. I love to sit and watch the snow fall. .
28. I think that it's important to sit down every once in a while and "count your blessings."
29. The simple pleasures of life are the best pleasures of life.
30. I think it's important to appreciate each day that you are alive.
31. Often I think, "What a privilege it is to be alive."
32. Although I'm basically in control of my life, I can't help but think about all those who have supported me and helped me along the way.
33. I feel deeply appreciative for the things others have done for me in my life.
34. Although I think it's important to feel good about your accomplishments, I think that it's also important to remember how others have contributed to my accomplishments.
35. I couldn't have gotten where I am today without the help of many people.
36. I'm basically very thankful for the parenting that was provided to me.
37. Sometimes I think, "Why am I so privileged so as to be born into the situation I was born into?"
38. I'm really thankful for friends and family.
39. Many people have given me valuable wisdom throughout my life that has been important to my success.
40. One of my favorite times of the year is Thanksgiving.
41. Part of really enjoying something good is being thankful for that thing.
42. I've gotten where I am today because of my own hard work, despite the lack of any help or support.
43. I feel grateful for the education I have received.
44. After eating I often pause and think, "What a wonderful meal."

**Note:** bolded items are reverse-scored.

**APPENDIX B:  
EXPERIMENTAL VIGNETTES**

## **Control Condition Vignette**

You are an associate at a prestigious consulting firm. Your firm provides project management services to Fortune 500 clients. You have only been at the organization a little more than a year.

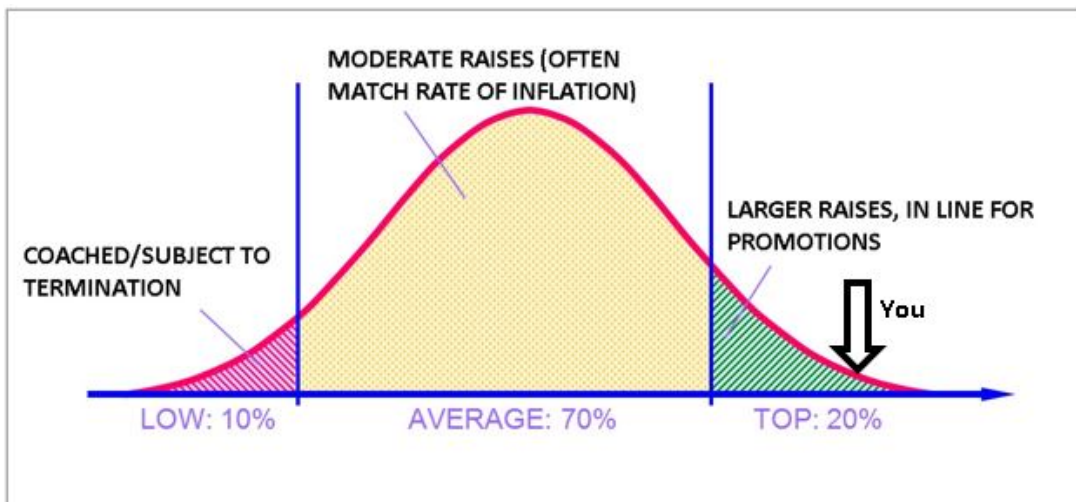
Out of the blue your supervisor sends you an email. The email informs you that the supervisor has secured an approval for you to attend Six Sigma training. Becoming Six Sigma certified is an important goal of yours, which your supervisor knew. You know it will help you advance in your career as a consultant. The organization typically only sends more senior level employees to this training.

Your supervisor asked you to confirm your agreement via email. Your supervisor will then start the process of obtaining funds from the HR liaison.



### Low External Attribution Vignette

You are an associate at a prestigious consulting firm. Your firm provides project management services to Fortune 500 clients. You have only been at the organization a little more than a year but you are a top performer, which means that in your annual evaluation, you ranked in the 96<sup>th</sup> percentile among your peers.



