



THE  
JUBILEE CENTRE  
FOR CHARACTER & VALUES

UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

# Gratitude in Public Life

22 – 23 November 2013

University of Birmingham

'Gratitude is not only the greatest of  
the Virtues, but the parent of all the  
others'

Cicero – 106-43BC



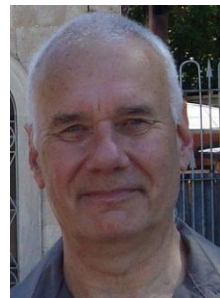
Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Welcome to Birmingham and to this Jubilee Centre for Character and Values gratitude seminar.

Gratitude is surely an attitude, response or virtue of some moral, spiritual, social, political and educational significance. In this light, it has recently and rightly attracted the interest and attentions of philosophers, social scientists, theologians and educationalists severally bent on exploring diverse conceptual, moral, psychological and pedagogical aspects of gratitude in a rapidly expanding academic and popular literature. Arguably, however, there has to date been rather less in the way of cross-disciplinary dialogue between researchers working on these rather different conceptual, normative and empirical aspects of gratitude than might be considered theoretically or practically desirable. From this viewpoint, while the Birmingham Jubilee Centre for the Study of Character and Values is centrally concerned with the more practical - political, social and educational - promotion of grateful attitudes and responses in public life, it takes the view that this may be best illumined and promoted by interdisciplinary and collaborative work drawing from a variety of conceptual, empirical and other directions. In this regard, the present Jubilee Centre for Character and Values seminar has been fortunate to attract a distinguished team of leading academic researchers in the field - from a variety of relevant disciplines - to the well overdue end of connection between different contemporary lines of gratitude research. It is hoped that - as well as serving to clarify and assist the practical and developmental aims of the Centre - this pioneering venture may in due course lead to further published academic work that usefully brings together the achievements and insights of different disciplines in a spirit of greater mutual understanding and common purpose.

I look forward to the various papers and I want to thank you all on behalf of the Jubilee Centre for Character and Values for your welcome participation in this event.

Professor David Carr  
Professor of Ethics and Education



## Programme

# Friday 22 November 2013

Kingfisher Room, Peter Scott House

09.30-10.00

**Welcome**

(James Arthur and David Carr)

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Chair: Kristján Kristjánsson

Liz Gulliford and Blaire Morgan,

University of Birmingham  
Chair: Kenneth Wilson

10.00-11.00

**Presentation 1**

Giacomo Bono,  
California State University  
Chair: David Carr

12.30-13.30

**Lunch**

13.30-14.30

**Presentation 3**

Nancy Fagley,  
Rutgers University  
Chair: Liz Gulliford

15.30 – 16.00

**Coffee**

16.00-17.30

**Jubilee Centre for  
Character and Values  
Gratitude Presentations**  
Chair: Tom Harrison

11.00-11.30

**Coffee**

11.30-12.30

**Presentation 2**

Claudia Card,

14.30 – 15.30

**Presentation 4**

18.30

**Dinner – Kababish  
Restaurant**

# Saturday 23 November 2013

Kingfisher Room, Peter Scott House

09.00 – 10.00

**Presentation 5**

Nathaniel Lambert,  
Brigham Young University  
Chair: Blaire Morgan

11.30 – 12.30

**Presentation 7**

Saul Smilansky,  
University of Haifa  
Chair: David Carr

14.30 – 15.30

**Presentation 9**

Alex Wood,  
University of Stirling  
Chair: David Carr

10.00-11.00

**Presentation 6**

Terrance McConnell,  
University of North Carolina  
at Greensboro  
Chair: Kristján Kristjánsson

12.30 – 13.30

**Lunch**

13.30 – 14.30

**Presentation 8**

Philip Watkins,  
Eastern Washington  
University  
Chair: Kenneth Wilson

15.30 – 16.00

**Coffee**

16.00 – 16.30

**Closing Remarks**

11.00 – 11.30

**Coffee**

18.30

**Dinner**

# Seminar Paper Abstracts

**Giacomo Bono**

California State University at Dominguez Hills, USA

## PROMOTING GRATITUDE IN KIDS HELPS BUILD CHARACTER

Over two decades of research demonstrates the psychology behind gratitude's role in human thriving. However, much of the evidence rests on research with adults, seriously limiting the empirical picture of gratitude as a transformational behaviour in human development. In the last several years research has started to show that gratitude has many similar benefits with youth as it does with adults. This paper presents recent correlational, experimental, and longitudinal evidence of determinants and benefits of gratitude among children and adolescents, with the objective of outlining how gratitude promotion early on in life helps foster the development of good character in children naturally.

