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Jonathan Tudge and Lia Freitas

In truth, O judges, while I wish to be adorned with every virtue, yet there is nothing which I can esteem more highly than the being and appearing grateful. For this one virtue is not only the greatest, but is also the parent of all the other virtues. (Cicero, *pro Plancio*, 80)

Was Cicero correct? Is gratitude a virtue? Some philosophers (Comte-Sponville, 1995/2007; McConnell, 1993) and psychologists (Baumgarten-Tramer, 1938; La Taille, 2000; Piaget, 1965/1995) have treated gratitude as though it is a virtue, defining it as occurring when: (a) a benefactor has freely and intentionally helped or provided a beneficiary with something; (b) the beneficiary recognizes the benefactor's intentionality; and (c) freely chooses to repay, if at all possible, with something the benefactor needs or wants. This seems like a virtue and, as developmental psychologists, we think it important to study its development, given that gratitude is neither innate nor something that emerges spontaneously in human beings.

But why do we think that gratitude is a virtue? It presumably has to do with a disposition to think and behave in a certain way. As Hursthouse (2013) argued, to make the claim that someone is possessed of a particular virtue means that that person should wholeheartedly accept a complex range of factors as calling forth certain feelings, expressions, and responses. Virtue ethicists invoke the concept of *eudaemonia*, perhaps best translated as some combination of happiness and human flourishing or well-being, as necessary for virtue. But this flourishing or well-being must be more than an individual phenomenon; being happy simply as a consequence of wealth, gaining something at the expense of others, or a momentary emotional state is not enough. Claims about what counts as *eudaemonia* need to consider the individual in conjunction

with others (it would surely not count as a virtue to be courageous, honest, or grateful *only* in regard to oneself). Eudaemonia takes into account the cooperative and social nature of human beings, connecting humans to other social non-human species, such as chimpanzees, dolphins, and elephants (de Waal, 2006, 2010). Virtue ethicists see virtues as part of our natural condition.

Given how we have defined gratitude, it thus seems to qualify as a virtue. Beneficiaries, freely accepting that they have a moral obligation to repay their prior benefactors, if at all possible, create a cycle of gratitude by becoming, in turn, benefactors. Such a cycle builds, or strengthens, bonds among people. But what does it mean to say that someone has the virtue of gratitude, or is a grateful individual? To be considered grateful is presumably to do more than simply expressing gratitude sporadically, or when reminded to do so; a grateful person is one who typically (though not necessarily under any and all circumstances) feels gratitude when given something or when helped. However, if the person providing that gift or help is doing so because forced to do so, or because he or she intends to gain something as a result, gratitude is not required.

The desire to retribute, if at all possible, is a necessary, but not sufficient, component of gratitude. Contrary to Watkins' (2014) argument, obligation to repay in some way is not necessarily at odds with gratitude. It is important to note the Piaget-inspired distinction (Piaget, 1932) between (a) a sense of heteronomous obligation (outside pressures requiring either that one provides something of benefit to a beneficiary or that the beneficiary *has* to repay the favour) and (b) a sense of autonomous obligation (when one freely and happily takes on a debt to former benefactor).

On the other hand, the virtue of gratitude is not bestowed *only* on those who always (or even typically) respond in appropriately grateful ways in conditions under which gratitude seems

appropriate. It is perfectly reasonable to call someone “generally grateful” or “fairly grateful” or in some other way accept the fact that one can express gratitude more or less frequently or to different degrees or extents. To possess a virtue is not an “all or none” issue (Hursthouse, 2013). If this is true for virtues such as honesty (one can be considered honest even when not telling the truth when asked on the street “How are you doing?”) or bravery (one can be thought brave even when retreating in the face of insurmountable odds) it is even more true of gratitude. One can have received great help but an opportunity to repay the favour might never present itself. Lack of repayment in such circumstances would not mean that one was not grateful (although on occasion such a debt can be repaid by “repaying forward”, or helping others as a way to compensate for an inability to repay the benefactor). Typically failing to try to repay the moral debts that have been incurred, however, would imply being ungrateful.