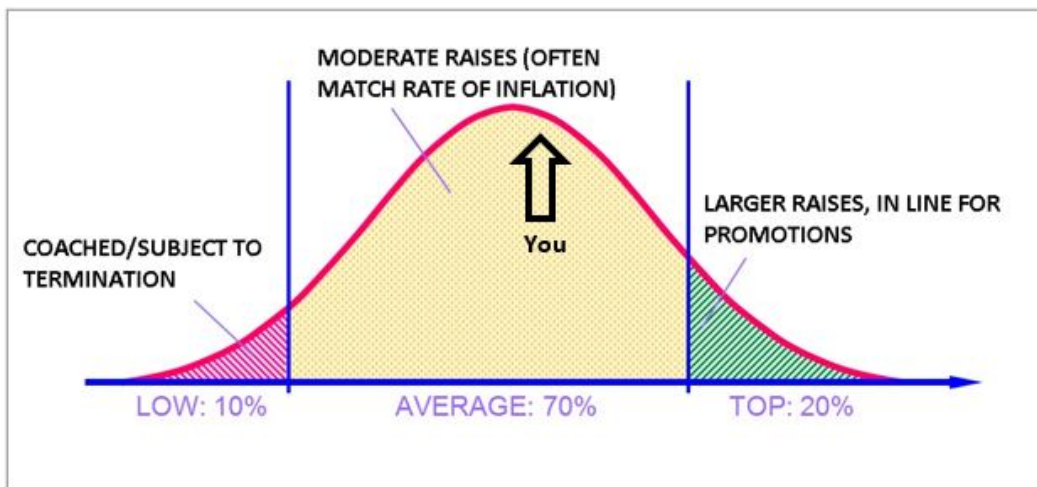
Out of the blue your supervisor sends you an email. The email informs you that the supervisor has secured an approval for you to attend Six Sigma training. Becoming Six Sigma certified is an important goal of yours and you know it will help you advance in your career as a consultant. The organization typically only sends more senior level employees to this training. You know this because you recently asked your coworkers if they knew how long it typically takes for new hires to get into the training and they told you that they had never heard of anyone getting approved for the training unless they were a star performer, they even used the phrase “rock star.” You can’t wait to take advantage of this amazing opportunity.

As you reflect on this event, you think about how you have put your best effort into this job. Since accepting the position, work has been your sole focus. You have put your personal life on hold and committed yourself fully to your work. You arrive to work early, you leave late, and you have taken on more clients than any of your coworkers. This really validates your hard work and your natural talent.

Your supervisor asked you to confirm your agreement via email. Your supervisor will then start the process of obtaining funds from the HR liaison.

## High External Attribution Vignette

You are an associate at a prestigious consulting firm. Your firm provides project management services to Fortune 500 clients. You have only been at the organization a little more than a year but you are a solid performer, which means that in your annual evaluation, you ranked in the 51<sup>st</sup> percentile among your peers.

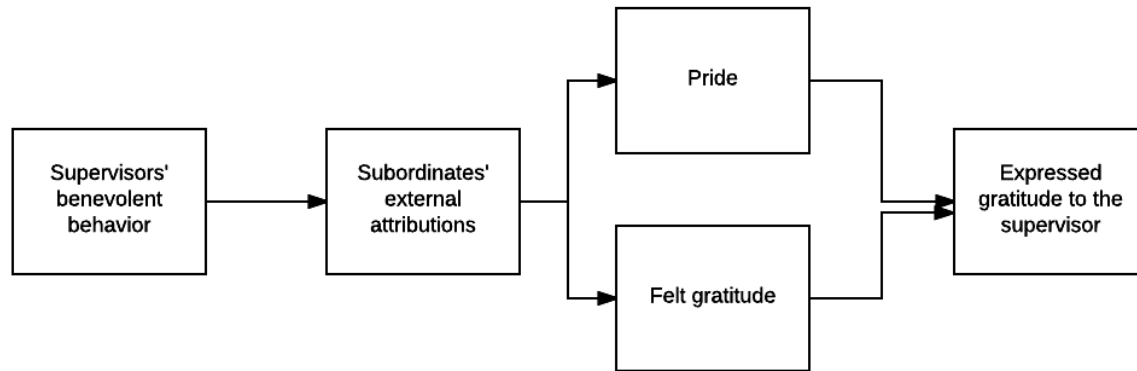


Out of the blue your supervisor sends you an email. The email informs you that the supervisor has secured an approval for you to attend Six Sigma training. Your supervisor knew that becoming Six Sigma certified is an important goal of yours and you know it will help you advance in your career as a consultant. You are sure your supervisor really had to pull some strings to get this approval. The organization typically only sends more senior level employees to this training. You know this because you recently asked your coworkers if they knew how long it typically takes for new hires to get into the training and they told you that they had never heard of anyone getting approved for the training unless they were a star performer and had been with the firm over three years. You can only imagine what your supervisor had to do to get this amazing opportunity approved.

