Thank You For Your Time! Would You Mind Donating to Our Cause? The Effect of Gratitude on Prosocial Behavior

Matthew L. Hortt
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, horttm@unlv.nevada.edu

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME! WOULD YOU MIND DONATING TO OUR CAUSE?

THE EFFECT OF GRATITUDE ON PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

By

Matthew L. Hortt

Bachelor of Arts – Criminal Justice
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2005

Master of Science - Library and Information Science
University of North Texas
2009

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of the requirements for the

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Greenspun College of Urban Affairs
The Graduate College

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This dissertation prepared by

Matthew Hortt

entitled

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Doctor of Philosophy – Public Affairs
School of Environmental and Public Affairs

Jessica Word, Ph.D.
Examination Committee Chair

Christopher Stream, Ph.D.
Examination Committee Member

Anna Lukemeyer, Ph.D.
Examination Committee Member

Michael Borer, Ph.D.
Graduate College Faculty Representative

Kathryn Hausbeck Korgan, Ph.D.
Graduate College Interim Dean
Abstract

A random assignment experiment examined the effects of three expressions of gratitude on two prosocial behaviors: volunteering and making monetary donations to charitable organizations. The results indicated that two of the expressions of gratitude had a significant opposite effect on the two prosocial behaviors. Both a verbal thank-you speech and a handwritten thank-you note, resulted in a significant reduction in the amount of pledged volunteer hours, while resulting in a significant increase in the amount of pledged charitable dollars. The third expression of gratitude, a ten dollar thank-you gift card, produced no significant findings for either prosocial behavior. The results of the experiment indicate that while volunteering and donating to charity are both prosocial behaviors, they each represent a different exchange relationship; volunteering, a social exchange and donating to charity, a market exchange. Each exchange is governed by a different set of norms and expectations. Violating these norms and expectations result in negative impacts on the prosocial behavior outcomes.
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Chapter I: Introduction and Overview

Background

Prosocial behaviors drive much of the work in the Third Sector. Prosocial behaviors are defined as actions that promote a collective cause at a personal cost to oneself (Panagopoulos 2011). Nonprofits rely heavily on two types of prosocial behaviors for support: monetary donations and volunteers. While increases in charitable donations greatly assists nonprofits, volunteers and the hours they donate are ‘absolutely essential’ to charities (Narraway & Cordery, 2009). When volunteers are active in an organization it can improve organizational accountability, create positive relationships with the community and increase charitable networks (Hotchkiss, Fottler & Unruh, 2009). Volunteering has been defined as organizationally, planned, prosocial behaviors that benefit others, (Hotchkiss et al, 2009). Both of these resources have become scarce and harder to come by in the last 15 years (Giving USA, 2010; Nonprofit Finance Fund, 2012; Rosenberg, Rooney, Steuerle, & Toran, 2012).

Third sector organizations are utilizing many different methods to attract more dollars and volunteer hours; it is, however, an uphill battle. A popular method has been the use of thank-you gifts for donations and as a reward for volunteering. A recent laboratory study, however, has found that this practice is not only less effective, but may also be detrimental to fundraising efforts (Newman & Shen, 2012). The finding of this study supports the need for more effective methods to increase volunteer hours and monetary donations. If the common practice of using thank-you gifts is in fact less effective and detrimental, new methods must be developed and tested. Social psychology literature provides a possible avenue of research that can be used to determine new methods of increasing these prosocial behaviors.
The social psychology research on gratitude has shown that it can have a positive effect on prosocial behaviors. Volunteering and the making of monetary contributions fall under the umbrella of prosocial behavior. Simple acts and expressions of gratitude may be used as a means to increase both prosocial behaviors and provide the support that third sector organizations need to survive. This study seeks to test the effects of gratitude on prosocial behaviors in general and donating to charity and volunteering specifically. It is expected that the findings of this study will provide support for a more effective method of attracting money and volunteers.

Formal research into the effects of gratitude, however, is in its early stages when compared with many other aspects of psychology and the social sciences (McCullogh, Kimeldorf & Cohen, 2008; Nowak & Roch, 2006; McCullogh, Kimeldorf & Emmons, 2001). The seminal studies in the area have shown that gratitude can have a profound effect on an individual’s well-being and interactions with their fellowman. As a generalization, gratitude or the activation of the emotion of gratitude has been shown to have a positive impact on prosocial behaviors. Social psychology refers to the activation of this emotion as the gratitude affect (McCullogh, Kimeldorf & Emmons, 2001). This effect was initially shown in Crowne & Marlowe’s (1960) study in which seventy one percent of participants who were thanked, assisted the researcher in cleaning up a pile of dropped papers, while just thirty six percent of the control group helped (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960). Additionally, gratitude expression has been shown to increase kidney donations (Bernstein & Simmons, 1974) as well as volunteering behaviors towards patients with HIV (Bennert, Ross & Sunderland, 1996). As evidenced by these findings, the gratitude affect can have an effect on a variety of prosocial behaviors.
Gratitude has been defined as a feeling of thankfulness or joy in response to the receipt of a gift, (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Adam Smith wrote that gratitude is a primary motivator for benevolent behavior. “The sentiment which most immediately and directly promotes us to reward, is gratitude,” (Smith, 1976 p.68). Gratitude can be considered a prosocial affect because it is a response brought on by the contribution to an individual’s welfare that may motivate the in-kind return of that behavior (McCullough, Kilpatrick & Tsang, 2002). Research up to this point has focused on how it benefits the individuals as well as how it can influence their response to others in need (McCullogh, Kimeldorf & Cohen, 2008). However, little research has been conducted into the effects of gratitude on formal, organized prosocial behaviors. The intent of this research is to examine the impact of varying degrees of gratitude on the prosocial behaviors: volunteerism and charitable donations. Additionally, this work will test and compare these findings with the negative effects which have been shown when thank-you gifts are offered in return for the same prosocial behaviors. This work seeks to answer the following questions through the use of a field experiments:

**R1:** How will the gratitude expressions impact prosocial behaviors (monetary donations and volunteerism)?

**R2:** How will the use of a thank-you gift as a form of gratitude expression change prosocial behaviors (monetary donations and volunteerism)?

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to determine what impact gratitude will have on the prosocial behaviors of volunteering for and donating to a charity. It will also compare these effects with the expected negative effects of a conditional (monetary marker) thank-you gift on these same prosocial acts. The findings of this study will help to identify more effective methods of
increasing prosocial behaviors. Nonprofits may be able to use these new methods to revise their fundraising and volunteer retention messages. Retention has become even more important following the decline in volunteer numbers and nonprofit donations since 2000, (Giving USA 2010). This decline in volunteer numbers and monetary support has driven the necessity to find and evaluate new and more effective methods of meeting both third sector needs. New methods may be evaluated through surveys, however a significant body of literature has been developed to address the inherent challenges posed by survey methodology. Evaluation through an experiment will provide unbiased results and allow for a real world evaluation of the effectiveness of the method being tested, (Guern & Rolston, 2013).

The use of a field experiment will test the effectiveness of the treatment as well as answer Mason’s (2013) challenge researchers to evaluate the aspects of charity and nonprofit organizations through the use of field experiments in partnership with nonprofit organizations. Random assignment, if used properly, can overcome many of the cited challenges that are presented by survey and observational methods. In 2012, Gerber and Green wrote, “Field experiments may be imperfect, but if uncertainty about bias is substantially lower for this type of research, they will effectively trump observational and lab studies” (p. 100). This form of research can prove to be a boon for research in the Nonprofit sector.

When a field experimental design is used, random assignment ensures that characteristics of treatment and non-treatment groups do not differ in any systemic way that would affect the success of the study.

…any difference in outcomes can be ascribed with a known degree of statistical confidence to the treatment. All other influences on the outcomes are washed out in this
calculation because they are the same for the control group and however many experimental groups there may be (Guern & Rolston, 2013, P.2).

The research design of this study sets out to answer Mason’s challenge to evaluate volunteerism and charity by using field experiments (Mason, 2013).

Additionally, this study will test the findings of Newman & Shen’s 2012 work. Their study found the offering of conditional thank-you gifts during charitable solicitations had a negative effect on prosocial acts. Newman & Shen’s study found that offering of conditional gifts did not help to increase charitable giving, but had a negative effect on the results of the solicitation. This finding supports the notion that using a thank-you gift or simply offering one to a prospective donor will lead to lower donations and an overall lower level of support. The results of the study did show a negative effect, however the use of conditional thank-you gifts as an expression of gratitude is a misnomer. The use of a conditional thank-you gift does not thank the donor for their donations, but introduces a monetary marker into the exchange and changes the solicitation from a social exchange into a market exchange.

Dan Ariely (2008) warns of the dangers of switching between these two exchanges in his book *Predictably Irrational*. Ariely explains people will often work harder and longer to help out a friend or family member, but if compensated for the work, the dynamics of the exchange are altered and work slows. Because Newman & Shen’s (2008) study uses conditional gifts as a variable, they are not truly evaluating the effect of gratitude. The researchers are providing a lure or incentive to entice charitable acts. Bringing the solicitation into a market exchange does not test gratitude; it simply tests the upper limits of the demand for the conditional thank-you gifts offered.
This study seeks to add to the literature by determining a more effective method of increasing prosocial behaviors. For the purposes of this study, the prosocial behaviors evaluated are volunteering and donating to nonprofit organizations. This study seeks to identify alternative methods which will help to increase donations and volunteerism through the expression of sincere gratitude. The use of the gratitude affect may prove a relatively low cost solution in comparison to the time and money spent in advertising and soliciting for volunteers and donations as well as the costs involved in the procurement and dispersal of thank-you gifts.

Additionally, it seeks to determine how gratitude can affect social and market relationship exchanges by expanding upon Newman & Shen’s (2012) work regarding the effects of thank-you gifts upon donations. The study will also serve to answer Mason’s 2013 challenge to utilize experimental design to evaluate nonprofit organizations.

In addition to the practical applications of the findings, the study seeks to add to the literature by directly comparing the effects of gratitude on the two identified prosocial behaviors. Previous studies have focused on the effect of gratitude upon one form of prosocial behavior. Crowne & Marlowe, 1960 willingness to help, Bernstein & Simmons, 1974, donation of kidneys, Newman & Shen (2012) focused on charitable monetary donations and Bernstein & Simmons, 1974 volunteering behaviors towards patients with HIV. These studies evaluate one specific prosocial behavior from a specific exchange, social or market. This study seeks to compare the effects of the same gratitude expression on prosocial behaviors from the two different exchanges: Social Exchange (Volunteering) and Market Exchange (Donating to charity). The gratitude literature suggests that individually it will have an effect upon the behavior, the study will determine if the effects are the same for both behaviors.
Problem Statement

Monetary donations are one of the largest revenue sources for nonprofits and charities in the United States (Giving USA, 2010). Coupled with volunteering, private charitable contributions are two critical resources for the nonprofit sector (Pettijohn, 2012). A 2011 survey by the Nonprofit Finance Fund found that of the 2,000 nonprofit organizations polled, 87 percent of the organizations continue to be impacted by the decline of the United States economy (The Nonprofit Finance Fund, 2012). Charitable giving made up about 2.2 percent of the GDP through most of the 2000s, but dropped by 13.2 percent between 2008 and 2009 and has maintained a relatively flat trajectory since (Rosenberg, Rooney, Steuerle, & Toran, 2012). Not only have levels of funding dropped, but a 2012 study by Newman and Shen showed that the use of thank-you gifts in solicitations have an adverse effect on donations. This finding highlights the need for more empirical research by examining the methods for initiating and maintaining support from donors and volunteers.

The volunteer workforce has decreased by nearly 25 percent, dropping from 83 million to 61.8 million in the span of eight years 2000-2008 (Independent Sector, 2009). Nonprofits faced with declining funding and staff resources are relying more heavily on the support of volunteers. A John Hopkins study found between September 2008 and March 2009, more than a third (34%) of nonprofit organizations reported the need to increase the number of volunteers they used, almost half (48%) anticipated that the need would continue to increase in subsequent years, (Salamon et al. 2009).

In 2012, individuals spent less time volunteering when compared to previous years. While nearly 26.5% of adults in the United States spent some time volunteering in an organizational setting, the average number of annual volunteer hours decreased by 17.2%;
dropping from 233 hours in 2011 to 193 hours in 2012. Given the decline in volunteers and hours, nonprofits must find the most effective methods of retaining the volunteers they attract. Determining new methods of attracting and retaining volunteers will enable organizations to improve recruitment efforts and help limit turnover.

Eisenberg and Mussen (1989) defined prosocial behavior as “voluntary actions that are intended to help or benefit another individual or group of individuals.” Taken in short, prosocial behaviors are voluntary actions that benefit others. Volunteering and the making of charitable donations fall well within these parameters. Using this logic, in order to increase volunteerism and charitable donations we need to find a method that will help to increase prosocial behavior. Research in the Theory of Gratitude as a Moral Affect has shown the emotion of gratitude can increase positive emotions, reduce negative emotions and increase overall satisfaction with life.

The theory of gratitude as a moral affect is based on cognitive appraisal theories of emotion (Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1966; Ortony et al., 1988; Scherer, 1984). According to this theory, emotions are generated in response to events that are appraised with respect to their implications for an individual’s wellbeing. When an individual experiences an emotion, they also experience a physiological change which leads to changes in their action tendencies and impulses. These action tendencies motivate overt behaviors that are generated in response to the expected effectiveness of their available behavioral options (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986). Frijda (2006) states that emotion generation is initially based on stimuli from the outside world, but it is also reliant upon the disposition of the individual: “Emotions arise by the interaction of events with dispositions of the individual. . . . The dispositions enable motivational, behavioral, physiological, and consciously felt response components” (p. 47).
Using this theory as a guide, this study will attempt to gauge the impact of the sincere expression of gratitude on the prosocial behaviors vital to nonprofit and charitable organizations. The findings of this study can be used to help refine fundraising solicitations and volunteer recruiting practices. Doing so would help to reduce charitable organizations’ overhead and allow them to free up funds that could be better allocated in supporting their core mission and causes. Identifying the positive effect that gratitude can have on these prosocial behaviors will also give these organizations a more effective tool to help them raise more funds plus attract and retain more volunteers.

Chapter two will review and examine the literature regarding: gratitude, prosocial behavior, fundraising and volunteerism. Chapter three will discuss the methods used for the study. Chapter four will discuss the findings of the study. Chapter five will discuss future research and limitations as well as provide a conclusion to the work.
Chapter II: Literature Review

The following chapter will review the research that has been conducted concerning gratitude, prosocial behavior (helping behaviors) as well as donor and volunteer motivation. Smith (1975) wrote that scholars who study voluntary action research should utilize cross-disciplinary inputs, a call most recently echoed by Payton, Tempel & Rosso (1991) and Clotfelter (1997). Since the 1980s, philanthropic studies have emerged as a new, multidisciplinary field in the social sciences (Katz, 1999). This review will look at these areas of literature from a multidisciplinary perspective. Examining the research through multiple lenses will help to provide a more complete overview of the research that has been conducted on prosocial behavior.

The assessment by Lindahl and Conley (2002) concludes that fundraising as a field needs a greater substantive base. Objective research is needed to replace the reliance on anecdotal evidence. This still holds; for instance, Warwick’s (2001) guide to successful fundraising letters contains no references to scientific research. Since these assessments, additional scientific research has been completed in various fields. This field spans many disciplines including: marketing, economics, social psychology, biological psychology, neuroscience, sociology, political science, anthropology, biology, and evolutionary psychology.