All children have a skill, talent, or passion that produces a spark. It's the responsibility of parents, teachers, and adults to fan those sparks by feeding their children's curiosity and helping them create a positive and coherent life story. Gratitude, which is born of loving connection and grows from loving connection, helps create this story. This paper begins with a focus on early strategies adults can use to foster gratitude in children and proceeds on through to the adolescent years to discuss strategies adults can use to help connect kids with a social world that cares about them and believes in them. Specifically, this paper outlines some guiding principles that parents, teachers, and adults can use to make grateful, thriving kids:

- Make Gratitude a Priority by Modeling and Teaching It
- Be Mindful Around Children and Appreciate Time Together
- Learn about Encourage the Use of Their Strengths
- Support Your Child's Autonomy and Help Them Achieve Intrinsic Goals
- Encourage Helping Others and Generosity
- Help Youth Nurture Their Relationships
- Help Kids Find What Matters to Them

**Claudia Card**

University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA

## GRATITUDE TO THE DECENT RESCUER

By "decent rescuers," I mean rescuers who thought they were doing the only decent thing they could, under the circumstances; they did not regard themselves as acting above and beyond the call of duty. Gratitude that might naturally be felt by the rescued presents an ethical problem: how to avoid offending the rescuer by implying that one would not have expected them to do what they thought was only decent. I consider several cases and conclude with some thoughts on expressing gratitude and on survivor guilt.

**Nancy Fagley**

Rutgers Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology, USA

## THE CONSTRUCT OF GRATITUDE—RECONSIDERED

Although the terms *gratitude* and *appreciation* are often used interchangeably, research indicates appreciation is more than just gratitude, as it is typically measured (Fagley, 2012; Wood, Maltby, Stewart, & Joseph, 2008). Therefore further clarification of these concepts is needed.

I argue that using the conceptual framework of appreciation, which specifies several aspects—including gratitude—would better reflect the broader conceptualization suggested by some gratitude researchers (e.g. Lambert, Graham, & Fincham, 2009; Watkins, Woodward, Stone, & Kolts, 2003; Wood, Froh, & Geraghty, 2010). More importantly, it would foster the development of more specific, targeted interventions.

Using a single term for all the various meanings and/or aspects of a multifaceted concept does not promote understanding the phenomenon. In contrast, using the framework of appreciation with its more differentiated view, and maintaining distinctions among the various aspects it describes is potentially valuable, as the various aspects (a) may be more or less related to particular criterion variables of interest, (b) direct researchers' attention to different behaviours or processes, and (c) may use different mechanisms.

The value of this conceptualization will be demonstrated with data showing that the various aspects, including gratitude, are differentially related to outcomes such as subjective wellbeing, psychological wellbeing, depression, and health.

*Gratitude seminar abstract*

**Liz Gulliford and Blaire Morgan**

University of Birmingham, UK

#### GRATITUDE IN THE UK: NAVIGATING A MAZE OF CONCEPTUAL COMPLEXITIES

The topic of gratitude has become extremely popular in recent years, and with good reason; studies from psychology have highlighted that gratitude is related to a host of positive psychological, interpersonal and health benefits, whilst the work of eminent philosophers has emphasised how gratitude is a fascinating, complex concept that warrants considerable debate.

Over the last 14 months, the Jubilee Centre for Character and Values' "Attitude for Gratitude" project has endeavoured to unite ideas from both psychology and philosophy. In a recent paper, [Gulliford, L., Morgan, B., & Kristjánsson, K. (2013). Recent Work on the Concept of Gratitude in Philosophy and Psychology. *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, 47(3), 283–317] we discuss the numerous conceptual controversies that surround gratitude, for example, issues of supererogation, presence of benefactors and conditions surrounding the benefit. To shed further light on such controversies we have developed two new investigative methods; a vignette questionnaire for adults and gratitude stories for use with children. These methods seek to elucidate how gratitude is understood by the British public and what factors influence when, and to what degree, gratitude is experienced.