As you reflect on this event, you think about how your supervisor has really invested in you. Since accepting the position, you have struggled to balance your work and your personal life and your supervisor has been nothing but supportive. You hoped you would get to attend the training eventually. This really validates that your supervisor went out on a limb for you.

Your supervisor asked you to confirm your agreement via email. Your supervisor will then start the process of obtaining funds from the HR liaison.

**APPENDIX C: CHAPTER 1-3 FIGURES AND TABLES**



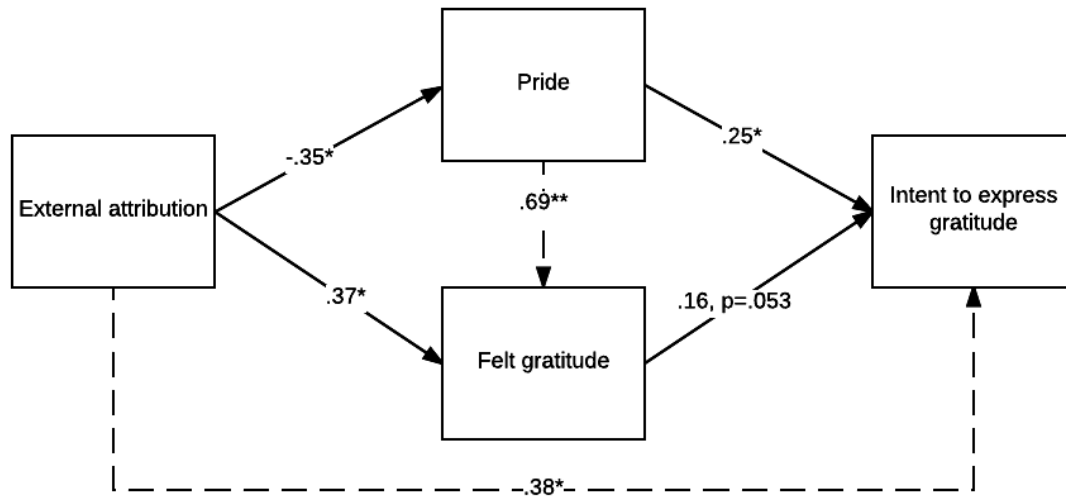
**Figure 1: Model of Subordinates' Attributions, Emotions, and Expressed Gratitude**

**Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations (Chapter 2)**

Variable	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Pride	4.09	.79	(.76)						
2. Felt gratitude	4.15	.98	.50**	(.95)					
3. Expressed gratitude	5.78	.82	.29**	.40**	(.65)				
4. Prosocial behavior	5.2	1.28	.12	.11	.34**	-			
5. Self-reward	5.43	1.25	.30**	.10	.30**	.04	-		
6. Goal effort	6.55	.68	.28**	.24**	.43**	.23**	.23**	-	
7. Withdrawal	1.63	1.20	.27**	-.09	.22**	-.02	-.07	.43**	-

*Note.*  $n = 155$ . Numbers in parentheses are alpha reliability coefficients.

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$ .



**Figure 2: Path model from Study 1 (Chapter 2)**

Note: Dashed lines reflect non-hypothesized paths that were included in the analyses.

† $p < .10$  \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$ .



**Table 2: Path Analysis and Mediation Results (Chapter 2)**

Main Effects	Pride	Felt gratitude	Expressed Gratitude
External attributions (path a)	-.35*(.15)	.37*(.04)	.38*(.15)
Pride (path b)		.69**(.11)	.25*(.11)
Felt Gratitude (path b)			.16†(.08) <sup>a</sup>
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.05	.27	.20
<i>F</i>	5.45*	18.7**	8.04**
Indirect Effects ( <i>ab</i> )	Estimate	LLCI	ULCI
External attributions --> Expressed Gratitude (via Pride)	-.09 (.06)	-.249	-.010
External attributions --> Expressed Gratitude (via Felt gratitude)	.06(.04)	.003	.180
External attributions--> Expressed Gratitude (via Pride-->Felt gratitude)	-.04(.03)	-.125	-.003

*Note:* *n* = 103 persons. Parameter estimates are unstandardized. Numbers in parentheses represent standard errors. †*p*<.10 \**p*<.05 \*\**p*<.01. a = relation between felt gratitude and expressed gratitude was marginal (*p*=.054). LLCI = Lower Level 95% Confidence Interval. ULCI = Upper Level 95% Confidence Interval. Confidence intervals based on 10,000 bootstrapped samples.