If we can talk about people having the virtue of gratitude, however, this means that we accept that gratitude is a trait, a part of a person’s character (the person typically feels grateful for gifts and/or help and tries, when possible, to reciprocate in some way). By contrast, we do not consider gratitude simply a state (the person feels grateful on occasion when receiving help or a gift but this has no implication for how the person will feel, or express that feeling, when receiving another gift or help). And this point gets to the heart of the virtue ethicist vs. “situationist” debate.

The ethicists’ position builds on the assumption that there are virtuous character traits—that someone viewed, for example, as grateful, honest, or courageous, will typically (though not necessarily always) act that way in many relevant situations. The situationist challenge to this position (see, for example, Doris, 2002) is that there are many examples from social psychology in which people seem far more influenced by the local context (the situation) than by anything

that is trait-like. Whether apparently administering electric shocks to people or refusing to help apparently in-need individuals when late for a lecture on the Good Samaritan, people seem to behave in ways very different to those in which they would say they should behave. One virtue ethicist response to this critique is to say that single episodes are never enough to judge whether an individual can be considered virtuous, because to be considered virtuous does not mean that one always and under any condition expresses that particular virtue.

Moreover, if social psychologists have opened the door for critiques on the primary component of virtue ethics (namely, that people simply act as they do depending on the specifics of the situation, rather than because they have a strong tendency to act as they do), have cultural psychologists helped to close that door (see, for example, Prinz, 2009)? After all, there is an extensive literature on cultural values, whether “basic values” such as benevolence and hedonism (Schwartz 1992, 2012), the distinctions between collectivism and individualism (Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1995, 2001) or independence and interdependence (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), or “autonomy-relatedness” (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2007, 2012). Collectivism, individualism, or autonomy-relatedness may not be moral virtues in the same sense as honesty or gratitude, but if these values have any meaning they imply that individuals are not simply acting based on the requirements of the immediate situation. Values, given that they differentiate people in different cultures, must be more than reactions to the exigencies of the current situation, and thus give credence to the idea of trait-like character. It is also worth noting that even the Milgram experiment (much cited by situationists as a way to cast doubt on the idea that the virtuous character exists), shows enormous variation when conducted cross-culturally. Australian participants were five times less likely to accede to the experimenter’s wishes than were German participants (Prinz, 2009).

Unfortunately, the same cross-cultural data that support the idea that character exists, and that individuals are not simply reacting to the situation, also creates a problem for virtue ethicists. Looking at both cross-cultural and cross-temporal differences, it is easy to find examples of eudaemonia that don't fit well with current (Western) notions of character types. Prinz (2009), for example, described Confucian values of piety and Indian values of Nirvana (which require, if anything, a letting-go of character). Tiberius (2004) noted that in societies described as "individualistic" well-being is correlated with measures such as the freedom to pursue one's own goals and self-esteem, whereas in "collectivist" cultures well-being may be linked to "pursuing goals for the sake of making others happy and meeting their expectations" (p. 294).

Virtue ethicists have traditionally assumed that there is a universal set of virtues; indeed many virtue ethicists try to list them. And, they assume that these virtues are universal precisely because they are all part of a universal human nature. But that supposition is untenable. What leads to fulfillment in life is neither universal nor entirely natural.

Culture can shape our conception of the good life. (Prinz, 2009, p. 134)

Similarly, as Tiberius (2004) argued:

a substantive account of wellbeing that gives a central place to the virtues can show how many of our actual commitments and real concerns provide reasons for us to develop these virtues. ... [However] As we fill in the details and draw out the practical implications of our formal analysis of well-being, it is more likely that the results will not be shared among cultures. (2004, pp. 303–304)

There are indeed some major cross-cultural variations in the expression of gratitude.

Visser (2009), for example, describes the different conditions under which different cultural

groups hold that saying “thank you” for something received is warranted. Traditionally, the Inuit and other hunter-gatherer groups would not view receiving parts of game that others have caught as any reason for expressing thanks. The Japanese are expected to leave the price of gifts attached to the gift while professing its exceedingly limited value, and the recipient is expected to later provide a gift of at least equal value in return (thereby removing the free intentionality of the return, something that is supposed to be a central part of gratitude). It may be possible to specify those culturally linked conditions and expressions, even though the conditions under which and how gratitude is expressed might vary in different cultures. If this were true, then it still would be possible to say that gratitude is a virtue, so long as individuals who consistently failed to feel or express gratitude under the appropriate conditions (as defined by the culture) were viewed as being bad characters.

