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Utilizing Self-Leadership to Enhance Gratitude Thought Patterns

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Abstract: This article explores the value of integrating thought self-leadership (TSL) and gratitude as a resource for employees to create positive and productive personal and work environments. We propose a conceptual model showing the relationships between TSL, emotional state of gratitude, thought patterns about gratitude, and performance. Given the positive benefits of the practice of gratitude in people's everyday lives and the positive benefits within organizations, TSL can be an important mechanism to enhance the development of gratitude. We argue that the level of gratitude experienced by individuals can be increased through the utilization of TSL. We propose a model which combines the constructs of TSL, gratitude, and performance.

Keywords: gratitude; self-leadership; performance

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1. Introduction

Gratitude has been a topic of discussion for many centuries. It is found in major world religions (Emmons and McCullough 2004; Emmons and Stern 2013; McCullough et al. 2001). Many books have been written on the subject for wider audiences that extoll the benefits of gratitude from reflective and often speculative perspectives (Emmons and McCullough 2003). Even a brief online scan of books on the topic of gratitude results in options from a sundry of perspectives designed for virtually all age groups. For example, the concept of gratitude appears in children's literature such as A.A. Milne (1926) wrote in the book, *Winnie the Pooh*: "Piglet noticed that even though he had a very small heart, it could hold a rather large amount of gratitude" (https://scholastic.com, accessed on 13 January 2021). Gratitude has been categorized in a variety of ways from a virtue, an attitude, a trait, mood, to an emotion (Alspach 2009; Emmons and McCullough 2003; Emmons and Stern 2013; McCullough and Tsang 2004). Researchers from diverse disciplines (Emmons and McCullough 2004) have utilized the construct of gratitude. It is not unexpected then that different understandings have been used (McCullough et al. 2001). Robert Emmons wrote in his introduction to *The Psychology of Gratitude* (Emmons and McCullough 2004, p. 4).

> "What exactly is gratitude? The *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) defined gratitude as 'the quality or condition of being thankful; the appreciation of an inclination to return kindness' (p. 1135). The word *gratitude* is derived from the Latin *gratus*, meaning pleasing. All derivatives from this Latin root 'have to do with kindness, generousness, gifts, the beauty of giving and receiving, or getting something for nothing' (Pruyser 1976, p. 69)."

For our purposes, we approach gratitude as both an emotion associated with events, and with more stable thought patterns from a thought self-leadership (TSL) perspective.

In recent years, gratitude has gained limited attention in the field of management (Fehr et al. 2017). There is significant empirical evidence regarding gratitude's positive benefits. These include promoting social bonds (Caputo 2015) and building relationships (

Bartlett et al. 2012). Individuals that manifest gratitude are generally happier (Caputo 2015; McCullough et al. 2004; Emmons and Stern 2013), healthier (Alspach 2009; Emmons and Stern 2013), more optimistic (McCullough et al. 2002; Emmons and McCullough 2003), and prone to more positive emotions (McCullough et al. 2004; Emmons and Stern 2013). McCullough et al. (2001, p. 261) in examining gratitude as "moral affect:"

> " . . . we hypothesized that gratitude functions as a moral reinforcer, motivating benefactors to persist in behaving prosocially. We found substantial support for the moral reinforcer hypothesis. People who have been the recipients of sincere expressions of gratitude are more likely to act again in a prosocial fashion toward their beneficiaries. They are also more likely to behave prosocially toward third parties after having received sincere thanks from someone on who they have already conferred a benefit." (See (McCullough et al. 2001) for the complete explanation and conclusions).

In summary, gratitude research is robust in its advantageous results.

While there is substantial empirical evidence for the positive benefits of gratitude, it is important to note that not all forms of gratitude are necessarily positive. Wood et al. (2016) discussed the perspective of gratitude as a virtue. Wood et al. (2016, p. 142) wrote: "The socially excellent characteristics exits only at the "golden mean," where its use is situationally appropriate and displayed in the right degree." An example of "harmful" gratitude in an inappropriate situation is "gratitude within abusive relationships" (Wood et al. 2016, p. 142). It is beyond the scope and direction of this article to discuss all aspects of inappropriate situations and degrees of gratitude (see (Wood et al. 2016) for a more complete treatment of this topic.) It is important for our discussion of TSL that gratitude be placed in the correct context of "beneficial" gratitude.

