

**A MORAL VIRTUE THEORY OF STATUS ATTAINMENT**

by

Feng Bai

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## Abstract

Recognition has grown that moral behavior (e.g., generosity) plays a role in status attainment, yet it remains unclear how, why, and when demonstrating moral characteristics enhances status. Drawing on philosophy, anthropology, psychology, and organizational behavior, I critically review a third route to attaining status: *virtue*, and propose a moral virtue theory of status attainment to provide a *generalized* account of the role of morality in status attainment. The moral virtue theory posits that acts of virtue elicit feelings of warmth and admiration (for virtue), and willing deference, towards the virtuous actor. I further consider how the scope and priority of moralities and virtues endorsed by a moral community are bound by culture to affect which moral characteristics enhance status. In particular, I theorize that virtues pertaining to community (e.g., humility) and divinity (e.g., cleanliness) are more effective to attain status in collectivistic cultures; whereas virtues pertaining to autonomy (e.g., rights) are more effective to attain status in individualistic cultures. Four experimental studies were conducted to examine the proposed theory. Studies 1 to 3 found that demonstrating a variety of virtues, including humility, cleanliness, and (advocating for human) rights, elicited admiration for virtue, which in turn led a virtuous actor to attain status. Expressing humility and cleanliness was more effective in attaining status in a collectivistic culture (India) than in an individualistic culture (the U.S.). Importantly, the positive impact of virtues on status attainment generally did not depend on the virtuous actor's levels of competence. Study 4 showed that expressing humility led people to see the humble actor as a more desirable leader and to be influenced by the humble actor in a collaborative cognitive task. Humility and cultural self-construals interacted to affect the actor's status through admiration for virtue. Specifically, individuals with high interdependent self-construals admired humility to a greater degree than those with low interdependent self-

construals, which in turn led them to confer higher status to the humble actor. These findings provide initial empirical support for the moral virtue theory of status attainment. Implications for theory, research, and organizational applications are discussed.

## **Preface**

This dissertation is based on work conducted under the supervision of Dr. Jennifer Berdahl. I identified and designed the research program, and conducted all recruitment, data collection, and data analysis. A version of the conceptual part of this dissertation, including the first three chapters, has been published. Bai, F. (2016) Beyond Dominance and Competence: A Moral Virtue Theory of Status Attainment. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*. All studies reported in this dissertation were approved by UBC's behavioural ethics board: H14-02755.

# Tables of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Preface.....	iv
Tables of Contents .....	v
List of Tables .....	ix
List of Figures .....	x
Acknowledgements .....	xi
Introduction.....	1
Literature Review.....	4
Social hierarchy .....	4
Status.....	4
Status hierarchy.....	6
Routes to status .....	7
Dominance: The “default” route.....	7
Competence: The functional route.....	9
Remaining issues .....	11
Morality: A third route to status.....	12
A Moral Virtue Theory of Status Attainment.....	19
Defining virtue .....	19
Moral judgment of virtues .....	24
The social psychological mechanism: Admiration for virtue .....	26
Relationships among the three routes to status .....	31
Culture.....	34

Individualism-collectivism .....	35
Empirical Tests of the Moral Virtue Theory of Status Attainment .....	41
Humility: A communal virtue.....	41
Cleanliness: A divine virtue.....	43
Rights: An autonomy virtue.....	45
The cultural boundary .....	47
Method .....	51
Study 1: Humility.....	51
Participants, study design, and procedure.....	51
Measures .....	52
Results.....	54
Discussion .....	57
Study 2: Cleanliness.....	58
Participants, study design, and procedure.....	58
Measures .....	59
Results.....	59
Discussion .....	62
Study 3: Rights.....	63
Participants, study design, and procedure.....	63
Measures .....	64
Results.....	64
Discussion .....	67
Summary: Studies 1 to 3 .....	68

Study 4 .....	69
Study 4a: Pilot.....	69
Participants, study design, and procedure.....	69
Measures .....	70
Results.....	70
Study 4b .....	71
Participants, study design, and procedure.....	71
Measures .....	72
Results.....	73
Discussion.....	75
General Discussion .....	76
Theoretical contributions .....	78
Practical implications.....	81
Limitations and future directions .....	81
Tables.....	86
Figures.....	104
References.....	113
Appendices.....	147
Appendix A: Study 1 scenarios.....	147
Scenario #1.1: Manipulation of high humility .....	147
Scenario #1.2: Control (humility) condition .....	148
Scenario #1.3: Manipulation of low humility .....	148
Appendix B: Study 2 scenarios.....	150

Scenario #2.1: Manipulation of high cleanliness .....	150
Scenario #2.2: Control (cleanliness) condition .....	150
Scenario #2.3: Manipulation of low cleanliness .....	151
Appendix C: Study 3 scenarios .....	152
Scenario #3.1: Manipulation of high egalitarianism (rights) .....	152
Scenario #3.2: Control (rights) condition .....	152
Scenario #3.3: Manipulation of low egalitarianism (rights) .....	153
Appendix D: Study 4 scripts for humility manipulations .....	154
High humility condition: .....	154
Control (humility) condition: .....	154
Low humility condition: .....	154
Appendix E: Measures .....	156
Interpersonal perceptions .....	156
Moral elevation .....	156
Perceived status .....	157
Interdependent-independent self-construals .....	157
Appendix F: An example of the contrast sensitivity task .....	159



## List of Tables

Table 1: Moral foundations and virtues .....	86
Table 2: Cronbach's $\alpha$ for scales used in Studies 1 to 3 .....	87
Table 3: study 1 descriptive statistics and correlation matrix (Indian sample).....	88
Table 4: Study 1 descriptive statistics and correlation matrix (U.S. sample) .....	89
Table 5: Admiration for virtue and status means by condition in Studies 1 to 3.....	90
Table 6: Study 1 regression results (Indian sample).....	91
Table 7: Study 1 regression results (U.S. sample) .....	92
Table 8: Study 2 descriptive statistics and correlation matrix (Indian sample) .....	93
Table 9: Study 2 descriptive statistics and correlation matrix (U.S. sample) .....	94
Table 10: Study 2 regression results (Indian sample).....	95
Table 11: Study 2 regression results (U.S. sample) .....	96
Table 12: Study 3 descriptive statistics and correlation matrix (Indian sample).....	97
Table 13: Study 3 descriptive statistics and correlation matrix (U.S. sample) .....	98
Table 14: Study 3 regression results (Indian sample).....	99
Table 15: Study 3 regression results (U.S. sample) .....	100
Table 16: Study 4 descriptive statistics and correlation matrix .....	101
Table 17: Admiration for virtue and status means by condition in Study 4 .....	102
Table 18: Study 4 regression results .....	103

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Three routes to status attainment.....	104
Figure 2: Mediation model of the effect of humility on status, with admiration for virtue as the mediator (Study 1: Indian sample).....	105
Figure 3: Mediation model of the effect of humility on status, with admiration for virtue as the mediator (Study 1: U.S. sample).....	106
Figure 4: Mediation model of the effect of cleanliness on status, with admiration for virtue as the mediator (Study 2: Indian sample).....	107
Figure 5: Mediation model of the effect of cleanliness on status, with admiration for virtue as the mediator (Study 2: U.S. sample).....	108
Figure 6: Mediation model of the effect of egalitarianism (rights) on status, with admiration for virtue as the mediator (Study 3: Indian sample) .....	109
Figure 7: Mediation model of the effect of egalitarianism (rights) on status, with admiration for virtue as the mediator (Study 3: U.S. sample) .....	110
Figure 8: Mediation model of the effect of humility on leadership nomination, with admiration for virtue as the mediator (Study 4b) .....	111
Figure 9: Mediation model of the effect of humility on behavioral influence, with admiration for virtue as the mediator (Study 4b).....	112

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## Introduction

Since the age of 11, Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani school girl, has advocated for girls' rights to education. Her activism defies the Taliban's ban on girls from attending school in Northwestern Pakistan. On October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012, Yousafzai was shot by two Taliban gunmen on a school bus while returning home. She narrowly survived. Two years after the attempted assassination, Yousafzai became the youngest-ever Nobel Prize laureate for her heroic struggle against oppression and for the rights of girls to education (Nobelprize.org, 2014). It is remarkable that, at the age of 17, Yousafzai has been named one of the most influential people in the world, alongside Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia, and Mary Barra, the CEO of General Motors (Time.com, 2014). How did Malala Yousafzai attain such high status and influence? Why was not she accepted and admired in her own culture?

Research has identified two major routes to status: a *dominance* route, based on coercion that induces fear, and a *competence* route, based on demonstrations of task ability that earn respect (Cheng, Tracy, Foulsham, Kingstone, & Henrich, 2013; Levine & Moreland, 1990). Indeed, many people seem to attain status and influence through dominance (e.g., Vladimir Putin) and/or competence (e.g., Mary Barra). Neither dominance nor competence, however, seem to have been the path that landed Malala Yousafzai such high status. In this dissertation, I review, theoretically develop, and empirically test a third route through which people attain status: the *virtue* route.

Scholars have long suggested that moral behavior and motivation may play a role in status attainment (e.g., Hollander, 1958; Ridgeway, 1982). But moral characteristics have usually been considered a *component* or *modifier* of the competence route, despite the well-established notion that competence and morality are two distinct social dimensions (e.g., S. T. Fiske, Cuddy,

Glick, & Xu, 2002; Goodwin, Piazza, & Rozin, 2014). Evidence is beginning to accumulate that certain types of moral characteristics—namely, altruism and generosity—can independently enhance a moral actor’s status (e.g., Flynn, 2003; Hardy & Van Vugt, 2006; Willer, 2009a). Yet extant theories seem inadequate to fully explain the relationship between morality and status attainment, and many questions remain. For example, how and why does signaling group motivation lead to status conferral towards a generous actor (e.g., Willer, 2009a)? Can moral characteristics other than altruism and generosity, such as humility (Tangney, 2000) and purity (Haidt, 2007; Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 1997), also enhance status? If yes, what desirable traits do expressions of these different forms of moral values signal?

To address these questions, I provide a critical review and integration of the research on morality and status attainment. Drawing on ideas from Mencius (trans. 2009), one of the most influential Chinese philosophers and Confucians, and recent developments in anthropology, psychology, and organizational behavior, I propose a moral virtue theory of status attainment to provide a more generalized treatment of the role of morality on status attainment. The moral virtue theory posits that demonstrating (moral) virtue leads to status through garnering *admiration* from others, and that culture affects which moral characteristics or acts are most likely to be deemed virtuous and elicit admiration. As a first attempt to test the moral virtue theory of status attainment, I present four experiments that focus on three important, but understudied, virtues—humility (Tangney, 2000), cleanliness (Douglas, 1966), and rights (Haidt & Joseph, 2004)—that correspond to the moralities of community, divinity, and autonomy (Shweder et al., 1997).