If gratitude is indeed considered a virtue, it should be the object of study in psychology. And there has certainly been a growth of interest in the concept over the past 20 years or so (Froh, 2010). However, the vast majority of the psychological research on the topic has not treated gratitude as a virtue. Social psychologists, particularly those working in the emerging field of positive psychology, view gratitude as a positive emotion that is either correlated with well-being (the vast majority of studies are by their cross-sectional nature unable to address issues of causality) or, in a few cases, is said to lead to well-being (Froh et al., 2014; Froh, Sefick, & Emmons, 2008; Wood, Maltby, Gillett, Linley, & Joseph, 2008). In other words, gratitude is not viewed as a virtue in the way that virtue ethicists do—as something that is valuable in its own right for eudaemonic human functioning. What’s the difference? One important difference is that gratitude as a virtue is heavily related to positive retribution, something that is likely to forge or strengthen a connection between people. By contrast,

gratitude as an emotion (Algoe, Haidt, & Gable, 2008), as a positive affect (Watkins, 2004), or as a “life orientation towards the positive” (Wood, Froh, & Geraghty, 2010, p. 892) is as likely to be felt when viewing a sunset or recognizing one’s good health as when another person has done something for one. Being grateful for a beautiful sight or one’s good health does not lend itself to such retribution.

When treated as an emotion, the concept of gratitude has been broadened considerably—for example, as viewed as a “life orientation towards the positive” (Wood et al., 2010). Gratitude, in this sense, encompasses a positive appreciation for a fairly wide range: an appreciation of other people; appreciating what one has; “feelings of awe when encountering beauty”; behaviours that express gratitude; focusing on the positive; appreciating the fact that life is short; and making “positive social comparisons” (Wood et al. 2010, p. 891).

This very broad assessment of gratitude is reflected in the main scales that have been used to collect data from adults, adolescents, or both. There are four main scales that have been used by social psychologists interested in gratitude. What is interesting from the point of view of a virtues approach to gratitude is that none of the items on the Gratitude Questionnaire–6 (GQ–6: McCullough et al., 2002, which seems to be the most widely used scale), the Gratitude Adjective Checklist (GAC: McCullough et al., 2002), the Gratitude, Resentment, Appreciation Test–Short Form (GRAT: Watkins, Woodward, Stone, & Kolts, 2003), or the Appreciation Scale (AS: Adler & Fagley, 2005) take into account the three key attributes of gratitude as a virtue. Only three of the six GQ–6 items, none of the GAC items, four of the 15 GRAT items, and nine of the 81 Appreciation Scale items even mention other people’s actions as a possible reason for feeling grateful, with none including the idea of wishing to repay, in some way, for a kindness that was done or a gift that was made.

Although those who developed these scales, and those who use them in research, refer to them as “gratitude” scales, it is important to recognize that gratitude is being defined in the broader life-orientation manner mentioned above. From this perspective, items such as “I have so much in life to be grateful for” (GQ-6), to be “appreciative” (GAC), “Every Fall I really enjoy watching the leaves change colors” (GRAT-short form), or “I recognize and acknowledge the positive value and meaning of things around me” (AS) certainly speak to a happy and appreciative feeling about life, but do not seem to qualify as a virtue. In fact, one might argue that these items do not adequately distinguish between gratitude and happiness.

Where these scales are particularly effective is in their ability to distinguish among people with different degrees of appreciation, which makes it easy to conduct correlational analyses with various measures of well-being. Perhaps not surprisingly, given the nature of most of the items in these scales, an appreciation for the life that one lives correlates positively with well-being and inversely with depression, hostility, vulnerability, and various measures of psychopathology (Watkins, 2004; Wood et al., 2010). Similarly, it is not altogether surprising that relatively simple interventions (asking people to reflect on five things for which they are thankful or keeping a “gratitude” diary) leads to people scoring higher on these measures of appreciation (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006; Froh et al., 2008). But it is unclear whether they have anything to do with gratitude as a virtue.