As evidenced by the many positive benefits of the practice of gratitude in people's everyday lives, further investigation is worthwhile for its implications for management in organizational contexts. Addressing gratitude from a management perspective, Fehr et al. (2017, p. 361) wrote: " . . . in only a handful of studies have scholars examined its [gratitude's] role in organizations (Grant and Wrzesniewski 2010; Kaplan et al. 2014; Waters 2012)." Consequently, given the positive benefits of gratitude, it is the purpose of this paper to contribute to reducing this gap in the literature. We propose that self-leadership, specifically thought self-leadership (TSL) (e.g., Manz and Neck 1991; Neck et al. 2013; Neck and Manz 1992, 1996a; Neck et al. 1999; Neck et al. 2003; Neck et al. 1997; Neck et al. 1995), can be an important mechanism to enhance the development of gratitude within organizations.

We argue that the level of gratitude experienced by individuals can be increased through the utilization of TSL. We propose a model that looks specifically at how TSL can increase the amount of gratitude experienced from events or (employees' emotional states), their thinking in more gratitude-provoking ways (employee thought patterns), and performance.

In the following section, we provide an overview of the TSL literature. Next, we propose a model which combines TSL and gratitude. Then, we examine the topics of TSL and the emotional state of gratitude (events), TSL and gratitude related thought patterns, and performance. Finally, we conclude with the discussion and implications for research and practice.

2. An Overview of Thought Self-Leadership

We generally think of leadership in the context of exercising influence on others toward a desired outcome such as Winston Churchill's actions in leading the people of England during the early days of World War II. Rather than social influence on others, self-leadership is an approach to exerting self-influence. This process is designed to provide self-direction and motivation in the accomplishment of goals important to an individual. In its essence, self-leadership is, "the process of influencing oneself to establish the self-direction and motivation needed to perform" (Manz 1983, 1986, 1992).

Self-leadership developed out of Manz and Sims (1980) early work centered around self-management as a leadership substitute. Self-management developed from previous research on the concept of self-control (e.g., Thoresen and Mahoney 1974) and its related methods such as self-observation, goal setting, incentives, and rehearsal (Andrasik and Heimberg 1982; Hackman 1986; Manz and Sims 1980; Marx 1982; Mills 1983). Self-leadership as a construct encompasses the practice of "influencing oneself to establish self-direction" (Neck 2018; Neck and Manz 2010; Neck and Houghton 2006; Manz and Neck 1999; Neck et al. 1999; Manz 1983, 1986, 1992). In comparing self-management and self-leadership, "the process of self-leadership prescribes a more active and comprehensive role for members in a work system and represents a much more advanced form of self-influence" (Godwin et al. 1999, p. 155). An important part of self-leadership is TSL, which purports that an individual (or employee) can self-influence with the use of particular cognitive strategies (Manz and Neck 1991, 1999; Neck 1996, 2018; Neck and Manz 1992, 1994, 1996a, 1996b; Neck and Milliman 1994; Neck et al. 1997; Manz and Neck 1999; Neck et al. 1995). These strategies include self-regulation of our beliefs and assumptions (Burns 1980; Ellis 1975), self-dialogue (Ellis 1962), and mental imagery (Manz 1992). Collectively, these cognitive methods help to shape a person's thought patterns in a constructive way that enables more positive habitual ways of thinking or schema (Manz 1983, 1992; Manz and Neck 1991, 1999; Neck and Manz 1992, 1996a, 1996b). TSL postulates that self-influence through these cognitive strategies results in more positive, constructive thought processes, habitual ways of thinking, affect, and influence on behavior (see (Manz and Neck 1991; Neck and Manz 1992) for an expanded explanation of TSL). We now examine in more detail the TSL strategies of self-regulation of our beliefs and assumptions, self-talk, and mental imagery.

