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**THE MULTIPLE FACETS OF GRATITUDE: EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF SALVATION,  
SERENDIPITOUS, AND SERENE GRATITUDE ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR**

A Dissertation in

Business Administration

by

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## ABSTRACT

Previous conceptualizations of gratitude have neither accounted for the state of need of the grateful individual before their benefit was received nor for the agency of the source of the benefit. Accounting for these factors leads to the development of a gratitude typology consisting of three gratitude types: salvation gratitude, serendipitous gratitude, and serene gratitude. Building on this typology, two essays demonstrate the differences between these gratitude types as well as the implications of the gratitude types for multiple consumer decision contexts.

In the first essay, I explore how and why the three gratitude types emerge and establish their differences. This examination focuses on the affective composition of each gratitude type, the cognitive appraisals associated with each gratitude type, and the strength of pro-social behaviors motivated by each gratitude type in the context of donations. Importantly, salvation gratitude is found to have negative affective and cognitive elements, as well as reduced donation willingness and behavior.

In the second essay, I explore the implications of each gratitude type on subjective feelings of control. In this essay, salvation gratitude is identified as inducing a state of decreased subjective feelings of control, relative to other forms of gratitude. The implications of reduced control are demonstrated in the context of preference for high-effort products, which offer a clear means through which consumers can re-establish subjective feelings of control.

The dissertation concludes by discussing the implications of three gratitude types, as well as identifying a series of future research directions.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Towards a Triadic Perspective of Gratitude

Take a moment and think back to the last time you felt grateful. Do you have it clearly pictured in your mind? Perhaps you are thinking of a recent instance in which someone performed an unexpected kindness for you: an anonymous driver ahead of you paid for your coffee in the drive-through. No? Maybe you were thinking of a time when someone recognized that you were in need of assistance and acted to provide it: someone paid for your coffee after you realized you left your wallet at home and you wouldn't be able to pay for your coffee, or a stranger stopped to help you jump-start your car when the battery died. Wrong again? Perhaps your thoughts went in another direction, and you were thinking not of being grateful to *someone*, but rather of a feeling of gratitude that arose within you in a moment of realizing just how much life has given you: maybe during a beautiful sunset or a moment of religion; a gratefulness for all the good there is in the world and your place within it.

The present research recognizes that “gratitude” can arise in response to widely varying circumstances, and explores the idea that not all gratitude experiences “feel” the same. As such, I propose a typology of gratitude wherein three distinct types of gratitude are identified and differentiated based on their affective, cognitive, and behavioral antecedents and consequences.

*Gratitude*, as currently defined, is an emotional response to a dyadic exchange between two actors (i.e., a benefactor and a beneficiary) in which the benefactor provides a benefit to the beneficiary and the beneficiary recognizes that their good fortune was brought about by another

(Smith 1790/1976). More broadly, gratitude should arise when a) an individual receives a benefit that was b) externally generated, and c) the beneficiary recognizes these two facts.

Though the above definition has stood for centuries, I suggest that both the need for the benefit received, as well as the ability to clearly identify one's benefactor, fundamentally affect the manner in which gratitude is *felt*, and thus, that multiple forms of gratitude exist. The current work delineates the underlying characteristics of each gratitude type and the implications of each for the individual's experience of gratitude. Differential consequences of gratitude type are additionally identified.

Past research has established that gratitude promotes and strengthens social and spiritual resources and interpersonal skills (Fredrickson 2004). Experiencing gratitude leads to greater subjective well-being (Emmons and Crumpler 2000; Polak and McCullough 2006; Toussaint and Friedman 2009; Wood et al. 2007a), life satisfaction (Froh, Bono, and Emmons 2010; Froh et al. 2011; Tsang et al. 2014), and self-esteem (Rash, Matsuba, and Prkachin 2011). It also facilitates socially-inclusive behaviors toward one's benefactor, even when those behaviors come at a cost (Bartlett and DeSteno 2006; Bartlett et al. 2012; Joel et al. 2013). Finally, past researchers have found that gratitude promotes pro-social motivations that extend beyond one's benefactor, while reducing feelings of self-interest and aggression (DeWall et al. 2012; Lazarus and Lazarus 1994; Weinstein et al. 2010). These pro-social motivations are gratitude-specific and cannot be attributed to reciprocity (e.g., Bartlett and DeSteno 2006; Gray, Emmons, and Morrison 2001; Tsang 2006), general positive affect (Algoe and Haidt 2009; DeWall et al. 2012; Kashdan et al. 2009; McCullough, Emmons, and Tsang 2002; McCullough et al. 2001; Soscia 2007), or satisfaction (Kim and Lee 2013). Though past research has focused on the positive effects of gratitude, I a) identify multiple types of gratitude, b) show that gratitude is not a solely positive

experience but rather differs by gratitude type, and c) identify relevant applications of the typology of gratitude for marketers.

My typology of gratitude rests on two nested dimensions. The first underlying dimension relates to social context – whether the gratitude-inducing benefit can be attributed to a specific and intentional agent. The second dimension relates to whether the individual perceives that the benefit received fulfills a pressing need. This second dimension is nested within the specific agent category, resulting in three types of gratitude. I call the three types: *salvation gratitude* (i.e., a specific agent fulfilled a pressing need), *serendipitous gratitude* (i.e., a specific agent provided a benefit that did not address a need), and *serene gratitude* (i.e., a benefit was recognized in the absence of a specific agent). I propose that these types of gratitude differ in their affective, cognitive and behavioral consequences (e.g., Han, Lerner, and Keltner 2007; Lerner and Keltner 2001; Smith and Ellsworth 1985).

## **1.2 Overview of Two Essays**

The first essay, entitled “Is All Gratitude the Same? Differentiating Salvation, Serendipitous, and Serene Gratitude,” explores how individuals experience gratitude, and outlines a framework that suggests three different gratitude “types”. Gratitude has commonly been theorized as a positive force that promotes both individual well-being (e.g., Emmons and Crumpler 2000; McCullough, Emmons, and Tsang 2002; Toepfer, Cichy, and Peters 2012; Wood, Joseph, and Linley 2007a) as well as relational and societal well-being (e.g., Canto-Mila 2013; Chang et al. 2012; Gordon et al. 2012; Kubacka et al. 2011; Lambert et al. 2010). To date, however, gratitude has been largely conceptualized and empirically treated as a single, univariate construct.

This essay demonstrates that, when a framework of gratitude is adopted that accounts for both the degree of the recipients' need of a benefit prior to receiving it as well as the agency of the source of gratitude, three distinct gratitude types emerge. These types are confirmed as distinct when explored through a cognitive appraisals lens (e.g., Ellsworth and Smith 1988; Smith and Ellsworth 1985). Additionally, by exploring the affective composition of each gratitude type, I establish that *salvation gratitude* has negative elements. These elements are shown to manifest behaviorally as well, with salvation gratitude leading to reduced donation intentions as well as reduced donation behavior relative to other forms of gratitude. The idea that gratitude is not a solely positive emotion runs counter to prior theory.

The second essay, entitled "The Differential Effects of Gratitude Type on Consumers' Product Attitudes," builds on the gratitude typology developed in essay 1 by exploring the implications of gratitude type in a consumption context. This essay explores the implications of gratitude type on subjective feelings of control (a relationship that has not been previously examined) and demonstrates the relevance of this relationship with regard to product preferences. Specifically, because salvation gratitude arises when there is a pressing need, I propose that it will be associated with diminished feelings of subjective control. As lack of control is an aversive state, I further propose that salvation gratitude will lead consumers to pursue consumption options that allow them to re-establish control. This essay thus demonstrates that salvation gratitude, relative to other forms of gratitude, more positively influences consumers' perceptions of product offerings that allow them to re-establish control through investments of effort (Cutright and Samper 2014).

The two essays together suggest that gratitude is a far more nuanced construct than has previously been considered. By recognizing that there are three separate gratitude types, I

identify a more negative element of gratitude and demonstrate that gratitude types differ fairly significantly in their affective, cognitive, and behavioral implications. This dissertation makes theoretical contributions to the literatures in emotion, control, charitable giving, and product positioning by recognizing the differential influences that gratitude types have on consumers' consumption decisions. I now present my two essays.

## Chapter 2

### ESSAY 1: IS ALL GRATITUDE THE SAME? DIFFERENTIATING SALVATION, SERENDIPITOUS, AND SERENE GRATITUDE

#### 2.1 Introduction

Emotion researchers have shifted their focus from global affect to discrete emotions (Cavanaugh et al. 2011; Tiedens and Linton 2001) and from negative to positive emotions (Seligman and Cziksentmihalyi 2000), emphasizing the need to refine our current understanding of different affective states, particularly discrete, positive emotions. Consistent with this increasing interest in positive emotions, Tracy and colleagues (e.g., Tracy and Robins 2004; Tracy and Robins 2008; Tracy et al. 2009) have pushed beyond exploration of specific emotions to identify sub-types of distinct emotions, differentiating between authentic and hubristic pride.

In the current work, I focus on the positive emotion of gratitude, which remains a relatively under-studied emotion (Emmons 2004; Solomon 2004). In seeking to enhance our understanding of gratitude, I propose three sub-types of gratitude, following the sub-types of pride identified by Tracy and colleagues.

Gratitude has long been defined as a positive emotional response to a dyadic exchange wherein an individual receives a benefit from another individual (their benefactor) and recognizes that this good fortune was brought about by the intentional act of another (Smith 1790/1976). Within the literature, however, there has persisted an underlying tension regarding the positivity of gratitude, as gratitude imbues beneficiaries with a need to reciprocate the benefit they have received (McCullough et al. 2001). Despite being described as an emotion “the core of which is pleasant feelings about the benefit received” (Emmons 2004, p. 5), gratitude has

consistently been identified as the least pleasant and most uncomfortable of the positive emotions, with gratitude experiences sometimes even triggering feelings of humiliation (Cavanaugh 2008; Sommers and Kosmitzki 1988). This humiliation likely arises due to the recognition that acceptance of aid should be reciprocated (Solomon 2004; Watkins, Scheer, Ovnicek, and Kolts 2006). It seems unreasonable, however, to suggest that gratitude experiences are invariably humiliating. Moreover, it seems unlikely that the good fortune for which one is grateful can always be attributed to a benefactor. The current work reconciles these tensions by proposing three unique gratitude types: salvation gratitude, serendipitous gratitude, and serene gratitude.

## **2.2 Developing a Triadic Perspective of Gratitude**

When individuals experience gratitude, it is experienced within a particular context. The individual receiving the benefit is reacting to the circumstances surrounding the conferral of the benefit and to the source of the benefit. Unfortunately, the traditional conceptualization of gratitude does not account for these contextual elements. While many elements of the benefit itself have been identified that moderate magnitude of gratitude (e.g., Tesser, Gatewood, and Driver 1968), I suggest that an antecedent to how gratitude is fundamentally experienced is whether the provided benefit meets a pressing need or not. That is, the beneficiary could perceive that the received benefit was needed and could not have otherwise been attained (e.g., a ‘needed’ benefit provided by a human agent). I refer to this as *salvation* gratitude. Alternatively, a benefactor might bestow a benefit on an individual that, while appreciated, was not needed. I refer to gratitude that arises in response to an agent-provided benefit that does not address a pressing need as *serendipitous* gratitude. Notably, the distinction between benefits that are

needed and not needed will depend on the perceptions of the recipient. Thus, the exact same benefit (for example, a financial gift) could be interpreted as needed by one beneficiary (e.g., an individual short on funds for whom bills are due) but not needed by another (e.g., an individual for whom funds are plentiful or no bills are due).

Gratitude can also arise in individuals not as a response to receiving a benefit, but rather due to self-reflection or self-awareness. This form of gratitude has been described in philosophy as consisting of “opening one’s heart to the universe” (Solomon 2004, p. viii) – an acknowledgement of and thankfulness for one’s life and advantages. I refer to this type of gratitude – gratitude that arises upon recognition of a benefit (or accrued benefits) in the absence of a human agent – as *serene* gratitude.

To empirically differentiate the proposed gratitude types, I focus on the antecedents of the conferral of the benefit and examine the affective, cognitive, and behavioral consequences across the three proposed gratitude types. I hypothesize that the affective experiences associated with each type of gratitude will be unique despite the fact each will continue to evoke feelings of gratitude. For example, I propose salvation gratitude will result in more negative affect than serendipitous or serene gratitude. The pressing need and subsequent rescue by the benefactor may also leave the individual receiving the benefit feeling vulnerable, ashamed, or guilty.

Discrete emotions are widely believed to arise based on appraisals of specific features of one’s environment (Ellsworth and Smith 1988; Lerner and Keltner 2000; Moors, Ellsworth, Scherer, and Frijda 2013; Smith and Ellsworth 1985). In the case of gratitude, the appraisal dimensions of *pleasantness* and *other-agency* may help to cognitively differentiate the various types of gratitude. For instance, consistent with evoking greater negative affect, I anticipate salvation gratitude will also score lower on the pleasantness appraisal dimension than the other



gratitude types. Additionally, I expect salvation and serendipitous gratitude to differ from serene gratitude on the other-agency appraisal dimension (i.e., attributions of one's own responsibility for creating the situation versus that of other people; Smith and Ellsworth 1985). As salvation and serendipitous gratitude arise due to clear attributions of a benefit provided by a specific individual or group to oneself, these gratitude types should be associated with relatively high appraisals of other-agency. Serene gratitude, on the other hand, is conceptualized as arising primarily from self-reflection. As such, serene gratitude should be associated with relatively low appraisals of other-agency.

Finally, I expect gratitude types to differ in their influence on pro-social behavior. Pro-social behaviors are the most consistently identified behavioral outcome of gratitude (e.g., Algoe and Haidt 2009; Bartlett and DeSteno 2006; DeWall et al. 2012; Gray, Emmons, and Morrison 2001; Kashdan et al. 2009; McCullough, Emmons, and Tsang 2002; Kim and Lee 2013; McCullough et al. 2001; Soscia 2007). In the current work, I propose that the more negative feelings associated with salvation gratitude increase the focus on oneself, thereby inhibiting the other-focused pro-social orientation that prototypically arises from gratitude. Within my typology, then, individuals feeling salvation gratitude are expected to demonstrate reduced pro-social intentions relative to serendipitous and serene gratitude.

In the studies that follow in essay 1, I explicate the presence of the three gratitude types and examine their unique affective, cognitive and behavioral differences. I now turn to each of the studies.

### **2.3 Pretest – Do Consumers Experience Different Gratitude Types?**

Before examining the affective, cognitive, and behavioral consequences of each gratitude type, I conducted a pretest to examine the relative frequency with which each hypothesized

gratitude type was experienced. Rather than eliciting one of the three gratitude types, participants were asked to think of the situation that has made them feel most grateful to assess the natural occurrence of each gratitude type when recalling gratitude experiences.