However, charitable giving is likely to be different from many other forms of helping behavior. One crucial difference is that the benefactor of charitable donations is usually absent from the context in which a donation is made, while the beneficiary is present in the helping situation in most studies. The presence of a beneficiary may strongly affect the social dynamics and motivations for helping behavior, but is atypical for many examples of philanthropy.
Sociologist John Wilson (2000) cited that volunteering, much like philanthropy is a form of formal prosocial behavior; there are many striking parallels between the two. The following section will review prosocial behavior in general, then donor motivation and volunteer motivations specifically.

Prosocial behaviors can be defined as actions that promote a collective cause at a personal cost to oneself (Panagopoulos, 2011). Psychologists claim there is a link between emotions and prosocial acts. They argue that initiating and guiding goal-oriented prosocial behaviors are a primary function of emotions (Barrett & Campus 1987; Cosmides & Tooby, 2000; Frijda, 1986: LeDoux, 1996). There is evidence that positive emotions, such as pride, have the capacity to motivate prosocial activity. Negative emotions such as shame can also motivate this type of activity (Panagopoulos, 2011). In addition to pride and shame, gratitude has been shown to be a motivating factor for prosocial behavior.

**Gratitude**

Theologians and moral philosophers have varying opinions about what constitutes the idea of gratitude. In 54 A.D. the Roman Stoic Philosopher Seneca in his work *On Benefits*, proposed that for gratitude to properly be expressed, a gift must be given. Thomas Aquines viewed gratitude in a more Christian context, in which there exists a continuous scale of obligations. Aquinas saw the largest debt owed must be paid to God. In *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbs identified gratitude as the 4th law of nature, and a necessary to ensure that self-interested people will be willing to act for the benefit of others and society in general. Scottish Philosopher and Political Economist Adam Smith changed the way gratitude was conceptualized in the West. Smith described the mechanism that gives rise to feelings of gratitude. This became the theory of moral sentiment in that humans are driven by self-interest but are also capable of love,
compassion & gratitude. Smith viewed gratitude as a necessary component of the contract system and a sentiment that promotes us to reward others for the good they have done for us. In recent years, gratitude has been identified as a foundation for political obligations (Klosko, 1989; Walker 1988, 1989).

Gratitude has been defined as a feeling of thankfulness or joy in response to the receipt of a gift (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Little research has been done to directly evaluate how to increase the amount and number of hours that are pledged or donated. Omoto & Snyder (1995) and Penner & Finkelstien (1998) found that once a majority of individuals begin to volunteer on a regular basis, they continue to do so for an extended period of time, on average a few years. The question then becomes, once they are committed to volunteer for a period of time, how can we entice them to pledge more time? Regardless of their motivations, is there a way to increase the amount of time they will give to an organization? The psychology literature shows that there is, through the use of activating the gratitude affect.

Volunteers have already agreed to pledge their time. If we sincerely thank them, and in so doing activate the gratitude affect, according to the theory, they will be more likely to participate in prosocial behavior and pledge more time to the organization. In a field experiment, expressions of gratitude have been shown to improve the behaviors of volunteers and increase visits of case managers in residential treatment programs (Bennett, Ross, & Sunderland, 1996, Clark, Northrop, & Barkshire, 1988). Additional lab experiments have shown that donors and volunteers who were thanked for their efforts were willing to give more and work harder, when compared with a sample who were not thanked (Clark, 1975; Goldman, Seever, & Seever, 1982; McGovern, Ditzian, & Taylor, 1975; Moss & Page, 1972).
History of Gratitude Study

In the social sciences, gratitude is a relatively new area of research. Despite the relatively new study of gratitude, historical concepts of the emotion can be broken down into two themes: religious views and recognition.

In terms of the religious view, gratitude is a concept that has been thoroughly defined by theologians and moral philosophers. In many of the writings, gratitude is seen as an important manifestation of virtue and is a valued disposition in the Jewish, Christian, Buddhist and Hindu faiths (Carmen & Streng, 1989). These religions see gratitude as being an essential portion of a life well lived which hinges upon showing gratitude in response to the receipt of a benefit.

Other philosophers have viewed it as a means to convey recognition for an act. Kant defined gratitude as “honoring a person because of a kindness he has done us” (Kant, 1964, P123). Thomas Brown saw it as “That delightful emotion of love to him who has conferred a kindness on us, the very feeling of which is itself no small part of benefit conferred” (Brown, 1820, p.291). McDougal viewed gratitude as being an admission of negative self-feelings (McDougal, 1929), meaning those admitting gratitude are not wholly self-sufficient and have relied on the help of others. Bentocci & Millard, wrote that it is “the willingness to recognize the unearned increments of value in one’s experience” (Bentocci & Millard, 1963, p.389). More recently, Solomon (1997) wrote that gratitude is “an estimate of gain coupled with the judgment that someone else is responsible for that gain” (Solomon, 1997, p.316). That same year, Harned (1997) defined gratitude as “…an attitude toward the giver, and an attitude toward the gift, a determination to use it well, to employ it imaginatively and inventively in accordance with the giver’s intention” (Harned, 1997, p.175).
In addition to these definitions, Fitzgerald (1998) identified three components of gratitude: First, the sense of appreciating a thing or person. Second, a sense of goodwill toward the focus of the appreciation. Third, the goodwill and appreciation drives a disposition to act (Fitzgerald, 1998). For the purpose of this study, gratitude will be defined as the feeling of thankfulness or joy in response to the receipt of a gift or kind act (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

**Gratitude as an Emotion**

Scholars distinguish gratitude from related emotions, like happiness or feelings of indebtedness (McCullough, Kimeldorf & Cohen, 2008). Although other positive emotions, such as happiness or amusement have the capacity to promote prosocial action, gratitude differs because it stimulates helping even when it requires a cost to the helper. (McCullogh et al., 2008). Scholars theorize that gratitude and gratitude expression are rooted in the evolutionary process and have changed and adapted to better facilitate social exchange; driven by selection pressures (Trivers, 1971; McCullough et al., 2008). Gratitude is believed to have evolved to stimulate both direct, reciprocal altruism as well as “upstream reciprocity,” which involves passing benefits on to third parties instead of returning benefits to one’s benefactors (Nowak & Roch, 2006). Due to the transitive nature of the gratitude affect, expressing gratitude will lead to a positive downstream affect.

**Hypothesis 1:** The expressions of gratitude will activate the gratitude affect and will positively increase the participants’ level of gratitude.

Despite the abundance of writing on gratitude from moral philosophers, theologians, and psychologists, social scientists are relative newcomers to the study of gratitude (Emmons & McCullough, 2004). Much of the seminal work done in this area began only in the early 2000s, but has produced some very interesting findings. The theory of gratitude as a moral affect was
proposed and supported in the work of McCullough et al. (2001). This study identifies three functions of gratitude: First, a Moral Barometer Function (gratitude is a response to the perception that one has been the beneficiary of another person’s moral actions); Second, a Moral Motive Function (gratitude motivates the grateful person to behave prosocially toward the beneficiary and others around them); Third, a Moral Reinforcer Function (when expressed gratitude will encourage benefactors to behave morally in the future) (McCullough et al., 2001).

Within this study, McCullough et al. (2002) found substantial support for their hypothesis that gratitude functions as a moral motive. Individuals who have been the recipients of sincere expressions of gratitude are more likely to act again in a prosocial fashion toward their beneficiaries. Additionally, the beneficiaries are also more likely to behave prosocially toward third parties after receiving a sincere “thank you” from a benefactor, (McCullough et al., 2001). Watkins et al. continued the study of gratitude’s effect on an individual’s mood. The findings showed that the simple task of priming gratitude helped to improve mood (Watkins, Woodward, Stone, & Kolts, 2003). In this study, priming acted as an unconscious reminder of the concept of gratitude. It is used as a tool to activate an idea or emotion thorough the use of mental priming techniques, which heighten the accessibility of the idea or emotion, in this case gratitude, at a level below the participants’ conscious awareness. An earlier Crowne & Marlowe (1960) study found that the simple act of being thanked influenced the participants’ opinion of the experiment and experimenter. It also positively increased their willingness to assist an experiment confederate with a problem. Seventy one percent of participants who were thanked assisted a research confederate in cleaning up a pile of dropped papers, while just 36 percent of those who did not receive the treatment helped (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960).
Business studies have also conducted some cursory research into gratitude expression. Rind & Bordia (1995) found that writing “thank you” on a restaurant bill raises servers’ tips. Carey et al. (1976) show that thanking consumers for prior purchases stimulates repeat purchasing behavior, compared to customers who are not thanked.

Additional field experiments have been used to evaluate gratitude’s effect on medical volunteerism. One field experiment found that gratitude expression can reinforce kidney donations (Bernstein & Simmons, 1974). Another found positive impacts on volunteering behavior toward people with HIV/AIDS (Bennett, Ross & Sunderland, 1996). A third experiment showed that gratitude expression resulted in an increase in visits from case managers in a residential treatment program (Clark, Northrop & Barkshire, 1988; Bono & McCullough, 2006).

A second McCullough et al. study produced a six item self-reported questionnaire that measured gratitude affect, The Gratitude Questionnaire-Six Item Form (GQ-6). Participants who rated more grateful on the GQ-6 also reported that they performed more prosocial behavior such as completing favors as well as providing emotional and physical support for others (McCullough et al., 2002). The GQ-6 also has been found to have good internal validity (Kashdan, Mishra, Breen & Froh, 2009).

There is mounting empirical evidence that gratitude motivates prosocial behavior (Barlett & DeSteno, 2006; McCullough et al. 2001; McCullough et al. 2006). McCullough et al. (2001) proposed that gratitude reinforces prosocial behavior because expressions of gratitude (saying “thanks”) validate the efforts benefactors put forth on others’ behalf and increase the likelihood that benefactors will behave prosocially again in the future. Such thanking behavior is commonplace in a wide range of settings, especially by groups or individuals (fundraisers,
volunteer recruiters or peer-reviewed journal editors for instance) who typically rely on repeated selfless, altruistic or philanthropic behavior. Previous studies reveal benefactors who are thanked for their efforts are willing to give more and work harder on behalf of others when future opportunities arise compared to benefactors who have not been thanked (McCullough et al. 2001). This effect helps to pave the way for increased donations and volunteerism among people currently involved in prosocial behaviors. If a sincere expression of gratitude is offered for their continued prosocial acts, the donors and volunteers will give more and work harder when next solicited. This effect leads to an expected positive affect on prosocial behavior.

**Hypothesis 2:** The gratitude affect will positively increase the subjects’ prosocial behavior.

**Hypothesis 2A:** Participants who are primed will express a willingness to volunteer and donate more in the future.

Research into the psychological motivations driving prosocial behavior has identified various factors influencing these actions. While some studies have identified pure altruism and belief in an identified cause, some of the most cited research has shown that many individuals are motivated by impure altruism or the warm glow feeling that they receive when they donate or volunteer (Andreoni 1989, 1990). Akin to this feeling, other studies have shown that prosocial behavior is motivated by the reward of self-gratification (Becker, 1976, 1978). Individuals who do acts of charity to win prestige, respect and friends fall into the category of impure altruism (Andreoni, 1990). They commit these acts for social status and not strictly to impact the public good. Prosocial behavior research shows that these actions can be affected by multiple variables. However, which variables specifically drive donor and volunteer motivations? The subsequent sections will review the identified motivations driving these two specific prosocial acts.
Donor Motivation

Donor motivation is evaluated by identifying the variables that drive charitable giving. Charitable giving can be defined as the voluntary charitable donation of money to a cause or organization that benefits those outside of an individual’s family (Ariely, 2008). In addition to this definition, models of philanthropy have been proposed.

Most models of philanthropy deal with only one donor motivation. Glazer and Konrad (1986) utilized mathematical formulas to model the effects of reputation on giving. The researchers referred to their model as a signaling explanation for charity. When people give, they are signaling to others that they are concerned with the wellbeing of others or they are signaling their wealth and prestige (Frank, Gilovich, & Regan, 1996; Harbaugh, 1998; Galaskiewicz & Barringer, 2012).

Duncan’s model of impact philanthropy evaluated the desire of donors to positively impact beneficiaries (Duncan, 2004). This model contained many of the aspects of the later identified warm glow effect. Although a majority of the models only deal with one motivation at a time, philanthropic acts are commonly driven by multiple motivations working in concert.

Bekkers and Wieping identified eight main mechanisms (motivations) that drive charitable giving: (1) awareness of need; (2) solicitation; (3) costs and benefits; (4) altruism; (5) reputation; (6) psychological benefits; (7) values; (8) efficacy (Bekkers & Wieping, 2007). These eight motives were identified through the authors’ in-depth review of 500 academic articles from a variety of disciplines. Of the eight mechanisms identified by Bekkers and Wieping, this study is primarily concerned with the third, cost and benefits. The remaining seven mechanisms will be discussed briefly, but a majority of this section will consist of the research regarding the costs and benefits of donor motivation. This work’s focus is on the change in market that results from
the introduction of monetary markers into the solicitation. The cost and benefit mechanism has a
direct effect on the economic choices volunteers and donors make. While the other seven
mechanisms are important they are beyond the scope of this work and would demand a larger
study to investigate.

*Awareness of Need*

Prior to donors making charitable donations, they must first be made aware of the need.
Needs normally fall into two categories: tangible (e.g. food, shelter & medication) and intangible
(social & psychological needs).

The field of social psychology has primarily contributed to the research on the effects of
need. Experiments in the area began in the 1960s with Berkowitz, (1968) and Berkowitz &
Daniels, (1964) and continued with S.H Schwartz (1975). These early experiments explored the
effects of need on a variety of prosocial behaviors including blood, organ and monetary
donations. These experiments manipulated the level of need by exposing participants to needy
individuals. The findings showed an overall positive correlation between the need for help and
the likelihood that help was given (Levitt & Kornhaber, 1977; S.H. Schwartz, 1974; Staub &
Bear, 1974). The awareness of need has been shown to be positively affected by other external
factors.

Survey research suggests that subject’s awareness of need increases when prospective
donors personally know potential beneficiaries of the charity or service. Bekkers (2008),
Burgoyne, Young, & Walker (2005), also found that individuals who have relatives suffering
specific illnesses are more likely to give money to charities working to combat those same
illnesses. Once the awareness of need is known, it becomes time for a solicitation.
Important to subject’s awareness is also the research concerning the identifiability of victims. Benefactors are more willing to assist unrelated victims if, the victims are identified by name or situation and not described as a statistic or left anonymous. This is true even when the subject’s identification contains no meaningful information about the victim. This effect is limited to single identifiable victim and does not extend to groups of victims (Slovic, 2007; Small & Loewenstein, 2003; Small, Loewenstein, & Slovic, 2006). Researchers have found that providing meaningless identity details, such as names & photographs, increase contributions for single victims. This effect has been dubbed, “singularity” and suggests that subjects’ emotions are activated when considering the victims plight and that this plays a large role in their donations (Small & Loewenstein, 2003). It has also been shown that the distress levels of subjects exposed to a single identifiable victim were higher than those exposed to a group of victims (Kogut & Ritov 2005a, 2005b). These effects can all play a role in the solicitations for donations and volunteer retention pieces.