**Table 3: Supplementary Path Analysis and Mediation Results (Chapter 2)**

	Pride	Felt Gratitude	Prosocial behavior	Self- reward	Goal effort	Withdrawal
External attributions (path a)	-.35*(.15)	.37*(.18)	.06(.26)	-.25(.24)	.02(.14)	-.07(.21)
Pride (path b)		.69**(.11)	.25(.19)	.71**(.18)	.20*(.10)	-.13(.16)
Felt gratitude (path b)			-.06(.15)	-.11(.13)	.03(.07)	.02(.12)
$R^2$	.05	.27	.02	.19	.07	.01
$F$	5.45*	18.17**	.57	7.58**	2.42†	.25
<b>Indirect Effects (<i>ab</i>)</b>				<b>Estimate</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>
External attributions --> Prosocial behavior (via Pride)				-.09	-.351	.016
External attributions --> Prosocial behavior (via Felt gratitude)				-.02	-.165	.081
External attributions --> Self-reward (via Pride)				-.25	-.570	-.053
External attributions --> Self-reward (via Felt gratitude)				-.04	-.218	.031
External attributions --> Goal effort (via Pride)				-.07	-.207	-.006
External attributions --> Goal effort (via Felt gratitude)				.01	-.045	.101
External attributions --> Withdrawal (via Pride)				.04	-.018	.175
External attributions --> Withdrawal (via Felt gratitude)				.01	-.078	.122

*Note:*  $n = 103$  persons. Parameter estimates are unstandardized. Numbers in parentheses represent standard errors. † $p < .10$  \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$ . LLCI = Lower Level 95% Confidence Interval. ULCI = Upper Level 95% Confidence Interval. Confidence intervals based on 10,000 bootstrapped samples.

**Table 4: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations (Chapter 3)**

Variable	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<i>Day-Level Variables</i>										
1. Supervisor benevolence	3.36	1.57	(.92)							
2. External attributions	3.22	.99	-.10**	(.67)						
3. Pride	3.55	.94	.12**	-.09**	(.69)					
4. Felt gratitude	3.71	1.04	.24**	-.11**	.52**	(.80)				
5. Expressed gratitude	.96	1.31	.37**	-.05	.09**	.12**	-			
6. Prosocial behavior	5.05	1.68	.14**	-.04	.14**	.08**	.12**	-		
7. Self-reward	3.02	1.79	.16**	-.03	.06	.05	.10**	.12**	-	
8. Goal effort	5.6	1.32	.07*	-.01	.11**	.05	.06*	.26**	.08*	-
9. Withdrawal <sup>a</sup>	1.99	1.29	.02	.04	-.04	.03	.00	.01	.03	-.22**
<i>Person-Level Variables</i>										
1. Delegation	5.08	1.22	(.86)							

*Note.* Day level correlations (n = 1019) represent pooled within-person correlations. For the person level (n = 133). Numbers in parentheses reflect reliability of within-person change (coefficient omega  $\omega$ ) for scales measured at the day-level. Coefficient alpha ( $\alpha$ ) is reported for the person-level variable. \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$ . a = sample size of 1018 for this variable.