### **2.3.1 Method and Measures**

*Participants and Design.* Participants were recruited from a nationally-representative panel to complete a survey as part of a larger study. Specifically, 221 adult participants responded to a survey question in which they were asked to describe a time when they felt grateful. Of these, 41 participants either did not provide a story about gratitude or did not provide enough detail to evaluate the story for pretest purposes, resulting in a final sample of 180 participants (49.7% male, with age ranging from 18 to 84, mean age was 47.9 years).

All participants indicated consent at the start of the study. Next, participants were told that the researcher was interested in exploring specific memory techniques and were asked to think about the one situation that has made them feel the most grateful in their life. On the subsequent page, participants read: “Thinking of the one situation that has led to the most gratitude in your life, please begin by writing down what you remember of the gratefulness-inducing event(s), and continue by writing as detailed a description of the event(s) as is possible. If you can, please write your description so that someone reading this might feel grateful on your behalf just from learning about the situation.”

These autobiographical responses were collected and coded by an external coder who was blind to my hypotheses. Specifically, the coder was asked to rate each story on two measures. The first measure (need) asked the coder to rate whether each story mentioned or implied being in a position of need (coded as 1 if no need was mentioned/implied, 2 if no mention of need was explicitly stated but need was implied by the story, or 3 if need was

explicitly mentioned). The second measure (specific other) asked the coder to indicate whether each story mentioned a specific individual who provided a benefit (coded as 1 if a specific person was mentioned, 2 if no specific person is mentioned, or 3 if a non-human source is mentioned, such as life, God, nature, etc.).

### **2.3.2 Results and Discussion**

Based on my typology of gratitude, salvation gratitude occurs when gratitude arises in response to a specific individual or group providing a benefit that addresses a clear need. Responses that were coded as need being implied or explicitly stated and a specific other being mentioned met this description, and accounted for 89 responses (49.4% of total). Serendipitous gratitude occurs when gratitude arises in response to a specific individual or group providing a benefit in the absence of recipient need. Responses coded in this manner totaled 47, and accounted for 26.1% of the total responses. Finally, serene gratitude is gratitude that arises due to recognition of a benefit that was not delivered by a specific human other. The remaining six coding cells meet this description, and totaled 44 responses (24.4% of total).

*Discussion.* The clear implication of the pretest is that all three proposed gratitude types are experienced at relatively high frequencies. This finding demonstrates the value of better defining and understanding gratitude types as a simple recall of gratitude may elicit substantially different experiences. The following studies seek to document the three gratitude types and their consequences.

### **2.4 Study 1 – Affective Profiles of Gratitude Types**

The first experiment was designed to test whether the three gratitude types elicit differing affective experiences. I specifically predict that salvation gratitude will have elevated levels of negative affect relative to other gratitude types.

### 2.4.1 Method and Measures

*Participants and Design.* Participants were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk panel to complete a 3-condition (salvation gratitude, serendipitous gratitude, and serene gratitude) between-subjects experiment. Specifically, 119 adult participants completed a "Research survey on personal experiences" in exchange for \$0.50 (average completion time was 8.78 minutes). Of these participants, eight failed a simple attention check, "For data quality, select strongly agree", resulting in a final sample of 111 participants (51% male, with age ranging from 19 to 77; mean age was 34 years). Participation was restricted to those participants living in the United States or Canada.

All participants indicated consent at the start of the study. Next, participants were told the study was examining types of personal experiences and they would be asked to describe one of these. Participants then completed an autobiographical recall task (e.g., Lerner and Keltner 2001) to prime gratitude type. After the recall task, participants completed the PANAS-X scale (Watson and Clark 1994) to measure felt affect in response to their assigned gratitude type.

*Autobiographical Recall Task.* To prime gratitude type, participants were randomly assigned to a gratitude condition and completed an autobiographical recall task aligned with this condition (e.g., Lerner and Keltner 2001). This type of task is commonly used to instantiate specific emotions (full stimuli reported in Appendix A). For each type of gratitude, I specifically manipulated the dimensions of need and agency while avoiding reference to the term 'gratitude'. Participants in the *salvation gratitude* condition were asked to think about a time when they were at a difficult point in their life and weren't certain of how to overcome the difficulties, but were able to with the help of someone else. Participants in the *serendipitous gratitude* condition were asked to think about a time when someone did someone nice for them that was unexpected.

Participants in the *serene gratitude* condition were asked to think about all the things in the world they were thankful for (i.e., being alive, the beauty of nature). All participants were then asked to describe the thoughts they were having in detail and how thinking about them made them feel.

*PANAS-X*. After the autobiographical recall task, all participants completed the PANAS-X (Watson and Clark 1994). This 60-item schedule is an extended version of the positive and negative affect schedule, and consists of a variety of affective responses, including general negative and positive affect, and more specific sub-scales measuring hostility, guilt, serenity, and surprise. Participants indicated whether they felt this way “while recalling their story” on a scale from “Did not experience at all” (1) to “Experienced very intensely” (7). While I hypothesized greater general negative affect for salvation gratitude, the guilt, hostility, surprise, and serenity subscales were also of interest. Unfortunately, the PANAS-X does not include any items relating to gratitude. To compensate for this, I added the items ‘grateful,’ ‘thankful,’ and ‘appreciative,’ to the schedule. All items were presented in a random order.

To complete the experiment, participants provided demographic information (gender, age, native English speaker, and religious affiliation).

## 2.4.2 Results and Discussion

*Gratitude*. I first looked at reported feelings of gratitude to verify that the manipulations had successfully instantiated feelings of gratitude. The three-item measure had acceptable internal reliability (Cronbach’s  $\alpha_{\text{Gratitude}} = .86$ ). An ANOVA of felt gratitude as a function of the gratitude type prime did not reveal a significant effect of type of gratitude ( $F(2, 108) = 1.92, p = .15$ ;  $M_{\text{Salvation}} = 5.62$ ,  $M_{\text{Serendipitous}} = 6.11$ ,  $M_{\text{Serene}} = 6.12$ ). Follow-up testing revealed that each condition resulted in significantly greater reports of felt gratitude than the midpoint of the scale

(all  $t$ -values  $> 7$ , all  $p < .0001$ ). This suggests that all three gratitude types were seen as equally, and strongly, representative of gratitude (despite the absence of the term ‘gratitude’ from the recall task instructions). This confirms that establishing the presence of different gratitude types will require a more nuanced approach and examination of other related affective responses.

*General Negative Affect.* Of primary interest in this experiment were participants’ general and discrete affective responses to different gratitude types. As per my theorizing, I expected salvation gratitude to more strongly elicit feelings of negative affect. The general negative affect sub-scale of the PANAS-X demonstrated strong internal reliability (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .94$ ). An ANOVA of this scale as a function of gratitude type demonstrated a significant effect of gratitude type ( $F(2, 108) = 13.58, p < .0001$ ). Planned contrasts revealed salvation gratitude ( $M = 2.49$ ) elicited greater negative affect than serendipitous ( $M = 1.24, p < .0001$ ) and serene gratitude ( $M = 1.72, p = .003$ ).

*Other Affect Sub-Scales.* Sub-scale descriptive statistics are reported in Table 2.1. Of specific interest were the hostility, guilt, surprise, and serenity sub-scales of the PANAS-X. The hostility subscale was comprised of: angry, hostile, irritable, scornful, disgusted, and loathing. The guilt subscale was comprised of: guilty, ashamed, blameworthy, angry at self, disgusted with self, and dissatisfied with self. If the hostility and guilt sub-scales are both higher for salvation gratitude, this suggests this type of gratitude includes feelings of self-loathing. The other two sub-scales were expected to be more applicable to the serendipitous and serene gratitude experiences, respectively. In particular, the surprise sub-scale was comprised of amazed, surprised, and astonished, all reactions consistent with receiving an unexpected benefit. Finally, the serenity sub-scale was comprised of calm, relaxed, and at ease and seemed to capture the element of self-reflection that was conceptualized as accompanying serene gratitude.

*Hostility.* An ANOVA of hostility as a function of gratitude type was significant ( $F(2, 108) = 17.66, p < .0001$ ) such that salvation gratitude ( $M = 2.43$ ) elicited greater hostility than serendipitous ( $M = 1.16; F(1, 108) = 33.15, p < .0001$ ) or serene ( $M = 1.42, F(1, 108) = 18.86, p < .0001$ ) gratitude. Serendipitous and serene gratitude did not differ on this dimension ( $F(1, 108) = 1.34, p = .25$ ).

*Guilt.* An ANOVA of guilt as a function of gratitude type also revealed a significant effect ( $F(2, 108) = 19.71, p < .0001$ ) such that salvation gratitude ( $M = 2.96$ ) elicited greater guilt than serendipitous ( $M = 1.35, F(1, 108) = 36.20, p < .0001$ ) or serene ( $M = 1.61, F(1, 108) = 22.60, p < .0001$ ) gratitude. Again, serendipitous and serene gratitude did not differ on this dimension ( $F(1, 108) = 0.96, p = .33$ ).

*Surprise.* An ANOVA of surprise as a function of gratitude type was also significant ( $F(2, 108) = 3.45, p = .035$ ). As expected, serendipitous gratitude ( $M = 4.39$ ) elicited greater surprise than salvation gratitude ( $M = 3.44, p = .03$ ) and serene gratitude ( $M = 3.48, p = .03$ ), which were not different from one another. Recall that serendipitous gratitude arises in response to a benefit being conferred in the absence of need. These results are consistent with this conceptualization.

*Serenity.* Finally, an ANOVA of serenity as a function of gratitude type was also significant ( $F(2, 108) = 3.51, p = .033$ ) such that serene gratitude ( $M = 4.92$ ) elicited greater serenity than salvation gratitude ( $M = 3.89, p < .01$ ) and directionally more serenity than serendipitous gratitude ( $M = 4.33, p = .11$ ). Salvation and serendipitous gratitude did not significantly differ.

*Discussion.* Experiment 1 results supported the primary hypothesis that salvation gratitude elicited more negative affect than serendipitous or serene gratitude. In addition, experiment 1 demonstrates that the three types of gratitude lead to predictable differences in affective

responses: 1) salvation gratitude elicits more hostility and guilt than serendipitous and serene gratitude, 2) serendipitous gratitude is characterized by greater surprise than the other forms of gratitude, and 3) serene gratitude elicits stronger feelings of serenity (e.g., peacefulness).

Notably, participants in all three gratitude type conditions reported equally high gratitude, suggesting that differences in reported affect are not a result of differing magnitudes of gratitude.

In conclusion, experiment 1 provides evidence that the three proposed gratitude types each have a unique affective composition.

## **2.5 Study 2 – Appraisal Patterns of Gratitude Types**

The second experiment was designed to test the hypothesis that each gratitude type is associated with a unique pattern of appraisals of one's situation. Recall that I anticipated salvation gratitude would arise from appraisals of a situation as being less pleasant, while I further anticipated serene gratitude will arise due to appraisals of the situation as having lower appraisals of other-agency.

### **2.5.1 Method and Measures**

*Participants and Design.* Participants were recruited from Amazon's MTurk panel to complete a 3-condition (salvation gratitude, serendipitous gratitude, and serene gratitude) between-subjects experiment. Specifically, 149 adult participants completed a "Survey on responses to personal and consumer experiences" in exchange for \$0.75 (average completion time was 6.95 minutes). Of these participants, four failed a simple attention check, "For data quality, select strongly agree", resulting in a final sample of 145 participants (51% male, with age ranging from 19 to 68; mean age was 34.9 years). Participation was restricted to those participants living in the United States or Canada.



*Procedure.* To prime gratitude type, participants were randomly assigned to a gratitude condition and completed an autobiographical recall task aligned with the gratitude type condition (e.g., Lerner and Keltner 2001; Full stimuli reported in Appendix A). Recall task instructions were refined from those employed in study 1 to be more streamlined and reduce the potential of confounding factors. Specifically, participants in the *salvation gratitude* condition were asked to think about a time when they felt grateful because someone did something nice for them when they really needed it. Participants in the *serendipitous gratitude* condition were asked to think about a time when they felt grateful because someone did someone nice for them even though they did not need them to do it. Participants in the *serene gratitude* condition were asked to think about a time when they felt a broad sense of gratefulness. All participants were then asked to describe either the thoughts they were having in detail and how thinking about them made them feel.

*Dimension Ratings Questionnaire.* Following the emotion priming task, participants were asked to complete the Dimensional Ratings Questionnaire (DRQ; Smith and Ellsworth 1985, all items aside from legitimacy items were included), as it referred to their recalled gratitude experience. The DRQ measures six appraisal dimensions: pleasantness, other agency, certainty, attentional activity, anticipated effort, and situational agency.

Cavanaugh (2011) identifies two additional appraisal dimensions, social connection and temporal focus, and argues that these dimensions are particularly relevant when differentiating positive emotions. As such, Cavanaugh's items were included to measure social connection (e.g., "to what extent did you feel close or closer to another individual or group", "to what extent did you feel more connected to another individual or group", and "to what extent did it affect the

way you thought about your relationship with some individual or group”) and temporal focus (i.e., “to what extent were you focused on... the present, the past, the future”).

All dimension items were measured by asking participants the extent of agreement with each statement on Likert-type scales anchored by 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. Following the appraisal dimension measures, participants completed two manipulation check items: “In the experience I wrote about, I was in a position of great need” and “In the experience I wrote about, I felt grateful to one person in particular.” Participants also provided demographic information (gender, age, English-speaking propensity, and religious affiliation).

### **2.5.2 Results and Discussion**

*Manipulation Checks.* An ANOVA of degree of need as a function of gratitude type was significant ( $F(2, 142) = 17.63, p < .01$ ). As expected, salvation gratitude ( $M = 5.48$ ) was associated with greater need than serendipitous ( $M = 3.38, F(1, 142) = 25.47, p < .01$ ) and serene ( $M = 3.38, F(1, 142) = 26.42, p < .01$ ) gratitude, which did not differ ( $F(1, 142) = 0.00, p = .99$ ). A similar ANOVA of the specific target manipulation check was also significant ( $F(1, 142) = 74.13, p < .01$ ). As expected, both salvation ( $M = 6.50, F(1, 142) = 119.22, p < .01$ ) and serendipitous gratitude ( $M = 6.38, F(1, 142) = 102.80, p < .01$ ) were significantly more strongly associated with specific others than serene gratitude ( $M = 3.23$ ). The priming of the three gratitude types through the autobiographical recall task was successful.

*Pleasantness.* An ANOVA revealed a significant effect of gratitude type ( $F(2, 142) = 14.71, p < .01$ ) on pleasantness. As expected, salvation gratitude ( $M = 4.19$ ) was associated with lower pleasantness than serendipitous ( $M = 5.64, F(1, 142) = 25.92, p < .01$ ) and serene gratitude ( $M = 5.33, F(1, 142) = 16.41, p < .01$ ). Serendipitous and serene gratitude were associated with

similar levels of pleasantness ( $F(1, 142) = 1.18, p = .28$ ). Thus, experiencing salvation gratitude is less pleasant than experiencing the other two types of gratitude.