Moreover, although some of these measures (specifically, the GQ-6, GRAT-short form, and GAC) have been used with children as young as 10 (and showing similar psychometric properties with adults as with children as young as 14), almost no research has focused on the development of gratitude in children and adolescents. That is, given that gratitude is unlikely to

be innate, how does it develop? This question could be asked regardless of how gratitude is defined, although the responses would necessarily be different.

From a developmental perspective, we might think of the first requirement of gratitude as simply for a beneficiary to feel good when being helped or given a gift. Second, the beneficiary should feel good not only about the gift or help, but also about the benefactor. Third is the idea to retribute, or repay, in some way, for without retribution how are we to distinguish being grateful for something from being happy for it? As Bonnie and de Waal (2004) argued, these are necessary but not sufficient features of gratitude. A further requirement is to retribute, freely and willingly, with something assumed to be of interest or need to the benefactor. Not surprisingly, this type of gratitude, a virtuous act, needs time, experience and, perhaps, encouragement if it is to develop.

Interestingly, the author of the first empirical study of gratitude (Baumgarten-Tramer, 1938) examined age-related changes in the expression of gratitude. By contrast, authors of almost all of the most recent psychological studies published on gratitude have focused on variations in individuals' extent of gratitude or how to foster greater gratitude by simple interventions. When adolescents are studied, the questions of greatest interest seems to be whether the scales that were developed for use with adults can be used effectively with youth (see Froh, Fan, et al., 2011) or whether interventions with youth both increase the extent of gratitude (as measured) and serve to increase well-being (Froh et al., 2014; Watkins, 2014). However, given that most of the gratitude researchers associated with positive psychology are social or personality psychologists, rather than developmental psychologists, the lack of research into the development of gratitude is perfectly understandable.

Developmental questions, however, are highly relevant to considerations of gratitude as a virtue. How do we get to be considered grateful? We're not born grateful, and virtue ethicists might [would?] argue that no children or adolescents can be described as possessing any of the virtues, no matter how often they tell the truth or say "thank you" when given a gift or help. They invoke the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, to explain that children and adolescents have yet to understand fully the virtue under consideration and thus may not feel or act in an appropriate way for the appropriate reasons. Adults, on the other hand, may be expected, as a consequence of their development, to have practical wisdom, but this, by itself, is no guarantee of virtuous behaviour. Age, by itself, accounts for nothing; what matters are the experiences people have as they get older, their activities and interactions with others (Tudge, 2008), and how they come to make sense of those experiences. *Phronesis* does not arrive fully formed at any given age in a person's development; it therefore makes sense to consider how gratitude, or any other virtue, develops.

Studies about the behaviour of non-human primates (Bonnie & de Waal, 2004; de Waal, 2009) suggest that, at least at a basic level, gratitude can be encountered in other species. However, gratitude as a human virtue is a complex concept, one that requires understanding that others have intentions and needs or desires different from our own (Nelson et al., 2013). Very young children can be taught to say "thank you", and repaying a gift or favour with something of interest only to the original beneficiary may occur while children are still egocentric. But it seems unlikely that either would qualify as a fully-fledged virtue. The most sophisticated type of gratitude, one that seeks to repay for a gift or help with something of value or need to the original benefactor, and thus seems most relevant to gratitude as a virtue, is most likely to be encountered with older children or adolescents. Prior to the development of theory of mind, children are

incapable of considering the world from another person's perspective and thus would not even *know* what another person might like. In other words, from a developmental perspective, exchanges between a beneficiary and a benefactor can occur at different levels of complexity (Piaget, 1954).

This is precisely what Baumgarten-Tramer (1938) found in her pioneering study of 1,000 Swiss 7- to 15-year olds. She first asked her participants to say what their greatest wish was, and then asked what they would do for the person who granted them that wish. In other words, she did not try to assess the free-floating emotional state of gratitude or measure how grateful her respondents said they were, but to tie their expression of gratitude to a benefactor having granted them their wish. She found that verbal gratitude (expressing one's thanks, and which could be simply an expression of politeness) did not vary greatly with age, although was most likely to be expressed by the 15-year olds. The younger children in her sample were most likely to say that they would repay their benefactor with a gift, money, a hug, and so on. Baumgarten-Tramer termed this type of response "concrete gratitude" and noted that although those expressing concrete gratitude view retribution as important, the response is essentially egocentric, not taking account of what the benefactor might actually like or need. For example, a child who wished for a new doll house might offer to give the benefactor a doll. Baumgarten-Tramer found that this type of gratitude declined steadily with age. By contrast, what she termed "connective gratitude" steadily increased with age. Children expressing this type of gratitude not only recognize that repayment of a gift or help is necessary, but also that what is returned should be something that is helpful or appropriate to the benefactor. It is this type of gratitude that we consider virtuous.

