

## The Science of Virtue: A Framework for Research

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This book is a methodological guide for the emerging, interdisciplinary science of virtue traits and their value. The authors situate this emerging empirical field in the history of psychology, critically survey existing work, defend the scientific validity of virtue science, and develop a general model that can guide, unify, and catalyze future research. In addition, chapters discuss how philosophy and philosophers can contribute to empirical inquiry and how a mature science of virtue could inform moral philosophy. The book is co-authored by two psychologists and a philosopher who pursued joint empirical work on fairness and then began to discuss larger methodological issues raised by that collaboration. It has four parts.

Part I introduces the topic of virtues to social scientists and others who can benefit from better understanding the philosophical and theoretical fundamentals of virtue theory. One of our main points in this book is to urge social scientists to deepen their theoretical understanding of virtues rather than continuing to rely on common-sense or popular conceptions of virtue. The conceptual muddiness that characterizes much psychological research has been a major impediment to virtue science. In Chapter 1, we describe a fundamental and ecumenical theoretical understanding of virtues written to be accessible to social scientists. Chapter 2 discusses the ways that philosophers can be informative for social scientists. Although philosophy is somewhat daunting to outsiders, there are many very accessible philosophers who study virtues, and there are many valuable insights available in that discipline. This chapter will be of interest to philosophers who wonder how they can productively contribute to empirical research. Of course, there are many philosophers and some social scientists who may not find this background necessary, and they may want to skip to Part II.

In Part II, we discuss the virtue science resources already available in psychology. We set the stage for that in Chapter 3, with a discussion of the currently patchy nature of virtue research, which has lacked cohesion and has not been cumulative so far. Instead, there are many atheoretical psychologists studying a disconnected set of largely independent virtues with limited measures and methods. In Chapter 4, we examine the resources for virtue science in the rich but disconnected scholarship on moral development. Surprisingly, moral development researchers have said relatively little about virtues, but that scholarship offers multiple resources to virtue researchers. And moral development research can be greatly enriched if scientists bring virtue measures into their studies. In Chapter 5, we discuss the plentiful resources that can be gleaned from personality psychology. Contrary to some authors, we argue that virtues need to be carefully differentiated from personality dimensions. Nevertheless, there are valuable integrative theory and research methods in personality psychology that can make vital contributions to the study of virtues. Finally, at the end of Part II, we take a step back from the various subareas of psychological research to review a strong but largely implicit demand in psychology and many other social sciences to separate facts and values. In Chapter 6, we push back against overly strong demands that science be value free and propose an alternative approach that we think will foster the development of virtue science.

Building on Parts I and II, in Part III we present our STRIVE-4 Model of virtue as a framework for resolving the theoretical and methodological problems in current virtue research. We see this systematic conceptualization as a critical step toward encouraging a mature science of virtue. The model's acronym clarifies that we propose virtues as empirically testable, Scalar Traits that are Role sensitive, that involve situation by trait Interactions, and are guided by key human Values that are often thought to partly

constitute Eudaimonia (human flourishing). The model also holds that virtue traits have four major components: knowledge, behavior, emotion/motivation, and practical wisdom. These components are detailed in the chapters of Part III, including a discussion of virtues as acquired, scalar traits (Chapter 7), role-related aspects of virtues (Chapter 8), interactions of situational influences and virtues (Chapter 9), how hypotheses about virtue-value and virtue-eudaimonia links can guide research (Chapter 10), and the four components of virtue (Chapter 11). We illustrate the heuristic value of the STRIVE-4 Model for a science of virtue with dozens of hypotheses that mark out new avenues for empirical work.

In Part III, we also discuss each STRIVE-4 Model hypothesis in light of the extant evidence to indicate which aspects of the model have or have not been assessed. Extant studies focus on many different virtues and use a wide variety of approaches, including survey, intensive longitudinal, informant-based, experimental, and neuroscientific methods. Our discussion of the methods and results of these studies demonstrates that social scientists have made a good start toward a science of virtues, and we describe how well-formulated conceptual guidance and a multimethod approach can expand and enrich this science. We explain how this approach can transform this large but siloed research domain into a cohesive, cumulative, and more complete domain of science.

In Part IV, we conclude by summarizing how the theoretical and methods guidance we offer can help guide researchers towards a mature science of virtue that will be of use to philosophers, psychologists, and others. We focus on how this science can contribute to philosophy in Chapter 12 and on how it can contribute to psychology and other domains in chapter in Chapter 13. We think the STRIVE-4 Model can provide a vital reference that can fruitfully guide research for years to come. Our contention is that a science of virtue can guide important practical efforts to cultivate virtues in children, citizens, professionals, people in business, and civic leaders. We also believe that a science of virtue can strengthen character education, one of the most widely used forms of moral education. Because we see human action as a morally engaged activity, and we believe that consistent moral behavior is best conceptualized in terms of acquired virtue traits, we see the conceptual and empirical study of virtues as one of the most urgently needed domains of social science.