In this seminar, we will describe these methods, the theory behind them and the preliminary findings that they have unveiled. We will also discuss the theoretical and practical implications of our work and why studies like these might help to better inform a growing field of gratitude research. We hope that this seminar will spur a conversation about how gratitude is defined and understood, and emphasise the value of laypeople's conceptions of gratitude.

**Nathaniel Lambert**

Brigham Young University, USA

#### VARIETIES OF GRATITUDE EXPERIENCES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR AND WELL-BEING

Gratitude has often been conceptualized as a one-dimensional construct. However, Lambert, Graham, & Fincham (2008) provided evidence suggesting more than one types of gratitude experiences, benefit-triggered gratitude and generalized gratitude. I propose that gratitude toward a higher power may be a third distinct type of gratitude experience that combines elements of benefit-triggered gratitude and generalized gratitude. I discuss each of these three varieties of gratitude experiences and propose unique mediational pathways for how each may impact prosocial behavior and well-being with examples from my research and that of others in the field.

## **Terrance McConnell**

University of North Carolina at Greensboro, USA

### GRATITUDE, SERVILITY, AND RIGHTS

The mere fact that  $P_1$  has benefited  $P_2$  is not enough to show that  $P_2$  owes  $P_1$  gratitude. In addition, at the very least  $P_2$ 's act must have a certain degree of moral significance. Part of what is needed for  $P_1$ 's act to have appropriate moral significance is that the benefit was provided intentionally, freely, and not for disqualifying reasons. Moreover,  $P_2$  must have accepted the benefit [McConnell (1993), Chapter 1]. Some think that a much stronger condition is needed before  $P_2$  has a debt of gratitude to  $P_1$ ;  $P_1$ 's act must have been supererogatory. Thus David Heyd writes, "Gratitude, however, is always appropriate in the case of supererogatory behavior, and strictly speaking, is not the fitting response to duty-fulfilling action" [Heyd (1982), p. 140]. In the same vein, writing about what children owe their parents, Daniel Callahan says, "Gratitude would be due, not simply because parents discharged their obligations toward their children, but because in the manner of doing so they went beyond the demands of mere duty, giving voluntarily of themselves in a way neither required nor ordinarily expected of them" [Callahan (1985), p. 35].

That an act is supererogatory is indeed of great moral significance. But this condition is too strong; duty-fulfilling conduct can, in some contexts, generate debts of gratitude [Simmons (1979), pp. 179-181; Blustein (1982), pp. 178-179; McConnell (1993), pp. 14-16; Smilansky, (1997)]. But when the question is put another way, the answer may seem less obvious. "Can one person owe another gratitude if the latter has merely given the former that to which she has a right?" Perhaps because of the word 'merely', a negative answer seems plausible here. Against this view, I shall argue that in some contexts respecting another's rights, even though not supererogatory, nevertheless can have the sort of moral significance necessary for creating a requirement of gratitude.

I shall focus on the actions of persons I call "moral standouts." These are individuals who perform their duties and respect others' rights even when most similarly situated agents fail to do so. But the mere fact that an agent performs her duties in contexts where most others do not is not enough to give her conduct the kind of moral significance needed to generate a requirement of gratitude. The challenge is to say what else is needed. Particulars matter and I shall focus on several historically-based cases from which I shall attempt to extract relevant features that can plausibly be said to give the agent's actions the requisite moral significance needed properly to prompt gratitude.

One reason to think that gratitude is not an appropriate response when we can correctly describe the benefactor's conduct as respecting the beneficiary's rights is that such a response may exhibit the moral failure of servility [Hill (1991), pp. 9-14]. The servile person fails to understand and acknowledge his own moral rights; he sometimes exhibits "misplaced" gratitude because of this shortcoming. If a person expresses gratitude when his rights are respected, that is morally fitting only if it does not thereby exhibit servility. I shall argue that in the cases I highlight, the various contexts show that a response of gratitude is not indicative of servility.