In the pages that follow, I define the concept of social hierarchy and discuss its role in motivating individuals to attain status. Next I review research on the dominance and competence

routes to status, followed by research on the relationship between morality and status and current limitations of this research. In subsequent sections I propose the moral virtue theory of status attainment and delineate its definition, judgment, mechanism, and cultural boundaries. Then I describe my study designs, methods, and findings in detail. I conclude with a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications of the proposed theory.

# Literature Review

## Social hierarchy

### Status

Following a long tradition in social psychology, I define status as the respect, prominence, and influence individuals have in a social group (Anderson, Willer, Kilduff, & Brown, 2012; Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch, 1980; Cheng, Tracy, & Henrich, 2010; Levine & Moreland, 1990; Martin, 2009; Rosa & Mazur, 1979). Individuals with higher status attract more attention (e.g., Graffin, Bundy, Porac, Wade, & Quinn, 2013; Ratcliff, Hugenberg, Shriver, & Bernstein, 2011), and are more influential (e.g., Berger, Zelditch, & Cohen, 1972; Cheng et al., 2013), than those with lower status.

Status is thus conceptualized as an interval variable, akin to the concept of *sociometric* status (Anderson, Kraus, Galinsky, & Keltner, 2012), with levels of influence as its key component. It is related to, but separable from, the definition of status adopted by some scholars (e.g., Blader & Chen, 2014; Magee & Galinsky, 2008) as respect and esteem one has in the eyes of others, primarily in task-oriented groups. With an emphasis on influence broadly, my conceptualization of status is appropriate to understand status attainment in social groups *generally*, including groups that are not oriented to pre-set (collective) tasks (e.g., Martin, 2009).

Status is distinguishable from other related hierarchical concepts, such as power, socio-economic status (SES), and reputation, in at least two important ways. First, unlike power, which refers to relative control over important outcomes or resources (Emerson, 1962; S. T. Fiske & Berdahl, 2007; Magee & Galinsky, 2008), status is socially conferred or accorded by others in the group (e.g., Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008; Gould, 2002; Halevy, Chou, Cohen, & Livingston, 2012). In other words, status is less of an objective property of an individual, and more of a

subjective social attribute, compared with power (see Blader & Chen, 2012). Consequently, status and power have different effects on social perceptions (Fragale, Overbeck, & Neale, 2011; Hays, 2013) and behaviors (Fast, Halevy, & Galinsky, 2012), sometimes even in opposite directions (Blader & Chen, 2012).

Second, status differs from SES by being a *locally*-defined, or a context-specific, characteristic, rather than a *globally*-defined characteristic based on one's position in the market and society more generally (Frank, 1985; Krieger, Williams, & Moss, 1997; Weber, 1946). Status is an emergent quality inseparable from human interactions within a shared culture (Gould, 2002; Weber, 1946), group, or situation (Anderson, John, Keltner, & Kring, 2001; Chatman, Boisnier, Spataro, Anderson, & Berdahl, 2008; D. A. Owens & Sutton, 2002). This contextual feature distinguishes status from SES (Adler et al., 1994; Anderson, Kraus, et al., 2012), typically defined by a combination of income (e.g., Wilkinson, 1997), consumption (Frank, 1985), education (e.g., Snibbe & Markus, 2005; White, 1982), and occupational prestige (e.g., Knigge, Maas, van Leeuwen, & Mandemakers, 2014; Sewell, Haller, & Ohlendorf, 1970). For example, a university professor may have relatively high status in society but nevertheless rank at the bottom of the “pecking” order in his or her department. Status has an important impact on a variety of outcomes, such as subjective well-being (Anderson, Kraus, et al., 2012) and turnover (Hambrick & Cannella, 1993), over and above SES. This dissertation confines attention to the attainment of status, instead of the attainment of SES, which has received much attention in sociology (e.g., Dimaggio & Mohr, 1985; Knigge et al., 2014; Lin, Ensel, & Vaughn, 1981; Mare & Maralani, 2006; Ritchie & Bates, 2013; Sewell et al., 1970).

Finally, status is also distinctive from reputation, defined as “public information that summarizes how a person behaves towards others (Pfeiffer, Tran, Krumme, & Rand, 2012, p.



2791).” In contrast to status, which is locally acknowledged within a specific social group, reputation consisting of publically held information regarding one’s past behavior can readily diffuse outside one’s social group through gossip or other means (e.g., Feinberg, Willer, Stellar, & Keltner, 2012; Semmann, Krambeck, & Milinski, 2005). In addition, despite being influential in status maintenance and attainment (e.g., Flynn, Reagans, Amanatullah, & Ames, 2006; Stewart, 2005), a good reputation (for competence or virtue) does not necessarily precede a high status. Status can emerge rapidly among strangers who interact face-to-face with each other briefly (e.g., Cheng et al., 2013; Tiedens & Fragale, 2003), before reputational information can be formed and communicated within the group. On the flip side, the formation of reputation based on past behavior is substantially affected by one’s status (Anderson & Shirako, 2008). It is difficult for low-status individuals, regardless of their actual behavior, to develop a reputation (for competence or virtue) due to the little attention they receive within their group.

In sum, status is socially conferred and emergent from a specific social context. Despite being often interrelated, status and other important hierarchical constructs including power, SES, and reputation are distinguishable.

### **Status hierarchy**

A social order based on status is pervasive in human organizations, serving adaptive functions such as coordination and motivation (Anderson & Brown, 2010; Halevy, Chou, & Galinsky, 2011; Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Tiedens, Unzueta, & Young, 2007). Status hierarchies provide clear lines of direction for people’s social behavior corresponding to their relative standings (S. T. Fiske, 2010; S. T. Fiske & Berdahl, 2007). By definition, a lower-status individual is expected to defer or submit to a higher-status counterpart when disagreements or conflicts occur (e.g., Berger et al., 1972). By providing social order, status hierarchies reduce

uncertainty embedded in social life and facilitate coordination. Status hierarchies also provide material and psychological incentives for people to aspire for status (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Although individuals tend to agree on status in (experimental) small group settings (e.g., Anderson, Srivastava, Beer, Spataro, & Chatman, 2006), status hierarchies, in reality, are often unstable and conflict-prone (e.g., Bendersky & Shah, 2012; Gould, 2003; Jordan, Sivanathan, & Galinsky, 2011; Sapolsky, 2005). Insofar as upward mobility is allowed, status hierarchies constitute a central venue for aspiring people to fulfill or satisfy their intrinsic desire for status (Gruenfeld & Tiedens, 2010). Scholars have identified two major routes to status—dominance, based on the use of intimidation and coercion to induce fear, and competence, based on the demonstration of task skills and expertise to gain respect.

## **Routes to status**

“People may oppose you, but when they realize you can hurt them, they’ll join your side.”

- Condoleezza Rice (cited in Pfeffer, 2010, p. 87)

### **Dominance: The “default” route**

Dominance and antagonistic encounters are, perhaps, the “default” route through which people “negotiate” their relative status in social hierarchies (e.g., Barkow, 1975). It appears to be inherited from our ancestors’ general primate tendency to use physical intimidation and threat to gain social dominance, which we still share with many of our primate “cousins” (Sapolsky, 2005). Aggression and intimidation often lead to submission and deference from others by inducing the belief that a (dominant) actor is capable of inflicting harm, thus eliciting fear, anxiety, or other discomfort (Mazur, 1985; Mazur & Booth, 1998). There is, furthermore, an implicit expectation that once status is conferred to a dominant actor, the dominant actor will withdraw the use of force. In other words, people “join your side” to avoid or alleviate stress or

discomfort that you are capable of imposing on them. Unfortunately, a large proportion of human violence is the consequence of dominance struggles among people seeking superior status (e.g., D. Cohen, Bowdle, Nisbett, & Schwarz, 1996; Daly & Wilson, 1988; Gould, 2003). Dominance struggles are especially prone to occur in symmetric or ambiguous relationships, because people similar in social status strive to achieve superiority over each other (Gould, 2003).

A social hierarchy based on dominance is likely dysfunctional for performance in task-oriented groups because dominant people may not have the task skills or expertise required to lead their groups (Ridgeway & Berger, 1986). Empirical research, nevertheless, shows that dominance tactics, often manifested as psychological and subtle forms of aggression such as verbal abuse and ostracism, are widely employed to not only maintain, but also attain or enhance, status in task-oriented contexts (Bendersky & Hays, 2012; Berdahl, 2007; Brass & Burkhardt, 1993; Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980; Pfeffer, 2010; Yukl & Falbe, 1990). For example, Bendersky and Hays (2012) found that dominance struggles were a major form of conflict over relative status in MBA student study groups. Despite impairing task performance, dominance behavior enhanced students' status within study groups over time (Bendersky & Shah, 2012).

Laboratory studies also support the dominance route to attaining status in task-oriented contexts, particularly when face-to-face interaction is allowed (M. T. Lee & Ofshe, 1981; Mazur, 1985; Rosa & Mazur, 1979). For example, Mazur and colleagues (1980) found that dominant mutual stares accompanied by lowered brows (i.e., stare-downs) caused stronger stress responses, indicated by greater physiological arousal, than gazes accompanied by raised brows; discomfort experienced during the stare-down, furthermore, negatively predicted one's status in a subsequent decision-making task. In a recent study, Cheng et al. (2013) asked undergraduates to interact face-to-face with same-sex unacquainted others (i.e., four to six individuals per group) to

complete a group task. The use of dominance tactics by each person during the task was assessed using the Dominance and Prestige Peer-rated Scales (Cheng et al., 2010). Examples of the dominance scale include “I enjoy having control over others” and “I am afraid of him/her.” Indeed, peer-rated dominance was positively associated with both perceived and behavioral measures of status.

### **Competence: The functional route**

Unlike dominance, status gained from demonstrating task-relevant skills or expertise is generally considered the functional, or meritocratic, route to attaining status. Competence is defined as skills, expertise, ideas or information that are unambiguously valuable to achieve specific task goals (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009a; Berger et al., 1980; Ridgeway & Berger, 1986). Demonstrating (outstanding) task skills or expertise induces the belief that a (competent) actor is instrumental in accomplishing collective task goals, and elicits *respect for skills* (e.g., Wojciszke, Abele, & Baryla, 2009), leading further to status conferral towards the competent actor. Importantly, it is implicitly expected that conferring status to a competent actor secures the competent actor’s future task contributions to the group, according to the expectation states theory (Berger et al., 1980). Conferring status to a competent actor also allows others to gain proximity to that actor, enabling them to learn from or “copy” the competent actor’s superior task skills, according to the information goods theory (Henrich & Gil-White, 2001). Note that both of the two theoretical accounts involve a direct reciprocity process in which groups award status to competent members in direct exchange for their superior task skills or contributions (Emerson, 1962; Frank, 1985; Shechtman & Kenny, 1994; Trivers, 1971).