**Solicitation**

Solicitation refers to the act of being asked to donate to a cause. Studies regarding solicitation have appeared across multiple disciplines, including marketing, psychology and economics.

Solicitation enhances the likelihood of donations. Early experimental findings show that actively soliciting contributions, having staff or volunteers make requests, is more positively correlated with an increase in donations than simple passive presentation of the solicitation (Lindskold, Forte, Haake, & Schmidt, 1977). Active solicitation allows prospective donors with a greater number of chances to be made aware of the need.
The greater the number of opportunities an individual is asked to give, the more likely they are to comply. Studies in marketing and sociology have found that receiving higher numbers of solicitations is associated with an increase in donor activity (Bekkers, 2005a; B. A. Lee & Farrell, 2003; Schlegelmilch, Love, & Diamantopoulos, 1997; Simmons & Emanuele, 2004; Tiehen, 2001; Wiepking & Maas, 2009). However simply increasing the number of solicitations sent to the same individual can have a detrimental effect and lead to donor fatigue, resulting in lower average donations (Van Diepen, Donkers, & Franses, 2009; Wiepking, 2008b). This same phenomenon can also lead prospective donors to reject the appeal altogether (W. D. Diamond & Noble, 2001). Organizations must be made aware of this danger to stay away from the possible negative consequences.

Awareness of need can also be increased if the solicitation informs the potential donor of the needs of the organization and their specific outcomes. This type of solicitation has been shown to increase the likelihood of donation, but lower the average amount of each individual donation (Dolinski, Grzyb, Olejnik, Prusakowski, & Urban, 2005). Following the solicitation, something must drive the benefactor to act. In literature across disciplines, altruism has been cited as the cause.

**Altruism**

Altruism has been studied using many different methods and to varying levels of success. Within Bekkers and Wieping model of motivations, altruism is acting for the benefit of others often at a personal cost to the benefactor (Andreoni, 2006). Purely altruistic motivation (in the economic sense) would lead individuals who learn about an increase in contributions by others of $1.00 to reduce their own contribution by $1.00. Motivational crowding out has been well-studied in cognitive psychology. Edward Deci (1971) initially demonstrated that the effects of
providing extrinsic motivation can reduce self-perceived intrinsic motivation for a task. Subjects in the study showed less intrinsic interest in solving a puzzle when they had previously been compensated for completing the same task. This is called a “crowding out” effect. A Kingma (1989) study is considered the landmark work on the subject of estimating the crowding out effect. In many respects, the crowding out effect mirrors the free rider effect in economics. If others, primarily the government provide support for nonprofits, prospective donors may feel that they do not need to contribute and draft off the government funding.

Despite the acceptance of the crowding out effect, there have been contradictory findings. Some studies have found no evidence of the crowding out effect (Brooks, 1999; Kropf & Knack, 2003; Marcuello & Salas, 2001; Reece, 1979) while others have found evidence of a crowding in-effects (Brooks, 2003b; Diamond, 1999; Hughes & Luksetich, 1999; Khanna, et al., 1995; Khanna & Sandler, 2000; Okten & Weisbrod, 2000; Schiff, 1985, 1990). One of the studies found the crowding in effect occurs when there was an increase in government support. This was correlated with a higher number of donors, but at a lower average of private contributions (Brooks, 2003a).

The private benefits and selective incentives (M. Olson, 1965) in exchange for contributions call into question the altruistic motives of the donors. Because of these concerns, some donors may be called “impure altruists” (Andreoni, 1989, 1990; Kingma, 1989). Even though these altruistic motives are not pure, they still result in funding for organizations (Payne, 1998: 338). These benefits would end up driving up overhead and may not prove to be effective (Newman & Shen, 2012). This equation means we need to find a more effective and less expensive method to increase donations. One often less expensive method is to play on the benefactor’s reputation.
Reputation

The mechanism of reputation refers to the social consequences of donations for the donor. These consequences can be intangible and occur between individuals. In social settings, donors can be verbally or non-verbally rewarded for giving or punished for not giving. Reputation is studied most often in psychology and economics.

Two studies have found that people who give to charitable causes are held in high regard by their peers (Muehleman, et al., 1976; Wiepking, 2008a). This feeling of higher regard leads them to receive recognition and the approval from others. Additionally, public good laboratory experiment games conducted by economists and social-psychologists found that individuals are willing to incur costs to receive recognition for their contributions (Clark, 2002). Recognition can even play a factor in public displays of giving. The subtle cues of being watched need not even be consciously perceived. A study using stylized eyes spots on the marketing materials had a positive effect on donations (Haley & Fessler, 2005). Donors often deny the importance of social pressure (Polonsky, et al., 2002). However, survey studies have found that donations are positively correlated with measures of social pressure (Bekkers & Schuyt, 2008; Mathur, 1996; Pitts & Skelly, 1984; Putnam, 1993; Smith & McSweeney, 2007; Lin, 2011).

Giving not only yields social benefits, but also offers psychological benefits for the donor.

Psychological Benefits

A majority of all studies regarding the psychological benefits of giving are conducted by (social) psychologists. These studies have shown that giving can contribute to one’s self-image as an altruistic, empathic, socially responsible, agreeable or influential person. As with most prosocial behaviors, automatic emotional response produces a positive mood, alleviating feelings of guilt, reducing aversive arousal and satisfying a desire to show gratitude.
Studies on helping behavior have provided evidence that helping others produces positive psychological effects for the helper, known as “empathic joy” (Batson & Shaw, 1991). In economic models of philanthropy, this has been labeled the “warm glow” effect (Andreoni, 1989). Recent evidence from neuropsychological studies suggests that donations to charity “elicit neural activity in areas linked to reward processing” (Harbaugh, Mayr, & Burghart, 2007) and “anterior sectors of the prefrontal cortex are distinctively recruited when altruistic choices prevail over selfish material interests” (Moll et al., 2006).

The activation of a positive mood can be induced by posing the question, “How do you feel today?” A majority of people would provide a positive answer. Doing so is sufficient to make the subjects more likely to fill a request for a donation. This has been referred to as the “foot-in-mouth effect” (Aune & Basil, 1994; Dolinski, et al., 2005; Howard, 1990). However, this effect is not wholly expected. One study argues that this effects works not because it brings a positive mood, but because it creates a relational obligation (Dolinski, et al., 2005).

Negative moods can produce similar effects. Cunningham et al. (1980) show that people in a good mood respond better to rewards associated with giving (a warm-glow feeling, or a present), and that people in a bad mood are more responsive towards avoiding punishments that come with not giving. Mood is hand in hand with prospective benefactors’ values. How they perceive their actions and how these actions fit within their frame of reference.

**Values**

Self-reported alignment of prosocial values generally is positively correlated with charitable giving. Due to the difficulty in experimental design of manipulating values as variables, experimental studies on the effects of social values on philanthropy are non-existent. Some experiments have attempted to link survey measures of attitudes and values to donations.
Fong’s 2007 study compared survey results with humanitarianism and egalitarianism and an additional study explored prosocial value orientations (Van Lange, Van Vugt, Bekkers, & Schuyt, 2007). Surveys conducted by sociologists and marketing scientists show that people are more likely to give if they have altruistic values (Bekkers & Schuyt, 2008; Farmer & Fedor, 2001), prosocial values (Bekkers, 2006b, 2007; Van Lange, et al., 2007), are less materialistic in general (Sargeant, et al., 2000), endorse postmaterialistic goals in politics (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2006), value spirituality (Todd & Lawson, 1999), endorse a moral principle of care (Schervish & Havens, 2002; Wilhelm & Bekkers, 2010), care about social order and social justice in society (Todd & Lawson, 1999), or feel socially responsible for the recipient organization (Weerts & Ronca, 2007) or society as a whole (Amato, 1985; Reed & Selbee, 2002; Schuyt, Smit, & Bekkers, 2010). All these attributes are correlated with the general idea of making the world a better place. In hopes of making the world a better place, donors and volunteers look for efficacy in organization (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2006).

**Efficacy**

Donors must see the efficacy of their donations. This means that the donors must see the difference their support is making to the cause. Various studies have shown that when people perceive that their contribution will not make a difference, they are less likely to give (Arumi et al., 2005; Diamond & Kashyap, 1997; Duncan, 2004; Mathur, 1996; Radley & Kennedy, 1992; Smith & McSweeney, 2007). This effect is not only seen in regular donations, but it also extends to the leaving of charitable bequests (Wiepking, Madden, & McDonald, 2010).

Efficacy can also be affected by the prospective donors’ outlook on life. Surveys reveal that a more coldly rational approach to life reduces giving (Bekkers, 2006b; Todd & Lawson,
This effect also holds sway over volunteers (Bekkers, 2005b; Unger, 1991). The same cold rational approach is related to a lower level of volunteerism.

Economics has also shown us that perceived efficacy is seen in the positive correlation between effective leadership and the use of seed money. (Andreoni & Petrie, 2004; Bac & Bag, 2003; Chen, et al., 2006; Landry, et al., 2006; List & Lucking-Reiley, 2002; List & Rondeau, 2003; Potters, Sefton, & Vesterlund, 2005).

Lincoln (1977) found that when participants observe another person make a donation there is an increase in subsequent donations. Surveys reveal that donors are averse to expensive fundraising methods (Arumi, et al., 2005; Sargeant & Woodliffe, 2005; Schervish & Havens, 2002). An experiment showed that donors have a less positive view of “flashy” fundraising materials (Bekkers & Crutzen, 2007).

Overall, perceptions of efficacy are related to charitable confidence and perceptions of overhead and fundraising costs. When donors feel their contributions are not likely to be spent on fundraising and overhead, they have more confidence in the charity and will donate more (Bekkers, 2006a; Sargeant, Ford, & West, 2006). Each of the motivations may be the driving force behind donations or they may be working in tandem. Many of these same motivations are positively correlated with volunteering.

**Costs and Benefits**

Using a definition first presented by Clark & Wilson (1961) and expanded by Chinman, Wandersman & Goodman (2005), material costs and benefits are defined as tangible consequences that are associated with a monetary value. In terms of donor motivation both costs and benefits are calculated simultaneously. Economically they appear to have an inverse relationship.
Cost

When entry costs are low, (e.g. the donation level that is solicited is low), charitable giving increases. This effect is seen in terms of both the true and absolute costs of the donations (Bekkers, 2005c; Eckel & Grossman, 2004; Eckel & Grossman, 2003; Karlan & List, 2006; Wiepking & Breeze, 2009). The opposite is true in the case of large requests; solicitations for large donations are less likely to be filled because the economic costs associated with making the donation is higher (Andreoni & Miller, 2002; Bekkers, 2004). However, if the cost of donating is increased, by requesting a higher amount, an average increase may be seen so long as the higher amount is not seen as excessive (Doob & McLaughlin, 1989). A similar effect was seen by using a higher reference point, or anchor. When a suggested donation amount or initial solicitation was increased, the return and average donated amount was higher. Doing so increased the average amount donated, but did not negatively affect the likelihood that a contribution would be made (Alpizar, Carlsson, & Johansson-Stenman, 2007). Regardless of the anchoring or size of the request, it has been found that when there are fewer perceived obstacles to charitable giving, individuals are more likely to give (J. R. Smith & McSweeney, 2007). In addition to limiting obstacles, providing benefactors with benefits also positively increases prosocial behavior (Smith & McSweeney, 2007).

Benefit

When benefits are high, giving increases, but providing benefits also has its risks. In economic terms, benefits for donations to charitable organizations can be seen as the donor buying services or receiving selective incentives that are not available to non-donors (Olson, 1965). If a donor receives concert, play tickets or a coffee mug in exchange for their donation, this interaction can be classified as an exchange and calls into question the pure altruistic
motives of the donation. Offering these benefits in exchange for a donation brings the exchange very close to a purchase in an economic market exchange. Because of this exchange, the benefits of charitable giving have been mostly evaluated through economic and marketing disciplines.

Buraschi & Cornelli (2002) found that offering fringe benefits to opera donors served to increase contributions. Additionally, when selected benefits are attached to giving categories and levels, giving increased even more (Andreoni & Petrie, 2004). Multiple studies have investigated including a gift in direct-mail package and its effect on donations. There has been an expectation that these benefits would increase giving, but a strong positive correlation has yet to be shown (Alpizar, et al., 2007; Chen, Li, & MacKie-Mason, 2006; Edlund, Sagarin, & Johnson, 2007. Alpizar et al. (2007) found that gifts increase the likelihood of contributions; however, the gift reduced the amount contributed by each donor. Edlund, Sagarin and Johnson (2007) found that participants who were offered a bottle of water purchased more raffle tickets for an alumni association. Chen et al. (2006) conducted an online fundraising campaign offering premiums (mouse pads, book lights and CD cases) but found no effect.

There is a danger in offering material benefits for charitable contributions. When people receive material benefits for helpfulness, that tend to undermine their feeling of being helpful (Zuckerman, Lazzaro, & Waldgeir, 1979); this reduces their likelihood of being helpful in the future. Fringe benefits change the decision into an exchange. It raises the question; do I get value for my donation? Gruber (2004) finds that subsidies for religious contributions reduce church attendance. These findings are in line with Newman & Shen’s (2012) findings regarding the offer of a thank-you-gift. They do not increase donations, because the fringe benefit changes the otherwise prosocial behavior into a perceived purchase market exchange.
Thank-You Gifts

Newman & Shen’s 2012 study, The Counterintuitive Effects of Thank-You Gifts on Charitable Giving, found that when charitable organizations offer conditional thank-you gifts, the result is a reduction in charitable donations. The data from this study indicates that there is a reduction in donations when participants were offered a conditional gift. Newman & Shen elaborated that this decline may be due to a variety of factors. The argument that the strings and expectations attached to conditional gifts may have a significant effect on donation levels is an intriguing argument and avenue for additional research. This study proposes that the conditional nature of offering gifts as an inducement or as the authors put it a “thank-you gift” will lead to these results. Doing so takes the solicitation out of the realm of social exchange and pushes it into an economic market exchange. Varying labels have been applied to these two types of exchange. The idea of a conditional gift contradicts the idea of a “thank-you’ gift as a form of gratitude expression. This change between types of markets has been elaborated in previous studies.

Pankj (2004) refers to them as exchange relationships and communal relationships. Exchange relationships are motivated by providing a benefit in order to receive something in return. This becomes a quid pro quo relationship. This type of relationship normally occurs in business and between strangers.

In communal relationships, people provide benefits for others in order to express their concern for the needs of their fellow man (Pankaj, 2004). Under this relationship a benefit is given in response to needs or general concerns for others. The benefit does demand a debt or obligation to return a comparable benefit.
Most people are willing to provide aid to a stranger at some expense to themselves without any expectation of repayment, if the stranger’s need for aid is greater than the relative costs. Communal relationships have been defined as those made up of close family and friends. Clark and Mills state that for most people, their communal relationships are the relationships that are most important for them (Mills & Clark, 1982). This argument explains the effects found in Newman & Shen’s 2012 study. Benefactors are more concerned with the communal relationships and do not care about the gifts. In the 1990s it began to be accepted that these relationships expand past these close relationships on a regular basis. With this expansion, it has becomes essential that a modern economy involving the trading of benefits is used. This change forces the situation into an exchange relationship. With this shift in exchange comes the obligation of one who receives a benefit to return a comparable benefit (Clark & Mills, 1993). This shift occurs when conditional thank-you gifts are offered as an inducement or lure for the solicitation of prosocial behavior, as in the case of Newman and Shen’s study.

