

Title: Are Gratitude and Appreciation One of the Same?: Comparing Relationships with Psychological Well-Being, Personality, Spirituality, Inspiration, and Awe

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Gratitude and appreciation are often used interchangeably, yet previous research has conceptually distinguished the two, with gratitude being primarily an affective trait or emotion (McCullough et al., 2002; McCullough et al., 2001; McCullough et al., 2004) that seems to include an appreciative component and reliance on personal relevance, and appreciation being primarily a cognitive construct (and not necessarily including gratitude; Tucker, 2007). To date, no research has been conducted to compare the two. The purpose of the present study was to compare the strengths of relationships for appreciation and gratitude with other psychological measures. Because of the overlap between appreciation and gratitude, it was expected both would show relationships with psychological well-being, personality, spirituality, inspiration, and awe. However, appreciation, compared to gratitude, was expected to show stronger correlations with constructs involving cognition-based processes (e.g., life satisfaction, open-mindedness, optimism, “awe,” inspiration) and weaker correlations with constructs involving emotion-based processes (e.g., happiness, positive and negative affect, depression, and anxiety). Also, it was expected that gratitude, compared to appreciation, would show stronger relationships with constructs that reflect personal relevance (e.g., self-esteem, personal growth, positive relations with [specific] others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance). One-hundred twenty-two participants from Psychology courses volunteered to participate by completing an online questionnaire for course credit. Results largely supported the hypotheses and suggest that while there is considerable overlap between gratitude and appreciation, each show a different pattern of relationships with an array of psychological factors, which offers the first set of evidence for the distinguishing the two.

References

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