The competence route to attaining status has received general support from field research. For example, Kipnis and colleagues (1980) asked part-time MBA students to report an incident

in which they succeeded in getting their boss, a co-worker, or a subordinate to do something they wanted. One of the most frequently employed tactics reported was to demonstrate competence. Moreover, social network research finds that competence-based tactics are generally effective in status attainment (Klein, Lim, Saltz, & Mayer, 2004; Lin, 1999), though their effectiveness may be influenced by certain boundary conditions (e.g., Casciaro & Lobo, 2008; Treadway et al., 2013). For example, demonstrating competence, when combined with positive interpersonal affect (e.g., being liked), can help individuals attain a central network position and status (Casciaro & Lobo, 2008). In contrast, demonstrating competence, when combined with negative interpersonal affect (e.g., being disliked), becomes irrelevant in a person's choice of partner for advice and problem solving.

Laboratory studies also provide evidence for the competence route to attaining status. Early research on the status characteristics theory (e.g., Berger et al., 1972) found that prior beliefs about and evaluations of various status characteristics (e.g., gender, age, and race) were differentially associated with perceptions of competence traits (e.g., intelligence), and led to status differences among strangers who differed in these status characteristics (see review by Berger et al., 1980). More recent studies, furthermore, find supportive evidence that the associations between status characteristics and actual status are indeed mediated by perceived competence (e.g., Anderson & Kilduff, 2009b; Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008; Fragale, 2006; Tiedens, 2001).

Instead of relying on status characteristics as proxies of competence, Wojciszke et al. (2009) manipulated information on a target's competence directly, and found that competence was a strong and positive predictor of (affective) respect (i.e., "I respect her," "She deserves

admiration,” and “She could serve as an example to others”) that the target received.<sup>1</sup> In another study that directly manipulated competence, university students were recruited to participate in a problem-solving task in four-person groups (Ridgeway, 1981). One group member was in fact a confederate whose competence was manipulated by varying the number of correct solutions he or she offered to the group. Actual competence was positively associated with perceived competence, and more importantly, with a behavioral measure of status (i.e., the number of trials in which the group adopts the confederate’s solution).

### **Remaining issues**

There has been some debate about the relative prominence of the dominance and competence routes. Advocates of the dominance route criticize the rational and meritocratic assumptions behind the competence route, and suggest that performance expectations may be post-hoc constructions to justify the emerging or existing social hierarchy (M. T. Lee & Ofshe, 1981). In response to this critique, advocates of the competence route argue that many dominance demeanors or tactics are task cues that give information about one’s competence (Ridgeway, Berger, & Smith, 1985). Both sides provide supportive evidence for their own arguments (Driskell, Olmstead, & Salas, 1993; M. T. Lee & Ofshe, 1981; Mohr, 1986), but there has not been convincing evidence that favors one over the other (Levine & Moreland, 1990).

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<sup>1</sup> Wojciszke et al. (2009) also manipulated information on the target’s morality or communion (e.g., “helpful” and “unfair”), and, surprisingly, found that morality-based information also positively predicted respect, even after controlling for interpersonal liking. Nevertheless, they argued that these positive effects were superfluous due to the confounding effect of liking, overlooking the evidence that the effects of moral traits on respect remained significantly positive after controlling for liking.

Recent research suggests that dominance and competence are distinct and that both are effective routes to attaining status (Cheng et al., 2013).

Yet this two-route model of status attainment seems inadequate to capture the “big picture” of how people get ahead in social hierarchies. Results from meta-analyses show that influence tactics related to dominance (i.e., assertiveness) and competence (i.e., rationality) have only weak positive impacts on extrinsic success at work (e.g., income and promotion; Higgins, Judge, & Ferris, 2003), and that the correlation between intelligence, a crucial component of task competence, and leadership, a formal position of status, is only slightly higher than .20, much lower than previously believed (Judge, Colbert, & Ilies, 2004). Furthermore, using factor analyses, Kyl-Heku & Buss (1996) found that half of the 26 status tactics they identified could not be explained by either a dominance factor (e.g., derogate others) or a competence factor (e.g., display knowledge). Indeed, two of the most likely employed tactics to attain status—“display positive social characteristics (e.g., caring)” and “help others”—were among the unexplained. In *Give and Take*, Grant (2013) argues that many successful people, such as Adam Rifkin, George Meyer, and Bob Gross, to name a few, attained superior status through *giving* more than *taking*. If the two-route model is inadequate to explain much of status attainment, is there a third route, distinct from dominance and competence, to attaining status?

### **Morality: A third route to status**

Aside from dominance and competence, there has been a relatively small but burgeoning literature on the role of morality on status attainment (e.g., Grant, 2013), which is the focus of the present review. Morality is defined as a system of “interlocking sets of values, virtues, norms, practices, identities, institutions, technologies, and evolved psychological mechanisms that work together to suppress or regulate self-interest and make cooperative societies possible (Haidt,

2012, p. 270).” Despite often being used interchangeably (e.g., Bazerman & Gino, 2012; T. R. Cohen & Morse, 2014; Rachels & Rachels, 2007), morality and ethics are distinct in that the former is *descriptive*—telling us what people in a certain group or community *believe* is right or wrong, whereas the latter is *prescriptive*—telling us what *ought to* be considered right or wrong according to philosophers and ethicists (Bauman, 1994; Spohn, 1997; Weiss, 1942). For example, Weiss (1942) argues, “A man is moral if he conforms to the established practices and customs of the group in which he is. He is ethical if he voluntarily obligates himself to live in the light of an ideal good (p. 381).” The descriptive approach to morality has its roots in anthropology and cultural psychology; the prescriptive approach to ethics has its roots in philosophy. This dissertation adopts the first approach as I draw mainly on theories and evidence from anthropology and psychology with an eye towards social and contextual, rather than absolute, evaluations of a person’s virtue.

Hollander (1958, 1960) was one of the first researchers to propose moral behavior as a source of status, in addition to competence and diffuse status characteristics (e.g., gender and race). He argues that conformity to group norms serves to maintain and increase one’s status through increasing one’s positive impressions (i.e., “idiosyncrasy credits”) in the eyes of others. Acknowledging Hollander’s idea that “good citizens” are awarded with status, Ridgeway (1981), nevertheless, argues that conformity to group norms is insufficient to status attainment because conformity behavior is often motivated by the pressure of group social sanctions (i.e., the desire to appear moral), rather than by intrinsic commitment to the group (i.e., being ethical). As a result, group members are unlikely to consider conformity indicative of genuine moral motivation, and are unlikely to confer “idiosyncrasy credits” to them as a result. In an experiment following Hollander’s (1960) original study design, Ridgeway (1981) manipulated



conformity by varying the degree to which a confederate in a four-person task group conformed to or deviated from group norms. The results showed that conformity did not effectively communicate group orientation and failed to enhance status, supporting Ridgeway's argument.

Instead, Ridgeway (1981, 1982) argues that perceived motivation—self-oriented or group-oriented—affects a group's decision to accept one's contribution and grant status in the group. In a follow-up study, Ridgeway (1982) manipulated group-oriented vs. self-oriented motivation and found that group-oriented members were generally more respected and influential than self-oriented ones. This research (Ridgeway, 1981, 1982) is one of the first studies to address the crucial role of moral motivation in status attainment. Ridgeway, however, considers competence, or performance expectations, to be the primary basis of status in task-oriented groups. According to her, moral motivation only plays a minor role in moderating the relationship between performance expectations and status attainment. Berger, Balkwell, Norman, & Smith (1992) also suggest that moral characteristics may function in the same way as status characteristics to affect performance expectations and status conferral. Following this tradition in the status characteristic theory, moral characteristics have been often considered a *component* or *modifier* of the competence route (e.g., Bingham, Oldroyd, Thompson, Bednar, & Bunderson, 2014; Cheng et al., 2013; Goldstein, Giskevicius, & Cialdini, 2011; Podolny, 2005; Torelli, Leslie, Stoner, & Puente, 2014), instead of an *independent* route to status. For example, Cheng and Tracy (2014) recently argue that only when coupled with culturally valued skills or expertise do moral characteristics promote status.

Yet recent research seems to favor Hollander's position that moral characteristics and acts may be a distinct source of status (Ellemers, Pagliaro, Barreto, & Leach, 2008; Flynn et al., 2006; Hardy & Van Vugt, 2006; Pagliaro, Ellemers, & Barreto, 2011; Willer, 2009a; Wojciszke,

Bazinska, & Jaworski, 1998). First and foremost, there is convincing evidence that people form perceptions and judgments of others along two distinct and fundamental dimensions: warmth and competence (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2008; S. T. Fiske et al., 2002). The warmth dimension captures one's perceived intentions for good or ill (e.g., sociability, agreeableness, and kindness). The competence dimension captures one's perceived ability (e.g., intelligence, efficacy, and skills) to pursue these intentions. In general, warmth-based information plays a more central role in forming global impressions of others compared with competence-based information, which appears to only serve as a weak modifier of impression intensity (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Wojciszke et al., 1998). More recent research (Brambilla & Leach, 2014; Goodwin et al., 2014), furthermore, suggests that the warmth dimension consists of both sociability (e.g., funniness and friendliness) and morality (e.g., generosity and charitableness) characteristics, and that it is the moral component of warmth that predominates in social and interpersonal judgment.

In addition, research on heroism suggests that moral excellence is the defining characteristic of heroes, who rank among the most prominent people in human societies (Franco, Blau, & Zimbardo, 2011; Goethals & Allison, 2012; Goode, 1978). Although heroes are often competent, competence is not necessary to make heroes. People without superior competence can become heroes by representing the ideal of civic virtues, which often includes physical peril or self-sacrifice. For example, a person who confronts terrorists to save others' lives but is killed due to lack of skills of fighting and using weapons may still be hailed as a hero for his or her courage and self-sacrifice to protect others (e.g., McCormack, 2014).

Undoubtedly, heroes are outliers among us. Nevertheless, sacrificing more than others for collective interest seems a key to enhance one's status (Grant, 2013). Among a sample of

engineers working in teams, perceived generosity, measured by peer-reported imbalance in favor exchange, was positively associated with individual status in the team (Flynn, 2003).

Furthermore, perceived generosity partially mediated the effect of self-monitoring, a personality trait, on status attainment in a follow-up study (Flynn et al., 2006). In other words, high self-monitors attain status partly by building up a reputation of generosity—high self-monitors tend to refrain from asking for favors from others but are willing to give help when they are approached by others. This research hence shows that giving more to others than taking from them may be a crucial source of status in organizations. The rationale behind this research is rooted in a *direct* reciprocity or exchange account (e.g., Emerson, 1962) that people confer status and influence to those whose favors they are not capable of returning.