*Other-agency.* The items ‘self-responsibility’ and ‘self (in) control’ were reverse-coded and averaged with ‘other responsibility’ and ‘other (in) control’ to form a measure of other agency as per Smith and Ellsworth (1985, and Ellsworth and Smith 1988;  $\alpha = .41$ ). Though the reliability of the measurement of this appraisal dimension is much lower than desired, I suspect that it is reflective of the contextual tension and role of self versus other in both the need and the agency that arises when experiencing the different types of gratitude. An ANOVA of this measure as a function of gratitude type was significant ( $F(2, 142) = 6.41, p < .01$ ). Follow-up contrast analyses demonstrated that this significant effect was driven by the serene gratitude condition ( $M = 3.19$ ), which was associated with significantly lesser appraisals of other-agency than salvation gratitude ( $M = 3.73, F(1, 142) = 6.48, p = .01$ ) and serendipitous gratitude ( $M = 3.95, F(1, 142) = 11.94, p < .01$ ), which did not differ from each other ( $F(1, 142) = 1.04, p = .31$ ).

*Discussion.* Current theory argues that emotions arise as a result of individuals’ appraisals of a series of dimensions. This theory further suggests that each emotion arises as a result of a specific pattern of appraisals – in other words, that each emotion has an appraisal “signature”. Thus, if each gratitude type actually represents a unique emotional experience, gratitude types should also have their own appraisal patterns. Experiment 2 demonstrates that this is indeed the case, across two key dimensions. First, salvation gratitude is shown to have lower appraisals of pleasantness than serendipitous and serene gratitude. Second, serene gratitude is shown to have lower appraisals of other-agency than salvation and serendipitous

gratitude. Taken together, these findings provide further evidence in support of three unique gratitude types.

## **2.6 Study 3a – The Effect of Gratitude Type on Pro-Social Intentions**

My third experiment was designed to explore whether gratitude types uniquely predict behavioral outcomes. In the literature, the most consistently observed behavioral outcome associated with gratitude experiences is that of pro-social responses (e.g., Bartlett and DeSteno 2006; Chang et al. 2012; DeSteno et al. 2010; McCullough, Emmons, and Tsang 2002; McCullough et al. 2001; Tsang 2006b). Experiment 3a therefore explores the impact of gratitude type on donation intentions.

### **2.6.1 Method and Measures**

*Participants and Design.* Participants were recruited from Amazon’s MTurk panel to complete a three-condition experiment wherein gratitude type was manipulated between subjects. Specifically, 150 adult participants completed a “Survey on responses to personal and consumer experiences” in exchange for \$0.75 (average completion time was 6.95 minutes). Of these participants, eight failed an instructional manipulation check (i.e., “How much attention were you paying while completing this survey,” with the correct response being “None at all”; Oppenheimer et al. 2009), resulting in a final sample of 142 participants (60.6% male, with age ranging from 19 to 65; mean age was 35.0 years).

*Procedure and Measures.* All participants indicated consent at the start of the study. Next, participants were told that I was interested in types of personal experiences and told that they would be asked to describe one of these. Participants then completed the same autobiographical recall task as in experiment 2. After the recall task, participants read a description of the Feeding

America charity and indicated their willingness to donate. To complete the experiment, participants provided demographic information (gender, age, English-speaking propensity, and religious affiliation). Participation was restricted to those participants living in the United States or Canada.

*Donation Stimuli.* Following the gratitude type recall task, participants were told that, as part of an unrelated study, the researchers were interested in their response to not-for-profit organizations. They then read a description of the Feeding America organization (see Exhibit 1), which was developed based on the Feeding America website. Following this description, participants indicated their likelihood of making a donation to Feeding America (1 = very unlikely, 7 = very likely).

## **2.6.2 Results and Discussion**

*Donation Likelihood.* An ANOVA of donation likelihood as a function of gratitude type was significant ( $F(2, 138) = 3.32, p = .04$ ). As expected, salvation gratitude ( $M = 4.12$ ) was associated with the lowest likelihood of donating relative to serendipitous ( $M = 5.00, F(1, 138) = 5.15, p = .02$ ) and serene ( $M = 5.02, F(1, 138) = 4.52, p = .04$ ) gratitude, which did not differ ( $F(1, 138) = 0.00, p = .96$ ).

*Discussion.* Current gratitude research has shown that gratitude is strongly associated with helping others, including third-party others who had no influence in delivering a benefit to the grateful individual. Such helping should manifest in a domain such as not-for-profit donations. The result, while not altogether surprising in light of the findings of experiments 1 and 2, clearly demonstrates the three gratitude types differ in terms of donation intentions.

## 2.7 Study 3b – The Effect of Gratitude Types on Actual Donation Behavior

The main finding of experiment 3a was a digression from all past gratitude research. The effect was worthy of replication to verify its robustness. Thus, experiment 3b was designed to provide confirmation of the results of experiment 3a and build on the previous design in several key ways. First and most importantly, it goes beyond donation intentions to capture actual donation behavior. Second, I included two additional emotion control conditions (neutral and happy) to allow for stronger conclusions. Finally, I used a different charitable organization as the donation recipient to test the external validity of the findings in experiment 3a.

### 2.7.1 Method and Measures

*Participants and Design.* Participants were recruited from Amazon's MTurk panel and randomly assigned to one of five conditions wherein emotion (salvation gratitude, serendipitous gratitude, serene gratitude, happiness, neutral) was manipulated between subjects. Specifically, 115 adult participants completed a "Survey on responses to personal and consumer experiences" in exchange for \$0.35 with a bonus of \$0.25 (median completion time was 6.38 minutes). Participants were 49.6% male, with age ranging from 19 to 77; mean age was 37.8 years). Participation was restricted to those participants living in the United States or Canada.

*Procedure and Measures.* All participants indicated consent at the start of the study. Next, participants were told that I was interested in types of personal experiences and told that they would be asked to describe one of these. Participants then were assigned to complete an autobiographical recall task. Participants in the salvation, serendipitous, and serene gratitude conditions completed the same recall task as in experiments 2 and 3a. Participants in the happiness condition were asked to describe a time when they felt happy. Participants in the neutral condition were asked to imagine that today is laundry day and to describe all the steps

involved in completing their typical laundry day. The laundry scenario is an established scenario for inducing a neutral affective state in participants (Griskevicius, Shiota, and Nowlis 2010).

After the recall task, participants read a description of the Childhelp charity and indicated their willingness to donate. To complete the experiment, participants indicated the degree to which they sympathized with the individuals being helped by Childhelp and provided demographic information (gender, age, English-speaking propensity, and religious affiliation).

*Donation Stimuli.* Following the emotion prime task, participants were told that, as part of an unrelated study, I was interested in their response to not-for-profit organizations. They then were told that they would be receiving an additional \$0.25 cents for completing the study, and that they had the option to donate any or all of this bonus to Childhelp. Participants were provided with a brief description of this organization and provided a link to the Childhelp website for additional information (see Appendix 2 for full stimuli). On the following page, participants indicated the amount they would donate to Childhelp based on five-cent increments (e.g., the first option read ‘No donation (and receive full 25 cents as a bonus)’ and the sixth option read ‘25 cent donation (and receive no bonus)’). These descriptions were provided to ensure zero confusion as to the meaning of the dependent measure.

### **2.7.2 Results and Discussion**

*Donation Amount.* An ANOVA of donation amount as a function of emotion condition, controlling for sympathy towards individuals being assisted by Childhelp, revealed significant effects of both sympathy ( $F(1, 109) = 7.24, p = .008$ ) and emotion ( $F(4, 109) = 2.88, p = .026$ ). Planned follow-up contrast analyses revealed that salvation gratitude ( $M_{\text{Salvation}} = 3.06$  cents) was associated with reduced donation magnitude relative to the serene gratitude condition ( $M_{\text{Serene}} = 8.28$  cents;  $F(1, 109) = 4.46, p = .037$ ), and marginally reduced donation magnitude relative to

the serendipitous condition ( $M_{\text{Serendipitous}} = 7.39$  cents;  $F(1, 109) = 2.74, p = .10$ ). Notably salvation gratitude also elicited marginally lower donations than happiness ( $M_{\text{Happy}} = 7.30$  cents),  $F(1, 109) = 3.17, p = .08$ ), and equal donations to the neutral condition ( $M_{\text{Neutral}} = 1.92$  cents),  $F(1, 109) = .21, p = .65$ ). The serene, serendipitous, and happy conditions elicited similar donations to each other, and each elicited greater donations than the neutral condition.

*Discussion.* Experiment 3b builds on experiment 3a by replicating the finding that salvation gratitude is associated with reduced pro-social behavior, as demonstrated by actual donation behaviors. Indeed, participants feeling salvation gratitude had donation levels similar in magnitude to those participants in a neutral affective state.

## 2.8 General Discussion

People often describe themselves as feeling grateful, but such pronouncements arise from such an incredibly diverse array of situations that it is difficult to believe that each experience is similar enough to elicit a consistent set of affective and behavioral responses to a consistent set of situational appraisals. In this research, I provide evidence in support of three unique gratitude types: salvation gratitude, serendipitous gratitude, and serene gratitude. Salvation gratitude arises in response to receiving a much-needed benefit from a human agent, serendipitous gratitude arises in response to receiving a benefit from a human agent that was not needed, and serene gratitude arises in response to self-realization of one's positive situation in life.

Across four experiments, I outline the affective, cognitive, and behavioral outcomes associated with each type of gratitude. In experiment 1, while each type of gratitude is found to elicit similarly high levels of gratitude itself, the gratitude types differ in their secondary affective consequences. Notably, salvation gratitude is associated with greater negative affect,



increased hostility, and greater guilt. I additionally found that serendipitous gratitude is associated with greater surprise, and serene gratitude is associated with greater serenity. In experiment 2, I demonstrate that each gratitude type is associated with its own pattern of cognitive appraisals. Specifically, salvation gratitude is associated with decreased pleasantness relative to serendipitous and serene gratitude, and serene gratitude was associated with less other-agency relative to salvation and serendipitous gratitude. Experiment 3 was designed to test a behavioral outcome that has been inextricably linked to gratitude, but which I suspected could differ across gratitude type. Specifically, I tested whether pro-social intentions (3a) and helping behavior through charitable donation (3b) would differ across gratitude type. The results indicate that salvation gratitude reduced willingness to donate as well as actual donations to two different charitable organizations. These results are consistent with the inference that salvation gratitude elicits weaker pro-social motivations than other forms of gratitude. The results of experiment 3b suggest that salvation gratitude may not elicit pro-social motivations whatsoever, as the salvation gratitude condition demonstrated similar results to the neutral emotion control condition.

*Theoretical Implications.* This is the first research that identifies three unique forms of gratitude based on need for a benefit and the agent providing the benefit. In identifying three gratitude types, I provide a means for addressing the tension in the literature between the idea that gratitude represents a panacea for societal and individual well-being and recognition that gratitude necessitates reciprocity, which is often an aversive state (Emmons 2004). By identifying gratitude as having three unique forms, I demonstrate that aversive feelings associated with gratitude experiences are primarily associated with salvation gratitude and dominated by self-loathing, hostility, and guilt from getting oneself into a situation where such assistance was needed. Serendipitous and serene gratitude, however, appear significantly less

aversive. Indeed, the present research reveals a variety of potential negative effects of salvation gratitude. To my knowledge, this is the first empiric research that has identified affective or psychological drawbacks to experienced gratitude.

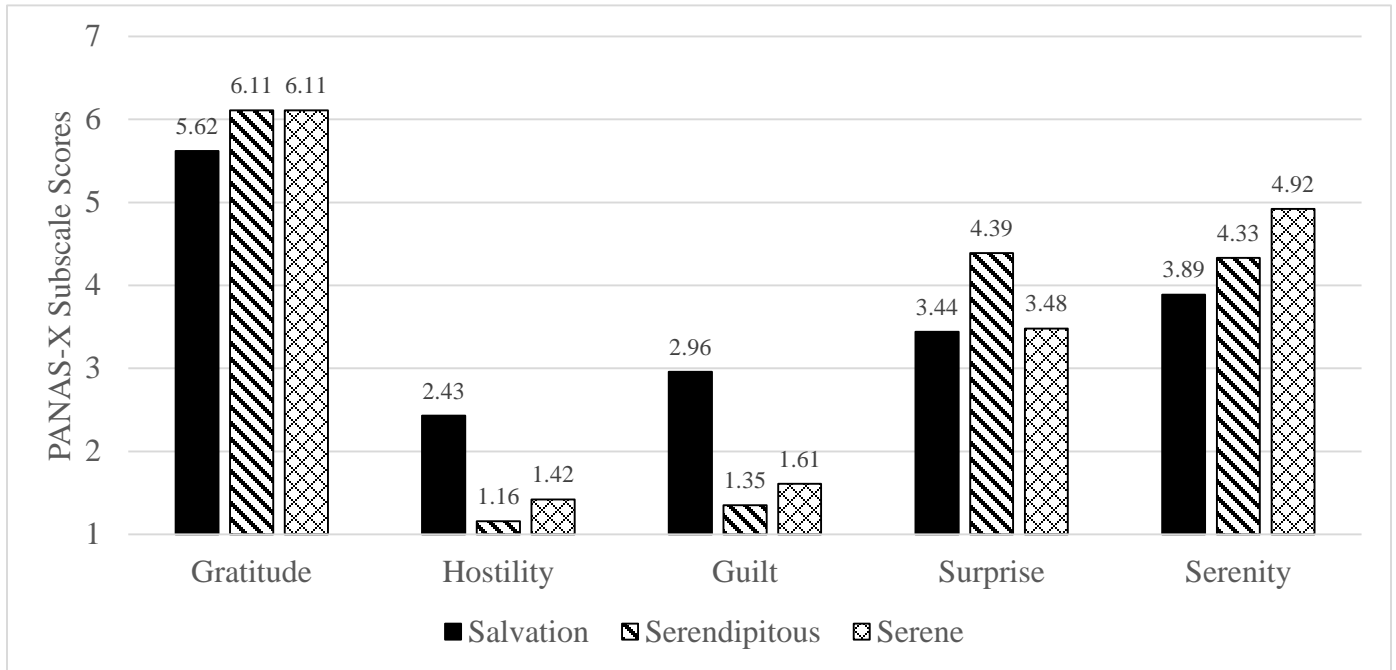
The present research is clearly not without limitations. First, the work presented herein is designed to introduce the concept of three gratitude types, and while I have attempted to outline the antecedents and affective, cognitive, and behavioral consequences of these gratitude types, much further work is needed to fully explore the implications of the findings. Indeed, it could be argued the primary contribution of this work is to provide a framework that stimulates future research in the area. Second, while the present research focused on behavioral outcomes associated with salvation gratitude, future research is needed to explore unique behaviors associated with serendipitous and serene gratitude. Many viable paths for future research also remain in the investigation of salvation gratitude. For example, negative moods are known to focus attention on immediate concerns, suggesting that salvation gratitude may undermine longer-term individual goals such as healthy lifestyles or financial savings, relative to serendipitous and serene gratitude. The present work also suggests that previously-established gratitude outcomes should perhaps be revisited to provide a more nuanced perspective. For example, gratitude has been identified as promoting interpersonal relationships (Algoe and Haidt 2008) and increasing consumption of sweet foods (Schlosser 2015). How might these relationships differ by gratitude type?