Social psychology literature also makes the distinction between relationships based on economic factors and those based on social factors (Clark & Miller, 1993). The concept of the two markets is explained by Heyman & Ariely (1993). In this work, the authors use the term token rewards in place of thank-you gifts.

Heyman & Ariely identify two markets based upon Fiske’s relational theory (1991). Fiske’s theory included four subcategories within the two markets: Communal Sharing (CS) in which there are high levels of cooperation between participants, Authority Sharing (AS) in which there is a clear superior-subordinate relationship, Equality Matching (EM) in which there exists a structure that exhibits equality and Market Pricing (MP) which represents a classic rational market structure in which there is constant cost-benefit analysis (Fiske, 1991).
Fiske’s theory separates the four subcategories into two distinct markets. CS, AS & EM, all fall under social-exchange. This form of exchange involves no money. MP is placed under economic-exchange; in this form money drives the exchange. Although Fiske’s relational theory is their guide, Heyman and Ariely simplify it by focusing on the two broader categories. In their model, Heyman and Ariely focus on social market and money market relationships. In this simplified model, social market relationships are driven and shaped by altruism. Levels of compensation are irrelevant to effort. In this relationship individuals will work regardless of payment (Batson, Sager, Gast & Kang, 1997, Cialdini, 1997, Trivers, 1971). Despite the lack of compensation, Heyman and Ariely (1993) caution that social rewards are fragile and need to be distributed with care.

In the money market relationship, effort is exerted according to reciprocity and compensation (Clark & Mills 1993, Fehr & Falk, 2002, Rabin, 1993). Money and goods drive the exchange and relationship. Money is the cue to the type of exchange and introducing money into social market relationship is done at the peril of the exchange and changes the dynamic and norms of the situation.

Dan Ariely identifies the dangers of taking interactions from social exchange and norms and making them a market exchange. Ariely’s book, Predictably Irrational (2008), outlines numerous experiments which tested taking social exchange norms and introducing market exchange. In these experiments subjects were asked to assist the researchers in a number of menial tasks. Of the subjects, half were offered compensation ($5.00), while the second group was not offered any compensation. They were asked to participate as a favor to the researcher. The result of the experiment was that the group that completed the tasks based solely upon a request for the subject to take part in prosocial behavior (favor) worked harder and produced a
higher level of output, by 50%, than those who were paid to take part in the experiment, (Ariely, 2008). Ariely argues this experiment as well as previous research shows people are willing to work harder for a cause than for cash or gifts.

If an individual is asked to help a researcher, friend or colleague to do something and chooses to provide the help, they are doing so as a favor and continue the interaction as a social exchange, ruled by social norms. Once money or even gifts that can be seen as having some value are offered in exchange for action, the interaction becomes a market exchange and is ruled by market norms. The simple introduction or mention of money is sufficient to cause people to act more selfishly and be less willing to participate in prosocial behavior (Vohs et al., 2006). This effect is not limited to money but can be used to explain the effect the gifts has on donations.

The priming or the subtle stimuli suggests money can directly increase individuals’ feelings of self-sufficiency. This phenomenon was shown by Vohs, Mead & Goode’s (2006) work, which tested the psychological effect of money on individuals. The study focused on six experiments related to the effects of money. Four of the six experiments have a direct impact on this work and the effects shown in Newman & Shen’s study.

In all of the studies, participants were assigned to one of three groups; a neutral (control) group, play (experiment 1) group and money (experiment 2) group. All groups were asked to unscramble a number of sentences. The control group was given neutral phrases, the play group was given data related to games and other forms of entertainment, and the money group was primed with sentences focusing on work and money phrases (Vohs et al, 2006).
In the third experiment of the study, after the participants completed the word scramble, they were asked if and for what duration they would be willing to help the researchers code data. The results of this experiment showed that the individuals primed with money only volunteered about half as much time as the other two groups. In the fourth experiment, subjects were asked to assist compatriots complete the word scramble. Subjects primed with money spent significantly less time assisting compatriots of the researcher than the other two groups. On average they offered half as much help as the other two groups did. In the sixth experiment, the findings showed that subjects primed with money were far less likely to donate to the student university fund when solicited by the researcher.

The findings of all six experiments in this study support the hypothesis that the introduction of money into the human psyche whether directly or subliminally, will arouse feelings of self-sufficiency. The authors describe the feelings of self-sufficiency as, “an insulated state wherein people put forth effort to attain personal goals and prefer to be spare from others” (Vohs et al, 2006). It is also explained through the example that when people are reminded of the concept of money they want to be free from dependency and would wish that others would not be dependent upon them. These feelings have a profound negative effect on prosocial behavior. If these feelings are aroused in a prospective volunteer or donor during a solicitation, the effects will be detrimental to the entire solicitation process.

Historically, the use of money was adopted to streamline the market exchange. Economists have classified human history into two eras: moneyless (barter) & monetary economies (Karimzadi, 2012). Before the use of money was instituted, goods were exchanged by barter or contract. These contracts were payable and fulfilled through the exchange of goods (Karimzadi, 2012). While this system worked for many years, as economies became more
sophisticated, the barter system became insufficient to account for the varied prices of goods in exchange. While the barter system is considered successful in less developed economies, it becomes inadequate as economies become more complex. In an analysis, Law found that the rise of the use of money was a solution to the insufficiency of the barter system (Karimzadi, 2012). This inadequacy was exhibited in the ancient Aztec barter system. A system was created to clear the deficit in commodity value. This was accomplished with the addition of cacao beans to the exchange to eliminate the deficit by evening out the value (Weaterford, 1998). Worldwide, a change from barter to a monetary economy was seen in the 1500s. The proliferation of gold and silver monetary markers in the known world made it easier for bakers, butchers and weavers to purchase needed goods without having to physically carry their own goods to the marketplace, (Weaterford, 1998).

Money helped to make market transactions easier, but at its core, it still represents goods and products. Subconsciously, humans know that goods represent some monetary value. Gifts even when their monetary value is not overtly stated represent a value that can be quantified in dollars and cents. Therefore, offering a gift as a lure or incentive will have the same negative effect as money on donations. It drags the solicitation into the market and places it under the rules of market norms.

Newman & Shen argue thank-you gifts used in their study have no monetary value. The history of money would contend that this is inaccurate. I would counter that this is also incorrect. The gift may not have a stated value in terms of the experiment, but any physical gift or reward has some monetary value attached to it, especially when viewed in terms of market exchange and norms.
While certain individuals may be motivated to participate in these behaviors, some recent studies have shown that there are steps nonprofits can take that will decrease prosocial behavior. Research into the priming effect of money and monetary symbols found that when individuals are reminded of money they are less likely to participate in prosocial behaviors and expressed that others should be more self-sufficient. (Vohs, Mead & Goode, 2006; Vohs, Mead & Goode, 2008). Newman & Shen’s (2012) study shows that the giving of conditional thank-you gifts actually decreased both donations and intentions to donate to nonprofits. The authors viewed and tested the gifts as rewards for donations and as a lure for donation requests, not as a sincere expression of gratitude (Newman & Shen, 2012). Earlier, Deci (1972) found that in a population of intrinsically motivated individuals, external rewards such as money, awards, and prizes tend to decrease intrinsic motivation.

Verbal reinforcements, on the other hand, increase intrinsic motivation (Deci, 1972). A similar study by Deci, Koestner & Ryan (1999), a meta-analysis of 128 experiments explored the effects of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation, finding similar results. The findings showed that tangible rewards had a significant negative effect on intrinsic motivation while intangible, nonmaterial rewards had a significant positive effect on intrinsic motivation (Deci et al., 1999). While these studies support the notion that external rewards for prosocial behavior negatively affect that behavior, they are only viewing and evaluating the variable as a lure or reward to act and not an expression of gratitude that would raise an individual’s gratitude affect.

**Volunteer Motivation**

The basic definition of a volunteer is an individual who helps others with no expectation of monetary rewards. Thus volunteerism is a type of activity that is intended to improve
wellbeing of others (Mowen & Sujan, 2005). A more complete definition describes volunteerism as voluntary, ongoing, planned, helping behavior that increases the well-being of strangers, expects no monetary compensation and regularly occurs within an organizational context (Clary et al., 1998; Finkelstien, 2009; Penner, 2002). In fact, almost 85 percent of volunteers work in an organization (Independent Sector, 2001).

There have been many studies concerning volunteer behavior. Omoto & Snyder (1995) and Penner & Finkelstien (1998) found that once a majority of individuals begin to volunteer on a regularly basis, they continue to do so for an extended period of time, on average a few years. Davis et al. (1999) found that individuals were more willing to volunteer if they anticipated a positive emotional response and foresaw satisfaction in completing the act.

It has become commonplace to consider volunteering a social phenomenon (Leandro & Cardoso 2005). Much of the work done by the third sector would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of volunteers (Wu et al. 2009). Planned and continued volunteering is the lifeblood that keeps the third sector alive during times of financial upheaval. Despite all that exceptional groups of volunteers do, in many cases they are scarce resources and merit continued research and attention from those studying nonprofits and voluntary action (Vecina et al. 2009). If we want to truly understand how we can help increase and retain volunteers we must look at the motivations that drive their prosocial action (Bussell & Forbes, 2002). Motivation has been defined as a basic psychological process or a need that drives a behavior (Luthans 2011) which results from an individual’s interaction with their environment (Latham & Pinder 2005).

Considering the impact volunteerism has in both economic and social terms, Johnson argues that it has been relatively understudied (Johnson, 2007). This area of study should
command more attention from researchers particularly regarding the motivations that drive prosocial actions.

**History of Altruism**

Initial research on volunteer motivations identified altruism as a main motivation for this type of prosocial acts (Tapp & Spanier 1973; Howarth 1976; Esmond & Dunlop 2004; Widjaja 2010). In later literature, altruism still continued to be the focal point of research (Horton-Smith 1981; Burns et al. 2006; Carpenter & Myers 2007). Based upon these findings various models have been developed and tested throughout the years. Most models of volunteer motivation assume the truth of the functional motivation theory.

**Functional Motivation Theory**

There are two tenets of functional motivation theory: individuals engage in purposeful activities to fulfill a certain goal and individuals can perform the same activities to serve different psychological functions (Clary et al., 1998). This theory implies that individuals will begin and continue to volunteer as long as doings so matches their personal motivational needs (Clary & Snyder, 1999). Functional motivation theory has been utilized and evaluated through various models.

**Unidimensional Model**

The unidimensional model of motivation is based upon the idea that there is only one category of volunteer motivation. Under this model, all volunteer motives can be combined into one category. Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen (1991) identified 28 motives, taken from existing literature and tested them in surveys. The researchers found that these motives formed a unidimensional scale. These findings suggest volunteers are motivated by both altruistic and
egoistic overlapping motives. Taken in short, under this model, volunteers are motivated not by categories of motives but by one category, made up of a combination of motives. Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen’s findings have not been able to be sufficiently replicated and the unidimensional model of motivation has not gained favor in the field.

**Two-dimensional model**

Two-dimensional models identify two different categories of volunteer motives. Differing models have shown variations in what the two categories may be. Frisch & Gerrad’s two-dimensions were egoistic and altruistic motives (Frisch & Gerrard, 1981). Egoistic motives relate to the attainment of tangible rewards like career-related benefits. Volunteers acting upon egoistic motives engage in volunteer service for their own self-interest and welfare. Volunteers motivated by altruistic motives act with a purpose for the welfare of others (Frisch & Gerrard, 1981). Finkelstein (2009) used extrinsic and intrinsic as his two categories of motives. Intrinsically motivated behavior is inherently satisfying and the individual engages in the activity because of the satisfaction it provides. Extrinsically motivated activities are performed because of the external outcome and rewards they yield (Finkelstien, 2009).

**Three-dimensional models**

In three-dimensional models, motivations are divided into altruistic motives, material motives, and social motives. Altruistic motives focus on action driven by the concern for others. Material motives are driven by the desire for material rewards (Monga, 2006). Social motives revolve around an individual’s need for social interactions. The labels of the three categories may vary, by model, but the three distinct motives are universally accepted.
Multi-dimensional models

Multi-dimensional models are based upon the notion of multiple categories of motives. The most widely accepted multi-dimensional model was developed by Clary et al. in 1998. Their model is also based upon the functional motivation theory and identifies six motivational categories.

The Volunteer Functions Inventory

Through a series of six studies, Clary et al. (1998) developed, verified, and refined their Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI). The VFI has been determined to be the most extensive and sound set of scales for determining volunteer motives (Okun, Barr, & Herzog, 1998). Because of the simplicity of design and ease of use it has become widely accepted as a self-report instrument of volunteer motivation (Rokach & Wanklyn, 2009). Ferreira described this model as possibly, “…one of the most complete categorizations in the literature” (Ferreira et al. 2008). The VFI is used to evaluate the six general functions that underlie an individual’s motivation for prosocial behaviors:

Values, The values function enables individuals to express deeply held values such as altruism and humanitarianism (Clary et al., 1998).

Understanding, A second function served by volunteerism is the understanding function, which involves the desire to learn new skills and to utilize knowledge or abilities that might otherwise go unused (Clary et al., 1998).

Social, According to the social function, volunteers engage in unpaid helping behavior as a means to increase social interactions, strengthen existing relationships, and to gain others’ approval (Clary et al., 1998).
Career, A fourth function served by volunteerism relates to the desire to gain career related experiences and to increase job prospects. Volunteers motivated by the career function regard volunteer service as a means to help their career (Clary et al., 1998).

Protective, The protective function serves to defend the ego by reducing the negative affect associated with guilt for being more fortunate than others or to defend against loneliness (Clary et al., 1998).

Enhancement, The final function, enhancement, increases positive affect by providing a means to self-development and growth (Clary et al., 1998).

The development of the VFI has two important practical implications: it can aid in recruitment efforts and decrease turnover rates. It allows organizations to find out potential volunteers’ functional motivations and can thus aid in recruitment efforts.

Based upon these varying models, research into motivation has utilized all forms of these models. In the 1980s, a distinction was identified between altruistic and egoistic/non-altruistic motivations (Horton-Smith 1981; Phillips 1982; Frisch & Gerrard 1981; Henderson 1981). This research lead to two and three factor models which categorizes volunteers’ motivations based on the factors that distinguish between the altruistic and the non-altruistic motivations.

These two and three factor models included models from the 1980s that diversified the factors used in VFI. Frisch & Gerrard (1981) identified motivations that revolved around an individual’s career advancement and obligations. Henderson (1981) determined that leisure proved to be another motivation for prosocial acts.

In the 1990s, one factor model and multifactorial model were introduced (Esmond & Dunlop 2004; Widjaja 2010). Cnnan & Goldberg-Glen (1991) argued that one-factor models were best for evaluating volunteer motivations. The authors concluded that volunteers are driven
by both altruistic and non-altruistic motives, but were unable to make a distinction between the motivations that held sway over them and did not act solely because of the influence of one motivation over another. They concluded that several motivations in tandem combine to define the reason for volunteer motivation.

Building upon this original model, Ferreira et al. (2012) identified four categories of motivation: development and learning, altruism, career recognition and belonging and protection. The Development and Learning category includes motivations that relate to the volunteer gaining new perspective and experiences and other motivations that involve the learning process. This has been seen as individuals who have lost their jobs try to sharpen current work skills and learn new ones through volunteering. Belonging and Protection are categorized as motivations relating to social interaction, friendship, affection and love (Latham 2007). It also includes making new friends, meeting people (Anderson & Shaw 1999) and relationship network (Edwards 2005). Career Recognition includes motivations that will assist volunteers in their career path. This may include the making of business contacts and ways to increase their employability and build their resume (Rhoden et al. 2009).