Our research has thus focused on age-related changes in the expression of gratitude, trying to understand the roots of gratitude as a virtue, and how gratitude develops over the course

of childhood and adolescence. Our first studies, conducted in Brazil, consisted of providing 5- to 12-year-old children short vignettes in which a benefactor helped a child beneficiary (Castro, Rava, Hoefelmann, Pieta, & Freitas, 2011; Rava & Freitas, 2013). The results suggested that the majority of the children attributed positive feelings to the beneficiary and valued the benefactor's action (helping the beneficiary), but not the benefactor him or herself. However, we noted an evolution in the manner in which the children understood the obligation to return a favour to a benefactor: (a) the 5- to 6-year-old children focused primarily on the negative consequences that a failure to repay would have on the benefactor (for example, she would be sad); (b) this type of response declined with age; (c) returning a favour as a heteronomous obligation (for example, to ensure that the beneficiary was not viewed as ungrateful or rude) was most common among children aged 7 and older; (d) repayment as a moral good, as an autonomous obligation (for example, that it is good to repay or it is good to make the benefactor happy) only was seen among some of the 11- to 12-year olds.

Gratitude as a virtue, as we have defined it, requires understanding both another person's intentionality and that what another person might like or need is not necessarily the same as what the original beneficiary of the help or gift might need. Children without a theory of mind and who are still likely to be egocentric should not be expected to understand this type of gratitude, and even less to feel or express it.

To test this, we used the same vignettes with North American 5-year olds in a study that had the objective of examining developmental precursors to children's gratitude (Nelson et al., 2013). We hypothesized that the ability to recognize emotions and tie them appropriately to social situations would be important for the understanding of the most basic aspect of gratitude—that the beneficiary not only has to feel positive but also has to tie that positive feeling with the

benefit received in order to feel grateful for it. As mentioned above, gratitude also requires an understanding of the mental state of the benefactor (McAdams & Bauer, 2004). To feel grateful, the beneficiary has to recognize that the benefactor has identified and acted to fulfill his or her need or desire. The results of this longitudinal study suggest that children with a better early understanding of emotions and mental states understand more about gratitude. Mental-state knowledge at age 4 mediated the relation between emotion knowledge at age 3 and gratitude understanding at age 5.

The second main way in which we have examined the development of gratitude, focusing specifically on different types of gratitude (simple politeness, an egocentric response, and one that is likely to establish or strengthen connections with others) is by adapting Baumgarten-Tramer's (1938) approach. Our goal is to assess the extent to which the same developmental patterns that she had found with Swiss children almost 80 years ago are found currently and in different societies, specifically the US, Brazil, Russia, and China.

Our reason for selecting these specific countries is that the first author has worked for extended periods in each of the first three countries, and speaks English, Portuguese, and (though no longer very well) Russian, and the second author has worked in both Brazil and the US and speaks Portuguese and English. China was chosen partly because the first author has worked with various Chinese graduate students and one of them collected the data in China. But the second, and more theoretically relevant, reason is that Hofstede (2001) found that these countries ranked very differently on his individualism–collectivism continuum. The United States was ranked at 91, very close to the individualism end of the continuum, Brazil and Russia were ranked at 38 and 39 respectively, and China was ranked at 20, close to the collectivism end of the continuum. We think that the individualism–collectivism distinction is too simplistic; societies

are far from homogeneous, and there are good reasons for thinking that collectivism is not the opposite of individualism, as Hofstede (2011) claimed (see, for example Kağıtçıbaşı, 2007; Oysermann, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002; Raeff, 2010; Tudge et al., in press). Nonetheless, these rankings serve to support our claim that these societies are culturally different in terms of at least some values. They therefore permit a reasonable assessment of whether the development of gratitude occurs in similar ways in different cultural groups.