2.1. Beliefs and Assumptions

An employee's thoughts are influenced by their underlying beliefs and assumptions. Beliefs and assumptions are the basis of attitudes and have significant impact on emotions and habitual ways of thinking (Manz 1992). Dysfunctional thinking can be the source of some of the problems that individuals face (Burns 1980; Ellis 1977). Godwin et al. (1999, p. 157), while discussing TSL and goal setting, summarized this perspective:

> "These distorted thoughts are based on common dysfunctional beliefs and assumptions that are generally activated by potentially troubling situations. Thus, employees can improve their goal performance by following the prescriptions of Ellis (1977) and Burns (1980). According to these authors, individuals can identify and confront their dysfunctional beliefs, replacing them with more rational beliefs."

More rational thoughts increase the chances of improved emotional states (Ellis 1962, 1975, 1977). Ellis (1975, p. 52) wrote, "one may control one's emotions by changing the internalized sentences, or self-talk, with which one largely created these emotions in the first place."

2.2. Self-Talk

Self-dialogue or self-talk is the internal verbalizations of what we tell ourselves. Manz and Neck (1991), and Neck and Manz (1992) maintain that self-dialogue is a significant avenue for self-influence. We tend to believe those closest to us (that we trust). For example, if I wear a shirt on a workday and a stranger on a city street says, "that's an ugly shirt," I will probably discount that comment. However, if I arrive at work and my colleague makes a similar comment, I may give it more weight. After work, if I arrive home and a family member, likewise, makes a negative statement about the shirt, I will then look in the mirror and tell myself the same. In this sequence of dialogue from stranger to colleague to family member to self, who has the most influence on our thoughts? TSL suggests that we do, and that we can control or self-influence our thoughts by utilizing the cognitive strategy of self-talk.

Research supports that self-talk or self-dialogue (inner speech) when used for self-influence can lead to personal effectiveness. These benefits include positive impact on quality of life (e.g., Butler 1983) and improvements in individual performance in communication (Boice 1985), goal setting (Godwin et al. 1999; Neck et al. 2003), sports psychology (Kendall et al. 1990; Mahoney and Avener 1977), clinical psychology (Bonadies and Bass 1984), counseling psychology (Kurpius et al. 1985), and education (Swanson and Kozleski 1985). Research also supports the link with emotional states (Harrell et al. 1981).

2.3. Mental Imagery

In TSL, mental imagery is visualizing or imaging a successful performance in advance of the actual event (Manz 1992; Manz and Neck 1991; Neck and Manz 1992). Weick (1979) made a similar argument. Manz (1992, p. 75) wrote that mental imagery is: "we can create and, in essence, symbolically experience imagined results of our behavior before we actually perform." Research in other domains supports the mental imagery and performance link. Examples of this research include sports psychology (Feltz and Landers 1983), counseling education (Baker et al. 1985), and clinical psychology (Crowder 1989).

An actual, real-life example of TSL and mental imagery in a sports context is the case of a young, high school athlete who was a high jumper. During a national championship meet, this athlete in her final jump could win "nationals" in her age group. If she missed, she would not win the national championship. While her parents, coaches, and other spectators felt the stress of the moment and the importance of the one jump in the accomplishment of this athlete's goals, she was lined up and preparing for the final jump. With the stress and distractions of being "on stage" and in front of college coaches who were scouting future prospects, she stood quietly with her eyes closed, blocking out everything around her and visualizing in her mind a successful jump and clearing the bar. By closing her eyes and visualizing the jump, she blocked out the immediate distractions and pressures of the moment. She was able to influence her cognitive processes for enhanced performance by focusing on her skill of high jumping. She visualized herself jumping at this height with the right speed in the approach and precision in executing the technique. It was then she opened her eyes, began her approach, and cleared the bar to win the national championship in her age group.

2.4. Thought Patterns

Thought patterns are consistent or "habitual" ways in which people think. Thought patterns are based in a cognitive structure or schema. Godwin et al. (2016, p. 69) briefly summarized the writing of Manz (1992) on thought patterns as:

> "Manz (1992) describes a thought pattern as "certain ways of thinking about our experiences," and as "habitual ways of thinking." As Manz (1992, p. 81) states, "these thought patterns involve among other things, our beliefs, our imagined experiences, and our self-talk."