While the present research has focused exclusively on gratitude as an emotional experience, there additionally exists a rich literature on trait gratitude, which has been linked to improved psychological resources and enriched life. Such resources include greater subjective well-being (Emmons and Crumpler 2000; Polak and McCullough 2006; Wood et al. 2007a;

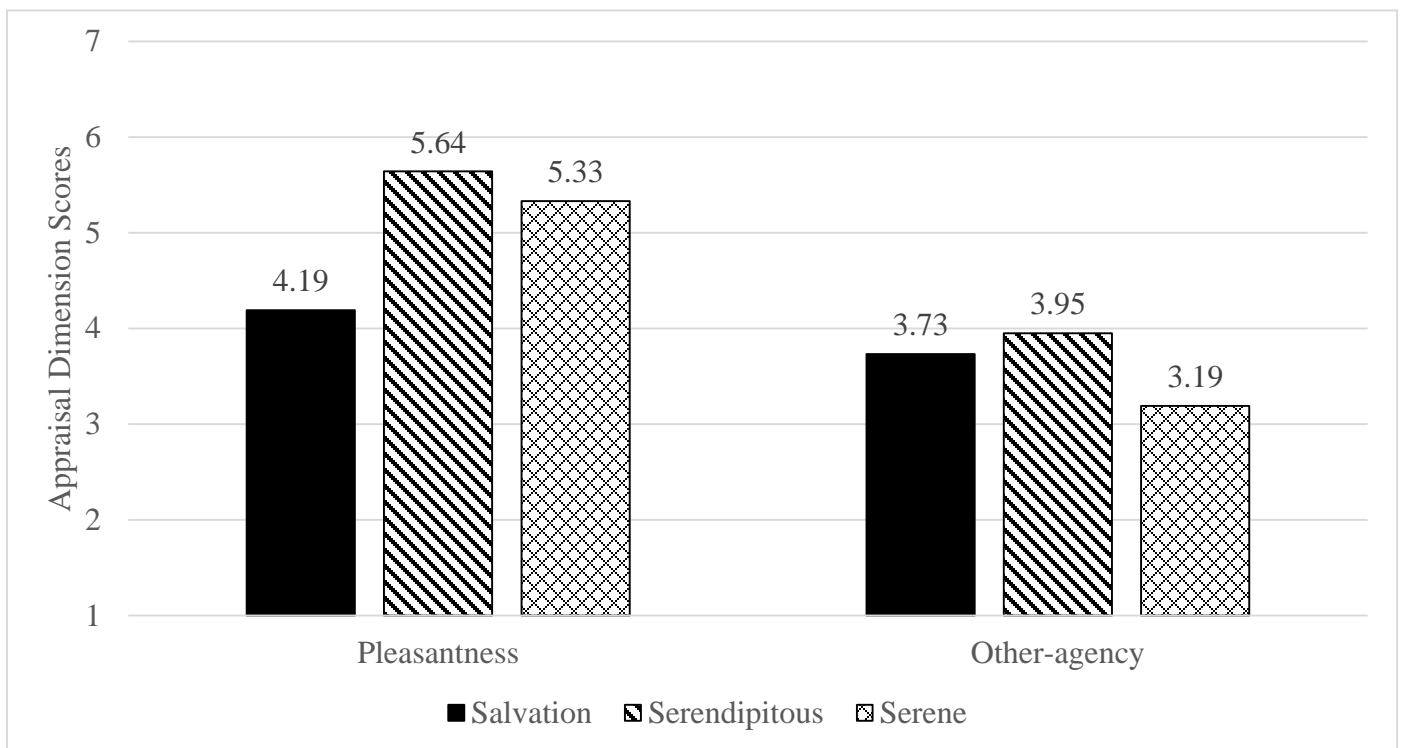
Toussaint and Friedman 2009), life satisfaction (Froh, Bono, and Emmons 2010; Froh et al. 2011; Tsang et al. 2014), and self-esteem (Rash, Matsuba, and Prkachin 2011). These connections have been hypothesized as due to the propensity of individuals high in trait gratitude to view the world in a more positive light and take more time to focus on positive elements in their life (Adler and Fagley 2005; Watkins et al. 2003). Individuals high in trait gratitude have also been shown to employ more adaptive coping styles when facing negative experiences (Wood, Joseph, and Linley 2007b). This literature offers an interesting direction for a parallel stream of research exploring the possibility of trait gratitude types. It seems reasonable to suggest that some people high on, for example, serene trait gratitude would be among those more likely to view the world in a more positive light, while individuals high on salvation trait gratitude might be those who demonstrate more adaptive coping responses to negative experiences because these experiences are more familiar.

In much the same way that distinctions between authentic and hubristic pride have opened up unique perspectives on the positive emotion pride, I hope that the conceptualization of gratitude as existing in three forms leads researchers to embrace a more nuanced view of gratitude. The current work suggests that to fully understand gratitude, researchers have to understand the three gratitude types.

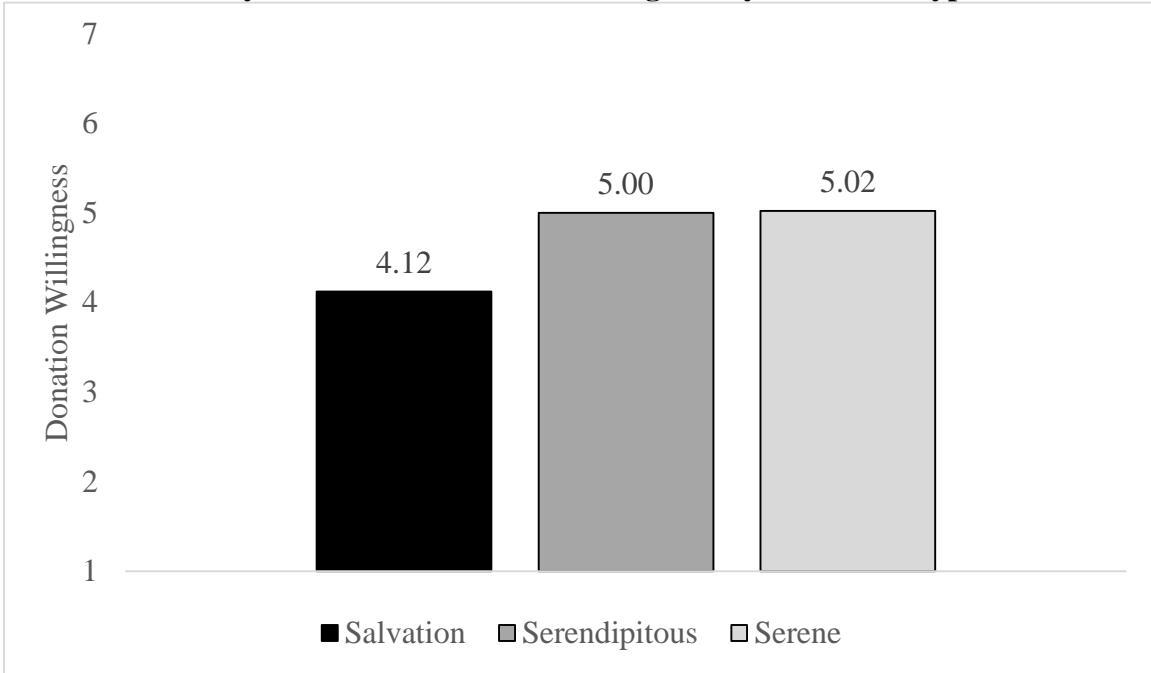
**Figure 2.1**  
**Study 1 Results: A Comparison of PANAS-X Scales by Gratitude Type**



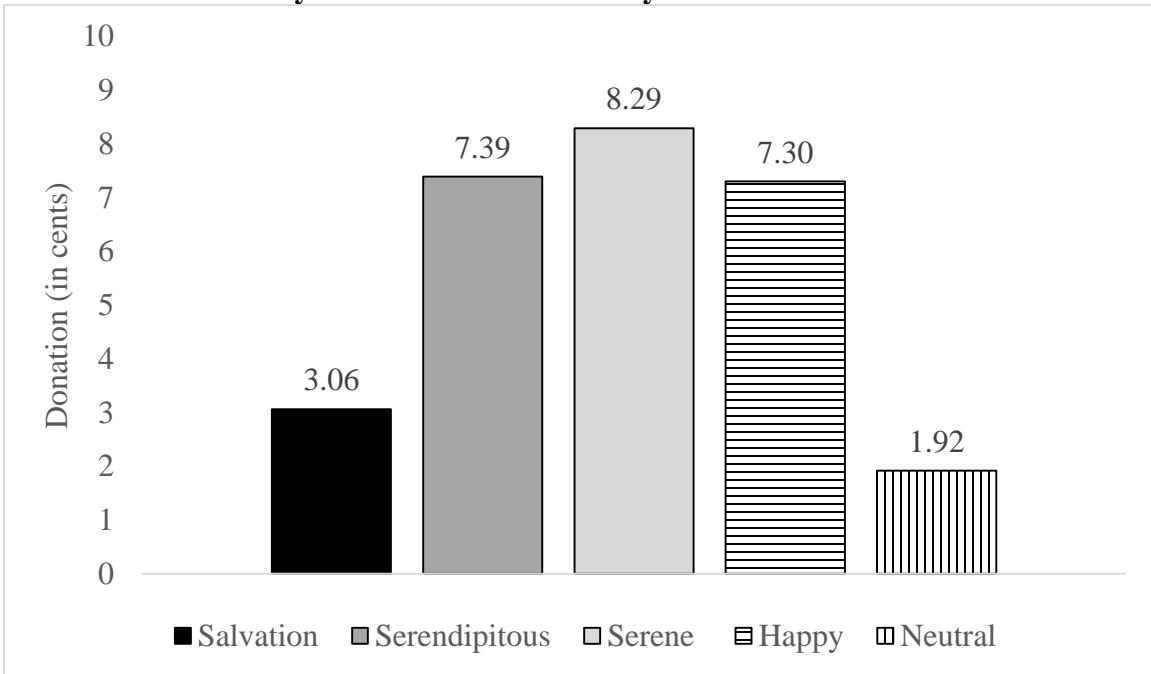
**Figure 2.2**  
**Study 2 Results: A Comparison of Appraisal Dimensions by Gratitude Type**



**Figure 2.3**  
**Study 3a Results: Donation Willingness by Gratitude Type**



**Figure 2.4**  
**Study 3b Results: Donations by Emotion Condition**



**Table 2.1**  
**Study 1 PANAS-X Subscales by Gratitude Type**

	$\alpha$	Salvation	Serendip.	Serene
General Neg.	0.94	2.49	1.24	1.72
General Pos.	0.92	4.16	4.06	4.62
Fear	0.93	2.18	1.23	1.84
Hostility	0.94	2.43	1.16	1.42
Guilt	0.94	2.96	1.35	1.61
Sadness	0.90	2.65	1.37	1.92
Joviality	0.95	3.64	4.74	4.76
Self-Assurance	0.85	3.56	2.82	3.71
Attentiveness	0.83	4.44	3.63	4.76
Shyness	0.86	2.24	1.63	1.78
Fatigue	0.86	2.33	1.33	1.72
Serenity	0.86	3.89	4.33	4.92
Surprise	0.80	3.44	4.39	3.48
Gratitude	0.86	5.62	6.11	6.12

**Table 2.2**  
**Study 2 Appraisal Dimensions by Gratitude Type**

	Mean	SD	$\alpha$	Salvation	Serendip.		Serene	
<b>Pleasantness</b>	5.02	1.53	0.92	4.19	5.64	$\alpha^*$	5.33	$\alpha^*$
<b>Other-Agency<sup><math>\delta</math></sup></b>	3.38	1.10	0.41	3.27	3.05		3.81	$\alpha^*\beta^*$
<b>Certainty</b>	4.59	1.15	0.33	4.35	4.75	$\alpha$	4.71	
<b>Attention</b>	6.57	1.11	0.72	5.23	5.54		5.95	$\alpha^*\beta$
<b>Effort</b>	3.02	1.65	0.83	3.19	2.76		3.07	
<b>Situation Control</b>	3.61	1.96	-	3.79	2.96	$\alpha^*$	4.02	$\beta^*$
<b>Social Connection</b>	5.45	1.44	0.9	5.46	5.71		5.21	$\beta$
<b>Temporal Focus</b>	4.98	1.19	0.43	4.79	5.06		5.13	

Note:  $\alpha$  signifies a  $p < .10$  difference from salvation,  $\beta$  signifies a  $p < .10$  difference from serendipitous, \* signifies a  $p < .05$  difference.  
 $\delta$ : The other-agency dimension is referred to as responsibility/control by Smith and Ellsworth (1985)

## 2.9 Essay 1 Appendices

### 2.9.1 Appendix 1 – Autobiographical recall task instructions

#### *Experiment 1*

##### *Salvation:*

Please think about a time when you were at a difficult point in your life. Perhaps you initially did not see any way of overcoming these difficulties on your own. Due to assistance from someone else, however, you were able to overcome the challenges. Please describe what you overcame, who offered assistance and how, and how you felt about it.

##### *Serendipitous:*

Please think about a time when someone did something nice for you that was completely unexpected. Please describe what was done for you, who did it and how, and how you felt toward this individual who did something nice for you.

##### *Serene:*

Please think about all the things in the world there are for you to be thankful for (i.e. being alive, the beauty of nature). Please describe some of these continuing sources of appreciation for you and how thinking about them makes you feel.

#### *Experiments 2 and 3*

##### *Salvation:*

Please think about a time when you felt grateful because someone did something nice for you when you really needed it. Please write down what you remember of the gratitude-inducing event, and continue by writing as detailed a description of the situation as is possible. What was it like to be in this situation? Who did something nice for you and what was it? Why did it make you so grateful?

##### *Serendipitous:*

Please think about a time when you felt grateful because someone did something nice for you, even though you did not need them to do it. Please write down what you remember of the gratitude-inducing event, and continue by writing as detailed a description of the situation as is possible. What was it like to be in this situation? Who did something nice for you and what was it? Why did it make you so grateful?

##### *Serene:*

Please think about a time when you have felt a broad sense of gratefulness (i.e. being alive, the beauty of nature).

Please write down what you remember of the gratitude-inducing event, and continue by writing as detailed a description of the situation as is possible. What was it like to be in this situation? Why did it make you so grateful?



## 2.9.2 Appendix 2 – Experimental Stimuli

### *Study 3a Donation Stimuli*



In the United States, 1 in 6 people struggles with hunger. The mission of Feeding America is to feed America's hungry through a nationwide network of member food banks and engagement of our country in the fight to end hunger.

Feeding America is a United States-based non-profit organization network of food banks that feeds more than 46 million people through food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, and other community-based agencies in communities across America. This translates to over 3 billion meals served and over 800 million pounds of produce delivered.