Two different samples were collected from Porto Alegre, the capital city of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, one consisting of 430 7- to 14-year olds (Freitas, Pieta, & Tudge, 2011) and one with 396 children with the same spread of age (Freitas et al., 2014). One sample of 358 7- to 13-year olds was collected from Greensboro, NC, in the United States (Tudge, et al., under review), one sample of 297 8- to 14-year olds from Tula and Moscow, in Russia (Mokrova et al., work in progress), and one sample of 334 7- to 14-year olds from Guangdong, China (Wang et al., work in progress).

In each case the children were asked: “What is your greatest wish?” They were then asked: “What would you do for the person who granted you that wish?” As discussed above, we think that it is important to link any expression of gratitude to gaining something that they would really like, rather than simply ask people to say how grateful they are. Although the children varied in terms of what they wished for, in this presentation we will just provide the data on their expressions of gratitude. We found that the great majority of the children’s responses could be categorized in the three main types (verbal, concrete, and connective) that Baumgarten-Tramer (1938) had described, and we will not discuss those relatively few responses that did not fit.

As discussed above, Baumgarten-Tramer (1938) reported that across her 7- to 15-year-old Swiss sample verbal gratitude did not vary greatly by age, although it was much more likely

to be expressed by the 15-year olds. If the same developmental trend is followed across historical time and cross culturally, we should find either no increase with age or some greater expression of verbal gratitude among the older children (Baumgarten-Tramer did not provide enough information to allow us to make any clearer prediction). However, her data were quite clear in the case of concrete gratitude (the egocentric type of repayment), which was expressed much more by her younger than older participants, and we therefore predicted a linear decline, with age, in this type of gratitude. By contrast, Baumgarten-Tramer found that her older participants were more likely than those who were younger to express connective gratitude (repaying with something judged to be of value to the benefactor), and we predicted a linear increase, with age, in this type of gratitude.

We used a type of linear regression (curve estimation) to assess the extent to which these children and young adolescents expressed the three main types of gratitude differently as a function of age to test our hypotheses derived from Baumgarten-Tramer (1938). She was not entirely clear about the age-related nature of verbal gratitude. In our research, both Brazilian samples saw significant linear increases, with age, in the expression of verbal gratitude (2008 sample $R^2 = .59, p < .05$; 2013 sample $R^2 = .67, p < .05$). In both the US and Russian samples, however, there was no significant change with age (US $R^2 = .43, ns$; Russia $R^2 = .15, ns$). In China, on the other hand, there was actually a curvilinear effect (R^2 [quadratic] = .86, $p < .01$), with younger children being far more likely than all others to express verbal gratitude, much less verbal gratitude expressed by 10- to 13-year olds, but more expressed by those that were 14.

These changes with age are interesting, but so too are the cultural differences. As just mentioned, Chinese 7- and 8-year olds were more likely than any other group to indicate that they would express verbal gratitude when receiving something that they really wanted. No fewer

than 70% of their responses were of this type, whereas only between 15% and 40% of the responses of same-age children in the other societies featured verbal gratitude. In the two Brazilian samples the percentage of responses that included verbal gratitude increased from about 15% to 30% among the younger children to about 45% to 60% of all responses among 13- to 14-year olds. By contrast, although the Russian children until about age 11 were more likely than those in the United States to express verbal gratitude (around 40% to 50% of responses compared to 20% to 30% in the US sample), the older children in these countries expressed very similar amounts of this type of gratitude (between 30% and 40%). If it is the case that verbal gratitude is simply a reflection of being taught to be polite when receiving something one wishes for, younger Chinese children were more than twice as likely as their counterparts in Brazil or the United States to be polite.

The results were more consistent in the case of concrete gratitude, in that there was a clear and significant linear decline, with age, in four of the samples. This was the case with both Brazilian samples (2008 sample $R^2 = .87$, $p < .001$; 2013 sample $R^2 = .81$, $p = .002$), as well as with the US participants ($R^2 = .77$, $p = .01$) and those from Russia ($R^2 = .70$, $p = .02$). This was not the case in China, however, with no evidence of any significant change with age ($R^2 = .44$, *ns*).