The study found that the most important motivations are development and learning, followed by altruism. Belonging and protection, followed by career recognition rounded out the findings (Ferreira et al. 2012). Additionally, the researchers conducted a factor analysis on the data and found two categories: intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction. Higher satisfaction levels were seen in volunteers who use their talents and skills to meet expectations and feel fulfilled. Extrinsic satisfaction is seen through the addition and expansion of career contacts.
Rewards

Some research in the early 2000s evaluated intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of volunteers (Ryan & Deci 2000; Raman & Pashupati 2002; Meier & Stutzer 2004). Intrinsic motivation occurs when volunteers receive an internal reward as a result of helping others, but they do not expect a material reward (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Extrinsic motivation occur when volunteers receive an external benefit or reward for their activity (Meir & Stutzer, 2004). The distinction between these two types of rewards and motivations plays a pivotal role in how organizations might choose to reward volunteers (Meyer & Gagné, 2008).

Motivation for both prosocial behaviors that have been reviewed above can play a role in driving these behaviors. Each driver of motivation is important, but they are not the determinate factor of the study. Based upon this volunteer and donor motivation literature the following hypothesis is expected:

Hypothesis 3: Gratitude treatment three (thank-you card) will increase prosocial behavior.

The gratitude research contradicts the findings of Newman & Shen, Deci and Deci, Ryan & Koestner. Asking subjects if they would donate more time and money if they were given a mug in a survey does not equate to providing volunteers with an sincere expression of gratitude, a heartfelt thank you from an organizations director, a handwritten thank-you note or a gift card to express gratitude in a field experiment. This difference points to the fundamental division in research between surveys and field experiments. A field experiment in which gratitude affect is activated will provide different results from the Newman & Shen surveys on prosocial behavior.
Utilizing the Crowne & Marlowe (1960) and Watkins et al. (2003) results along with McCullough et al. (2001) findings regarding the three functions of the gratitude affect, this study investigated the effects of gratitude on the prosocial behavior of volunteering and donating to social causes. In answering this question, the study primed gratitude and tested the moral motive function proposed by McCullough et al. (2001) theory of gratitude as a moral affect and its impact on prosocial behavior. This study utilized a natural experiment to test the effect of varied gratitude expressions upon subject’s willingness to pledge volunteer hours and monetary donations.

Volunteering and making charitable donations falls well within Eisenberg and Mussen (1989) definition of prosocial behavior. The authors state that this type of behavior is voluntary actions which are intended to help or benefit another individual or group of individuals, (Eisenberg & Mussen 1989). Given the negative effects that money can have on prosocial behavior, it is not surprising that Newman & Shen (2012) found that gifts have a negative effect on donations. Due to these findings, providing gifts is not an optimal method for enticing donations. This is where research into gratitude affect and its ability to positively affect prosocial behavior can greatly help to keep our solicitation within social exchange. Because people work harder for a cause, it is expected that if pure gratitude is expressed an increase will be seen in the donations of volunteer hours and money.
Chapter III: Methodology

The purpose of this study is to determine what impact priming the gratitude affect will have on the prosocial behaviors of volunteering for and donating to a charitable organization. In attempting to do so, this study utilized a random assignment field experiment to evaluate the following research questions and hypotheses:

**R1:** How will the gratitude expressions impact prosocial behaviors (monetary donations and volunteerism)?

**R2:** How will the use of a thank-you gift as a form of gratitude expression change prosocial behaviors (monetary donations and volunteerism)?

**H1:** The expressions of gratitude will activate the gratitude affect and will positively increase the participants’ level of gratitude.

**H2:** The gratitude affect will positively increase the subjects’ prosocial behavior.

**H2A:** Participants who are primed will express a willingness to volunteer and donate more in the future.

**H3:** Gratitude treatment three (thank-you card) will increase prosocial behavior.

Research Design

Political scientists commonly employ field experimental techniques to study the impact of various tactics and approaches on voter mobilization (Green & Gerber, 2008). Random assignment experiments can also be used to evaluate complex social problems. The action of randomly assigning participants to control and treatment groups, then comparing the results to determine the effects of the intervention has long been utilized in medical clinical trials.
The use of this methodology for hypothesis testing has slowly gained prominence over the last several decades within the social sciences. This form of research has proven successful in measuring microfinance, welfare/housing reform and school teaching methods (Guern & Rolston, 2013). In, *Fighting for Reliable Evidence*, Guern and Rolston (2013) argue that because of random assignment in experiments,

…the nontreatment characteristics of the groups can be assumed not to differ in any systematic way that would affect success; any difference in outcomes can be ascribed with a known degree of statistical confidence to the treatment. All other influences on the outcomes are washed out in this calculation because they are the same for the control group however many experimental groups there may be (Guern & Rolston, 2013, P.2).

In randomly assigned field and social experiments, subjects are randomly placed into two (or several) groups: one or more receives the intervention being tested (the treatment or experimental groups); and one receives no intervention (the control group). If administered properly any resulting difference in behavior among the subjects in the different groups can be attributed to the treatments administered, (Guern & Rolston, 2013).

Randomized experiments assign units of observation randomly to treatment and control groups, a feature that estimate the samples’ characteristics (observed and unobserved) are similarly distributed. Randomization thus enhances the likelihood of obtaining unbiased estimates of causal effects and facilitates reliable causal inference. Field experiments, as distinct from laboratory experiments, study the effects of an intervention within a naturalistic setting, not a manufactured situation that may occur in a lab. As such, field experiments are typically unobtrusive interventions into real-world processes that do not activate subjects’ self-concerns
(social desirability or demand effects, for example) that arise from subjects’ knowledge that they are being studied.

The literature review contained sections regarding various donor and volunteer motivations, which may have an impact on prosocial behavior. These motivations however will not be tested in these studies. The use of randomly assigned experiments will allow for the testing of the gratitude affect specifically. The design (randomization) will control for other variables. Gueron and Howard explain this process in regards to random assignment used in a study of the welfare program:

A type of random selection similar to tossing a coin or running a lottery was developed under which similarly eligible people applying for a new form of welfare were randomly placed in either the new program or the prior system. This approach enabled analysts to measure and compare the outcomes of two groups that differed systematically only in their welfare program experience. What the new program achieved can be accurately estimated as a difference in outcomes between the two groups, because they were randomly selected from the same group and lived through the same shifting economic and social conditions. (Gueron & Howard, 2013 p.2).

True Experiments

Schutt (2009) has defined a true experiment as having three aspects. Under this definition, to be deemed a true experiment a project must have: 1) At least two distinct groups. At minimum an experimental group (set of subjects who receive a treatment) and a control group (set of subjects who do not receive any treatment and to whom the experimental group can be compared); 2) Variation in the independent variable before the assessment of change in the
dependent variable; 3) Random assignment of subjects to the two (or more) comparison groups. The design of the experiment meets the three aspects of Schutt’s definition of a true experiment. Each portion will be discussed in subsequent sections of this chapter.

This study will utilize a natural experiment. The experiment will utilize one control group and three treatment groups and will measure the impact of the gratitude affect on the prosocial behavior of pledged volunteer hours and pledged monetary donations.

Each subject was assigned to one of the four groups through the use of a random number generator (see Appendix A). Using this method of random assignment, it is generally assumed that any estimate of the motivations that drive the subjects will be controlled for and difference in outcome can be attributed to the treatments that the treatment groups received, within the limitations defined by the study.

**Randomization**

Researchers cannot determine with complete certainty what the true effects of a treatment are; if the treatment group differs from the experimental group in any way other than the absence of the prescribed treatment.

The assignment of subjects at random to experimental and treatment groups ensures that the assignment of the subjects into groups is not affected by any systematic bias. Random assignment cannot, however, guarantee that the groups will be perfectly identical when the experiment begins.

The act of randomization removes bias from the assignment process strictly by its reliance on chance. It is important to note that the random assignment of subjects is not the same as random sampling from a larger population (Schutt, 2009). The goal of random assignment is
to ensure that subjects are randomly assigned to a treatment or control group and eliminate any basis in the process, not to ensure that the research subjects are representative of a larger population. Random assignment is used to create equivalent treatment and control groups and is used to maximize the likelihood of internal validity. This process of assignment does limit the generalizability of the findings.

Causal (Internal) Validity

The ability of an experiment to provide valid conclusions about the causal effects of a treatment is determined by the comparability of the control and treatment groups within the study. The control group must be similar enough to the treatment groups to show what the treatment group would be like if it had not received the prescribed treatment and the independent variable had not been modified by the researcher.

Factors, aside from assigned treatments, that affect the comparability between a treatment and control group can pose a threat to internal validity. Five of these factors have been identified by Schutt (2009):

Selection Bias: When characteristics of the subjects in the treatment and control group differ. Self-selection bias occurs when a subject or subjects ignore the group they are assigned to and receives the treatment from another assigned treatment group.

Endogenous change: Any change or development of the subject that occurs as part of an ongoing process independent of the prescribed experimental treatment. These changes may occur due to three distinct effects and pose a threat to internal validity. Testing-subjects may be primed or more sensitive to an issue or topic as a result of any pretesting; this can affect their response in the post-test and subsequent results. Maturation- During lengthy studies, those that occur over
months or years, subjects get older, gain experience and increase in knowledge, independent of treatment. This natural maturation process may account for their outcome. Regression- subjects experience cyclical or episodic changes that result in different post-test scores.

Historical Effects: These effects are seen when something occurs, during the course of the experiment, other than the treatment, which influences outcome scores. Event Effects: These effects are seen when events external to the study influence outcome scores. Event effects may include: Newsworthy events, Disasters, Weather, Traffic patterns, something about the setting of the experiment unrelated to the treatment.

Contaminations: When either the treatment group or the control group are aware of the other group and treatment and are influenced by this knowledge in terms of their outcomes (Mohr, 1992:64)

Treatment Misidentification: Variation in the independent variable (the treatment) is associated with variation in the observed outcome, but the change occurs through a process that the researcher has not identified. (Schutt, 2009).

The design of the study was such that it limited the effects of these five threats to internal validity: eliminated bias through random assignment, limited endogenous changes due to the lack of a pretest and limited time frame of the study, guarded against history effects and event effects as much as possible. Because it is impossible for the researchers to control all aspects of a subject’s life, it is not a realistic expectation that the effects can be controlled for limited contaminations. All events were held during the course of one week. The researches took steps to insure that subjects only attended the events to which they were assigned. Theory and previous research were utilized to limit the possibility of treatment misidentification.
**Subjects**

In the United States, women are more likely to volunteer than men, and give more of their time than men (Misick & Wilson, 2008). This trend is mirrored in the proposed sample in this study, roughly 84% of the volunteers in the partnering organization are female. Additionally, people are more likely to participate in organized volunteering efforts if they are highly educated, middle aged, have higher incomes, work at least part time, are married, and have a spouse who also volunteers (BLS 2009; Boraas 2003; Morrow-Howell 2010; Rotolo and Wilson 2006, cited in Butrica, Johnson, & Zedlewski 2009).

Approximately 25.3% of Americans over the age of 16 volunteered for an organization in September 2014 (Bureau of Labor Statistic, 2015). The volunteer rate fluctuates drastically from state to state with the highest 44% in Utah and the lowest in its boarder state Nevada at 18%

Volunteer rates have historically been low in the Las Vegas, NV area and have lagged behind the national average. In 2004, only 13.6% of the Las Vegas population was engaged, well below the National average of 28.8% for the same year, (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). In 2013, the Las Vegas volunteer statistics have increased to 18.9%, but are still below the National Average 26.8%, (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). Because of the lackluster rates of volunteerism, the Las Vegas area proved to be an interesting venue to conduct this experiment and provided a good backdrop to evaluate the treatment effect. These statistics are illustrated in Table 2.1 (data taken from Volunteering & Civic Life in America, 2014).
Due to the studies reliance upon an external organization’s cooperation with the study and cost prohibitive nature of using a large representative sample, this study relied on a sample of convenience. This reliance limited the generalizability of the findings to larger volunteer and donor populations.

**Subject Identification**

The experiment utilized subjects randomly selected from the volunteer and donor pool of a Las Vegas, NV area foundation. Based on previous events and the initial information provided by the organization, the proposed N=200. These subjects were to be randomly assigned to one control and three condition (treatment) groups. The distribution separated the sample equally and it was expected that 50 subjects would be in each group. The proposed N and subsequent numbers of group participants were not meet. The study was conducted with 84 subjects.

**Group Assignment**

A list of all last names and contact information of donors and volunteers was digitally provided by the organization. The list totaled 739 contacts, but the research team was informed
that the organization was not confident that all the information was accurate. A review of the list
of contacts revealed that a number of subjects in the membership were listed multiple times with
various contact information. In addition to these contacts, a number of the organization’s staff
were also listed in the membership. These subjects were removed from the list in order to
identify a more accurate population. A total of 40 contacts were removed from the initial list.
This step culled the list of possible participants down to 699. A digital random number generator
was used to assign each of the 699 contacts into one of the four experimental groups. Each
number represented the subject’s group assignment. Number 1 assigned the subject to the
Control Group, number 2 represented Treatment Group 1, number 3 represented Treatment
Group 2 and number 4 represented the Treatment Group 3. For the list of randomly generated
numbers see Appendix A.

Following the group assignment, each prospective group’s total was: Group 1 (Control): 186, Group 2 (Treatment 1): 189, Group 3 (Treatment 2): 174, Group 4 (Treatment 3): 150. Once
the groups were established and two months prior to the event dates, invitations were sent out to
the prospective participants utilizing the contact information that the organization provided.

Invitations included: Event invitation specific for each group, an invitation letter and
incomplete informed consent (see appendix B-G). Following IRB approval, the initial informed
consent was incomplete, due to the threat of internal validity posed by contamination. If the
subjects know the research team was evaluating the effects of gratitude expression, this
information might have affected the subjects outcomes. To eliminate the possibility of this type
of contamination, the full purpose of the study was not included in the informed consent in the
invitation packet.
The results from the initial invitations found that some of the organization’s contact information was incorrect. Once the undeliverable notifications were received: Group 1 (Control) lost 15= 172, Group 2 (Treatment 1) lost 17= 173, Group 3 (Treatment 2) lost 12= 164, Group 4 (Treatment 3) lost 10= 141. This left a possible total of 650 subjects. In addition to the undeliverable invitations, the researcher was contacted by five individuals who were unable to attend due to scheduling conflicts. This dropped the total possible participants to 645 subjects. Follow up invitations were sent out to help increase participation.

Following the invitations, the research team received 88 total RSVPs: Group 1 (Control): 28, Group 2 (Treatment 1): 21, Group 3 (Treatment 2): 16, Group 4 (Treatment 3): 23. Despite the RSVPs, the actual total participants totaled 64 subjects: Group 1 (Control): 19, Group 2 (Treatment 1): 19 (20 attended, 1 subject withdrew), Group 3 (Treatment 2): 12, Group 4 (Treatment 3): 14. 10% of the possible subjects participated in the study.