For example, a categorization of thought patterns in the TSL literature is "opportunity" thinking versus "obstacle thinking" (Manz 1986; Neck 2018; Neck and Manz 1992, 1996a, 1996b). "Opportunity thinking involves a pattern of thoughts that focuses on opportunities, worthwhile challenges, and constructive ways of dealing with challenging situations" (Neck et al. 1999, p. 479). By contrast, "Obstacle thinking, ... involves a focus on the negative aspects (the obstacles) involved in challenging situations ... " (Neck et al. 1999, p. 479). The distinction between the two is important. Individuals employing opportunity thinking will look for ways to succeed even when faced with challenging circumstances, whereas persons engaging in obstacle thinking patterns will see the challenging situation as a reason to give up or quit (Manz 1986; Neck 2018; Neck and Manz 1992).

As we begin to discuss the connections between the level of gratitude experienced by individuals and the utilization of TSL, it is important to note that gratitude is a constructive way to engage in positive thought patterns. We discuss these thought patterns from the perspective of cognitive structures or schema, specifically how these relate to the practice

of gratitude. We now turn our attention to the proposed model which combines TSL, gratitude, and performance.

3. Proposed Model

3.1. Gratitude and TSL

Given the unique nature of the application of TSL as a method for organizations to enhance the well-documented benefits of gratitude in building support for our model in Figure 1, we draw from a variety of perspectives. Our conceptualization of how TSL influences gratitude is focused on its application as an approach that individuals and organizations can utilize to promote and enhance gratitude. In the following sections of the paper, we discuss: (1) TSL and the emotional state of gratitude; (2) TSL and gratitude related thought pattern; and (3) gratitude and performance.

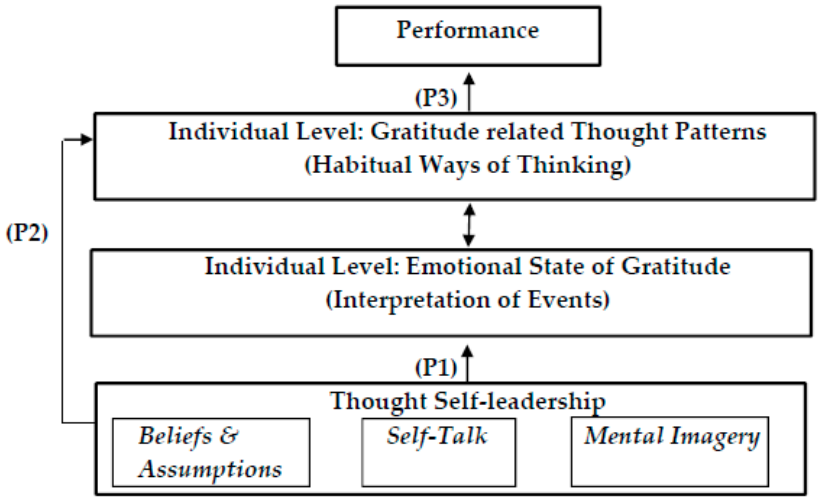

Figure 1. A conceptual model of thought self-leadership (TSL)'s impact on gratitude.

3.2. TSL and the Emotional State of Gratitude

According to Rosenberg (1998, p. 250), "Emotions are acute, intense, and typically brief psychophysiological changes that result from response to a meaningful situation in one's environment." Emotions comprise one category of affective state (Rosenberg 1998). What we term the "emotional state of gratitude" is that in which gratitude is experienced with a certain level of intensity for a relatively brief period. Fehr et al. (2017, p. 363) discussed "episodic gratitude" as an emotion "—an affective phenomenon that persists for a brief period of time (Elfenbein 2008)". The construct is described as a feeling of appreciation in response to an experience that benefits the individual. This type of gratitude is faceted given experiences that produce moments, or feelings, of gratitude (McCullough et al. 2002; Rosenberg 1998). Various experiences in the workplace can generate events that elicit gratitude (Fehr et al. 2017).