Donations are high impact, with every \$1 in donations leading to 10 meals being secured and distributed to people facing hunger.

### *Study 3b Donation Stimuli*

We have posted this HIT for 35 cents but we will give you an additional 25 cents for the completion of this survey (\$0.60 total).

**For the additional 25 cents, you may choose to have any portion of it donated to Childhelp and receive the remaining portion of it as a bonus payment to your Turk account.** You will be asked to indicate your choice on the next page.

If you are unfamiliar with Childhelp, please read the information below.



Founded in 1959 by Sara O'Meara and Yvonne Fedderson  
PREVENTION *and* TREATMENT of CHILD ABUSE

[www.childhelp.org](http://www.childhelp.org)

**Founded in 1959, Childhelp is a leading national organization dedicated to meeting the physical, emotional, and educational needs of abused, neglected and at-risk children. Childhelp focuses their efforts in the areas of advocacy, treatment, prevention, and community outreach. Childhelp programs and services are designed to help children from any situation and let them experience the life they deserve.**

**Additional information can be found here: <https://www.childhelp.org>**

If you want to view this page, please copy and past the link into another browser window so you do not accidentally leave this survey.

## Chapter 3

### ESSAY 2: THE DIFFERENTIAL EFFECTS OF GRATITUDE TYPE ON CONSUMERS' PRODUCT ATTITUDES

#### 3.1 Introduction

In the past decade, marketing practitioners have started to prominently feature gratitude in their marketing mix. For example, Toblerone began marketing itself as the “Thank You Chocolate,” featuring a ‘Play it, Forward it, Share the Gratitude’ product awareness campaign (Butcher 2009; Gonzales 2012). Applebee’s (an American casual dining restaurant chain) incorporated gratitude into their brand strategy with the creation of their “Thank You Movement.” Perhaps the most prominent incorporation of gratitude into a practitioner’s marketing mix was Proctor and Gamble’s “Thank You Mom” campaign, launched during the 2012 London Olympic Games (Griner 2012). This campaign won international acclaim and was continued for the 2014 Sochi Olympic Games. Many other brands feature marketing mix elements designed to elicit gratitude in consumers, from advertisements featuring gift giving and rescues to loyalty programs. The question remains, however; what effect does the elicitation of feelings of gratitude have on consumer behavior?

Gratitude has traditionally been defined as a positive emotion (Emmons 2004) that arises from “an estimate of gain coupled with the recognition that someone else is responsible for that gain” (Solomon 1977, p. 316). Based on this conceptualization of gratitude, researchers have demonstrated that gratitude promotes pro-social behaviors (McCullough et al. 2001) and the development of relationships (Algoe, Haidt, and Gable 2008). In Essay 1, however, I suggest that gratitude is more nuanced than the current univariate perspective allows and provides a typology of gratitude that identifies three distinct types of gratitude: salvation gratitude,

serendipitous gratitude, and serene gratitude. Briefly, salvation gratitude arises when the actions of a human agent address a pressing need that would not have otherwise been met (e.g., the person providing the benefit rescues you). Serendipitous gratitude is experienced when someone provides a benefit when there is no pressing need (e.g., the person provides you with an unexpected gift), and serene gratitude arises in the absence of a human agent (e.g., in response to a breathtaking sunset).

While Essay 1 outlines the unique affective profiles and appraisal structures associated with each gratitude type and demonstrates differences between gratitude type on charitable donations, it is not clear how each impacts consumer behavior beyond the donation domain. Given the extent to which marketers have been employing gratitude in their strategic marketing communications, a lack of appreciation for this more nuanced understanding of gratitude type may leave firms at a disadvantage. As such, the current research considers how gratitude type impacts consumers' attitudes toward products that differ in the extent to which they allow consumers to gain or exert control (Cutright and Samper 2014).

I specifically focus on products differing in the degree to which they facilitate or hinder control. Based on the typology of gratitude outlined in essay 1, consumers experiencing salvation gratitude (i.e., being rescued) may perceive that they lacked control during the time of need, relative to those experiencing serendipitous and serene gratitude. Given that having and exercising control is widely regarded as a core human motivation (deCharms 1968), consumers who perceive they lack control should seek to re-gain it. Thus, salvation gratitude should lead consumers to respond more favorably to products which provide an avenue to re-gain or exert control (e.g., high-effort products; Cutright and Samper 2014).

I test this theorizing in three studies. Study 1 demonstrates salvation gratitude increases favorable attitudes toward high-effort (but not low-effort) products, relative to other forms of gratitude. Study 2 replicates this pattern for high-effort products and shows subjective feelings of control underlie this effect. In Study 3, I manipulate felt control and find the relationship between salvation gratitude and high-effort products dissipates when an alternative source of control is available, providing causal evidence for this theorizing (Spencer, Zanna, and Fong 2005).

The present research contributes to the gratitude literature not only by extending the examination of gratitude effects beyond prosocial behavior and into the domain of product preference, but also by demonstrating that not all gratitude experiences have the same effect on such preferences. Doing so enhances understanding of how emotions impact consumers' attitudes. Additionally, by linking emotions, specifically gratitude type, to perceived control, this research contributes to the growing literature linking control to product preference (Cutright and Samper 2014). Finally, the current work also offers insights into appraisal dimensions of emotions, answering the call for further research on emotion appraisals (So et al. 2015).

In addition to these theoretical contributions, this research also has practical implications for marketers eliciting gratitude. By aligning gratitude type and product positioning, consumers' attitudes should be more positive. Understanding how gratitude impacts product attitudes also answers the MSI research priority for better understanding of "how and at what points do emotions affect consumer decisions" (MSI Research Priority 1-E, 2014).

## 3.2 Theoretical Development

### 3.2.1 Gratitude

Gratitude is a positive emotion, the core of which is pleasant feelings about benefits received (Emmons 2004). As such, it is believed to positively impact consumers, particularly in terms of motivating pro-social behavior (Bartlett and DeSteno 2006, McCullough et al. 2001) as well as building and strengthening relationships (Algoe et al. 2008, Algoe 2012; Bartlett et al. 2012; Palmatier et al. 2009). Given this positive influence on relationship building, it is not surprising that marketers have begun to pursue opportunities to elicit feelings of gratitude.

Though emotions researchers have embraced the notion that gratitude is a positive emotion, I question whether experiencing gratitude is a wholly pleasant feeling. Inherent in the definition of gratitude is the potential for feelings of indebtedness. Aristotle perceived the grateful attitude as demeaning in its acceptance of a debtor position (Aristotle, trans. 1980, bk. 4, chap. 3). Others have written of gratitude as at least partially consisting of a feeling of “discomfort” (Solomon, vi). This negative element of gratitude has received little consideration in the recent literature (i.e., the benefits of gratitude on prosocial behavior and relationships are proposed to arise from the positive experience of gratitude; e.g., Emmons and Crumpler 2000; Froh, Yurkewicz, and Kashdan 2009), but there does seem to be evidence that gratitude may carry a negative affective component.

Gratitude experiences have scored poorly on the pleasantness and attentional activity appraisal dimensions relative to other positive emotions (Smith and Ellsworth 1985; Cavanaugh 2009). Further, gratitude often scores highly on responsibility of others causing the emotional experience (Smith and Ellsworth 1985; Cavanaugh 2009). Given this high degree of other-agency, one might expect gratitude to lead to diminished perceptions of control over one’s

circumstances, which may in itself represent an undesirable state for individuals (Law, Logan, and Baron 1994). Indeed, the writings of Aristotle and others suggest that ceding control over one's own circumstances is a necessary precursor to feeling gratitude. Despite the potential for gratitude to lead to discomfort due to loss of control, the literature has largely focused on the positive effects of gratitude, including psychological well-being and happiness (e.g., McCullough, Tsang, and Emmons 2004; Rash, Matsuba, and Prkachin 2011). How then can these two positions be reconciled?

Recent work suggests the gratitude construct may be more complex than previously thought. Essay 1 identifies two dimensions that can be used to categorize gratitude experiences: a) the degree of need a proffered benefit addresses, and b) the extent to which gratitude is induced by the actions of a specific human agent. These distinctions have led to the identification of three types of gratitude mentioned earlier: *salvation gratitude*, wherein a benefit provided by a human agent addresses a pressing need, *serendipitous gratitude*, wherein a benefit provided by a human agent does not address a pressing need, and *serene gratitude*, wherein gratitude arises from self-realization as opposed to the actions of a human agent.

Past empirical examinations of gratitude (e.g., Tsang 2006; Tsang 2007) have predominantly employed gratitude manipulations that would be categorized as serendipitous gratitude. Since serendipitous gratitude does not arise in response to a pressing need, feelings of indebtedness and lack of control are not likely to be associated with this gratitude experience. As such, positive outcomes are likely to result from such gratitude experiences. In contrast, salvation gratitude arises when the actions of a human agent address a need that could not or would not otherwise have been addressed by oneself; the individual was "rescued" in some sense. As such, salvation gratitude might be more strongly associated with the discomfort noted by Aristotle.

Lastly, though gratitude is traditionally conceptualized as involving a human agent, *serene gratitude* can occur in the absence of a human agent and arise via self-realization that may, for example, be triggered by an appreciation for being alive or experiencing a beautiful moment (e.g. of nature). In the absence of a specific benefactor, serene gratitude should also be positioned away from Aristotle's association of discomfort with gratitude. Indeed, Essay 1 identifies salvation gratitude as representing a less pleasant gratitude experience than serene or serendipitous gratitude, noting the negative circumstances surrounding the gratitude experience.

The present work builds upon this research on gratitude type, suggesting that receiving a benefit in a time of need is likely to be associated with heightened subjective feelings of lack of control over one's circumstances. It is this perception of lack of control during the period of need and prior to receiving the benefit during salvation gratitude episodes that I believe will carry forward and subsequently influence product attitudes and shift preference towards products that offer the opportunity to re-establish a sense of control.

### **3.2.2 Gratitude and Perceived Control**

Control is generally accepted as a core human motivation (deCharms 1968). It has been defined as the need to demonstrate one's competence, superiority, and mastery over one's environment (White 1959), and "the perceived ability to significantly alter events" (Burger 1989, p. 246). Individuals who are both aware of what outcome they hope to obtain and who feel they can cause the desired outcome to occur are considered to be high in perceived control (Wortman 1975). In contrast, when individuals believe they cannot change their circumstances or stop undesirable outcomes perceive that they do not have control or mastery over their environment. These individuals are low in perceived control and they subsequently feel distressed (Law, Logan, and Baron 1994).



In considering gratitude type, I propose that salvation gratitude might inhibit an individuals' sense of perceived control to a greater extent than serendipitous or serene gratitude. By definition, salvation gratitude involves realization that there was a pressing need that could not be addressed by oneself – it arises due to an absence of control over one's outcomes. In the case of serendipitous gratitude, although a benefit was received, the benefit was not necessary – there was no pressing need – so individuals should not feel they have ceded control when receiving the benefit. Likewise, though serene gratitude is associated with recognition and acceptance of the advantages one has been fortunate enough to attain, the lack of human agency for these fortunes “takes the sting out of acknowledging vulnerability” (Solomon, p. x). As such, serene gratitude should not diminish one's sense of perceived control (e.g., Rothbaum et al. 1982).

Taken together, I propose a heightened desire for control is most likely to arise during a salvation gratitude experience (as opposed to serendipitous or serene gratitude).

**H1:** Salvation gratitude promotes a greater desire for control than serendipitous or serene gratitude.

### **3.2.3 Desire for Control Affects Product Attitudes**

In today's marketplace, consumers expect to be able to exert control over their purchase experiences, not only through search and buy/don't buy decisions, but also via increased customization ability (Ariely 2000; Godek and Yates 2005). Consumers not only expect control, but control is also an important factor influencing consumer attitudes and choice. Having control positively affects consumers' expectations of product satisfaction (Botti and Iyengar 2004; Botti and McGill 2011) and service experiences (e.g., Hui and Bateson 1991), and can lead to greater customer commitment (e.g., Robinson, Irmak, and Jayachandran 2012). Thus, in general, giving

consumers control can benefit the brand. However, what happens when consumers feel they lack control?

When consumers perceive they lack control (as I hypothesize is the case for those who experience salvation gratitude), they are likely to demonstrate a heightened desire for control and strive to re-establish control (deCharms 1968; White 1959). In turn, this desire for control may influence product attitudes and preferences. Specifically, when feelings of personal control are threatened, consumers have been found to prefer products that allow them to (re)exert control over personal outcomes (e.g., products that “do it *with* you” (high effort) are preferable when control is threatened as opposed to products that “do it *for* you” (low effort); Cutright and Samper 2014). Building on the Cutright and Samper (2014) findings, I suggest consumers who are feeling salvation gratitude will express more positive attitudes towards high-effort products that “do it *with* you” (vs. low-effort products that “do it *for* you”), relative to consumers who are feeling serendipitous or serene gratitude. This pattern should occur because high-effort products should be seen as a means through which consumers can re-establish their sense of control.

**H2:** Consumers who feel salvation gratitude will express more positive attitudes towards high-effort products relative to consumers feeling serendipitous or serene gratitude, but gratitude type will not impact attitudes toward low-effort products.

**H3:** The effect of salvation gratitude on favorable attitudes towards high-effort products is mediated by a desire for control.

### **3.3 Study 1 – Effect of Gratitude Types on Preference for High- vs. Low-Effort Products**

The purpose of Study 1 was to test the relationship between gratitude type and product attitudes. Recall that high-effort products are products that emphasize the work a consumer will need to exert to achieve goals pertaining to the product. By emphasizing this work on behalf of

the consumer, such products have been shown to be preferred by consumers with an elevated desire for control (Cutright and Samper 2014).

Study 1 thus tests whether gratitude type, which is proposed to affect consumers' sense of perceived control, impacts consumers' attitudes towards high-effort products. Specifically, study 1 tests H2, which predicts an interaction between gratitude type and product effort wherein participants who feel salvation gratitude will demonstrate more positive attitudes towards high-effort products (relative to low-effort products), relative to those who feel serendipitous or serene gratitude. I predict that gratitude type will not impact low-effort product attitudes.

### **3.3.1 Methods and Measures**

*Participants and Design.* Study 1 manipulated gratitude type (salvation versus serendipitous versus serene) and product effort (high versus low) in a 3 x 2 between-subjects experimental design. Participants were 365 undergraduate business students who completed this study as part of a larger set of studies offered in exchange for extra credit in an introductory business course. Students were recruited to complete a research study titled "Consumer Experiences and Preferences" and received 0.5% course credit for completion of a 30-minute study session. Of these participants, 18 failed a simple attention check (e.g., "For data quality, select strongly agree") and an additional 85 failed an instructional manipulation check (Oppenheimer, Meyvis, and Davidenko 2009), resulting in a final sample of 272 participants (71% male, mean age 19 years).