**Table 5: Path Analysis and Indirect Effects (Chapter 3)**

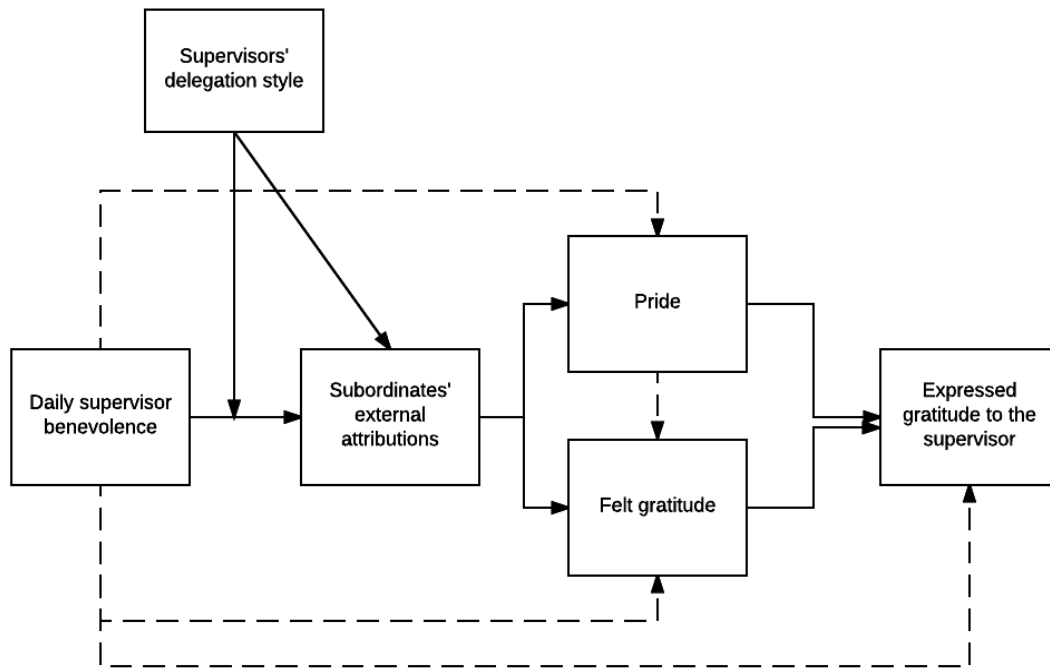
Main Effects	External Attributions	Pride	Felt gratitude	Expressed Gratitude
Time	.01*(.00)	.00(.00)	.00(.00)	-.05**(.02)
Supervisor benevolence	-0.09*(0.03)	.06**(.02)	.07**(.02)	.40**(.04)
Delegation	-.12**(.04)	.00(.05)	-.03(.06)	
Supervisor benevolence X Delegation	.02(.03)			
External attributions		-.05*(.02)	-.03(.03)	.01(.04)
Pride			.51**(.05)	.05(.08)
Felt gratitude				.03(.07)
Indirect Effects		Estimate	LLCI	ULCI
Supervisor benevolence --> Pride (via External attributions)		.000	-.017	.012
Supervisor benevolence --> Felt gratitude (via External attributions)		.001	-.007	.028
External attributions --> Expressed Gratitude (via Pride)		-.002	-.010	.005
External attributions --> Expressed Gratitude (via Felt gratitude)		-.001	-.009	.006
Supervisor benevolence --> Expressed Gratitude (via External attributions and Pride)		.000	.000	.001
Supervisor benevolence --> Expressed Gratitude (via External attributions and Felt gratitude)		.000	-.001	.001
Supervisor benevolence → Expressed Gratitude (via External attributions, Pride, and Felt gratitude)		.000	.000	.000

*Note:*  $n = 133$  persons, 10 days, 1019 observations. Parameter estimates taken from the Mplus output. Numbers in parentheses represent standard errors. \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$ .