For example, an employee might be under stress to get a large amount of work finished by an approaching deadline, and a couple of work colleagues take time from their schedules to help to accomplish the task. In most cases, this should elicit a sense of gratitude from the beneficiary for the benefactors' efforts. In this case, how the employee thinks about (or interprets) the help received will determine the level or "intensity" of gratitude felt (McCullough et al. 2002; Rosenberg 1998). The employee may interpret the event from a transactional perspective and think, "I've helped them before, so they need to help me now." Or the employee may see the episode differently and think, "Wow, they did not have to help me, but they did! I am so grateful for their friendship and the fact that they cared enough to help me." Both are different cognitive thought reactions to the same set of facts in this episode. In this case, we posit that TSL could help employees to influence themselves with positive self-talk to enhance their affective states and increase

their intensity of gratitude felt (Neck and Manz 1992)—and thus be more likely to have the latter response to the event of being helped by colleagues. In doing so, the employee and the organization would reap the benefits of increased gratitude outlined earlier in this paper. Neck and Manz (1992) propose that employees can improve their affective states when they become cognizant of their "self-defeating" self-talk. Therefore, what individuals tell themselves would impact beliefs, affective states, and their perceptions of gratitude.

Proposition 1. *Individuals who engage in TSL will enhance their emotional states of gratitude in the interpretation of events.*

3.3. TSL and Gratitude Related Thought Patterns

In the conceptualization of TSL, thought patterns are habitual ways in which people think about something overtime. These consistent patterns come out of a cognitive structure or schema. Manz (1992) describes a thought pattern as "certain ways of thinking about our experiences", and as "habitual ways of thinking". This perspective is more akin to that of Fehr et al. (2017) in their conceptualization of gratitude in an organizational context, when they referred to this (the notion of schema) as "persistent gratitude". They defined this as "a stable tendency to feel grateful within a particular context" (Fehr et al. 2017, p. 363).

We posit that TSL, in helping to create thought patterns, is aiding in the development of cognitive structures or schema that enable an individual to be oriented toward gratitude. From a social cognition perspective, TSL practices of self-talk and mental imaging promote greater frequency and intensity of gratitude that may modify the underlying cognitive structures. These cognitive structures or schema form an individual's perceptual lens to interpret events (Neisser 1976). Fiske and Taylor (1991, p. 98) wrote:

> "A schema may be defined as a cognitive structure that represents knowledge about a concept or type of stimulus, including its attributes and the relations among those attributes (Brewer and Nakamura 1984; Fiske and Linville 1980; Hastie 1981; Rumelhart and Ortony 1977; Taylor and Crocker 1981)."

Based on the previous literature, we suggest that TSL exerts self-induced influence through the modification of one's gratitude related schema or perceptual lens. Bargh (1984, p. 15) noted:

> "Perception by most accounts involves an interaction between the environmental stimuli that are currently present and the individual's readiness to perceive some over others."

The gratitude-related thought patterns may be activated by the self-influence through the practices of TSL.

Let us return to the real-life example of the high school age athlete that won a national championship in the high jump. Numerous times in her athlete career, she experienced significant victories in track and field meets. Most of the time, she felt and expressed gratitude to her coaches and others for their assistance in her success. These feelings and expressions of gratitude did not diminish her own hard work and dedication to her improvement as an athlete. She was highly motivated, worked very hard, and yet benefited from expressing gratitude. We propose in our model that the utilization of TSL can enhance these feelings of gratitude through self-influence. In addition, these emotional episodes of gratitude contribute to thought patterns or "habitual ways of thinking" that strengthen her tendency to feel and express gratitude in the future not only in track and field but also in other endeavors as well.

Proposition 2. *Individuals who engage in TSL will enhance their thought patterns or "habitual ways of thinking" about gratitude and be more inclined to experience gratitude.*

3.4. Gratitude and Performance

Building upon the work of Neck and Manz (1992), we propose that increased levels of gratitude are positively related to performance. Neck and Manz (1992) reviewed and summarized the relevant literature supporting their model and concluded that " . . . the impact of self-talk and performance is mediated by affective responses" (pp. 688–89) (see (Neck and Manz 1992) for a complete overview).