*Procedure.* To begin the study, participants were randomly assigned to one of three gratitude type primes as part of a writing assessment task. Then, in an ostensibly unrelated task examining consumer ad evaluations, participants were randomly assigned to one of the two product effort conditions and responded to a series of items regarding their reactions to a product

advertisement (e.g., involvement, processing fluency). Last, participants completed demographic measures including gender, age, race, and whether they were native English-speakers.

*Gratitude Type Prime.* First, to prime gratitude type, I used an autobiographical recall task (e.g., Lerner and Keltner 2001; see Appendix A for priming instructions). For each type of gratitude, I specifically manipulated the dimensions of need and agency while avoiding reference to the term ‘gratitude’. Participants in the salvation gratitude condition were asked to think about a time when they were at a difficult point and were initially uncertain of how to overcome their difficulties, but were able to with the help of someone else. Participants in the serendipitous gratitude condition were asked to think about a time when someone did someone nice for them that was unexpected. Finally, participants in the serene gratitude condition were asked to think about all the things in the world they were thankful for (i.e., being alive, the beauty of nature). All participants were then asked to describe the experience and thoughts they were having in detail, as well as how they felt at the time.

*Effort-Based Product Manipulation.* Following the gratitude type priming task, participants read that they would begin a second, unrelated portion of the study that focused on their opinions of product ads. Participants then read an advertisement for a Nike running shoe, the Nike Trainer One. Participants in the *high effort condition* read about a shoe that “does it all with you”. The ad highlighted the position that work would be required to achieve fitness goals. Conversely, participants in the *low effort condition* read about a shoe that “does it all for you”. This ad emphasized the position of being able to achieve fitness goals with minimal effort. Both stimuli have been employed and validated in prior research (Cutright and Samper 2014).

*Attitude Toward the Product.* After reading the ad, participants provided attitude ratings for the product (1 = ‘Very negative’, 7 = ‘Very positive’). Participants then completed a two-

item manipulation check for the effort manipulation: ‘If the product works as indicated, I will need to do a lot in order to see positive results’, and ‘If the product works as indicated, I will need to do little in order to see positive results’ (reverse-coded).

### 3.3.2 Results

*Effort Manipulation Checks.* After reverse-coding the second item, the two items in the effort manipulation check were significantly correlated ( $r = .87$ ) and were averaged to form a single measure. Because gratitude type was a three-level variable (salvation vs. serendipitous vs. serene) and no differences were hypothesized between serendipitous and serene gratitude, I tested this prediction using orthogonal contrast codes as per Table 1 (Rosenthal, Rosnow, and Rubin 2000). An ANOVA of the effort manipulation check measure was conducted as a function of the two gratitude contrast codes from Table 1, the effort factor, and the interactions between the effort factor and contrast codes. As expected, participants reported that they would need to work harder with the high-effort product ( $M = 4.97$ ) than the low-effort product ( $M = 3.12$ ,  $F(1, 266) = 84.28$ ,  $p < .01$ ), indicating that my manipulation of product effort was successful. There were no other main or interactive effects.

*Attitude toward the Product.* As per H2, I expected participants in the salvation gratitude condition to demonstrate more positive attitudes towards the high-effort product than participants in the serendipitous or serene gratitude conditions, with no differences predicted for the low-effort product across gratitude type. I used the same predictor variables as in the manipulation check to predict attitude toward the product. This analysis revealed an interaction between

contrast code 1 and effort ( $F(1, 266) = 3.64, p = .058$ )<sup>1</sup>. Participants in the salvation gratitude condition ( $M = 5.37$ ) demonstrated greater attraction to the high-effort product than participants in the combined serendipitous ( $M = 5.07$ ) and serene ( $M = 4.70$ ) conditions ( $M_{\text{combined}} = 4.88, t(1, 266) = 1.93, p = .05$ ). When evaluating the low-effort product, however, there were no differences across conditions ( $M_{\text{salvation}} = 4.61, M_{\text{serendipitous}} = 4.86, M_{\text{serene}} = 4.76, M_{\text{combined}} = 4.81, t(1, 266) = 0.81, p = .42$ ). With respect to contrast code 2, no effect of gratitude emerged ( $F(1, 266) = 1.34, p = .25$ ). No interaction with effort was observed ( $F(1, 266) = 0.42, p = .52$ ). A marginal main effect of effort ( $F(1, 266) = 3.35, p = .07$ ) was observed.

*Discussion.* Study 1 provides evidence in support of H2: salvation gratitude prompts more positive attitudes toward high-effort products but not toward low-effort products. I hypothesized this effect would occur because high-effort products offer an opportunity to exert control over one's environment. Those experiencing salvation gratitude were expected to have a diminished sense of perceived control and strive to re-assert control via their more positive attitudes towards high-effort products. To more systematically test this hypothesized relationship, Study 2 examines whether perceived control drives the effect of gratitude type on attitudes toward high-effort products.

### **3.4 Study 2 – Effect of Gratitude Type on Perceived Control**

Study 2 examines the links between gratitude type, measured perceived control, and product attitudes. This enables me to test H1 and H3. If measured perceptions of control are lower under salvation gratitude and attitudes towards high-effort products are higher, this will

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<sup>1</sup> When fluency of processing the ad and involvement with the ad were included as covariates, this interaction effect became significant,  $F(1, 264) = 5.55, p = .02$ .

provide evidence in support of control as the underlying psychological process through which gratitude type affects attitude towards high-effort products.

### 3.4.1 Method and Measures

*Participants and Design.* A total of 371 participants completed a “Research Survey on Personal Experiences and Product Preferences”. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions (salvation gratitude, serendipitous gratitude, serene gratitude). A total of 219 undergraduate students completed this study as part of a larger set of studies in exchange for course credit, with the remaining 152 participants recruited from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk. The latter participated in exchange for \$0.55 (average completion 5.3 minutes). Of the total sample, 50 (43 students, 7 mTurk workers) failed an instructional manipulation check (Oppenheimer et al. 2009), resulting in a final sample of 321 participants (145 mTurk workers, 176 undergrads; 53.6% male, mean age 26.2 years). Recruitment from MTurk was restricted to those participants living in the United States or Canada.

*Procedure and Measures.* Recognizing no differences by gratitude type for the low-effort product in study 1, participants only evaluated a high-effort product. To begin the study, participants were randomly assigned to one of three gratitude type primes. After writing their autobiographical retrospective, participants reported their feelings of perceived control. They then read the same ad evaluation instructions as in study 1, saw an advertisement for a high-effort product (in this case, a fitness training program), and reported their attitudes toward the product. Last, participants completed demographic measures including gender, age, race, and indicated whether English was their native language.

*Gratitude Type Prime.* An autobiographical recall task (e.g., Lerner and Keltner 2001) was again used, as in study 1. Recall task instructions were refined from those employed in study

1 to be more streamlined and reduce the potential of confounding factors. Specifically, participants in the salvation gratitude condition wrote about a time they needed help and received it, participants in the serendipitous gratitude condition wrote about a time they received help that was not needed, and participants in the serene gratitude condition wrote about a time they felt a broad sense of gratefulness (see Appendix B for full stimuli).

*Perceived Control.* Following the autobiographical priming task, participants read: “Having just written about your experience, please indicate the extent to which you feel each of the following at this time. At this time, I feel... [In control, capable]” (7-point scale, anchored by 1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree).

*Product Evaluation.* Participants then evaluated an ad for a high-effort fitness training program, from the perspective of being in need of such a product (stimuli adapted from Cutright and Samper 2014, study 4). Participants indicated their attitudes toward the product with the item “How would you describe your attitudes toward the FUSIONFIT Training Routine?” followed by two 7-point items anchored by very negative/very positive and very unfavorable/very favorable.

### 3.4.2 Results

*Perceived Control.* The two item measure of subjective feelings of control showed good internal reliability ( $r = .69$ ). Using the same orthogonal contrast coding as in study 1, an ANOVA<sup>2</sup> of perceived control as a function of contrast 1 (which compares salvation versus the combination of serendipitous and serene gratitude) and contrast 2 (which compares serendipitous

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<sup>2</sup> Including participant sample (mTurk vs. undergraduate) as a covariate did not affect the results of any analysis nor was it a significant predictor of any measure.



versus serene gratitude) revealed significant effects of contrast 1 ( $F(1, 318) = 10.79, p < .01$ ) as well as contrast 2 ( $F(1, 318) = 6.37, p = .01$ ). Salvation gratitude ( $M = 4.47$ ) demonstrated lower perceived control than the mean of serendipitous and serene gratitude ( $M_{\text{Combined}} = 5.00$ ), supporting H1. Unexpectedly, serendipitous gratitude ( $M = 4.77$ ) also demonstrated lower felt control than serene gratitude ( $M = 5.25$ ).

*Attitude toward the Product.* I expected participants in the salvation gratitude condition to demonstrate more positive attitudes toward the high-effort product than participants in the serendipitous or serene gratitude conditions. I used orthogonal contrast coding as in study 1 to predict attitude toward the product. An ANOVA of attitude toward the product as a function of the two contrast codes revealed a significant effect of contrast 1 ( $F(1, 318) = 4.24, p = .04$ ) and non-significant effect of contrast 2 ( $F(1, 318) = 0.04, p = .83$ ) ( $M_{\text{Salvation}} = 4.77, M_{\text{Serendipitous}} = 4.43, M_{\text{Serene}} = 4.39$ ).

*Indirect Effect of Gratitude Type on Attitude through Control.* To test for the role of perceived control in explaining the effect of gratitude type on attitudes towards the high-effort product, I tested for mediation using the bootstrapping technique (Preacher and Hayes 2004). Using Hayes' process macro (model 4, 10,000 bootstrap samples), I tested a model wherein contrast 1 was the independent measure, attitudes the dependent measure, and subjective feelings of perceived control as the mediator, with contrast 2 included as a covariate. This model revealed a significant indirect effect of contrast 1 on product preference as mediated by subjective feelings of perceived control ( $\beta = -.03, 95\% \text{ confidence interval} = [-.07, -.01]$ ), supporting H3. The complete model is provided in figure 3.3.

*Discussion.* These results support the assertion (H1) that salvation gratitude leads to decreased feelings of perceived control, which in turn promotes increased preference for high-

effort products. Indeed, subjective feelings of perceived control were found to mediate the effects of gratitude type on product attitudes, supporting H3. The partial nature of this mediation indicates that feelings of perceived control, while an important psychological outcome of gratitude type, appears to not be the only factor leading to preference for high-effort products.

One drawback of the current study is its reliance on correlational data to draw inferences. Correlational analyses such as the mediation testing in the present study, however, do not allow for strong causal inferences. In an attempt to address this shortcoming, study 3 manipulates the sense of perceived control by allowing some participants to exert control in a separate and unrelated task (Spencer et al. 2005). By allowing some individuals to exert control in this separate task, it should turn off the desire to gain control.

### **3.5 Study 3 – The Moderating Role of Perceived Control**

Study 3 was designed to experimentally manipulate feelings of perceived control (Spencer et al. 2005). By doing so, I provide evidence in support of a causal chain between gratitude type, perceived control, and preference for high-effort products. Specifically, I expect that when control is provided in an intervening task (following the gratitude prime but prior to the product attitude elicitation), salvation gratitude will no longer promote more positive attitudes towards the high-effort product. When control is not provided in the intervening task, however, I expect that participants experiencing salvation gratitude will continue to demonstrate more positive attitudes toward high-effort products. This study represents a second conceptual test of H3; that perceived control mediates the effect of gratitude type on high-effort product attitudes.

### 3.5.1 Method and Measures

*Participants and Design.* Participants were 299 adult participants recruited from Amazon's MTurk to complete a "Research Survey on Personal Experiences and Product Preferences" in exchange for \$0.75 (average completion 9.3 minutes). Participants were randomly assigned to a 3 (gratitude type: salvation, serendipitous, serene) x 2 (control intervention: present, absent) between-subjects design. Of these, 53 failed a simple attention check ("please check option 3") and an additional 21 failed an instructional manipulation check (Oppenheimer et al. 2009), resulting in a final sample of 225 participants (43.3% male, mean age 45.6 years).<sup>3</sup> Recruitment from MTurk was restricted to those participants living in the United States or Canada.

*Procedure and Measures.* To begin the study, participants were randomly assigned to one of three gratitude type primes using the writing assessment task of study 2. Then, participants were told that they would be completing a puzzle to "clear their mind." This was where the control manipulation was inserted. Participants were randomly assigned to either have the ability to choose from a set of possible puzzles to complete (present) or not (absent). After completing the "mind-clearing puzzle", participants read the same ad evaluation instructions as in study 2, saw the same advertisement for a high-effort product (again, a fitness training program), and responded to a series of items regarding the advertisement. Last, participants completed demographic measures including gender, age, race, and indicated whether English was their native language.

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<sup>3</sup> The pattern of results held when all participants were retained, but noise in the data reduced the focal type\*control interaction significance to  $p = .07$ .

*Gratitude Type Prime.* To prime gratitude type, the same autobiographical recall task instructions (e.g., Lerner and Keltner 2001) were provided as in study 2. Participants in the salvation gratitude condition wrote about a time they needed help and received it, participants in the serendipitous gratitude condition wrote about a time they received help that was not needed, and participants in the serene gratitude condition wrote about a time they felt a broad sense of gratefulness.

*Control Prime.* Following the autobiographical task, participants were asked to complete a “mind clearing” task used to manipulate control. Each of three possible task options took the form of a simple puzzle. Those with choice were told that for the mind clearing task, they could complete either a word search, a sentence unscramble task, or a word unscramble task. Each task featured the same set of neutral words. Participants in the control-present condition read “Next, to clear your mind, you will complete a short puzzle of your own choosing. Please indicate which puzzle you would like to see.” Participants in the control-absent condition read “Next, to clear your mind, you will complete a short puzzle,” and were randomly assigned to one of the three puzzles. These puzzles appeared with approximately the same frequency as those with choice of mind-clearing task. These tasks have been successfully employed to manipulate feelings of control in previous research (Atalay 2007). See Appendix C for full stimuli and instructions.

*Attitude Toward the Product.* After the control manipulation, participants were asked to evaluate a fitness training program, assuming they were in need of such a product (stimuli adapted from Cutright and Samper 2014, study 4). After reading the high-effort ad, participants indicated their attitudes toward the product with the item “How would you describe your

attitudes toward the FUSIONFIT Training Routine?” (1 = very negative, 7 = very positive). Last, participants provided demographic measures.

### 3.5.2 Results

*Attitude Toward the Product.* As per H3, I expected participants in the salvation gratitude condition to demonstrate more positive attitudes toward the high-effort product than participants in the serendipitous or serene gratitude conditions, but for this preference to disappear when participants were granted control over the mind-clearing puzzle. I used the same orthogonal contrast coding as in study 2 to predict attitude toward the product. An ANOVA of attitude toward the product as a function of the two contrast codes, control, and the interactions between contrast codes and control revealed an interaction between contrast code 1 and effort ( $F(1, 219) = 6.90, p < .01$ ).