Moreover, experimental research is also accumulating evidence of the positive effects of moral behavior on status attainment. Two studies found that contributing a greater proportion of one's resources to the group in economic games enhanced status (Hardy & Van Vugt, 2006; Willer, 2009a). Even outside observers who did not play the economic games allocated higher status to high contributors than to low contributors. Similarly, Milinski et al. (2002) found that public donations to charity (e.g., UNICEF) increased the donors' income received from other members of their group and the number of votes the donors received in the election for the students' council. Note that these findings cannot be fully explained by *direct* reciprocity theories (e.g., Emerson, 1962; Flynn, 2003; Frank, 1985; Trivers, 1971), according to which people only confer status to those who have given them direct benefits, nor by *indirect* reciprocity theories (e.g., Alexander, 1987; Boyd & Richerson, 1989; Nowak & Sigmund, 2005), according to which people confer status to those who have benefited others in their social group.

Instead, costly signaling theories (Roberts, 1998; Smith & Bird, 2000; Willer, 2009b; Zahavi & Zahavi, 1997) seem to provide a better explanation for the aforementioned findings, positing that generosity and altruism serve as costly but effective means to signal underlying desirable traits. Hardy and van Vugt (2006) suggest that “people who display altruistic actions might be seen as possessing a *broad* class of desirable traits and qualities (p. 1411),” such as task ability, resourcefulness (or resource potential), and commitment. Willer (2009a, 2009b), substantially extends this research by explicitly theorizing and empirically demonstrating that generosity signals group motivation—the extent to which people value a group’s interests relative to their own, which in turn leads to status conferral. Confining its attention to collective action situations “where a group of individuals shares an interest in producing a public good, but are also motivated to free-ride (p. 139, Willer, 2009b),” this line of research focuses on altruism and generosity—two moral traits that are crucial to these situations.

To summarize, extant research has provided preliminary evidence that moral behavior and motivation may play an important and, possibly, distinct role in status attainment. It is, however, still unclear how exactly and under what conditions moral behavior and motivation is related to status attainment. Neither reciprocity theories nor costly signaling theories adequately explain the positive effects of moral characteristics on status attainment, and many questions remain. For example, how and why does signaling group motivation lead others, particularly outside observers, to confer status and deference to a generous actor? Moreover, extant research tends to focus on a narrow scope of morality, primarily regarding altruism and generosity in collective action situations. Recent research on cultural and moral psychology reveals that descriptively moral domains include not only altruism and generosity but also loyalty, obedience to authority, humility, and purity, to name a few (Haidt & Joseph, 2004; Shweder et al., 1997).

We know little about whether these other forms of moral characteristics enhance status. If they do, what desirable traits are being signaled and when do expressions of these different moral values affect the attainment of status?

## A Moral Virtue Theory of Status Attainment

To address these questions, I propose an integrated theory of the effects of morality on status attainment—the moral virtue theory. Incorporating ideas from classic Chinese philosophy and recent developments in anthropology, psychology, and organizational behavior to the existing literature on morality and status, this theory aims to provide a *generalized* account of how, why, and when demonstrating moral characteristics serves as a distinct and independent route to attaining status.

### Defining virtue

First and foremost, I define *virtue*, the key concept in the moral virtue theory, as “characteristics of a person that are morally praiseworthy (Haidt & Joseph, 2004, p. 61)”. Virtue is hence conceptualized as “virtues of character,” in Aristotle’s term (trans. 2014), that represent human excellence specific to the *moral* domain, and exclude intellectual virtues, such as creativity and curiosity (see Dahlsgaard, Peterson, & Seligman, 2005; Peterson & Seligman, 2004), and personal virtues, such as fortitude (Gert, 2004), which mainly benefit their possessors (i.e., are amoral).

To be morally praiseworthy, virtue, inevitably, involves *voluntary* self-sacrifice for the good of others, beyond conformity to moral norms (e.g., Pagliaro et al., 2011) or (normative) moral character (e.g., guilt-proneness and agreeableness; T. R. Cohen, Panter, Turan, Morse, & Kim, 2014). For example, though generosity is a widely, if not universally, valued virtue in human societies, we are generally not expected to give more than we take from others (e.g., Gouldner, 1960). Indeed, most of us are “matchers,” who strive to equate what we give and what we take in the long term (Grant, 2013). In a normative sense, “matchers” conform to the norm of reciprocity, and should be deemed moral but not necessarily virtuous. Only “givers,” who

voluntarily and consistently give more than they take from others, embody the virtue of generosity.

In addition, virtue is based on a *prescriptive* system of moral regulation that focuses on approach motives to do something good, in comparison to conformity or guilt-proneness seemingly rooted in a *proscriptive* system of moral regulation that focuses on avoidance motives not to do something “bad” (Janoff-Bulman, 2011; Janoff-Bulman, Sheikh, & Hepp, 2009). There may be a tipping point above which moral characteristics or acts become seen as virtuous. Yet excessive or conspicuous giving is not necessarily deemed virtuous because it is often mixed with self-interested intentions to show off one’s wealth and reap reputational benefits (e.g., Berman, Levine, Barasch, & Small, 2015; Griskevicius, Tybur, & Van den Bergh, 2010). This conceptualization of virtue hence is consistent with the Aristotelian “Golden Mean”—the mean of two extremes, those of deficiency or excess.

Virtues in this dissertation deviate from those defined in positive psychology (Dahlsgaard et al., 2005; Peterson & Seligman, 2004) and in political philosophy (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006) in that the virtues under investigation are not necessarily ubiquitous or universal. To be consistent with the aforementioned definition of morality, I adopt a relativistic perspective of virtue, again in a descriptive, rather than a prescriptive sense (e.g., Mele & Sanchez-Runde, 2013). Without arguing whether there is a “universal truth” or “foundational principle” in morality (e.g., Colby, Kohlberg, Gibbs, & Lieberman, 1983; Kohlberg & Gilligan, 1971), this descriptive form of relativism merely posits that different groups or communities have different moral codes and virtues, and the moral codes and virtues endorsed by a group or community dictate what is believed to be right or wrong within that collective. There is considerable

empirical evidence supporting this account (e.g., Haidt, Koller, & Dias, 1993; Miller & Bersoff, 1992; Rai & Fiske, 2011; Rozin, Lowery, Imada, & Haidt, 1999; Shweder et al., 1997).

Shweder and colleagues (1997) identified three major moral codes: *autonomy*, *community*, and *divinity*. Autonomy “aims to protect the zone of discretionary choice of ‘individuals’ and to promote the exercise of individual will in the pursuit of personal preferences (p. 138)” and captures concerns about harm, justice, and human rights. Community “aims to protect the moral integrity of the various stations or roles that constitute a ‘society’ or a ‘community’ (p. 138)” and emphasizes regulative concepts such as (communal) duty, hierarchy, and interdependence (or relationship). Divinity is centered on the idea that the body is a sacred temple that must remain pure and relies on concepts such as sacred order, traditions, and pollution. Among these “big three” moralities, only the morality of autonomy closely resembles the justice-based moral principles dominant in the West. The moralities of community and divinity seem more relevant in Eastern cultures and much of the rest of the world than in North America and Western Europe.

This relativistic view of moral virtue recognizes that different groups or communities develop different moral codes gradually from the specific experiences in dealing with moral conflict or problems prominent within their local contexts (e.g., Walzer, 1983). Each of the “big three” moralities is characterized by a set of unique virtues that uphold the corresponding moral domain. For example, the morality of divinity features virtues such as *purity*, *chastity*, and *cleanliness*; these virtues, despite manifesting differently, all capture the essence of the moral domain that “aims to protect the soul, the spirit, the spiritual aspects of the human agent and ‘nature’ from degradation (p. 138; Shweder et al., 1997).” Originally, purity, chastity, and cleanliness might be developed to serve as a defence function against the dangers posed by pathogens (e.g., malaria and tuberculosis), particularly in regions that have historically higher



prevalence of pathogens (Fincher, Thornhill, Murray, & Schaller, 2008; Schaller & Murray, 2008). Note that this relativistic account of virtue does not oppose the idea that there may be a small set of ubiquitous or universal virtues (e.g., Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Some virtues such as generosity and charity are probably ubiquitous (e.g., Campbell, 1975); others such as chastity or sexual purity are likely to be specific to certain social contexts and times (e.g., Haidt et al., 1993).

Virtues are relatively stable, but still modifiable (Dunning, 1995) traits that are both innate and socially constructed (Haidt, 2012; Haidt & Joseph, 2004). Aristotle (trans. 2014) has long argued that “nature gives us the capacity to acquire them (i.e., virtues), and completion comes through habituation (p. 23).” Recently, Haidt and colleagues (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009; Graham et al., 2011; Haidt & Joseph, 2004) extended the Aristotelian idea and proposed the moral foundation theory (MFT), arguing that there are a small set of (innate) intuitions, or moral foundations, in the human mind resulting from evolution. Based on these moral foundations, people develop moral characters and virtues through learning (e.g., from parents and peers) cultural institutions and practices (or ethos). The Harm/Care, Fairness/Reciprocity, and Liberty/Oppression foundations, in combination, resemble the morality of autonomy; the In-group/Loyalty and Authority/Respect foundations capture two important components (i.e., duty and hierarchy) of the morality of community; and finally, the Purity/Sanctity foundation corresponds to the morality of divinity (Rai & Fiske, 2011). Please see Table 1 for details of the moral foundations.

Virtues, once acquired, discipline one’s faculties so that one is capable of reacting properly to morally relevant events or situations, particularly, in an *intuitive* or *habitual* manner (Haidt & Joseph, 2004). For example, in response to hearing screams for help, Leo Moody, a

virtuous bystander, did not hesitate to jump into freezing water to save an infant trapped in an overturned car from drowning (The Associated Press, 2014). Undoubtedly, moral deliberation or reasoning plays a role in shaping virtues. Indeed, moral intuition or habituation may be the consequence of moral reasoning in the first place. Yet recent research shows that deliberation and reasoning can, sometimes, overshadow altruistic moral intuition and undermine virtues (Paxton, Ungar, & Greene, 2012; Rand, Greene, & Nowak, 2012; Swann et al., 2014; Zhong, 2011).

Importantly, virtues are distinct from task skills and other competence traits (e.g., intelligence) valuable to achieving specific task goals. Despite being highly valued within a moral community, virtues do not necessarily facilitate goal-achievement in a specific task-oriented context. For example, enacting purity virtues (i.e., cleanliness and order), despite having some beneficial effects on healthy choices and charitable behavior, can impair performance in a creativity task (Vohs, Redden, & Rahinel, 2013). Moreover, “givers” who spend too much time helping others may end up experiencing burnout and failing their own tasks (Bendersky & Shah, 2012; Grant, 2013).