Gratitude is in this constellation of "affective responses". Fredrickson (2004) included gratitude in the positive emotions that "broadens" and "builds." Barbara Fredrickson developed the "Broaden-and-Build" theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson 2001). In describing the theory, the author (Fredrickson 2001, p. 219) wrote, " . . . certain discrete positive emotions . . . share the ability to broaden people's momentary thought-action repertoires and build their enduring personal resources ranging, from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources." Opportunity for effective performance is enhanced by the beneficial outcomes associated with gratitude. In particular, the broaden-and-build theory supports this assertion. Fredrickson (2004, p. 153) noted that:

> " . . . the theory underscores the relationship between positive emotions and individual growth and development. Through experiences of positive emotions, individuals can transform themselves, becoming more creative, knowledgeable, resilient, socially integrated, and healthy. Individuals who regularly experience positive emotions, then, are not stagnant. Instead, they continually grow toward optimal functioning."

These characteristics, such as being more creative and knowledgeable, are valued in organizations.

Other studies support gratitude as a predictor of job performance (Cortini et al. 2019) and job satisfaction (Cortini et al. 2019; Waters 2012) In general, individuals that experience gratitude are happier (Caputo 2015; McCullough et al. 2004; Emmons and Stern 2013) and healthier (Alspach 2009; Emmons and Stern 2013). In organizations, the other benefits of gratitude in the building of relationships (Bartlett et al. 2012) and strengthening social bonds (Caputo 2015) may also contribute to the performance of employees through the development of teamwork and more positive organizational environments. Gratitude may also be a motivating force for prosocial behavior by benefactors, beneficiaries, and others (McCullough et al. 2001). As evidenced by the many positive benefits of the practice of gratitude in people's everyday lives, further investigation is worthwhile for its implications for management in organizational contexts. We posit that TSL will enhance gratitude thought patterns in individuals, and in doing so, increase performance.

Proposition 3 *Individuals who engage in TSL will enhance their thought patterns or "habitual ways of thinking" about gratitude and will perform more effectively in organizations.*

4. Discussion

We have proposed that the level of gratitude that individuals experience can be increased through the utilization of TSL. Higher levels of gratitude contribute to a happier, more emotionally controlled, and overall healthier life. TSL, when implemented effectively, is not only an approach to exerting self-influence, but a process designed to provide self-direction and motivation in the accomplishment of goals.

When taking into consideration beliefs and assumptions, self-talk, mental imagery, and thought patterns, individuals can influence their perspective, response to situations, and level of gratitude. We now provide an actual case where gratitude and self-leadership were applied and impactful. The context and identities of the people are confidential due to the nature of the case.

Two people faced difficulty in which both were locked in a perpetual cycle of misunderstanding, defensiveness, and hardship. Both engaged in more arguments, did not practice effective conflict management, and were feeling socially isolated due to differences. Both were caught in a vicious cycle of pointing out the mistakes, negatives, and wrongdo-

ings of the other, instead of emphasizing the strengths, positives, and helpful nature. This combination of negativity ultimately resulted in a toxic environment where neither one felt comfortable, and frankly, both felt defeated. One individual continually hoped the other would see things differently. The individual's thoughts were, "if only the other would adopt my perspective and react to situations more like me." This thought pattern became destructive. At a very low point, both considered leaving and going elsewhere. At this low point, one individual changed approaches and implemented TSL. The individual began to express positivity and gratitude for all the good efforts that were previously overlooked. The individual attempted to express positivity, appreciation, and gratitude in other areas as well. In situations where the other said or did something that bothered the individual, instead of reacting in the moment, the individual engaged in self-talk through the situations and gave positive, constructive responses. Overtime, the individual's thought patterns changed, and the individual had the mental image of having a positive relationship.

In this case, an interesting facet is that as the individual implemented TSL and expressed gratitude, the other then began to respond differently. With fewer feelings of defensiveness, a stronger, more enjoyable relationship developed. The lines of communication opened up, and the environment became more positive. A relationship that could have been over, due to a cycle of misunderstanding and negativity, was restored with gratitude and positivity through the implementation of TSL.

As discussed throughout the paper, gratitude and self-leadership can have positive impacts on an individual's life and interactions with others. Although time, self-reflection, cognitive strategies, and disciplined work can be involved, the outcome is often much more positive and rewarding for everyone involved. The implementation of TSL in conjunction with gratitude is an area of research that can be beneficial to individuals in an organizational context.