When no control was granted, participants in the salvation gratitude condition ( $M = 4.58$ ) revealed significantly more positive attitudes towards the high-effort fitness training product than participants in the serendipitous ( $M = 4.13$ ) or serene ( $M = 4.06$ ) conditions ( $M_{\text{joint}} = 4.09; t(1, 219) = 1.79, p = .07$ ). When control was granted, however, participants in the salvation gratitude condition ( $M = 3.98$ ) indicated lower attraction to the high-effort product than participants in the serendipitous ( $M = 4.46$ ) and serene ( $M = 4.53$ ) conditions ( $M_{\text{joint}} = 4.49; t(1, 219) = 1.94, p = .05$ ). No effect of contrast code 2 ( $F(1, 219) = 0.00, p = .99$ ), its interaction with control ( $F(1, 219) = 0.10, p = .75$ ), or of control ( $F(1, 219) = 0.12, p = .73$ ) were observed.

*Discussion.* These results support the *a priori* assertion (H1) that salvation gratitude prompts a heightened desire to exert control in the focal product evaluation task, leading to more positive attitudes toward high-effort products. By providing control in an intervening “mind clearing” task, the control striving induced by salvation gratitude was effectively shut off.

Control striving being assuaged reduced the need to assert control through high-effort products (H3). While the attitudes towards the high-effort products for the control-present condition were unexpectedly elevated for serendipitous and serene gratitude, this could perhaps be explained by enhanced positive affect in these two conditions. Receiving control might be perceived as an unexpected bonus in these two conditions, which would lead to greater optimism and more positive evaluations (Scheier, Carver and Bridges 1994). Further, providing control generally increases expectations of product satisfaction (Botti and Iyengar 2004).

### **3.6 General Discussion**

Researchers and marketing practitioners alike have begun to pay more attention to gratitude as part of a strategic effort to positively impact brand attitude and purchase behavior. That said, research has lagged regarding the relationship between gratitude and its effects on consumer behavior, with only limited empirical exploration. One reason for this limited research may be due to a lack of understanding of the nuances of gratitude itself, preventing consistent identification of gratitude effects. Drawing on Essay 1's gratitude type framework, the current work applies this more nuanced understanding of gratitude and focuses on the control-seeking effects associated with salvation gratitude. I establish that other types of gratitude (i.e., serendipitous and serene) are not characterized by the same desire for control as salvation gratitude and hence do not lead to the consumer behaviors. This research is the first to demonstrate that not all gratitude experiences will have the same effect on consumer behavior, but instead, that a more fine-grained examination of gratitude by type leads to predictable differences.

In the present work, consumers experiencing salvation gratitude are shown to have greater preference for high-effort products, or products that offer consumers the opportunity to

reclaim control over their own circumstances, relative to other forms of gratitude (studies 1, 2, and 3). In study 2, reduced feelings of control from salvation gratitude result in an increased desire for control among consumers, resulting in more positive attitudes for high-effort products. Importantly, study 3 provides causal evidence for the role of control by demonstrating that when control is manipulated, the more positive attitudes for high-effort products by those experiencing salvation gratitude is attenuated.

*Theoretical Contributions.* This research contributes to the growing body of literature on positive affect (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000) in consumer behavior research. While prior work has either focused on identifying and delineating positive emotions (Cavanaugh 2009) or anchored on specific positive emotions such as happiness (e.g. Pham 2015), pride (e.g. McFerran, Aquino, and Tracey 2014), or hope (e.g. Winterich and Haws 2011), very little consumer research has focused on gratitude and its implications for consumer behavior (though see Morales 2005, Palmatier et al. 2009, and Schlosser 2015 for notable exceptions).

The current research not only examines the effects of gratitude on product preferences but also reaffirms the existence of three unique gratitude types (see Essay 1). Finding multiple gratitude types is consistent with a general trend in the relatively young field of research on specific positive and negative emotions, wherein more nuanced perspectives have allowed for identification of multiple types of pride (e.g., Tracy and Robins 2004), envy (Van de Ven, Zeelenberg, and Pieters 2009), embarrassment (Krishna, Herd, and Aydinoglu 2015), and sadness (Tiedens and Linton 2001).

Recognizing these nuances, salvation gratitude might be considered a mixed emotion in that it is the least pleasant form of the positive gratitude emotion and most directly associated with perceptions and behaviors consistent with a threatened state. The present research builds on

the previous finding that salvation gratitude is associated with less pleasant feelings and more negative affect (Essay 1) and demonstrates that salvation gratitude additionally induces subjective (negative) feelings of low control. In sum, recognition of three gratitude types represents a significant development in gratitude research and will hopefully spur extensive future research.

The current research builds on recent work exploring gratitude and choice (Schlosser 2015) by increasing our understanding of gratitude's effects on attitudes towards effort-based products. By inducing subjective feelings of low control, salvation gratitude prompts consumers to seek avenues to re-establish a sense of mastery over their environment. High-effort offerings (be they offerings that naturally align with high effort, such as gym membership, or conversely offerings that are framed as requiring high effort) represent an attractive means through which such mastery can be pursued and a sense of control re-established. The implications of gratitude type on self-control (e.g., consumption of unhealthy foods as per Schlosser 2015) represents an interesting and as-of-yet unexplored follow-up to the current research.

This research also contributes to a growing literature on the role of control in consumer behavior (e.g., Hui and Bateson 1991; Robinson et al. 2012; Hamerman and Johar 2013; Cutright and Samper 2014) by demonstrating a link between positive emotional states (e.g. salvation gratitude) and feelings of/desire for control. Indeed, while the present research focused on consumer attitudes towards high- versus low-effort products, consumers low in perceived control have also shown increased preference for lucky products (Hamerman and Johar 2013). Future research, therefore, could explore whether preference for lucky products are also preferred by consumers feeling salvation gratitude.



*Managerial Implications.* The present research also has relevant implications for marketing managers. One of the current Marketing Science Institute Tier 1 Research Priorities is to better understand “how and at what points do emotions affect consumer decisions” (MSI 2014). By demonstrating the effects of incidental gratitude on product preferences, I provide a basis for strategically identifying when and how to employ gratitude as a marketing tool.

While brands increasingly work towards building associations between their brand and the concept of gratitude, marketers need to ensure they are eliciting the type of gratitude that is most appropriate for their brand. Though managers may perceive gratitude as a positive emotion, consistent with past research, some gratitude experiences are coupled with negative affect as well as subjective feelings of low perceived control. Eliciting such gratitude experiences may not bode well for the brand if consumers are left feeling less than positive after viewing an advertisement eliciting gratitude. Thus, brands seeking to elicit positive affect through their gratitude elicitation should focus on serendipitous or serene gratitude.

Importantly, the results of the current research suggest the less than purely positive salvation gratitude can lead to more positive product attitudes when paired appropriately. That is, if marketers can harness the desire for control that consumers experiencing salvation gratitude seek in their product offerings, consumers will prefer their products. Focusing on salvation gratitude makes sense for a provider of products designed to “work with” consumers to achieve desired outcomes. For example, fitness products and services, professional development services, or offerings that allow for customer co-creation (e.g., Norton, Mochon, and Ariely 2012) may benefit from eliciting salvation gratitude since consumers can seek to regain control when these products are positioned to work with the consumer rather than do it for them. Similarly, framing of one’s offering as higher effort could be successfully employed by firms operating in industries

in which consumers are likely to experience low subjective feelings of control, such as the banking or pharmaceutical industries. Notably, managers may perceive that consumers prefer not to exert effort as evidenced by the large number of claims for “magical” weight loss products and the wide variety of offerings that focus on ease of use. However, this research suggests that experiencing salvation gratitude can increase preference for products that do require effort on behalf of the consumer. Consumers may not want the home contractor to do it all *for* them; they may prefer they do it *with* them.

*Limitations and Future Research.* One limiting factor of the present work is its reliance on an autobiographical recall task to instantiate emotional states. The effects reported in this paper are thus the result of incidental affect, whereas practitioners are likely more interested in the effects of task-related gratitude experiences. While I take the position that task-related gratitude should lead to similar effects as incidental gratitude, this remains an argument that is in need of further research. Future research exploring the effects of, for example, advertising that elicits differential gratitude types on preference for high- versus low-effort offerings would serve to address this gap. A second factor that stands to be improved in future research is generalizability of the identified effects to novel high-effort contexts. The current research employed athletic shoes and fitness equipment contexts, both of which fall within the fitness domain. Identification and exploration of alternative high-effort contexts would help to establish generalizability of the present reported findings.

Gratitude represents a construct with substantial potential for future research. The identification of three types of gratitude allows for a more nuanced understanding of the construct and thus for exploration not only of general effects of gratitude, but for exploration of effects of specific types of gratitude as well. The present research focused on preference for

high-effort products as an exemplar of the effect of gratitude type on consumer behaviors, but much more research is needed to explore the effect of gratitude type in other consumer contexts (So et al. 2015). There is also the need to identify unique behaviors associated with serene and serendipitous gratitude. For example, serene gratitude elicits stronger feelings of tranquility and peacefulness (Essay 1) and might reasonably be expected to positively influence consumer responses to organizational failures or lead to more positive attitudes toward offerings that are congruent with this state.

Many viable paths for future research also remain in the study of salvation gratitude. For example, negative moods are known to focus attention on immediate concerns, suggesting that salvation gratitude may undermine long-term consumer goals such as healthy lifestyles or financial savings, relative to serendipitous and serene gratitude. As gratitude has recently been found to increase consumption of sweet foods (Schumann 2015), this is suggestive that salvation gratitude may also undermine self-control.

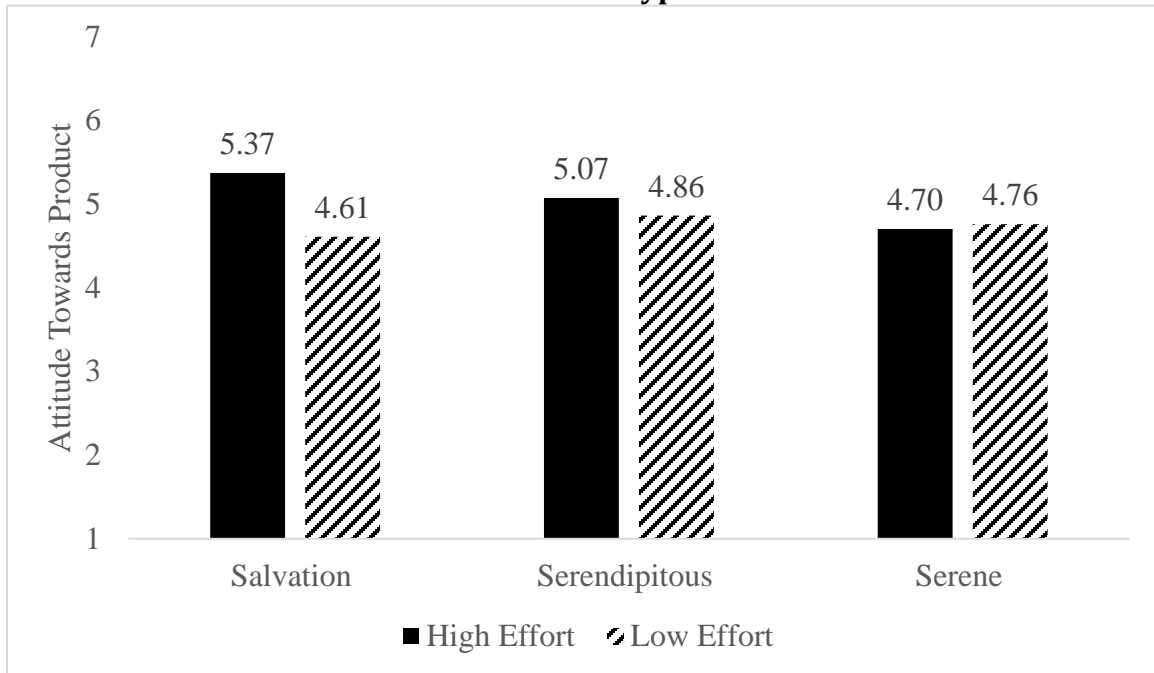
Another direction for future research might be found in the information processing domain. For example, control deprivation has been found to promote analytical thinking among those who are predominantly holistic thinkers (Zhou et al. 2012). Salvation gratitude may then have the potential to influence processing style. By means of influencing control, salvation gratitude may also serve to impair customer commitment, as per Hui and Bateson (1991). The effects of control striving associated with salvation gratitude may also have implications for product satisfaction, especially for hedonic versus utilitarian products (Botti and McGill 2011).

Previous research has also identified a negative relationship between gratitude and materialism (Polak and McCullough 2006; Tsang et al. 2014). It was beyond the scope of the present research to explore the implications of specific types of gratitude on this relationship, but

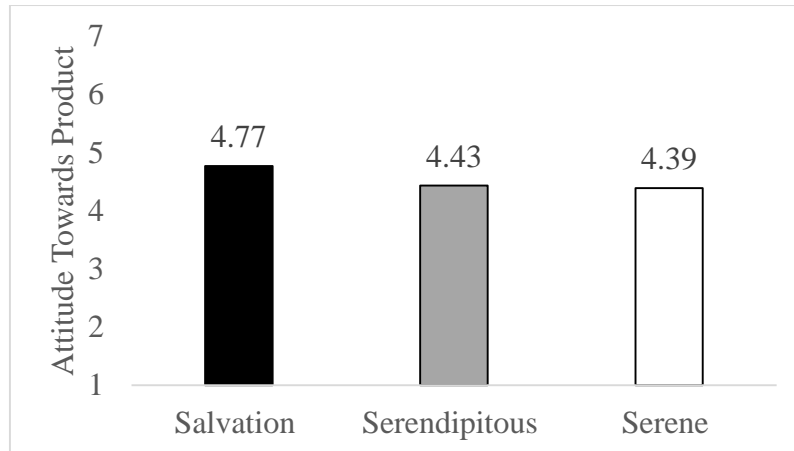
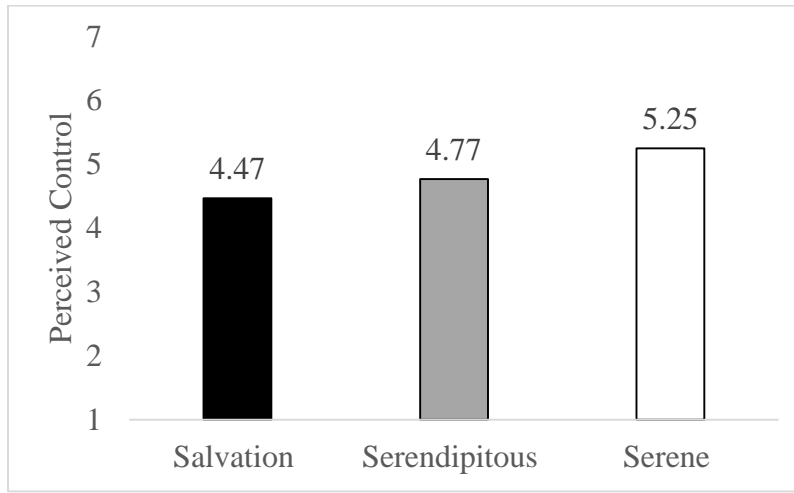
this represents another valuable direction for future research. It further suggests that certain types of brands, for example luxury brands, might be wise to refrain from employing or evoking gratitude in their marketing initiatives.