In sum, following a tradition in anthropology and cultural psychology (Haidt et al., 1993; Miller & Bersoff, 1992; Rai & Fiske, 2011; Rozin et al., 1999; Shweder et al., 1997; Shweder & Sullivan, 1993), I conceptualize virtue as relativistic, in a descriptive sense, such that different groups or communities have different moral codes, as well as different sets of virtues corresponding to and upholding these moral codes. Virtue involves the prescriptive system of moral regulation—focusing on approach motives to do something good—and hence goes beyond conformity to norms or (normative) moral character (e.g., guilt-proneness) related to the proscriptive system of moral regulation—focusing on avoidance motives not to do something

“bad.” Virtues are modifiable traits, shaped by both innate intuition and cultural learning or habituation, and enable virtuous actors to respond properly to morally relevant events or situations. In contrast to competence traits, virtues do not necessarily enhance, and can sometimes hinder, goal-achievement in task-oriented contexts. Virtue, therefore, is the *general* desirable trait uniquely signaled by (outstanding) moral behavior and motivation, which may manifest in a broad scope of moral domain.

### **Moral judgment of virtues**

Moral psychologists previously believed that moral judgment is primarily the result of reasoning and reflection (e.g., Kohlberg & Gilligan, 1971; Turiel, 2006). In other words, we are all “amateur” judges who search for relevant evidence, weigh evidence, and infer a moral conclusion (Haidt, 2001). This rationalist approach, however, is inconsistent with recent findings (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999; Greene, Sommerville, Nystrom, Darley, & Cohen, 2001; Haidt, 2001; Haidt et al., 1993; Rozin et al., 1999). Instead, Haidt (2001; Haidt & Bjorklund, 2007) proposes the social intuitionist model, arguing that moral judgment of a person’s characteristics and actions is primarily the result of moral intuition defined as “the sudden appearance in consciousness of a moral judgment, including an affective valence (good-bad, like-dislike) (p. 818)”. Like reasoning, moral intuition and the appraisals associated with moral emotions are cognitions; unlike reasoning, moral intuition runs fast, effortlessly, and automatically with only the outcome but not the process accessible to consciousness. In other words, we feel flashes of approval or disapproval upon encountering or observing virtues or vices, and these flashes of intuition and emotions dominate our moral judgment. Even pre-existing, or experimentally induced, emotions can affect evaluations of virtue. For example, experimentally inducing disgust caused harsher judgment of purity-violating behavior (e.g., “Being sexually promiscuous”) and

amplified approval of behavior upholding purity (e.g., “Refraining from consuming drugs, cigarettes, and alcohol”; Horberg, Oveis, Keltner, & Cohen, 2009). Although moral reasoning may still play a role in evaluating virtues, the social intuitionist model suggests that it matters mainly in a post-hoc manner to justify already-formed intuition and emotions (Haidt, 2001).

Admittedly, (intuitive) moral judgment and evaluations of virtues can be sometimes flawed (e.g., Kahneman & Klein, 2009). On the one hand, virtues may be feigned to gain personal interests (e.g., promotions; Grant & Mayer, 2009; Hui, Lam, & Law, 2000). The authenticity of virtues can be difficult to determine, especially when social interaction is brief and infrequent. Perhaps appearance does have more influence than reality, as told by the ancient Greek sages (Plato, trans. 2007). “Faked” virtue can bring about personal benefits (i.e., status) insofar as observers perceive it indicative of outstanding moral standards and admirable. Nevertheless, a recent study (Donia, Johns, & Raja, 2015) showed that supervisors were relatively accurate in detecting “fakers” among their subordinates in the workplace. It is especially difficult to feign virtue in the long term as “fakers” inevitably leak clues of selfishness (Grant, 2013).

On the other hand, authentically virtuous acts may sometimes be seen as instrumental or as impression management intending to gain personal interest, particularly when witnesses’ moral self-image is at stake. For example, whistleblowers who demonstrate virtue by standing up against wrong-doings are often questioned and resented because their virtuous acts (in the eyes of in-group members) implicitly condemn the witnesses who did not take the stand.

Whistleblowers hence present a threat to the witnesses’ moral self-image (Monin, Sawyer, & Marquez, 2008; Stouten, van Dijke, Mayer, De Cremer, & Euwema, 2013; Sumanth, Mayer, & Kay, 2011). The intentionality of virtuous acts may also be more likely seen as dubious when the

virtuous actors are out-group members than when they are in-group members (Piazza, Goodwin, Rozin, & Royzman, 2014; Uhlmann, Pizarro, Tannenbaum, & Ditto, 2009). The tendency to make motivated moral judgement, nevertheless, is constrained by plausibility—“people only bend data and the law of logic to the point that normative considerations challenge their view of themselves as fair and objective judges (p. 314)”—and hence limited in situations where moral behavior and motivation is ambiguous (Ditto, Pizarro, & Tannenbaum, 2009). Again, in the long term, it is difficult to “distort” judgment against actors who consistently demonstrate virtue.

After defining what virtue is and delineating how virtue is evaluated, I draw on Mencius’s classic ideas, as well as recent research in psychology and organizational behavior, to explain how and why demonstrating virtue can lead to status attainment in the following section.

### **The social psychological mechanism: Admiration for virtue**

“When one uses force to make people submit, they do not submit in their hearts but only because their strength is insufficient. When one uses *virtue* to make people submit, they are pleased to the depths of their hearts, and they sincerely submit.”

- Mencius (trans. 2009, p. 33)

Mencius, who lived in the 3rd Century BC, proposed a virtue route to attaining status in an attempt to provide an alternative to the use of force for ambitious rulers. Importantly, virtue, in Mencius’ terms, covers a broad scope of moral domain, including sympathy-benevolence (*ren*), deference-propriety (*li*), shame/disgust-righteousness (*yi*), and approval/disapproval-wisdom (*zhi*) (Flanagan & Williams, 2010). There are two parts of Mencius’ thesis. First, he argues vividly that acts of virtue please our hearts, just like delicious food pleases our mouths. In other words, observing acts of virtue is pleasant, if not desirable, to us. This part of Mencius’ thesis is consistent with the social intuitive model (Haidt, 2001), which argues that moral

judgment is primarily intuitive and affective. Similarly, Hume (1739-40/1969) pointed to the pleasure arising from witnessing outstanding moral conduct or intentions as the defining feature of virtues. Second and, perhaps, more importantly, Mencius posits that the pleasure elicited by observing virtuous acts leads to sincere deference or submission towards a virtuous actor. As far as I know, Mencius was the first to argue that pleasure, or positive emotions, in addition to fear, can make people submit and confer status to an actor. In combination, Mencius laid out the first draft of the virtue route to attaining status.

Yet Mencius never elaborated on *why* virtue and the pleasure it elicits can lead to status for the virtuous actor. To extend Mencius' thesis, I propose that demonstrating virtue is likely to induce the belief that this (virtuous) actor is willing to sacrifice his or her interest to uphold the ideal of morality and elicit pleasant feelings in others. The cognitive appraisal and the subsequent positive feelings, in turn, lead to the *expectation* that the virtuous actor will *advance* the good of others and the collective even at his or her own expense, and that conferring deference to the virtuous actor and accepting the virtuous actor's influence is in one's best interest. This cognitive process probably does not operate at the conscious level (Ridgeway et al., 1985) and is likely intuitive (Haidt, 2001). It is important to note that, in reality, conferring status to a virtuous actor is not necessarily in one's best interest because, as aforementioned, virtues do not necessarily facilitate goal-achievement in specific task-oriented contexts. In other words, virtuous individuals may be accorded higher status and influence, even beyond their domain of excellence (Henrich & Gil-White, 2001).

Neither did Mencius elaborate on the nature of the pleasure elicited by virtue. Fortunately, recent research points to *admiration* as a primary candidate of the virtue-elicited pleasure (Schindler, Zink, Windrich, & Menninghaus, 2013; Sweetman, Spears, Livingstone, & Manstead,

2013; van de Ven, Zeelenberg, & Pieters, 2011). Admiration, referring to delighted or astonished approbation, captures the emotional responses to others' goodness or excellence in moral or non-moral domains. Given its broad scope, admiration is considered an umbrella term for "other-praising" emotions including admiration for virtue or elevation (Algoe & Haidt, 2009), (affective) respect (Henrich & Gil-White, 2001), inspiration (Thrash & Elliot, 2004), and awe (Keltner & Haidt, 2003).

Soren Kierkegaard (1849/2008) was probably right that admiration is happy self-surrender. A social functional perspective of emotions suggests that admiration may play a crucial role in directing individuals to define and negotiate their statuses (Keltner & Haidt, 1999; Sweetman et al., 2013; van de Ven et al., 2011). Feeling admiration towards an actor informs the subject of the actor's superiority, and forms the expectation that it will be in the subject's best interest to defer to the superior actor. At the group level, admiration may facilitate coordination within the existing hierarchy and motivate lower-status members to "copy" higher-status members' competence or virtue to improve their performance and social standing (Henrich & Gil-White, 2001; Sweetman et al., 2013). Importantly, admiration is associated with the action tendency to praise or honor the outstanding other by giving deference or submission (Schindler et al., 2013). For example, Sweetman et al. (2013) found that admiration induced by high levels of competence and warmth increased self-reported deference. Therefore, admiration seems to function as an emotional trigger to give deference to superior others.

This psychological mechanism (i.e., admiration) underlying the virtue route appears to overlap with that underlying the competence route (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009a; Cheng et al., 2013; Cheng et al., 2010). As aforementioned, like virtues, outstanding competence or skills are capable of eliciting admiration in others and subsequently enhancing a competent actor's status.

It is, nevertheless, important to keep in mind that admiration is an “umbrella” term summarizing the “other-praising” family of emotions, and emotions under the admiration umbrella are related but distinct in multiple ways (Schindler et al., 2013).

There is accumulating evidence that *admiration for virtue*, or moral elevation, and *respect for (excellent) skills* are, indeed, distinct emotions (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Diessner, Iyer, Smith, & Haidt, 2013; Haidt, 2003). For example, Algoe and Haidt (2009) randomly assigned members of a university community to watch one of the three videos: (1) virtue: a boy who established a homeless shelter in Philadelphia; (2) excellent (task) skills: basketball star Michael Jordan “flying” through the air to dunk a basketball; and (3) amusement: clips of three stand-up comedians. They found that both the virtue and the (task) skills videos induced higher levels of subjective feelings of admiration and respect than the amusement video. Yet admiration for virtue and respect for skills differed in two important ways. First, witnessing acts of virtue was associated with higher levels of physical sensations characterized by feelings of “warmth” in the chest and lumps in the throat compared with witnessing acts of superior skills. Second, admiration for virtue was associated with a stronger desire to emulate the virtuous acts and to engage in virtuous behavior than was respect for skills.

Perhaps the strongest evidence for the distinction between admiration for virtue and respect for skills comes from neuropsychology (Englander, Haidt, & Morris, 2012; Immordino-Yang, McColl, Damasio, & Damasio, 2009; Immordino-Yang & Sylvan, 2010). For example, in an fMRI experiment, Immordino-Yang and colleagues (2009) found that admiration for virtue and respect for skills were associated with different neural networks. Admiration for virtue recruits more of the inferior/posterior posteromedial cortices (PMC) and the anterior middle



cingulate; whereas respect for skills involves more of the sector of PMC connected with lateral parietal cortices.