## **Saul Smilansky**

University of Haifa, Israel

### GRATITUDE FOR THE PAST AND THE NONIDENTITY PROBLEM

Is it reasonable to feel gratitude for the past? Ought we to do so? On the one hand, it seems both reasonable and arguably even morally required that we feel some gratitude for the past, such as towards those people whose sacrifices enabled our existence, freedom or well-being. On the other hand, reflection upon history, and in particular on the nonidentity problem as it pertains to the past, threatens such a position. I wish to explore

these issues. Since the nonidentity problem has been examined almost exclusively in a forward-looking way, my exploration will necessarily be rather tentative.

### **Philip Watkins**

Eastern Washington University, USA

#### HOW GRATITUDE MAY TRAIN COGNITIVE PROCESSES THAT ARE FOUNDATIONAL TO WELL-BEING

Research provides strong support for the theory that gratitude is an important component of the good life. How is gratitude important to well-being? In past work I have argued that gratitude supports well-being because it amplifies the good in one's life. Gratitude may enhance well-being through several different mechanisms, such as amplifying the good in one's emotional experience, in one's social life, and in coping processes. In this presentation I will discuss how gratitude might amplify the good in cognitive processes. I will focus on a treatment outcome study where we found that a 3-blessings gratitude intervention improved well-being significantly greater than placebo and 3-blessings pride interventions. Notably, the greatest enhancement in well-being for those in our gratitude treatment occurred *after* the treatment phase. Indeed, the highest level of well-being for these individuals was found at our last assessment, five weeks after the conclusion of treatment. Why did the well-being of those in the gratitude intervention continue to increase after treatment? I propose that grateful recounting treatments such as this, train cognitive processes that may be important to well-being. Specifically, these exercises may train individuals to allocate attention to the good in their life, they may train individuals to interpret events in a more positive manner, and they may encourage people to reflect more frequently on the good in their life. Moreover, when individuals allocate their attention toward the good and interpret events in a more benevolent manner, this should enhance the encoding of positive events, which should increase their accessibility in memory. I will then explain how the Cognitive Bias Modification (CBM) paradigm may provide some helpful leads for investigating these cognitive mechanisms. In conclusion, gratitude may be adaptive because it trains cognitive habits that are important to well-being. In short, gratitude amplifies the good in cognitive processing.

### **Alex Wood**

University of Stirling, UK

#### GRATITUDE AS AN INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCE

The talk overviews a program of research into gratitude as an individual difference, its relationship with physical and psychological health (and the underlying mechanisms), and how it naturally develops as well as how it can be fostered with therapeutic techniques. Specifically; (a) gratitude is conceptualized as a life orientation towards noticing and appreciating the positive in life; (b) gratitude longitudinally leads to less stress and depression and greater social support; (c) the relationship between gratitude and well-being persists after controlling for other personality traits (assessed with the 30 facets of the NEO-PIR big five measure); (d) gratitude operates through the existence of positive schemas; and (e) interventions to increase gratitude are as effective as improving depression, anxiety, and body image as the gold standard techniques used in clinical therapy. Thus suggesting how gratitude develops, what it is related to, and the mechanism through which these relationships operate.

### **Jubilee Centre for Character and Values Gratitude Presentations**

University of Birmingham, UK

#### GRATITUDE PRESENTATIONS

Members of the Jubilee Centre for Character and Values team will present thoughts and findings from research projects focussing on gratitude. Included in these presentations will be the 'Thank You Film Awards', a project inviting young people to consider how they experience gratitude and the impact it has in their lives by making a film thanking someone or something in their lives; 'Give Thanks, Give Back', a project which is considering young people's understandings of gratitude and the implications for schools seeking to promote the virtue; 'Good Neighbours In A Good Neighbourhood', promoting gratitude in the neighbourhood, and the 'Theological Roots of Gratitude', which aims to answer the question What is the meaning of gratitude in Judaism, Christianity and Islam? Members of each project team will present their work to date. Presentations will be made by Jenny Higgins and Tom Harrison (Thank You Film Awards), Al Barrett (Good Neighbours in a Good Neighbourhood), Lee Rogerson (Give Thanks, Give Back) and Kenneth Wilson (Theological Roots of Gratitude).



# Delegate List

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Adjunct Faculty  
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Development Program  
California State University  
at Dominguez Hills

**Professor Claudia Card**  
Emma Goldman Professor  
Department of Philosophy  
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**Professor David Carr**  
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