The subjects are predominantly female; 54 of the 64 participants, representing 84% of the subjects. The subjects also were predominantly older, 29 participants were 51-70 years old representing 45% of the subjects, 33 were over 70 years old representing 51% of the subjects. The demographic breakdown of the subjects is detailed in Table 2.2 and Table 2.3.
Table 2.2 Sample Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M: 10</td>
<td>18-25 yrs: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(16%)</td>
<td>26-35 yrs: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F: 54</td>
<td>36-50 yrs: 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(84%)</td>
<td>51-70 yrs: 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>70+: 33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3 Group Demographics

| Group   | Gender        | Age Group       |
|---------|---------------|
|         | M: 5 (27%)    | 18-25 yrs: 1  |
|         | F: 14 (73%)   | 26-35 yrs: 0   |
|         |               | 36-50 yrs: 0   |
|         |               | 51-70 yrs: 6   |
| Group 1 |               | 70+: 12        |
|         | M: 2 (11%)    | 18-25 yrs: 0  |
|         | F: 17 (89%)   | 26-35 yrs: 1   |
|         |               | 36-50 yrs: 0   |
|         |               | 51-70 yrs: 8   |
|         |               | 70+: 10        |
| Group 2 | M: 3 (25%)    | 18-25 yrs: 0  |
|         | F: 9 (75%)    | 26-35 yrs: 0   |
|         |               | 36-50 yrs: 0   |
|         |               | 51-70 yrs: 8   |
|         |               | 70+: 4         |
| Group 3 | M: 0 (0%)     | 18-25 yrs: 0  |
|         | F: 14 (100%)  | 26-35 yrs: 0   |
|         |               | 36-50 yrs: 0   |
|         |               | 51-70 yrs: 7   |
|         |               | 70+: 7         |

Table 2.3 Group Demographics
Experiment

The experiment meets the standards Schutt defined to be a true experiment. The design contains: four distinct groups (one control and three treatment), variation in treatment (three distinct forms of gratitude expression) and randomization, subjects were randomly assigned to one of the four groups.

The participants in the study came from a medium sized quasi-governmental agency that relies heavily on volunteers and monetary donations. The experiment took place during the organization’s annual volunteer appreciation luncheon. For the purpose of the experiment, the four groups were randomly assigned to four separate luncheons. While designing the experiment, it was determined that if all four groups were to meet at the same time and location, a high likelihood existed that the subjects might be contaminated by exposure to subjects from the other groups. In order to limit the possible contamination, all four luncheons were conducted on different day during the course of one week, the first session was held on a Monday, the second on a Wednesday, third on a Thursday and the fourth on the following Monday.

Controlling for the possibility of contamination did not allow for the control of possible events effects; slight variations on weather and traffic patterns may have some effect on the subjects.

Each session of the experiment was conducted in the Organization’s Program Room. Each group received an identical lunch catered by the same catering company. The lunch consisted of: garlic herb chicken, vegetarian lasagna, caesar salad, rolls, and assorted fruit: grapes, strawberries and pineapple, assorted cookies, water and assorted sodas.
Although each group’s session was held on different days, they all began at 11:30 AM. Subjects for each group checked in with the research team at the appointed time and were given a copy of the study’s informed consent as well as a participant identification number, which was made up of their group number and participant number. Group 1’s (Control Group) first participant number was (G101). The subjects were then allowed to pick their seat at one of the tables and given time to review and sign the informed consent. After the subjects had all checked in, read, agreed to and signed the informed consent they were asked to begin their lunch, which was served as a buffet. Once all subjects were seated and began eating, the treatment groups were each given their assigned treatment. Following the completion of their meal, the subjects in each group were asked to complete the survey sheet. It included the: Volunteer Hours and Monetary Pledge Card, The Gratitude Questionnaire-Six Item Form (GQ-6) and 5 demographic questions (see Appendix H). Following the completion and collection of the documents, the research team read the debrief statement (see Appendix I) which included the full purpose of the study. At this time the subjects were allowed to ask questions and the research team answered all questions that were presented. The subjects were again given the opportunity to withdraw from the study. Following the debriefing the subjects were allowed to leave the facility at their own rate.

**Group 1 (Control)**

The initial event for Group 1 (Control) was held on a Monday, 73.4 Degrees, Wind 19.6 mph out of the Southwest with a high pollen count. During the luncheon, the control group was asked to complete a survey instrument.
**Group 2 (Treatment 1)**

Group 2 (Treatment 1)’s event was held on a Wednesday, 60.8 Degrees, Wind 12.7 mph out of the Northwest with a high pollen count. Group 2 received Gratitude Affect Treatment One. During the lunch, the Organization’s Director offered a sincere thank you speech (see Appendix J) One subject withdrew following lunch, but prior to the completion of the survey.

**Group 3 (Treatment 2)**

Group 3 (Treatment 2)’s event was held on a Thursday, 64.4 Degrees, calm wind with a high pollen count. The second treatment group (Group 3) was given Gratitude Affect Treatment Two. During the lunch a handwritten thank-you card was distributed to each subject. The cards were uniform and handwritten (See Appendix K).

**Group 4 (Treatment 3)**

Group 4 (Treatment 3)’s event was held on a Monday, 78.8 Degrees, wind 5.8 mph out of the east with a moderate pollen count. The third treatment group (Group 4) was given Gratitude Affect Treatment Three. During the lunch thank-you gifts ($10.00 Amazon Gift Card), were distributed to all subjects in the group.

Following the conclusion of all four groups, the survey instrument data was collected and stored by the research team. In addition to the data collected through the instrument, the organization allowed the research team access to the volunteer hours and donation logs for the three months following the study. This allowed the research team to track the downstream effects of the treatment. More recently, it has been found that when individuals are asked to pledge money and time, it increases the likelihood they will carry out the promise because they feel
accountable (Bator & Cialdini, 2000; Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Cotterill, John & Richardson, 2010). During the experiment, volunteers and donors were asked to pledge hours and/or dollars. This effect should help to hold the participants accountable for their pledges.

**Data Collection**

For the experiment, demographic data was collected from each participant and will be reported as descriptive statistics and analyzed as moderating variables. GQ-6 scores were also recorded to determine the subjects’ gratitude levels. Data collection for variables was collected in two steps.

In step one, the answering of questions on the GQ-6, the Independent Variable: Gratitude Affect, was measured as nominal data through the presence or absence of the priming of gratitude affect. The Dependent Variable: Gratitude Score, was measured as continuous data through the subject’s scores on the GQ-6. In step two, pledge of volunteer hours and or monetary donations, the Independent Variable: Gratitude Affect, was measured as nominal data through the presence or absence of the priming of gratitude affect. The Dependent Variable: Prosocial Behavior, was measured as continuous data by each subject’s pledged volunteer hours and monetary donations.

**Data Analysis**

The data collected through the pledge card, GQ-6 and the demographic questioner were evaluated via two standard research tools. An Independent Sample T-test was utilized to determine, calculate and compare the difference in means between the control and each treatment group. The difference in means defined the effect of the treatments. The results of the test determined the direction of the effect, positive and negate effects were seen. The frequency
distribution of the age and gender of the subjects were also calculated and recorded. The findings from the statistical calculations and their discussion are recorded in the subsequent chapters.
Chapter IV: Findings/Results

The literature from previous gratitude studies guided the design and execution of this study. Based upon the findings from the seminal literature in the area, this study was driven by three hypotheses. This chapter is organized so that each hypothesis is presented individually with the relevant data reported in each section.

Hypothesis 1 - The expressions of gratitude will activate the gratitude affect and will positively increase the participants’ level of gratitude.

The results indicate that the individual gratitude expression for each treatment group had little effect upon the outcomes of the GQ6 survey.

Figure 4.1 GQ6 Scores
All treatments showed some effect on the average GQ6 scores of each group. The mean score of the control group equaled 37.32. Treatment 1’s, (Verbal Thank-you), mean equaled 39.16 (+1.842, sig=0.211) and Treatment 3’s (Thank-you Gift) mean equaled 36.00, (-1.316, sig=0.262) neither showed a significant difference. Treatment 2 (Written Thank-you) did show a significant negative difference of means. The group’s mean equalling 33.83 (-3.482, sig=0.046). This is attributed to the group nature of the volunteer appreciation event. The treatment appears to have lessened the feeling of gratitude that the subjects felt, since the thank-you cards were administered in a group setting. It is possible that the subjects had an opportunity to compare and determine that the message was the same for all subjects in the group. The group nature and knowledge that each participant in the group was receiving the same thank you card may have attributed to the effect upon the subjects. If the thank-you cards were mailed individually to each subject, it may have given a more personal touch and offered a different outcome. The negative effect may also be attributed to the anonymous nature of the thank-you card. The card was signed “Organization Staff” and was not attributed to a specific staff member. In the case of the verbal thank-you, the Director of the organization offered the expression of gratitude, this treatment gave a face to the thank-you. The verbal and written thank-you were almost identical, however, due to the fact that the thank-you card could not be attributed to a specific individual; it did not provide the same effect.

It is important to note that the average GQ6 scores for three of the four groups were markedly higher than the general average results of the GQ6. The baseline (average) score has been set at 34 (Emmons & McCullough, 2002). This baseline was created using the average of mean scores across 25 studies conducted between 2002 and 2009. The only score below the average was nominally below the average by one point. The higher than average scores suggest
to the researcher that the general level of gratitude shown by all subjects was higher than the average subject. This is due to the fact that the design of the experiment was built around a volunteer appreciation luncheon. The very nature of the luncheon would account for the heightened average GQ6 scores. Volunteers were being thanked for their previous prosocial activity across all 4 groups of subjects. In two of the treatment groups (1&3), the difference in means between the control group was not significant and did not allow for the null hypothesis to be rejected. While the gratitude expressions did not positively impact the GQ6 scores or show a measurable difference in means, within the confines of this study, high levels of overall GQ6 scores suggests that the subjects were experiencing high levels of gratitude at the onset of the experiment.

Despite the higher than average scores, the only significant group (Treatment Group 2-Written Thank-you) score provide a negative difference in means. The two other treatment groups did not show a significant difference in means and the variation can be attributed to change. These results indicate that Hypothesis 1 was not supported by the results of the study. The only significant finding in terms of the activation of the gratitude affect showed that the gratitude treatment had a negative effect on the GQ6 score. This tells the researcher that the treatments did not positively increase the level of subject’s gratitude, as defined by the GQ6 survey.

**Hypothesis 2** - The gratitude affect will positively increase the subjects’ prosocial behavior.

**Hypothesis 2A:** Participants who are primed will express a willingness to volunteer and donate more in the future.
Pledged Volunteer Hours

The results indicate that across both measures of prosocial behavior, pledged volunteer hours and charitable donations, two of the three gratitude expressions showed a significant effect.

Figure 4.2 Pledged Volunteer Hours

In terms of the volunteer hours pledged, the mean of the control group was 358.89 for the upcoming 12 months. The mean pledge of Treatment Group 1 (Verbal Thank-You) equaled 181.26 hours for the upcoming year providing a significant difference of means of -177.63,
Treatment Group 2 (Written Thank-You) also showed a negative effect. The mean of the group was 187.17 hours provide a significant difference in means of -171.728, (sig=0.034). Treatment Group 3 (Thank-You Gift) pledged a mean of 382.00 hours, the difference of means for this group was positive, however, not statistically significant. The difference of means equaled +23.105, (sig=0.146). These findings are in conflict with the proposed Hypothesis 3. Based upon the gratitude literature, the researcher proposed that the expressions of gratitude would positively increase the numbers of hours pledged. The data does not support this hypothesis. The verbal and written thank-you expressions both negatively reduced the mean hours pledged by nearly 50%. Of the three treatments only the thank-you gift, provided any positive effect, however this effect was not statistically significant enough to reject the null hypothesis.

While further research is needed, these negative findings are attributed to the altruistic nature of volunteering, similar to the findings of Newman & Shen, 2012. A recent study in Italy of regular blood donors rejected the idea of receiving incentives in exchange for their donations (Lacetera & Macis, 2010). This can be coupled with the anecdotal data collected by the researcher, multiple subjects across groups mentioned, in varied terms, that they did not need any other form of thank-you; the luncheon was enough. They were happy to be a part of the organization and give their time to help something they believe in. To evaluate these motives further a qualitative study would need to be conducted. These negative effects are also attributed to the overall group nature of the volunteer luncheon. Similar to the pattern seen in the GQ6 results, the control groups pledged mean hours were high, due to the high level of gratitude they were feeling solely based upon the volunteer luncheon. The administration of a group thank-you detracted from the effect of the treatment. In both the verbal and written thank-you groups, the
gratitude expression was not unique to each individual subject, but was the same for each member of the group. This may have detracted from the overall feeling of gratitude that the subjects felt was being expressed and was seen in the negative difference in means effect of each group.

While the thank-you gift (Treatment 3) provided a positive increase in the pledged hours, the average treatment effect was only negligible and not significant. Due to its insignificance, it cannot support or refute the recent findings of Newman & Shen, 2012 and Lacetera & Macis, 2010. The difference in means was positive and if the study were replicated with a larger sample, the positive effect may be large enough to be significant. However, under the current study, the findings for this treatment cannot be attributed to more than chance. The overall effect of the treatments on pledged volunteer hours is attributed to the type of relationships that the subjects have with the organization. In this case, volunteers take part in what Heyman & Ariely term a social market relationship that is driven and shaped by altruism. In this exchange, levels of compensation are irrelevant to effort (Batson, Sager, Gast & Kang, 1997, Cialdini, 1997, Trivers, 1971). Heyman & Ariely caution that these relationships are fragile and any social rewards must be distributed with care (Heyman & Ariely, 1993). In this caution, the authors suggest that when asking for help in a social exchange, “…ask friends and offer them dinner”, (Heyman & Ariely, 1993). The findings of this section of the experiment echo this suggestion. The highest average amount of hours pledged was provided by the control group, who received only a meal. Based upon the social exchange, the verbal and written thank-you treatments, while simply expressions of gratitude, both placed additional expectations upon the social market relationships and appears to have a negative effect.
Exogenous factors may also contribute to these findings, time constraints and the logistics of offering more time may have an effect upon these findings.

**Pledged Monetary Donation**

In terms of pledged monetary donations, the results indicate that treatment 1 & 2 both showed significant effects on the means of the treatment groups.

![Figure 4.3 Pledged Monetary Donations](image)

The mean amount of money pledged by the control group equaled $129.58; both Treatment Group 1 (Verbal Thank-You) and Treatment Group 2 (Written Thank-You) provided a positive difference in means. Treatment Group 1’s mean was $319.47 with a difference of
means equaling +$189.895, (sig=0.022). Treatment Group 2’s mean was $388.33 with a difference of means of +258.754, (sig=0.007). Both findings are consistent with the previous gratitude research, the verbal and written expressions of gratitude produced an increase in prosocial behavior (Pledging Monetary Donations).

This effect is not seen in the difference of means of Treatment Group 3. Treatment Group 3 (Thank-You Gift)’s mean $104.64 with an average treatment effect of -$24.936, (sig=0.869). This finding is not significant and cannot justify the rejection of the null hypothesis. However, the treatment effect was negative and hints at supporting the findings of Newman & Shen’s study. The difference of means appears to have a slight negative effect upon the pledge of monetary donations, but it cannot be definitively stated that this effect was not due to chance.