Admiration for virtue, furthermore, affects a variety of important outcomes, such as moral judgment and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), that are unlikely to be affected by respect for skills (Cox, 2010; Erickson & Abelson, 2012; Schnall, Roper, & Fessler, 2010; Strohming, Lewis, & Meyer, 2011; Thomson & Siegel, 2013; Vianello, Galliani, & Haidt, 2010). First, admiration for virtue affects moral judgment involving moral dilemmas. Specifically, admiration for virtue makes people adhere to moral principles and decrease permissiveness for deontological violations; whereas another positive emotion, mirth, has the opposite effect (Strohming et al., 2011). Second, organizational behavior research finds that admiration for virtue increases prosocial behavior at work. For example, Vianello et al. (2010) found that admiration for virtue elicited by leaders' virtuous behavior, in turn, increased subordinates' OCB and organizational commitment at a public hospital in Italy.

To summarize, I extend Mencius' original thesis by elucidating the general cognitive process underlying the virtue route—virtue induces the belief that a virtuous actor is willing to sacrifice his or her self-interest to fulfill moral ideals and elicits a pleasure in the hearts of others; this belief and pleasure, in turn, leads to the expectation that the virtuous actor will advance their interest when conferred status and influence. Moreover, I identify admiration for virtue as the virtue-elicited pleasure, referred to by Mencius, which leads to sincere submission towards a virtuous actor. Admiration for virtue is distinct from respect for skills in terms of antecedents, physical sensations, motivational states, neural correlates, and cognitive and behavioral consequences. We not only are capable of distinguishing virtue from competence, but also appreciate and react to virtue and competence in different ways. Insofar as observers feel

admiration for virtue towards an actor, they will sincerely defer and confer status to the actor, regardless whether direct social interaction is involved (e.g., Willer, 2009a). Admiration for virtue hence seems the missing link between virtue, the general desirable trait that is costly signaled by (outstanding) moral behavior and motivation, and status conferral in costly signaling theories (Roberts, 1998; Smith & Bird, 2000; Willer, 2009b; Zahavi & Zahavi, 1997).

I therefore propose that admiration for virtue mediates the relationship between an actor's demonstrations of virtue and the status conferred to the virtuous actor (please see Figure 1). In other words, an actor who demonstrates virtue is more admired than an actor who does not demonstrate virtue. Admiration for virtue, in turn, leads to status conferral to the virtuous actor. According to this theory, Malala Yousfzai's advocacy for girl's rights, despite death threats and sanctions from the Taliban, may demonstrate her virtue, garner admiration, and advance her status.

### **Relationships among the three routes to status**

It is worthwhile to discuss the relationships among the dominance, competence, and virtue routes to status attainment. From an evolutionary perspective, dominance seems the "default" path that we inherit from our ancestors to attain status; competence and virtue might later evolve, uniquely among the human species, from the general primate trait of dominance to provide evolutionarily advantageous alternatives to attaining status and maintaining self-esteem (e.g., Alexander, 1987; Barkow, 1975; Boehm, 1999b).

I consider the three routes to attaining status distinct but not mutually exclusive. First, the dominance and the virtue routes appear to overlap when it comes to warrior-ship, at least in some human groups or societies (e.g., Libyan Bedouin; Abu-Lughod, 1986). Yet the two routes are distinct in terms of the underlying psychological experience (i.e., fear vs. admiration). Fighting

for a virtuous cause may be seen as virtuous and admirable in the eyes of in-group members, but vicious and terrifying in the eyes of out-group members (e.g., Piazza et al., 2014). For example, Malala Yousafzai is likely seen as courageous and virtuous in the eyes of girls and women who want to receive education in Northwestern Pakistan, but likely induces (ideological) threat and fear in the Taliban.

In addition, the desire to “wash away” the sins associated with using dominance may even motivate people to enact certain virtues (e.g., purity and charity; Zhong, Ku, Lount, & Murnighan, 2010; Zhong & Liljenquist, 2006). For most, if not all, of us, morality is central to our self-identities (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Strohinger & Nichols, 2015). Using dominance to advance status may present a threat to one’s moral self-image. This threat, in turn, can activate a desire to act virtuously to restore moral integrity. On the flip side, demonstrating virtue may licence an actor to use dominance to maintain or enhance status. According to the moral licensing theory (e.g., Effron & Monin, 2010; Klotz & Bolino, 2013), demonstrating virtue may accrue moral licenses to carry out moral transgressions, including dominance behavior, often without significant damage to the transgressor’s reputation. For example, a fighter of social justice, such as Julian Assange, may feel licensed to occasionally mistreat followers. The licensing effect of virtue, nevertheless, should be rather limited; overusing dominance may elicit resentment from the rank and file, undermine admiration for one’s virtue, and ultimately damage one’s status.

Second, the dominance route appears to be somewhat entangled with the competence route. As reviewed earlier, it has been debated whether dominance demeanors or tactics are merely task cues that form performance expectations (Ridgeway et al., 1985). For example, Anderson and Kilduff (2009b) found that individuals high in personality trait dominance were

perceived to be more competent and conferred higher status, even when they actually lacked task competence. Cheng et al. (2013), however, pointed out the possibility that dominance demeanors or tactics might function simultaneously through both the dominance and the competence routes to affect status. In other words, it seems possible that a dominant individual (e.g., Donald Trump) may be seen as intimidating and fearful as well as competent and respectable at the same time. In addition, individuals who have attained status through the competence route may easily become hubris, which in turn increases dominance behavior. For example, McFerran, Aquino, and Tracy (2014) found that authentic pride, an emotion elicited by possessing superior task skills, was associated with a heightened desire to make luxury purchases, which in turn elicited hubris pride, an emotion that motivates the use of dominance (Cheng et al., 2010).

Third and finally, it seems possible that some virtues (e.g., generosity) can help accomplish certain task goals (e.g., maximizing the public good in collective action), and therefore function through the competence route to enhance status. Nevertheless, the moral virtue theory posits that even virtues (e.g., cleanliness) irrelevant to task achievement can enhance one's status by eliciting admiration for virtue. Relatedly, the virtue route may be particularly effective to enhance status for people stereotypically seen as incompetent (e.g., women; see Ridgeway, 1982). Keep in mind that competence and virtue both lead to different forms of admiration for an actor. There may be a ceiling effect that, at a high level of competence, demonstrating virtue ceases to substantially increase admiration (for virtue) and status conferred to a highly competent actor. In contrast, demonstrating virtue may help an actor who otherwise lacks competence to gain more admiration (for virtue) and therefore status, compared with an equally incompetent actor who does not demonstrate virtue. The competence route, however, may be discounted by immoral conduct, even when the conduct is task irrelevant (e.g., Casciaro

& Lobo, 2008; Piazza et al., 2014). For example, Ridgeway (1982) theorizes that a group will not accept a member's task contributions, even if competent, if the member is perceived as self-oriented. After all, a competent but greedy person (e.g., Martin Shkreli), when given status, will be the most detrimental to a group. There may be a minimum level of morality for the competence route to be effective, but not necessarily vice versa (Piazza et al., 2014). In other words, the competence route may become effective to attain status only after a certain threshold of morality is fulfilled.

In sum, there are three routes to attaining status that are distinct but not mutually exclusive, and actors may follow two or more routes simultaneously to enhance their status. Importantly, the moral virtue theory posits that virtue is a distinct route to attaining status, regardless of a virtuous actor's levels of competence.

## **Culture**

After delineating the virtue route to attaining status, I will address the question asked at the beginning of this dissertation: why did Malala Yousafzai's advocacy for girls' rights to receive education not lead to admiration and status but rather to hatred and violence against her in her own culture? The answer to this question, I argue, is that the virtue route is *culturally bound*. Consistent with the aforementioned relativistic view of virtue, morality does not derive from a universal set of standards or principles but rather develops gradually from the specific experiences of a moral community in dealing with specific moral conflict or problems determined by its cultural context (e.g., Walzer, 1983). The cultural context hence affects whether a certain moral characteristic or act is deemed as virtuous and admirable.

Note that I acknowledge that culture may also affect the other routes to attaining status. For example, Torelli, Leslie, Stoner, and Puente (2014) recently found that individuals with an

individualistic cultural orientation associated competence traits with status to a greater degree than those with a collectivistic cultural orientation. The goals of this dissertation, however, are first to review and establish virtue as a distinct and independent route to attaining status, and second to define the cultural boundary under which the virtue route is more or less effective. A comprehensive review of how culture affects status attainment through other routes is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Morality, as defined earlier, is a defining part of culture, which provides the context to interpret the meaning of moral acts. Scholars (e.g., Boehm, 1999a; Geertz, 1973; Rai & Fiske, 2011) have argued that morality can only be studied and understood when its full and often intricate cultural context is taken into consideration. The moral virtue theory of status attainment embraces this perspective, and proposes that culture determines the scope and priority of moralities endorsed by a community (e.g., Walzer, 1983), which consequently affects whether a certain moral characteristic or act is deemed a virtue or a vice. In the following sections, I will elaborate on how an important cultural form, that is, individualism-collectivism, affects the virtue route.

### **Individualism-collectivism**

Individualism refers to “a social pattern that consists of loosely linked individuals who view themselves as independent of collectives; are primarily motivated by their own preferences, needs, rights, and the contracts they have established with others (Triandis, 1995, p. 2)”; collectivism refers to “a social pattern consisting of closely linked individuals who see themselves as parts of one or more collectives (family, co-workers, tribe, nation); are primarily motivated by the norms of, and duties imposed by, those collectives (Triandis, 1995, p. 2)”. In general, the West (i.e., North America and Western Europe) tends to be more individualistic, and

the East (i.e., primarily East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia), as well as much of the rest of the world, tends to be more collectivistic (Triandis, 1995).

Research in anthropology, cultural and moral psychology generally finds that in collectivistic cultures, people *moralize* a broader scope of issues—not only harm avoidance and justice, but also loyalty, obedience to authority, and purity—than people do in individualistic cultures (Graham et al., 2011; Haidt et al., 1993; Miller & Bersoff, 1992, 1994; Shweder et al., 1997; Vaclair, Wilson, & Fischer, 2014). For example, Miller and Bersoff (1992, 1994) found that Indians tended to moralize interpersonal responsibility (e.g., helping a friend), whereas Americans tended to view interpersonal responsibility as a matter of personal preference. In addition, disgusting and disrespectful actions (e.g., cleaning one's toilet with a national flag and eating one's dead pet dog), even when perceived as harmless, are more likely to be moralized and disapproved of in more collectivistic cultures (e.g., Brazil) than in more individualistic ones (e.g., the United States; Haidt et al., 1993). Though people across cultures generally value and care about justice and (human) welfare, Vaclair and colleagues (2014) found that rights-based moral concerns (e.g., being open-minded and critical) were more relevant among participants from more individualistic cultures (i.e., Germany), compared with among those from more collectivistic cultures (i.e., Philippines and Brazil). Consistent with Shweder et al.'s (1997) findings, people in collectivistic cultures rely on all of the “big three” moralities, whereas people in individualistic cultures focus on the morality of autonomy.