**Table 6: Supplementary Analysis of Indirect Effects (Chapter 3)**

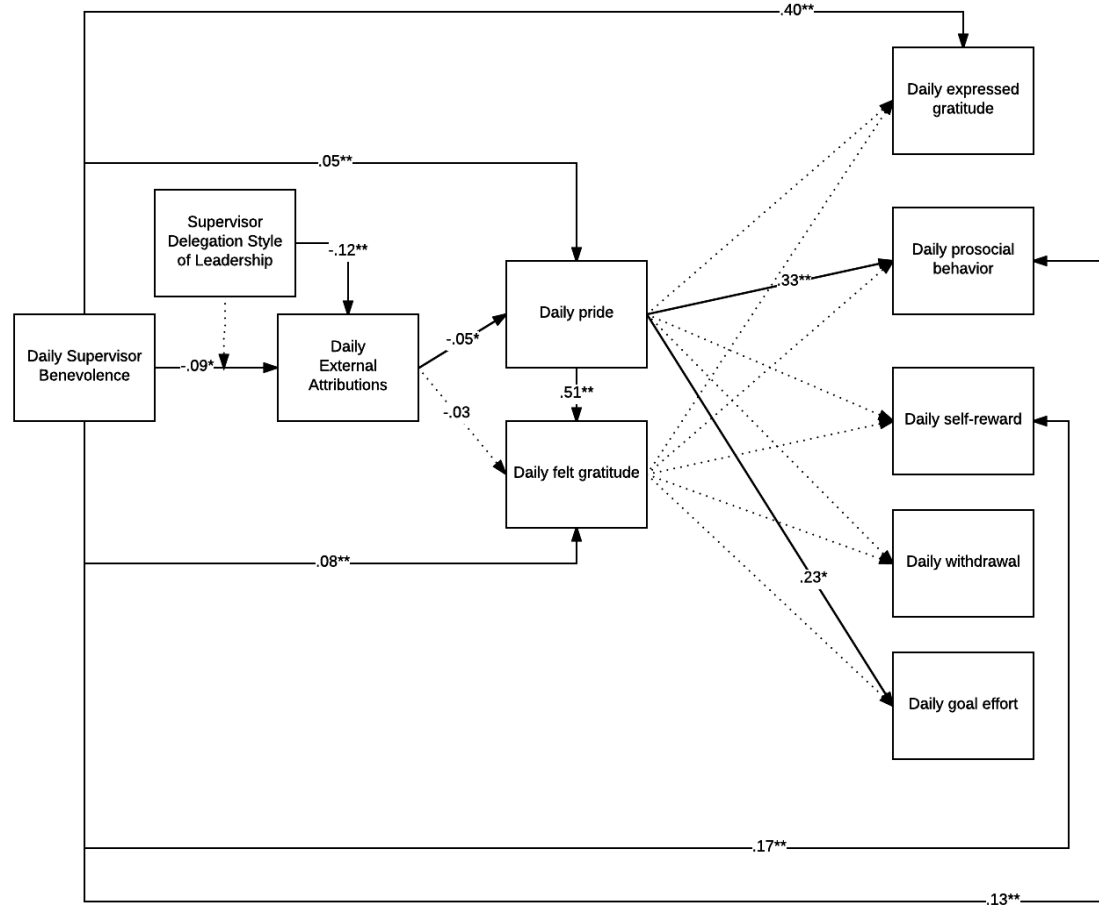
Indirect Effects	<i>Outcome</i>					
	Pride	Felt Gratitude	Prosocial Behavior	Self-reward	Goal effort	Withdrawal
Supervisor benevolence-->External attributions-->Outcome	0.01†	0.01†				
Supervisor benevolence-->External attributions-->Pride-->Outcome			.00	.00	.00	-.00
Supervisor benevolence-->External attributions--Felt gratitude-->Outcome			.00	.00	.00	.00
External attributions-->Pride-->Outcome			-.02†	-.01	-.01	.01
External attributions--Felt gratitude-->Outcome			-.00	.00	.00	-.01
Supervisor benevolence-->External attributions-->Pride-->Felt gratitude-->Outcome			.00	.00	.00	.00

*Note:*  $N = 133$  persons, 10 days, 1018-1019 observations. Parameter estimates taken from the Mplus output. † $p < .10$ .



**Figure 3: Full Sequential Moderated Mediation Model.**

Dashed lines represent non-hypothesized paths that were included in the analyses.



**Figure 4: Path Model from Supplementary Analysis (Chapter 3).**

Significant paths are solid thick lines. \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$ . Paths from attributions to the outcomes were included but are not significant and not depicted to reduce clutter on the figure.

## **APPENDIX D: GRATITUDE DICTIONARY**



## Gratitude Word List

- grateful
- gratitude
- gratefulness
- thankful
- thanks
- thank
- thanking
- thanked
- appreciative
- appreciate
- appreciated
- appreciates
- appreciating
- appreciation

**APPENDIX E: IRB APPROVAL LETTER**



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board  
Office of Research & Commercialization  
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501  
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246  
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276  
[www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html](http://www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html)

### Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1  
FWA00000351, IRB00001138**  
To: **Sharon Sheridan**  
Date: **June 16, 2016**

Dear Researcher:

On 06/16/2016, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination  
Project Title: Attributions and subordinate reactions  
Investigator: Sharon Sheridan  
IRB Number: SBE-16-12338  
Funding Agency:  
Grant Title:  
Research ID: n/a

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the [Investigator Manual](#).

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne Muratori".

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 06/16/2016 01:19:12 PM EDT

IRB Manager



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board  
Office of Research & Commercialization  
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501  
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246  
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276  
[www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html](http://www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html)

### Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1  
FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **Sharon Sheridan**

Date: **October 17, 2016**

Dear Researcher:

On 10/17/2016, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination  
Modification Type: Updates to instrument and new population. Request is reflected in updated consent and protocol  
Project Title: Attributions and subordinate reactions  
Investigator: Sharon Sheridan  
IRB Number: SBE-16-12338  
Funding Agency:  
Grant Title:  
Research ID: n/a

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the [Investigator Manual](#).

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Kamille Chaparro on 10/17/2016 09:57:42 AM EDT

IRB Coordinator

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