Finally, from a managerial perspective, further research is also needed to identify when consumers experience specific types of gratitude. Is it in the power of marketers to evoke specific types of gratitude in their consumers by means of emotional appeals, marketing materials, or branding? The present research explored the effects of incidental gratitude experiences. While effects based on these might reasonably be expected to extend to task-related gratitude experiences, verifying that this is the case would also represent a valuable contribution. In sum, it is safe to say that gratitude has much to offer marketers, and by embracing a more nuanced understanding of gratitude, it will be possible to make strides in understanding its influence.

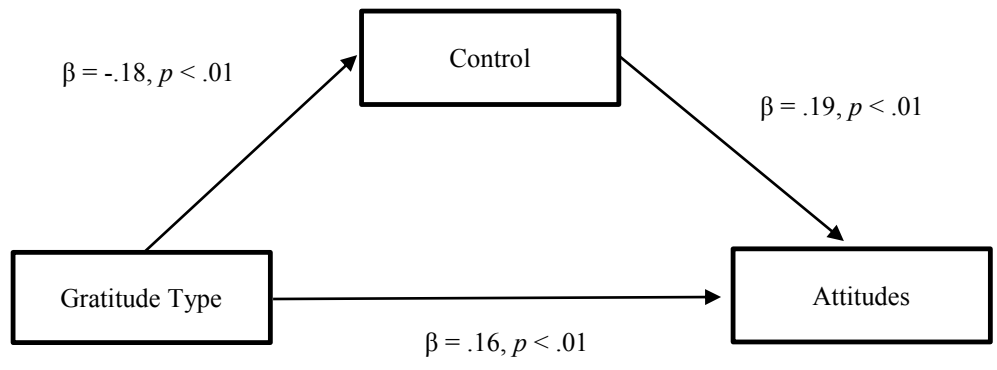
**Figure 3.1**  
**Study 1 Results: High- versus Low-Effort Product Attractiveness as a Function of Gratitude Type**



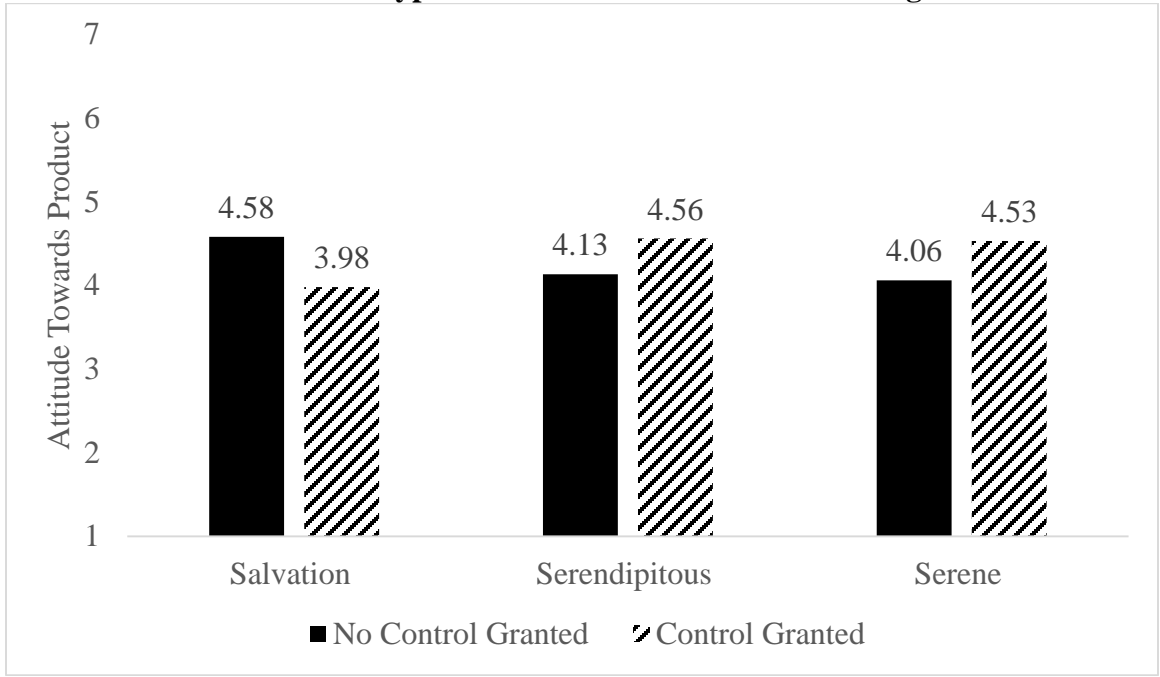
**Figure 3.2**  
**Study 2 Results: Perceived Control and Attitudes by Gratitude Type**



**Figure 3.3**  
**Study 2 Mediation Results<sup>4</sup>**



**Figure 3.4**  
**Effects of Gratitude Type and Control on Preference for High-Effort Products**



<sup>4</sup> Note that gratitude type was coded as salvation gratitude = 2 and serene and serendipitous gratitude = -1.

**Table 3.1**  
**Orthogonal Contrast Coding**

	<i>Serendipitous Gratitude Condition</i>	<i>Serene Gratitude Condition</i>	<i>Salvation Gratitude Condition</i>
Contrast code 1:			
Serendipitous and serene versus salvation gratitude	1	1	-2
Contrast code 2:			
Serendipitous versus serene gratitude	-1	1	0



### 3.7 Essay 2 Appendices

#### 3.7.1 Appendix A – Study 1 Materials

##### Gratitude Type Primes

###### *Salvation Gratitude*

Please think about a time when you were at a difficult point in your life. Perhaps you initially did not see any way of overcoming these difficulties on your own. Due to assistance from someone else, however, you were able to overcome the challenges. Please describe what you overcame, who offered assistance and how, and how you felt about it.

###### *Serendipitous Gratitude*

Please think about a time when someone did something nice for you that was completely unexpected. Please describe what was done for you, who did it and how, and how you felt toward this individual who did something nice for you.

###### *Serene Gratitude*

Please think about all the things in the world there are for you to be thankful for (i.e. being alive, the beauty of nature). Please describe some of these continuing sources of appreciation for you and how thinking about them makes you feel.

#### *Low-Effort and High-Effort Product Stimuli (Cutright and Samper 2014)*

**THE ULTIMATE TRAINER**

**THIS SHOE DOES IT ALL FOR YOU.**

Some call the Nike Trainer One a magical toning shoe. It's a training shoe. Its DiamondFLX technology allows you to receive maximal benefits with less burn from each squat, lunge or stride you take. So you don't have to work as hard to get fit fast. Studies show an average of a 75% increase in muscle tone after four weeks of use.

**Trainer One: It works harder so you don't have to!**

Low Effort Stimulus

**THE ULTIMATE TRAINER**

**THIS SHOE DOES IT ALL WITH YOU.**

The Nike Trainer One is not a magical toning shoe. It's a training shoe. Its DiamondFLX technology primes your muscles to receive maximal benefits from each squat, lunge or stride you take. So if you work hard, you get fit even faster. Studies show an average 75% increase in muscle tone after four weeks of use.

**Trainer One: It works as hard as you do!**

High Effort Stimulus

### 3.7.2 Appendix B – Study 2 Materials

#### Gratitude Type Primes

##### *Salvation Gratitude*

Please think about a time when you felt grateful because someone did something nice for you when you really needed it. Please write down what you remember of the gratitude-inducing event, and continue by writing as detailed a description of the situation as is possible. What was it like to be in this situation? Who did something nice for you and what was it? Why did it make you so grateful?

##### *Serendipitous Gratitude*


Please think about a time when you felt grateful because someone did something nice for you, even though you did not need them to do it. Please write down what you remember of the gratitude-inducing event, and continue by writing as detailed a description of the situation as is possible. What was it like to be in this situation? Who did something nice for you and what was it? Why did it make you so grateful?

##### *Serene Gratitude*

Please think about a time when you have felt a broad sense of gratefulness (i.e. being alive, the beauty of nature). Please write down what you remember of the gratitude-inducing event, and continue by writing as detailed a description of the situation as is possible. What was it like to be in this situation? Why did it make you so grateful?

#### High-Effort Product Stimulus (Cutright and Samper 2014)

**FUSIONFIT TRAINING ROUTINE**



**The FusionFit system is a routine of cardio, weight, and flexibility training that will get you into shape. By engaging in intense exercise sessions and following a strict diet, you can obtain the results you've been looking for. You'll feel how hard you're working and see amazing changes!**

### 3.7.3 Appendix C – Study 3 Materials

*(adapted from Atalay 2007)*

#### Feelings of Control Manipulations

*Control Absent condition instructions*

“Next, to clear your mind, you will complete a short puzzle.”

*Presence of control condition instructions*

“Next, to clear your mind, you will complete a short puzzle of your own choosing. Please indicate which puzzle you would like to see: word search puzzle/word scramble puzzle/sentence scramble puzzle”

#### Puzzle: Word Search

A	A	K	P	N	N	W	X	F	L
X	P	K	X	O	J	O	E	T	I
Y	N	P	T	L	Y	R	F	E	C
G	N	T	L	V	L	D	J	U	N
K	O	U	B	E	J	Y	Z	I	E
C	B	O	E	B	R	E	A	D	P
J	O	A	M	L	L	P	T	Z	Y
K	C	Q	M	J	H	X	H	F	Y
I	Y	N	N	S	Y	I	Y	E	T
W	X	S	Z	R	E	E	C	A	F

APPLE  
BOOK  
BREAD  
COTTON  
PENCIL  
WORD

**Puzzle: Word Unscramble**Word Unscramble Puzzle

Unscramble each set of letters to create a proper word.

For example, 'ydnca' could be unscrambled to make the word 'candy'.

pape

okob

adbre

contto

pilnec

rowd

**Puzzle: Sentence Unscramble**Sentence Unscramble Puzzle

For each set of words, create a proper sentence using **four of the five** words.

For example, consider the set of five words "yet ready begin you are". These words can be used to create the four-word sentence "Are you ready yet".

apples green juicy it are

long book of the is

smells bread nice for baking

sweet candy you cotton tastes

of sharpening pencil needs the

of this a word is

## Chapter 4

### CONCLUSION

Gratitude has long been conceptualized as a single, univariate construct. I contend that this conceptualization of gratitude has served to limit our understanding of the experience and outcomes associated with gratitude. By recognizing the important role of the degree of need of the individual prior to receiving the benefit, as well as the agency of the benefactor, I identify three gratitude types: salvation gratitude (wherein a needed benefit is provided by a human agent), serendipitous gratitude (wherein an unneeded benefit is provided by a human agent), and serene gratitude (wherein an externally-produced benefit is realized in the absence of a specific human agent). Two essays build on this model, outlining the affective, cognitive, and behavioral consequences of gratitude types (Essay 1), as well as the implications of gratitude types for product attitudes and preference (Essay 2).

Each dissertation essay makes several distinct theoretical and practical contributions. The first essay contributes to the emotion and charitable giving literatures. I first systematically establish the three gratitude types outlined above, based on the dimensions of need and agency. Salvation, serendipitous, and serene gratitude are shown to be associated with differing appraisals of pleasantness and other-agency. Specifically, salvation gratitude is associated with lower appraisals of pleasantness and higher appraisals of other-agency. Serendipitous gratitude is associated with higher appraisals of pleasantness and higher appraisals of other-agency. Serene gratitude is associated with higher appraisals of pleasantness and lower appraisals of other-agency. Salvation gratitude is additionally found to evoke stronger negative affect than serendipitous and serene gratitude. I then show that the three specific gratitude types differentially affect donation behavior. Though past emotions research has established that

gratitude leads to increased helping behavior and promotes pro-social motives (e.g., McCullough et al. 2001), individuals experiencing salvation gratitude donated at a rate equal to a neutral affective state. This suggests that charitable organizations should seek to induce either serendipitous or serene gratitude in their potential donors.

The second essay builds on the first essay by extending the exploration of gratitude type into the domains of subjective control and product preference. This essay demonstrates that salvation gratitude is associated with diminished feelings of subjective control (a psychological state consistent with high other-agency), and that these feelings of lack of control trigger striving to re-establish control (a goal that is consistent with lower appraisals of pleasantness). This control striving has direct implications for consumer behavior. In particular, salvation gratitude is found to promote more favorable attitudes toward high-effort products (Cutright and Samper 2014), as high-effort products provide a clear avenue for consumers to re-establish feelings of subjective control through physical or psychological exertion. This research provides important implications for marketers who are interested in positioning a product as high- or low-effort, especially if marketing materials include a gratitude component.

Overall, the findings from the two essays contribute to an improved understanding of gratitude. This dissertation offers significant insights to marketers and makes important contributions to the marketing literatures in emotions, charitable giving, control, and product positioning decisions. It also responds to the call for more research on the power of emotions to influence consumer choice (MSI 2014).

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**VITA**  
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**EDUCATION**

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*Ph.D., May 2016 (expected)*

The Pennsylvania State University, Smeal College of Business

Major: Business Administration (Marketing: Consumer Behavior), Minor: Statistics

*M.Sc. Marketing, August 2011*

Queen's University

*B.A. Business Administration (Honors), With Distinction, May 2008*

University of Western Ontario, Richard Ivey School of Business

**RESEARCH INTERESTS**

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Affect and Emotion, Brand Failure and Recovery, Persuasion, Moral psychology.

**Publications**

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Blanchard, Simon, Kurt Carlson, and Jamie D. Hyodo, "Making a Discount Feel Like a Favor: How Pairing a Favor Request Helps Seal the Deal," *forthcoming* at the *Journal of Consumer Research*.

**AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS**

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Jerome E. Scott Memorial Scholarship, Smeal College of Business (2015); Haring Symposium Fellow (2015); Georgetown Institute for Consumer Research Consumer Insights Challenge Winner (2014); Paul F. Anderson Dissertation in Marketing Award, Smeal College of Business, (2014); Frank P. and Mary Jean Smeal Endowment Fund Scholarship, Smeal College of Business (2011-14); Smeal Small Research Grant, Smeal College of Business (2012-2015); Ontario Graduate Scholarship (declined; 2012); Geoffrey H. Wood Foundation Master of Science in Management Award, Queen's University (2011); Queen's Business School Scholarship, Queen's University (2011); Queen's Graduate Awards Scholarship, Queen's University (2011); Student Council Teaching Award nomination, Western University (2010); Graduated with distinction, Richard Ivey School of Business (2008); Pass with distinction, Richard Ivey School of Business (2007); Dean's honour list, University of Western Ontario, (2005).

**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

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2008-2010 *Full-Time Lecturer*, Richard Ivey School of Business

2007 (sum.) *Marketing Specialist*, The MIBRO Group, Toronto, Canada

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