The cultural difference in individualism-collectivism is, perhaps, most salient and influential when different sets of moral codes are in conflict. For example, Mazar and Aggarwal (2011) found that the degree to which a national culture is individualistic versus collectivistic increased the propensity to offer a bribe to an international business partner. Specifically,

participants primed with a collectivistic mindset believed that the decision to offer the bribe was made in the best interest of the organization, and hence considered themselves to be less accountable for the bribe, than those primed with an individualistic mindset.

Moreover, moral acts involving moral dilemmas or conflict often present opportunities to demonstrate virtue and earn admiration because substantial self-sacrifice is often required to resolve conflict (e.g., Rai & Fiske, 2011; Waytz, Dungan, & Young, 2013). For example, pro-collective crimes (see review by Vadera & Pratt, 2013), such as “honor killings” of “impure” women (Rai & Fiske, 2011), may be seen as virtuous when they are committed to advance collective interest at the potential expense of one’s own, in some *highly* collectivistic cultures. In contrast, whistleblowers (e.g., Hugh Thompson Jr.) who choose to sacrifice friendship or in-group loyalty to promote justice and human rights may be seen as particularly admirable and virtuous—although it may take time for their virtue to be recognized—in individualistic cultures.

Note that the aforementioned studies do not suggest that justice and human rights, pertaining to the morality of autonomy, are morally irrelevant in collectivistic cultures; nor do they suggest that loyalty and purity, pertaining to the moralities of community and divinity, are irrelevant in individualistic cultures. Indeed, bribery is considered an unethical business practice across cultures (e.g., Husted, Dozier, McMahon, & Kattan, 1996); and there are people (e.g., American conservatives) who deeply care about loyalty and purity within individualistic cultures (e.g., Graham et al., 2009). This line of research simply suggests that in collectivistic cultures people are more likely to prioritize the moralities of community and divinity over the morality of autonomy compared to people in individualistic cultures, who are more likely to prioritize the morality of autonomy over the moralities of community and divinity.



Finally, individualism-collectivism may also determine the degree to which people pay attention to others' virtuous acts and respond to them emotionally (Kitayama, Markus, & Kurokawa, 2000; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Easterners tend to attend more to others than their Western counterparts, who attend more to themselves. Consequently, Easterners may experience other-focused emotions, including admiration for virtue, more frequently than Westerners, who may be more likely to feel ego-focused emotions (e.g., pride and anger; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Hence, individualism-collectivism may affect the degree to which individuals are attuned to others' moral characteristics and acts and the likelihood to respond with admiration for virtue.

In sum, individualism-collectivism affects the scope and priority of moralities endorsed by a moral community, and consequently whether a certain moral characteristic or act is deemed as a virtue or a vice. Specifically, people in collectivistic cultures tend to rely on a broad moral domain that covers all of the "big three" moralities, and to emphasize the moralities of community and divinity; people in individualistic cultures tend to focus on and prioritize the morality of autonomy. Hence I propose that moral characteristics upholding the moralities of community (e.g., loyalty and humility) and divinity (e.g., purity and cleanliness) are more likely to lead to admiration for virtue and status attainment in collectivistic cultures; whereas moral characteristics upholding the moralities of autonomy (e.g., justice and human rights) are more likely to lead to admiration for virtue and status attainment in individualistic cultures. The same act, therefore, may be seen as virtuous and admirable in one culture, but deviant and blameworthy in another. In Yousfazai's case, taking culture into account helps us understand why she fails to garner recognition and honor in her own culture but succeeds to do so in Western cultures—her advocacy for gender equality in education deviates from, if not challenges,

tradition, communal order, and religious order endorsed and prioritized in many collectivistic cultures.

Before moving forward, it is important to point out that the moral virtue theory of status attainment takes a dynamic perspective of culture. Culture, as well as morality, represents adaptations to past environments (Campbell, 1975; Greenfield, 2009; Holton, 2000). As the environment changes, cultures evolve correspondingly over time, though it may sometimes take generations to complete the cultural adaptation. For example, as the West underwent urbanization over the last 200 years, individualistic values (e.g., choice and personal possessions) gradually grew, whereas collectivistic values pertaining to duties and religion gradually declined (Greenfield, 2013). Importantly, culture and morality—“representing wisdom about past environments (p. 1123)” —may no longer be compatible with current environments and become *maladaptive* (Campbell, 1975). This dynamic view of culture explains why throughout history, moral rebels whom we now deem as exceptionally virtuous were resented and even persecuted in their own times (e.g., Socrates, Jesus, Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Hugh Thompson Jr.; Minson & Monin, 2012; Monin et al., 2008).

Furthermore, the evolving cultural context may also play a decisive role in the divergence of the competence and the virtue routes. According to Mencius, there are only two routes to attaining superior status—dominance and virtue, and competence seems to be a minor component of virtue. The ancient Greeks emphasized the unity of intellect virtues (e.g., wisdom and creativity) and virtues of character (i.e., justice and generosity), insisting that it is impossible to have one without the other. I speculate that the competence and the virtue routes began to diverge as it became possible for individual task skills and expertise, independent of (moral) virtue, to determine resource accumulation and consequently survival. The industrial revolution

and increasing division of labor, in the West, may be a catalyst for this divergence, as the industrialization process erodes the strength of a traditional moral community based on the moralities of community and divinity, and replaces it with a free market system that emphasizes individual profit-maximization and autonomy (Greenfield, 2013; Hirschman, 1986). As a result, competence may become based more on the ability to accumulate resources (e.g., money and financial assets) than on making contributions to groups or societies, perhaps particularly among the upper-class (Lamont, 1996).

## **Empirical Tests of the Moral Virtue Theory of Status Attainment**

To validate the moral virtue theory of status attainment, this dissertation focuses on three specific virtues—humility (Tangney, 2000), cleanliness (Douglas, 1966), and rights (Shweder et al., 1997), each corresponding to one of the “big three” moralities. I choose the three virtues for two reasons. First, these virtues are conceptually important but empirically understudied, compared with generosity and altruism (e.g., Flynn, 2003; Willer, 2009a), in the status attainment literature. To demonstrate the generalizability of the virtue route, it is important to show that virtues other than generosity and altruism can elicit admiration for virtue and lead to status attainment. Second, these virtues are more or less valued, depending on the cultural context. In contrast to generosity and altruism, which, arguably, are valued universally, humility, cleanliness, and rights seem to a greater degree affected by the cultural context. Studying these virtues may hence help to understand the moderating role of culture in the relationship between acts of virtue and status attainment.

### **Humility: A communal virtue**

Humility is a “rich, multifaceted construct, in sharp contrast to dictionary definitions that emphasize a sense of unworthiness and low self-regard (Tangney, 2000, p. 73)”. The core of humility is a growth orientation (B. P. Owens & Hekman, 2015) and the view that something greater than the self exists (Ou et al., 2014). Scholars seem to agree that three behavioral facets of humility are widely valued, including: (1) a manifested willingness to view oneself accurately and in perspective, (2) a displayed appreciation of others’ strengths and contributions, and (3) teachability, or openness to new information or ideas (Oc, Bashshur, Daniels, Greguras, & Diefendorff, 2015; Ou et al., 2014; B. P. Owens & Hekman, 2012; Tangney, 2000). Nevertheless, manifestations of humility may differ across cultures. For example, besides the aforementioned

dimensions, O'c et al. (2015) identified five unique dimensions of leader humility in Singapore (i.e., leading by example, showing modesty, working together for the collective good, empathy and approachability, and mentoring and coaching). These additional manifestations of humility seem to be rooted in the collectivistic social orientation, prominent in the East (e.g., Varnum, Grossmann, Kitayama, & Nisbett, 2010).

Anthropologists have long considered humility a *communal* virtue that can be traced back to the egalitarian ethos commonly found in small-scale nomadic foraging human societies (Boehm, 1993). In these historic “egalitarian societies,” humility, characterized by absence of irascibility, absence of self-aggrandizement, and avoidance of prominence, was highly valued, particularly in leaders or chiefs, which is crucial to avoid conflict and maintain the harmony of a community. Often studied as a personality trait (e.g., Ashton & Lee, 2007), humility is also positively associated with other virtues pertaining to the morality of community, such as altruism (LaBouff, Rowatt, Johnson, Tsang, & Willerton, 2012), generosity (Exline & Hill, 2012), and (active) cooperation (Hilbig, Zettler, Leist, & Heydasch, 2013). On the flip side, humility is negatively related to the “Dark Triad,” consisting of Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy, which captures the immoral aspects of human personalities (K. Lee et al., 2013). In summary, humility represents a communal virtue rooted in interdependence and restraining the ego, which is essential to maintain communal sharing relations (A. P. Fiske, 1992; Rai & Fiske, 2011).

Humility is also a core organizational virtue that lays the foundation for moral action and affects important outcomes in organizational settings (Cameron & Caza, 2004; Collins, 2001). One study showed that expressed humility by a student team member was highly appreciated and valued by their peers and increased the perceived quality of his or her team contribution (B. P.

Owens, Johnson, & Mitchell, 2013). Another study demonstrated that expressed humility by leaders was found to directly enhance employee or follower retention, commitment, job engagement and performance (Ou et al., 2014; B. P. Owens et al., 2013). In addition to the direct effects on follower outcomes, leader humility can also temper the detrimental effects of narcissism and amplify the potential positive effects on follower job engagement and performance (B. P. Owens, Walker, & Waldman, 2015). Finally and perhaps most importantly, leader humility has been associated with increased team and firm performance (Ou, Waldman, & Peterson, 2015; B. P. Owens & Hekman, 2015). The rationale is that leader humility fosters a shared interpersonal team process that emphasizes collective humility and integration, which in turn leads to superior team performance—through creating a collective promotion focus (B. P. Owens & Hekman, 2015)—and firm performance—through creating an ambidextrous strategic orientation (Ou et al., 2015).

While this research focuses on humility in leaders, it falls short of addressing *whether* and *how* humble individuals are more likely to emerge as leaders and attain status in the first place. The moral virtue theory of status attainment may help to delineate how (expressed) humility affects one's status and fosters positive consequences in the workplace.

### **Cleanliness: A divine virtue**

Literally, cleanliness refers to the (physical) absence of dirt, noxious gases, or other pollutants. Evolutionarily, concerns about cleanliness may first arise as an adaptation to a world full of dangerous microbes and parasites (Haidt & Joseph, 2004). People with diseases or parasites and things like rotting corpses and excrement automatically trigger a feeling of disgust, which in turn prompts us to stay away from the “unclean.” The scientific domain of cleanliness goes beyond care for hygiene, and it includes respect for conventions and for social or religious

order (Douglas, 1966). Many religions have developed elaborated rules and norms, pertaining to cleanliness, to regulate diet. For example, in Judaism, the book of “Leviticus” contains lengthy and detailed dietary laws—describing what are considered “clean” or “unclean” to eat—that are not necessarily based on actual hygienic standards (Douglas, 1966).