The findings of the pledged money differ from that of the hours because the pledge of money takes the exchange from a social market relationship into that of a money market relationship. In this type of relationship, effort is exerted according to reciprocity and compensation (Clark & Mills, 1993; Fehr & Falk, 2002; Rabin, 1993). Based upon the findings, it is apparent that Treatment 3, a $10.00 Amazon Gift card, was not considered to be adequate compensation or reciprocity for an increase in donations. This coupled with the lack of significance in the findings can neither support nor rebuff the previous findings on the effects of thank-you gifts. The findings do, however, support the theory that expressions of gratitude do positively affect monetary donations to charitable organization. Being thanked verbally and in writing have positive effects upon both groups. In this market exchange, the subjects offered higher mean monetary pledges when they were verbally thanked +$189.895, (sig: 0.022), and thanked via a written note +258.754, (sig: 0.007). Both messages were nearly identical (See Appendix J- K); this difference is accounted for based upon the individual nature of the thank-
you card, versus the group verbal thank-you. The difference in results between the two treatments could also be attributed to the tactile difference of receiving and reading a thank-you card versus a verbal thank-you. Further research into this effect would be needed. With the mixed findings, the study also attempted to track longitudinal effects of the treatments.

Longitudinal Effects of the Treatment

Following the experiment and administration of the treatments the organization allowed the research team access to the records of the volunteer hours actually donated by the subjects. Monetary donations were not tracked and associated with specific donors, which made the collection and analysis of donation data impossible. The subject’s volunteer hours for the three months following the study were recorded and analyzed using an independent sample t-test. The results provided a mixture of significant and not significant findings. Due to a variety of exogenous factors outside the control of the researcher, the effects cannot be wholly attributed to the treatments administered.

Month 1

In the first month following the study, the mean hours donated by the control group equaled 7.2895. Treatment Group 1 (Verbal Thank-you) equaled 4.4474 hours which was not a significant difference of means -2.84211, (sig: 0.592). Treatment Group 2 (Written Thank-You) equaled 7.8125 hours with a difference in means of 0.52303 which was not significant (sig: 0.251). Treatment 3 (Thank-you Gift) equaled 8.7857 hours which was not a significant difference in means of 1.49624, (sig: 0.800).
Month 2

In the second month following the study, the mean donated hours by the control group equaled 4.3947. Treatment Group 1 (Verbal Thank-you) equaled 3.1711 hours which was not a significant difference of means -1.22368, (sig: 0.776). Treatment Group 2 (Written Thank-You) equaled 7.5000 hours with a difference in means of 3.10526 which was not significant, (sig:
0.073). Treatment 3 (Thank-you Gift) equaled 6.7143 hours with difference in means of 2.31955 which was not significant, (sig: 0.688).

Figure 4.5 Month 2 Completed Volunteer Hours

**Month 3**

In the third month following the study, the mean donated hours by the control group equaled 3.3289. Treatment Group 1 (Verbal Thank-you) equaled 4.1447 hours with a difference in means of 0.81579 which was not significant (sig: 0.157). Treatment Group 2 (Written Thank-You) equaled 7.5625 hours with a significant difference in means of 4.23355, (sig: 0.007).
Treatment 3 (Thank-you Gift) equaled 5.7857 hours with a significant difference in means of 2.45677, (sig: 0.010).

**Figure 4.6 Month 3 Completed Volunteer Hours**

The only significance in the longitudinal data was found in Treatment Group 2 (Written Treatment) and Treatment Group 3 (Thank-you Gift) during month 3. While these findings are statistically significant, the lack of significance in the previous months following the study, suggests that these effects are due to exogenous factors, not related to the treatments administered by the study and are in fact spurious. If an effect was seen during the first two
months following the study and continued into the third month, the researcher could have attributed these effects to the treatment. Since the effects only became significant in the third month following the study there is a very low likelihood that they can be attributed to any treatment effect.

**Total Volunteer Hours Donated**

Over the course of the three months following the exposure to the treatments the mean of two of the three treatment groups’ hours was higher than the control groups. During the three months, the mean of the Control Group was 15.0132 hours. Of these findings only Treatment Group 2 (Written Thank-You) provided a significant difference in means. The mean of group 2 was 22.8750, providing a difference in means of 7.86184 which was significant (sig: 0.031). The means of Treatment Group 1 (Verbal Thank-You) and Treatment Group 3 (Thank-You Gift) were not significant. The mean of Treatment Group 1 (Verbal Thank-You) was 11.7632, with a difference in mean of -3.25000, (sig: 0.641) not significant. The mean of Treatment Group 3 (Thank-You Gift) was 21.2857, this provided a difference in means of 6.27256, which was not significant (sig: 0.699). The treatment effect provided mixed results over the course of the three months which were primarily not significant. The comparison of the means can be seen in graph 7.
Despite the lack of significance seen in the comparison in means between groups, significance was found in the difference in means between the initial month and the cumulative total. The Control Group’s initial mean was 7.2895 hours, after three months the mean had risen to 15.0132 hours a significant difference in means of 7.72368, (sig: 0.002). Treatment Group 1 (Verbal Thank-You) also showed a significant increase; initially a mean of 4.4474 hours which increased to 11.7632 hours, a significant difference in means of 7.31579, (sig: 0.005). Treatment Group 2 (Written Thank-You) showed an initial mean of 7.8125 which increased to 22.7850 a significant difference in means of 15.06250, (sig: 0.022). Treatment
Group 3 (Thank-You Gift) also showed this positive tread. The initial mean was 8.7857 hours which grew to 21.2857 hours for a significant difference in means of 12.50, (sig 0.007).

While the longitudinal effects on the whole do not show a significant difference in means from the control group’s hours. The general significant positive effect on the difference in means shows that the gratitude event, the volunteer/donor luncheon, can have a long term impact on the volunteer hours donated to the organization. Due to the exogenous effects, these longer term findings cannot be entirely attributed to the treatment, however, the positive trend in the data provide a path for future research, that would require a design that controls form more external effects.

Hypothesis 2 is supported in the effects of the verbal and written thank-you expressions. A significant positive effect was seen from these treatment groups on monetary donations. The unexpected negative effects seen can also provide avenues for further research that will be discussed in the following chapter.

**H3:** Gratitude treatment three (thank-you card) will increase prosocial behavior.

The data collected for Treatment Group 3 (Thank-You Gift) was not significant for both pledges, but the effects were directional. Positive in terms of hours, but negative in terms of money. Results for this hypothesis are inconclusive and would require further study with a larger population to determine if there is any effect. Outcomes of the thank you gift treatment showed slight variations, but none significant enough to support or rebuff the findings of the Newman & Shen Study. There was a negative effect on the GQ6 scores as well as on the donation of money. The treatment did show a positive impact on the pledge donation of hours. However none of the results that involved the thank you gift were statistically significant. The findings from the study
produced a variety of results. Some of the results were unexpected and they will all be further discussed in the following chapter.
Chapter V: Conclusion/Discussion

This study sought to measure how gratitude can affect the prosocial behaviors of volunteering and donating to a charitable organization. In evaluating this theory, the study was designed to answer two research questions:

**R1:** How will the gratitude expressions impact prosocial behaviors (monetary donations and volunteerism)?

**R2:** How will the use of a thank-you gift as a form of gratitude expression change prosocial behaviors (monetary donations and volunteerism)?

Data from the study provided insight into answering Research Question 1; however, the results of the study was not found to be significant and could not serve to provide an answer for Research Question 2.

**Impact**

The data produced from Treatment 1, (Verbal Thank-you), and Treatment 2 (Written Thank-you), both showed a significant effect upon the volunteer hours pledged as well as the monetary donations. In both cases, the treatments affected the pledges in a similar manner. Both treatments produced a negative effect on the average hours pledged by the treatment groups; while these treatments positively affected the average monetary pledges made by the treatment groups. These findings speak to the fact that while volunteering and donating are both seen as prosocial behaviors, the act of volunteering and donating to charity reside in separate types of exchanges.
Volunteering creates a social exchange relationship, which is defined by limited expectations and rules. Social market relationships are shaped by altruism, in which the level of compensation is irrelevant to the effort and time offered by the participant. Volunteers work regardless of any compensation or reward they might receive (Batson, Sager, Gast & Kang, 1997, Cialdini, 1997, Trivers, 1971). These relationships are fragile and need to be carefully monitored. This relationship may have been negatively affected by a number of factors surrounding the manner in which the treatments were administered. Due to the fact that volunteering is a social exchange, the subjects may have seen the appreciation luncheon as a time to socialize and interact with the other volunteers and donors. The administration of the treatments may have served to interrupt this time of fraternization; causing the subjects to interrupt their conversations to listen to the Director’s speech or read the thank-you note. The treatments demanded that the socialization cease for a period of time. This expectation of the subjects’ attention may have detracted from an important part of the appreciation event and the negative effect was seen in the pledged hours.

Two specific factors in regards to the treatments may have affected the outcome; however, they were unable to be controlled for. The organization’s Director was fairly new to the organization, having been in place for less than a year. This was the first appreciation event that the Director had participated in. Due to the abbreviated period that the Director had been in place, there may not have had the opportunity to build long lasting bonds with the membership. In many cases, the luncheon was the first time that the subjects had the chance to meet the Director. The results may have been different if the speech had been offered by a longtime incumbent Director. In addition to the freshness of the Director, the thank-you card was impersonal and signed by “organizational staff”. A personalized thank-you card signed by a
member of the organization who had worked closely with the subject may have provided a more positive outcome. This design was impossible within the confines of the study. In order to ensure that a treatment was that in-depth and personalized, the researcher would need to have more access and control of the organizational staff, which was not possible.

The results of this study show that verbal and written thank-you expressions had a negative effect upon the hours pledged. The results show that the best outcome for pledged volunteer hours was seen in the control group. This means that this group of subjects did not, in fact, receive any additional treatment. The group did, however, receive a form of gratitude expression, the same that all groups received: a volunteer/donor luncheon. The results indicate that the most effective way to increase pledges of volunteer hours is to hold a volunteer/donor thank-you luncheon. Any additional treatment or gratitude expression may add expectations upon the social market that exceed the relationship. For this theory to be tested, an additional study would need to be conducted in which the control group receives no gratitude expression and the volunteer/donor luncheon is reserved for a treatment. This design was impossible given the restrictions posed by the Human Subjects Board.

While Treatment 1 (Verbal Thank-you) and Treatment 2 (Written Thank-you) showed a negative effect upon the pledged volunteer hours, both treatments showed a significant positive effect upon the pledged monetary donations. In the case of Treatment 1, pledged dollars more than doubled (Control Mean=$129.58, Treatment 1 Mean= $319.47). In Treatment 2, the pledge amount nearly tripled (Control Mean= =$129.58, Treatment 2 Mean= $388.33). These effects support the theory that in the money market relationship, effort and resources are exerted according to reciprocity and compensation offered (Clark & Mills 1993, Fehr & Falk, 2002, Rabin, 1993). Due to the fact that a monetary marker (Donation) was involved in this pledge, the
relationship changed from one of a social market relationship as seen in the volunteer hours pledged into a money market relationship, complete with different rules and expectations. In this pledge and subsequent outcome, it appears that the gratitude expressions offered in Treatment 1 (Verbal Thank-you) and Treatment 2 (Written Thank-you) were desirable enough to increase the value of the pledge and the observed outcomes. Money, goods and expressions of gratitude (Thank-you) drive the exchange in this relationship. Based upon the outcomes of these treatments and the non-significant findings presented by Treatment 3 (Thank-you Gift), it is apparent that for this group of volunteers and donors, being thanked for their previous prosocial behaviors resulted in a significant increase in pledged monetary donations. However, the results from Treatment 3 (Thank-you Gift) show that the same is not true for the gratitude expression offered as a gift. These results may be due to the particular gift offered in the treatment ($10.00 Amazon Gift Card). The specific gift may not have been desirable enough to increase the value of the exchange. This effect can also be attributed to the negative effect of money or monetary markers upon donations as found in Vohs et al., 2006. Further evaluation with a larger sample would be needed.

The finding of this study are both contrary to and support the literature on gratitude. The results from the pledged hours show that gratitude expressions, specifically being thanked for prosocial behaviors can have a positive effect upon future (pledged) prosocial behaviors, in this case donating to charity. The results from the pledged hours are contrary to the gratitude literature. The findings show that the gratitude expressions of being thanked actually serve to decrease future (pledged) prosocial behavior, volunteering. These results are counterintuitive based upon the literature and appear to challenge what has been written on gratitude. The explanation for this observed phenomenon can be found in the GQ6 scores. The highest GQ6
score, which represents the level of gratitude the subjects were feeling during the study was seen in the control group (mean=37.32). Only Treatment Group 1 (Verbal Thank-you) showed an increase in mean score (mean=39.16), this change was not statistically significant. Both Treatment Group 2 (Written Thank-you) and Treatment Group 3 (Thank-you Gift) showed mean scores below the control. All groups scored well above the average on the GQ6 scale, three of the four groups scored in the 25% percentile of the instrument. This means that each group of subjects was feeling gratitude during the study. The researcher attributes this to the fact that the design of the study centered on the organizations volunteer/donor appreciation luncheon. The subjects were all feeling gratitude due to the fact that they were being thanked and recognized as part of the luncheon. The additional thank-you expression detracted from the effect of the gratitude expression, which was seen in the negative response to the solicitation for pledged volunteer hours. The social market exchange was affected because of this and the negative outcomes were the result. This theory could have been better evaluated if a Pre and Post Treatment GQ6 had been administered, however doing so would have primed the subjects with the concept of gratitude and may have contaminated and confounded the results.

Pledged monetary donations were not effected in the same way due to the different expectations and rules of the money market relationship. The gratitude score appears to be irrelevant to this relationship. Subjects appreciated being thanked for their previous prosocial behaviors and responded with a significant increase in pledged monetary donations.

These results add to the understanding of social and market exchange relationships. In terms of this study, the results indicate that a gratitude event/luncheon provides the best outcome when looking to increase prosocial behaviors in a social market relationship such as volunteering. Verbal and written thank-you expression provides the best outcome when looking
to increase prosocial behaviors in a money market relationship such as monetary donations. These findings both support and challenge what has previously been written regarding the effect of gratitude on prosocial behavior. Based upon previous work, it was expected that both types of pledges would produce a positive increase. The study did not meet these expectations. Additional steps could be taken to control for possible issues and further test the implications of these findings.

**Limitations**

While providing useful findings regarding the effect of gratitude on prosocial behaviors, these findings are constrained by a number of limitations.

**Generalizability**

The initial limitation is the lack of generalizability to a larger population. Due to the pool of subjects that were used, the findings are not generalizable to the larger population of volunteers and donors nationwide. The organization that was selected to participate was chosen based upon the access presented and the convenience of the pool. The sample of convenience was randomly assigned to a control and treatment groups based upon the subjects willingness to participate. While the sample followed the average age and gender demographics seen nationally (Giving USA, 2014), the size of the sample cannot be expected to be representative of the larger population. A randomized sample was not possible due to the response rate of the possible participants. In addition to the low response rate, the number of original contacts and incorrect or incomplete contact information raises a number of questions, that will be discussed in the future research section. Because of this fact, the findings cannot be considered to be generalizable to a larger population and are limited to the gratitude effect upon the specific subjects within the
study. A truly randomized sample with participants who support a variety of charitable organizations would be needed to provide generalizable findings for the larger population of volunteers and donors.