The most interesting cross-cultural differences were that the American children, of all ages, were the most likely to express concrete gratitude at all ages (with more than 50% of the responses of 7-year olds being of this type) and the Russian children, at least from the age of 9 onwards (20% of their responses), were consistently least likely to express this type of gratitude. The Brazilian children, from both samples, fell between these two groups. In other words, similar rates of decline, with age, across these four groups began from different starting places.

In the case of China, however, fewer than 15% of the responses of the 7-year olds were of concrete gratitude, with little variation across age. These younger Chinese children, in other words, were much more likely to express verbal gratitude and much less likely to express concrete gratitude than were children in the other countries.

We have argued, however, that connective gratitude, by taking into account the wishes and feelings of the benefactor, thereby strengthening the relationship, best qualifies as a virtue. We were interested to know, therefore, whether there was any evidence of this type of gratitude in children, whether it was more commonly expressed among older children, and whether children in different cultures might express this type of gratitude to different extents.

What we found was that in three of the samples there was a significant increase in connective gratitude with age; however, this was not the case in either of the Brazilian samples (2008 sample $R^2 = .44$, *ns*; 2013 sample $R^2 = .05$, *ns*). With our US participants, older children were much more likely to express connective gratitude than were those who were younger ($R^2 = .91$, $p = .001$), as were their counterparts in Russia ($R^2 = .64$, $p = .03$). As for the Chinese sample, there also was a strong tendency for children aged 10 to 13 to express connective gratitude more than did those who were younger ($R^2 = .49$, $p = .052$); however, a decline in connective gratitude among the Chinese 14-year olds meant that we found a significant curvilinear effect (R^2 [quadratic] = .86, $p = .008$).

Several things are worth noting. First, between 15% and 30% of the responses of 7- to 8-year olds were of connective gratitude; in other words, this type of gratitude is not only found in young adolescents. Second, 11- to 14-year-old Russian youth were most likely to express this type of gratitude (around 60% of their responses), and 10- to 13-year-old Chinese youth were similarly likely to express connective gratitude (around 50% of their responses). Finally,

although Brazilian 7- and 8-year olds from the 2013 sample were more likely than any other same-age group to express this type of gratitude (a little over 30% of their responses), there was no increase, with age, in the expression of connective gratitude, as there was in the Russian, Chinese, and American samples.

What do these findings tell us about gratitude as a virtue? At first sight, not very much. No one would argue that a child or young adolescent was virtuous, even with regard to the feeling and expression of gratitude, on the basis of a single grateful act, and even less on the written expression of gratitude on the basis of imagining being granted one's best wish. Nonetheless, it seems clear that the bases for the development of gratitude as a virtue are present in children as young as 7. Many of them said that they would respond at least politely, expressing thanks, to someone who granted them their wish, and many others recognized that help or a gift should be repaid in some way. Younger children, for the most part, thought in terms of repayment with something that they themselves would like; offering a doll or a toy to a benefactor is surely evidence of a desire to give something nice, although offering the benefactor \$100 after having received one million dollars is perhaps less compelling evidence. Our older participants, at least in Russia, China, and the United States, were much more likely than those who were younger to take into account the wishes or needs of the benefactor, and thus behave in a way likely to strengthen their relationship with the benefactor.

Moreover, the cultural variability that we found suggests that culture-wide sets of child-rearing values and beliefs have an influence on how children respond to being given something. If it is the case that culture-wide values influence children's responses to help and gifts, it is most likely that the parents are the mediating factor. Are Chinese parents, for example, more likely than those in other societies to stress to their young children the importance of thanking? Do

Russian and Chinese parents exemplify more collectivist or related values, thereby encouraging their youth to think about others, rather than have them focus on the individual? Do American parents, by focusing more on the gifts that are given than on the people providing those gifts, encourage their children to think in terms of a gift return rather than on strengthening relationships?

If parents have an impact on how their children react on receiving help or a gift, then the next step is to understand what they are currently doing to influence their children's feelings and expressions of gratitude. Then, if we wish to encourage the development of gratitude as a virtue, we need to find ways to persuade them to focus less on the gift itself and more on the giver. In other words, we should not only think of gratitude as being the parent of all virtues, but also what parents can do to ensure that gratitude as a virtue is developed in their children.

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