5. Conclusions and Implications for Research and Practice

Gratitude has many positive benefits for individuals and organizations. We proposed utilizing TSL to help individuals to influence themselves to experience gratitude from events and to develop gratitude-oriented thought patterns. One possible approach for future research to test our propositions is to utilize the methodology of training individuals in TSL and gratitude. Previous research supports this suggestion.

Neck and Manz (1996a) demonstrated that TSL training can be used effectively in organizations. They conducted an empirical study in which employees were dealing with the changes of their organization going to reorganization bankruptcy. The researchers found support for their four propositions that employees that received the TSL training would show evidence of enhanced: (1) mental performance; (2) affective states; (3) job satisfaction; and (4) self-efficacy. In discussing the study's results, Neck and Manz (1996a, p. 460) wrote:

> "First, one general contribution of this research is that it provides support for viewing thought as a self-controlled phenomena. More specifically, this study provides evidence that the effective self-regulation of cognitions can be learned/developed in an organizational setting . . . "

It is noteworthy that those receiving the TSL training viewed the bankruptcy status "in a more opportunistic, positive light" compared to the control group (Neck and Manz 1996a, p. 460). A major implication of Neck and Manz (1996a) that they demonstrated empirically was that TSL can be utilized in organizational training programs.

In a similar vein, we suggest that TSL training coupled with a curriculum designed to enhance gratitude is a method to test our propositions. As evidence of curriculum training, Froh et al. (2014) conducted two studies with elementary school aged children ranging from 8 to 11 years old. The purpose was to see if an educational intervention in the classroom could teach children to think more gratefully. According to the authors (p. 138), "The benefit-appraisal curriculum . . . worked as intended. Students . . . reported increases in benefit appraisals and grateful mood . . . " (p. 138). In general, this research "supports

the notion that elementary school children can be taught to think more gratefully via a brief cognitive intervention..." (p. 146) (see (Froh et al. 2014) for the complete methodology, results, and discussion of these studies).

Another form of possible future research method is to combine TSL training with well-established gratitude enhancing practices. Empirical evidence supports that reflecting and reporting on positive events enhances gratitude in individuals. Emmons and McCullough (2003) conducted a series of three empirical studies to examine how a grateful outlook impacts an individual sense of well-being. In all three studies, there were positive benefits to reflecting and reporting things for which one is grateful. Emmons and McCullough wrote: "In study 1, we found that a weekly benefit listing was associated with more positive and optimistic appraisals of one's life, more time spent exercising, and fewer reported physical symptoms" (p. 386). Studies 2 and 3 also reported positive results, including "greater levels of positive affect, more sleep, better sleep quality, and greater optimism and a sense of connectedness to others" (p. 386) (see (Emmons and McCullough 2003) for the complete methodology, results, and discussion of these studies).

In a study conducted by Armenta et al. (2020), students were given assignments each week to write a letter expressing gratitude and assignments focused on gratitude reflection. Armenta et al. (Armenta et al. 2020, p. 1528) wrote regarding this research that it "provides evidence that expressing gratitude and reflecting on their benefactors' actions may help keep high school students motivated and satisfied with their lives over the course of a semester."

Neck and Manz (1996a) demonstrated that employees can be successfully trained in TSL. Froh et al. (2014) provided evidence that a gratitude-oriented curriculum has positive results. Emmons and McCullough (2003) and Armenta et al. (2020) show that practices can elicit gratitude. In summary, we suggest based on these studies that future research can test our propositions that TSL will enhance emotional states of gratitude, "habitual ways of thinking" about gratitude, and will ultimately lead to more effective performance.

The combination TSL and gratitude presents multiple opportunities for future study. In addition to these propositions, one could examine the magnitude and duration of the effect of TSL training on individuals' emotional states of gratitude in the interpretation of events. These research endeavors can help to fill the existing gap in the organizational literature related to TSL and gratitude. Given this empirical evidence and the positive benefits of TSL and gratitude, we suggest that these are important areas for further investigation by researchers.

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