**Informed Consent**

The study was also limited by the restriction of having to inform the subjects they were taking part in a study through the informed consent. It is a requirement of the Human Subjects Review Board and necessary to protect the subjects, however, it did not allow for the observation of how the subjects might have reacted in a natural setting. The subjects were made aware that they were participating in a study. It appeared that this knowledge led some participants to be vigilant and during the study attempted to ascertain what the researchers was truly testing. Because the initial informed consent that was signed by the participant was vague, some subjects were trying to guess the true nature of what was being studied. One subject asked, “Are you testing what food we decide to eat?” another asked “Do the decorations hold any subliminal meaning?” The fact that the subjects were informed generally of the study and the resulting hypervigilance may have affected the findings in an undeterminable manner.

**Exogenous Factors**

The longitudinal data was not complete and the pledged monetary donations turned out to be unidentifiable. These factors as well as a number of exogenous factors affected the longitudinal data and ended up rendering it not significant. Illnesses, hospitalizations and time constraints effected the volunteer hours donated to the organization during the three months following the initial treatment. The researcher was made aware of one such illness and subsequent surgery that effected two of the subjects and the possible hours donated.
Additionally, the time of year may have had an exogenous effect upon the results. The three months following the study bridged spring into early summer. Many of the subjects were unavailable due to vacations and other commitments. Some of these factors could be controlled for by extending the period of observations to a full year or even a multi-year study. This, however, was outside the defined design of the experiment.

Despite these limitations, the study provides significant findings that can prove useful in defining the effect of gratitude in both a social market relationship and a money market relationship.

**Significance**

The findings of this study, which failed to answer both research questions, provides insight into how gratitude affects both a social market relationship and a money market relationship. It provides support for both the positive and negative effects of gratitude on these relationships. While additional studies need to be conducted to verify and expand upon these findings, they serve as a basis that can be built upon for the expansion of gratitude research into these relationships.

In addition to the academic significance of these findings, the data will prove to be valuable for nonprofit practitioners who work with volunteers and donors. The data shows that a volunteer/donor appreciation event is the most effective method for increasing pledged hours, thank-you expressions, both verbal and written can have a great impact upon pledged monetary donations.
Lastly, the study increases the number of field experiments conducted by social science and answers Mason’s challenge posed in 2012. While this study establishes an agenda for further research it is important that it is replicated and expanded upon.

**Future Research**

In building upon this study the researcher plans on expanding the scope and continuing the evaluation of how gratitude and the gratitude affect can impact prosocial behaviors in both social and money market relationships.

In doing so, it is proposed that the study be replicated using both a larger and more diverse randomized sample. By identifying and studying subjects from a variety of volunteer driven nonprofit and charitable organizations across the nation, the findings will become more complete. A larger randomized sample would be representative of the larger population and generalizable to said population. The study would seek to replicate this study on a large scale to determine if the outcomes would be consistent with the current findings.

Despite the plan to expand the study, Nevada and Las Vegas specifically offer many additional avenues of research. For this study, the original population size was 739 after some evaluation the true number became 645 and of that only 84 people participated. The low participation rate and inflated membership number coupled with the overall low percentage of volunteers in Las Vegas raises a number of questions for future research. Are these low numbers symptomatic of an organizational problem, the need to clean up membership records or part of the culture in the city and state? This is a question that opens up a new and important avenue of study for future research. The response rates may be attributed to bookkeeping issues, however, is this just one of the issue that is plaguing the Las Vegas Valley or do community norms and
culture drive organizations to operate this way perpetuating the same issues? Answering this question will require multiple studies and longitudinal data. The answer may prove to help answer the overarching research question of this study, how do we increase prosocial behavior? I encourage other researchers to look at this issue and evaluate it through multiple lenses.

The researcher also proposes a study that would test a volunteer/donor appreciation event as one of the treatments to be administered. Designing this study would require that a control group not participate in the volunteer/donor appreciation event, and thus receive nothing prior to completion of the GQ6 and survey instrument. Under this design: Treatment 1 would be a verbal thank-you- phone call, Treatment 2 would be a personalized written Thank-you mailed to the subject, Treatment 3 would be a gift-card and Treatment 4 would be participation in a volunteer luncheon. The basic survey instrument would be the same, but it would also collect additional demographic information.

Another variation on the study would seek to evaluate the effect of the treatments utilizing a GQ6 pre and posttest. Data from this type of study would provide recordable findings that would report the effect of the treatments on gratitude felt by the subjects as defined by the GQ6. This data would also serve to direct future studies and define possible gratitude expression treatments that could be used to better define gratitude’s effect upon the social and money market relationships.

This work and the proposed research agenda will help to build the basis for the theory of a gratitude market relationship that can inform future work in the social sciences. The researcher plans to work toward the creation of this theory.
Appendix A

Randomly Generated Numbers

2 2 3 2 3 3 2 4 2 3 2 2 1 3 1 1 3 1 3 3 1 2 2 2 4 2 3 1 1 4 2 1 3 3 2 1 1 4 1 1 4 2 3 2 2 4 4 3 4 1 2 1
4 3 3 3 3 2 1 4 1 3 2 2 4 4 4 4 4 2 3 3 3 3 1 4 2 1 1 2 1 1 3 2 3 4 2 1 2 2 2 2 4 3 2 2 1 1 2 3 2 1 1
2 2 1 2 4 1 3 4 4 3 1 3 1 4 3 4 4 1 1 2 1 4 2 4 1 3 2 2 3 2 4 3 3 3 1 2 1 3 4 3 3 2 3 4 4 3 3 1 1 2 2
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Appendix B

Event Invitation Page 1
This event is part of the

Thank You for Your Time!
Would you Mind
Donating to Our Cause?

Research Project.

For more information or questions please contact the Principle Investigator Dr. Jessica Word

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Appendix D

Event Invitation Page 3

PLEASE JOIN US...

Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon

WHEN.............
TIME.............
WHERE..........
Study Invitation

Department of Public Affairs

TITLE OF STUDY: Thank You For Your Time! Would You Mind Donating to Our Cause?

INVESTIGATOR(S): Dr. Jessica Word, Matthew Hortt

As part of the volunteer appreciation event you are also being invited to participate in a research study that will help to inform the Doctoral Research project as well as provide data for the Friends of the Henderson Libraries.

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to identify commonalities in decisions to volunteering as well as validate prior prosocial behavior research.

The purpose of the study is to identify commonalities in decision to volunteering as well as validate prior prosocial behavior research.

For questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Dr. Jessica Word.

For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted, contact the UNLV Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects at 702-895-2794, toll free at 877-895-2794 or via email at IRB@unlv.edu.
Appendix G

Incomplete Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT
Department of Public Affairs

TITLE OF STUDY: Thank You For Your Time! Would You Mind Donating to Our Cause?
INVESTIGATOR(S): Dr. Jessica Word, Matthew Hortt
For questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Dr. Jessica Word at (702) 895-2684.

For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding
the manner in which the study is being conducted, contact the UNLV Office of Research
Integrity – Human Subjects at 702-895-2794, toll free at 877-895-2794 or via email at
IRB@unlv.edu.

Purpose of the Study
You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to identify
commonalities in decisions to volunteer. You are being asked to participate in the study because
you are a current donor and/or volunteer of a local nonprofit organization.

Risk
If you chose to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following: Participate in a 1
hour volunteer/donor appreciation luncheon. During the luncheon you will be asked to complete
a brief written survey. This study may include only minimal risks. You may feel uncomfortable
in answering some of the survey questions. You do not have to answer a question if it makes you
uncomfortable. You may withdraw at any time. We encourage you to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

**Participation and Withdrawal**

In some research studies, the investigators cannot tell you exactly what the study is about before you participate in the study. We will describe the tasks in the study in a general way but we can’t explain the real purpose of the study until after you complete these tasks. When you are done, we will explain why we are doing this study, what we are looking at and any other information you should know about the study. You will also be able to ask any questions you might have about the study’s purpose and the tasks you were asked to complete. Some details of this project may not be made known to you until the session is completed. At the completion of the session you have the option of withholding the responses you have provided.

Your participation in the study is not a requirement for you to attend the appreciation event. You may attend the appreciation event without agreeing to participate in the study. If you decide to attend the appreciation event without participating in the study, you are free and encouraged to ask questions of the research team during the event. Clarification will be provided as questions and concerns arise.

Agreement to initially participate in the study does not require you to participate in the study for the duration of the event. You may withdraw from the study at any time during the process.

**Privacy**

All information gathered in this study will be kept as confidential as possible among the research team. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in a group setting among the other participants. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for 5 years after completion of the study. After the storage time, the information gathered will be shredded.

**Participant Consent:**

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I have been able to ask questions about the research study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

__________________________________________  __________

Signature of Participant                        Date

__________________________________________

Participant Name (Please Print)
Organizational Pledge Card

Identifier Number (Participant #): ________________________________

Please fill in the amount you would be willing to pledge for the upcoming year for the following two questions.

Volunteer Hours: ________________________________

Charitable Contributions: ________________________________

---

The Gratitude Questionnaire-Six Item Form (GQ6)
Using the scale below as a guide, write a number beside each statement to indicate how much you agree with it.

1 = strongly disagree
2 = disagree
3 = slightly disagree
4 = neutral
5 = slightly agree
6 = agree
7 = strongly agree

___1. I have so much in life to be thankful for.
___2. If I had to list everything that I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list.
___3. When I look at the world, I don’t see much to be grateful for.
___4. I am grateful to a wide variety of people.
___5. As I get older I find myself more able to appreciate the people, events, and situations that have been part of my life history.
___6. Long amounts of time can go by before I feel grateful to something or someone.
Please Circle One Answer for the Following Questions
What drives your volunteering?
- Civic Duty
- Love of (the organization)
- Giving Back
- Way to Keep Busy

Are you currently a member of the (the organization)?
- Yes
- No

Would you be interested in joining the organization?
- Yes
- No

Would the membership due change your mind?
- Yes
- No

How much would you be willing to pay for an annual membership due?
- $5.00
- $10.00
- $25.00
- $50.00

Demographic Questions
What is your Genders?
- Male
- Female

What is your Age Group?
- 18-25 Yrs.
- 26-35 Yrs.
- 36-50 Yrs.
- 51-70 Yrs.
- 70+ Yrs.
Appendix I

Study Debrief Statement

UNLV
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA LAS VEGAS
INFORMED CONSENT

Department of Public Affairs

TITLE OF STUDY: Thank You For Your Time! Would You Mind Donating to Our Cause?

INVESTIGATOR(S): Dr. Jessica Word, Matthew Hortt

For questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Dr. Jessica Word at (702) 895-2684.

For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted, contact the UNLV Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects at 702-895-2794, toll free at 877-895-2794 or via email at IRB@unlv.edu.

Debriefing Script

Purpose of the Study
Thank you for participating in our study: Thank You for Your Time! Would You Mind Donating to Our Cause? At this time the research team would like to discuss certain aspects of the study and answer any questions you may have.

When research is conducted some details of this project may not be made known until after the session is completed. This is done in order to insure that the effects being examined are not influenced by information that could compromise the study. Some details of the study were omitted prior to the session.
The stated purpose of the study was to identify commonalities in decisions to volunteer. This statement is true, however, the full purpose of the study is threefold. First to identify a more effective method of attracting monetary donations and volunteers, Second determine what impact gratitude will have on the prosocial behaviors of volunteering for and donating to charity and finally to validate or challenge prior thank-you gift research. In short the study was testing the effects of different forms of gratitude expression on prosocial behavior.

**Selection and Random Assignment**

All participants in the study were randomly assigned to one of four groups using a random number generator. The groups consisted of one control group and three treatment groups, each treatment group received a different form of gratitude expression. This varies from the normal volunteer/donor appreciation luncheons, which are generally held in one large group setting.

The results from the pledge cards you completed will be recorded and stored using your participant number. Your name has been removed from the data and will not be used in any reports or articles produced as a result of this study. Your actual volunteer time and or donations will also be tracked over the next three months, but will be recorded using your participant number.

**Benefits**

Information regarding all procedures, benefits and risks remain the same. There may not be direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. A free lunch was provided to all participants. There are risks involved in all research studies.

**Risks**

This study may include only minimal risks. You may have felt uncomfortable in answering some of the survey questions. You did not have to answer a question if it made you uncomfortable. There is also the possible risk that you might experience an above average feeling of guilt associated with the study. Because we are testing the effects of gratitude expression, your feelings and desire to donate more time or money to the organization may have been manipulated by the treatment you were exposed to. Any guilt you may experience because of this effect is normal, but the result of the exposure is important to this project. The study is designed to see if there is any variance between the effects of the different gratitude expressions utilized. The findings will help organizations to more effectively attract and maintain support for their
cause. The study was funded in its entirety by the research team. No organizational funds were used for the purchasing of food or expressions of gratitude. If it would help to reduce any feelings of guilt you may experience you may return any gift cards received and they will be donated back to the organization. Additionally if you have any concerns regarding feelings of guilt, we would be happy to discuss them individually following the end of this session.

**Confidentiality**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with UNLV. We encourage you to ask questions about this study. With knowledge of the full purpose of the study, you still at this time have the option of withholding your responses and they will be omitted from all subsequent analysis. If you wish to be omitted please let one of the research team know at this time and your response will be discarded.

All information gathered in this study will be kept as confidential as possible among the research team. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in a group setting among the other participants. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for 5 years after completion of the study. After the storage time, the information gathered will be shredded.

If you have any questions at this time the research team would be happy to answer them. If it is a question you do not wish to ask in front of the group, a member of the research team will answer any questions privately.

Are there any questions? Again thank you for your time!
Appendix J

Text of Director’s Speech (Verbal Thank-You Treatment)

I wanted to thank you collectively for all the hard work that you have put in as a volunteer, supporter and ….. Aesop said, “No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted”. Everything that you do during the course of your work as a volunteer supports the ….. and its’ mission. We truly could not have accomplished what we have over the past year without you and the tireless hours that you devote to the ….. Booksales are held, special projects are accomplished, day-to-day ……. tasks are supported and money raised through fundraising efforts continues to grow, this is all because of work that you do. This is a testament to your dedication. Winston Churchill said, “We make a living by what we do, but we make a life by what we give”. The living you all make based on giving must be tremendous. I want to truly thank you for all you do and encourage you to continue your support. Thank you all for everything!
Appendix K

Text of Written Thank-You (Written Thank-You Treatment)

I wanted to thank you collectively for all the hard work that you have put in as a volunteer, supporter and …… Aesop said, “No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted”. Everything that you do during the course of your work as a volunteer supports the ……… and its’ mission. We truly could not have accomplished what we have over the past year without you and the tireless hours that you devote to the ……… Booksales are held, special projects are accomplished, day-to-day ….. tasks are supported and money raised through fundraising efforts continues to grow, this is all because of work that you do. This is a testament to your dedication. Winston Churchill said, “We make a living by what we do, but we make a life by what we give”. The living you all make based on giving must be tremendous. I want to truly thank you for all you do and encourage you to continue your support.

Thank you all for everything!

Staff
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Curriculum Vitae

Matthew L. Hortt

4505 S Maryland Pkwy
Department of Environmental and Public Affairs
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Las Vegas, NV 89154
Office Phone (702) 207-4253
E-mail address: horttm@unlv.nevada.edu

Education

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Ph.D., Public Affairs, December 2015

University of North Texas
M.S., Library and Information Science, August 2009

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
B.S., Criminal Justice, December 2005

Class Instruction Experience

PUA-403 Risk Management in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors

Publications