Cleanliness is considered a virtue pertaining to the morality of *divinity*, because, in many major religions, physical cleanliness is believed to correspond to the purity of the soul (Zhong & Liljenquist, 2006). Indeed, recent research has shown a reciprocal association between the physical and the moral dimensions of cleanliness (e.g., Cramwinckel, De Cremer, & van Dijke, 2013; Preston & Ritter, 2012; Yang et al., 2013). Zhong and Liljenquist (2006), for example, found that priming one’s own or others’ moral transgressions presents a threat to one’s moral self-image, which activates a need for physical cleansing. Physical cleansing activated by a moral threat, in turn, relieves subsequent negative moral emotions (e.g., disgust, guilt, and shame) and reduces direct compensatory behaviors (e.g., volunteering to help). Moreover, physical cleanliness not only can “wash away” moral transgressions but also motivate virtuous behaviors. For example, clean scents induced by a spray of citrus-scented Windex were found to promote reciprocity and charity (Liljenquist, Zhong, & Galinsky, 2010). Physical cleanliness hence purifies our souls and prompts us to enact elevated moral standards (also see Yang et al., 2013).

Most research on cleanliness focuses on the absence of cleanliness and its resulting negative emotions, particularly *disgust* (e.g., Eskine, Kacirik, & Prinz, 2011; Horberg et al., 2009; Tybur, Lieberman, & Griskevicius, 2009). Some preliminary evidence, however, suggests that people also approve of their own and others’ physical cleanliness or cleansing-related acts (Schnall, 2011). For example, (physical) cleanliness-primed undergraduates ranked themselves as more virtuous than their fellow students, and they subsequently rendered harsher judgment on

purity-related issues such as abortion and pornography (Zhong, Strejcek, & Sivanathan, 2010). Moreover, Cannon, Schnall, & White (2010) found that thinking about positive cleansing-related activities (e.g., somebody brushed their teeth after every meal) actually relieved negative affect such as disgust. Little research, however, has directly examined *whether* and *how* physical cleanliness can induce admiration for virtue in the eyes of others and enhance one's status.

### **Rights: An autonomy virtue**

Rights is defined in the *New Oxford American Dictionary* as “a moral or legal entitlement to have or obtain something or to act in a certain way.” The modern concept of rights covers a variety of domains, and two core sets of rights are *physical integrity* rights, including the right to life and personal security, and *civil and political* rights, including the right to vote and free speech (Cole & Ramirez, 2013). According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations, human rights are granted to all members of the human family. The class of right-holders, however, may be extended to include animals, particularly in Western cultures (Shweder et al., 1997). It is important to point out the dynamic nature of rights. Some sets of rights, for example, the right to marry a same-sex partner, are controversial and in constant change.

“Rights dominate modern understandings of what actions are permissible and which institutions are just. Rights structure the form of governments, the content of laws, and the shape of morality as it is currently perceived. To accept a set of rights is to approve a distribution of freedom and authority, and so to endorse a certain view of what may, must, and must not be done (Wenar, 2011).”

Upholding, protecting, and promoting human rights is considered an *autonomy* virtue (Haidt & Joseph, 2004; Shweder et al., 1997). By laying the foundation for the morality of



autonomy, rights make individual autonomy and social justice possible, enforced by law and social conventions. The virtue of rights hence represents the ideal of the morality of autonomy. When making moral judgments, rights virtues (e.g., “freely expressing him/herself” and “voting in elections”) were found to be strongly endorsed, more so than virtuous acts related to cleanliness and purity (e.g., “refraining from consuming drugs, cigarettes, and alcohol” and “maintaining a healthy body”), in the United States (Horberg et al., 2009). Many human rights fighters, such as Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela, despite being controversial figures early in their time, ultimately gain recognitions and admiration for their struggles for human rights and garner tremendous status. There is, however, little research showing that upholding human rights can lead one to attain status, particularly in an organizational or task-oriented setting.

Researchers previously theorized, though never explicitly examined, that virtue—narrowly conceptualized in task-oriented small group contexts as group motivation—is a minor component of competence, affecting only the extent to which a group is willing to accept one’s task contribution (Ridgeway, 1982; Willer, 2009b): in other words, virtue does not independently lead to status attainment, particularly when a virtuous actor lacks competence. The virtue theory instead proposes that virtue is distinct from competence and a relatively independent route to attaining status. Experimental research that manipulates both levels of competence and virtue of an actor hence is warranted to examine whether virtue interacts with competence to affect status attainment as predicted by these two competing theories. A significant positive effect of virtue on status attainment when one’s competence is low will provide strong support for the virtue theory. In addition, an investigation is also warranted whether there is a certain threshold of moral standard to be fulfilled for competence to enhance status.

According to the moral virtue theory of status attainment, demonstrating humility, cleanliness, or rights should elicit admiration for virtue in others, which in turn enhances a virtuous actor's status. Moreover, the moral virtue theory distinguishes itself from previous theories (e.g., Cheng & Tracy, 2014; Ridgeway, 1982) by proposing that virtue is distinct from competence and a relatively independent route to attaining status. In other words, virtue is not merely a component or modifier of competence, affecting the extent to which a group is willing to accept one's task contribution. Instead, insofar as humility, cleanliness, and rights are moralized and endorsed within a group or community, demonstrating these virtues can elicit admiration for virtue and consequently lead to status attainment, regardless of a virtuous actor's levels of competence. Therefore, I propose:

*Hypothesis 1: An actor who demonstrates humility, cleanliness, or (advocating for human) rights is admired, independent of the actor's competence.*

*Hypothesis 2: An actor who demonstrates humility, cleanliness, or (advocating for human) rights gains status, independent of the actor's competence.*

*Hypothesis 3: Admiration for virtue mediates the positive relationship between an actor's demonstrations of humility, cleanliness, or (advocating for human) rights and the actor's status attainment.*

## **The cultural boundary**

According to the moral virtue theory of status attainment, the effectiveness of demonstrating a specific virtue in attaining status is affected by cultural differences in individualism-collectivism. Humility, as a virtue essential to communal life, may be more relevant and effective for status attainment in collectivistic cultures than in individualistic cultures. Although collectivistic cultures accept social inequality to a greater degree than

individualistic cultures do (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005), people in collectivistic cultures, regardless of their social positions, are obligated to constrain their ego and care for others' needs and sentiments (Shweder et al., 1997). In contrast, humility, featured by acknowledging one's own mistakes and appreciating others' strengths and contributions, seems less morally relevant in individualistic cultures where self-enhancement is normative (e.g., Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997), and where assertiveness and masculinity are cherished (e.g., Kipnis et al., 1980; Pfeffer, 2010; Rudman & Phelan, 2008). Indeed, in individualistic cultures, being humble may be seen as a cue of lacking competence or leadership, instead of demonstrating self-discipline and concerns about others. Hence, expressed humility may be more morally relevant, admirable, and effective for status attainment in collectivistic cultures than in individualistic cultures.

Cleanliness may also be more morally relevant and important in collectivistic cultures than in individualistic cultures (Haidt & Joseph, 2004; Shweder et al., 1997). For example, stories about violation of cleanliness and purity, such as eating one's dead pet dog, were found more likely to be disapproved in a more collectivistic culture (i.e., Brazil) than in a more individualistic culture (i.e., the United States; Haidt et al., 1993). Moreover, within a country, people differ substantially regarding to what extent they endorse and value cleanliness, depending on the cultural context they are embedded in (Graham et al., 2009). For example, in India, a typically collectivistic culture that emphasizes cleanliness, some groups are more individualistic and are less concerned about cleanliness than other groups that are more collectivistic (Beck, 1972). Consequently, demonstrating the virtue of cleanliness may be more admirable and effective in status attainment in collectivistic cultures than in individualistic cultures.

In contrast to humility and cleanliness, the virtue of rights may not be so relevant and important in collectivistic cultures as in individualistic cultures (Shweder et al., 1997). In many collectivistic cultures, certain civil and political rights, such as the right to vote and the right to education for women, are rather limited and not enforced by law. Moreover, advocating for these rights in collectivistic cultures may be seen as disobedient and morally deviant from traditions. Hence, I propose:

*Hypothesis 4: The relationship between demonstrated humility or cleanliness and status attainment will be more positive in collectivistic cultures than in individualistic cultures, because a virtuous actor will be more admired for demonstrating humility or cleanliness in collectivistic cultures than in individualistic cultures.*

*Hypothesis 5: The relationship between demonstrated virtue of (advocating for human) rights and status attainment will be less positive in collectivistic cultures than in individualistic cultures, because a virtuous actor will be less admired for demonstrating the virtue of (advocating for human) rights in collectivistic cultures than in individualistic cultures.*

To summarize, this dissertation focuses on humility, cleanliness, and rights, corresponding to the moralities of community, divinity, and autonomy, respectively, as the first attempt to examine the moral virtue theory of status attainment. Insofar as being endorsed within a moral community, demonstrating or expressing humility, cleanliness, or rights should elicit admiration for virtue in the eyes of observers, which in turn leads a virtuous actor to attain status, beyond the actor's competence and dominance. The virtues of humility and cleanliness are more likely to elicit admiration for virtue and enhance status in collectivistic cultures than in

individualistic cultures; whereas the virtue of rights is more likely to elicit admiration for virtue and enhance status in individualistic cultures than in collectivistic cultures.

## Method

Four experimental studies were conducted to test the moral virtue theory of status attainment and the aforementioned hypotheses. Studies 1 to 3 were scenario studies that examined the impacts of humility, cleanliness, and rights on admiration for virtue and status conferral, respectively. To disentangle the virtue and the competence routes, competence was manipulated as well, and the interactions between virtue and competence were investigated. To examine the cultural boundary of the virtue route to status, Studies 1 to 3 recruited online participants, through Amazon's Mechanical Turk Web-based platform (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011), from a collectivistic culture (i.e., India) and an individualistic culture (i.e., the United States). Studies 1 to 3 hence adopted a 3 (high, control, and low virtuousness)  $\times$  2 (competence vs. incompetence)  $\times$  2 (Indian vs. U.S.) design.

Study 4 was a laboratory experiment that focused on expressed humility of an actor and investigated the effect of humility on a behavioral measure of status. An experienced student actor was instructed to act more or less humbly in a short video clip, which was used as the experimental manipulation. A pilot study was first run to ensure the effectiveness of the manipulation. Study 4, furthermore, measured participants' *interdependent-independent* self-construals (Singelis, 1994) to examine the impact of culture on the relationship between humility and status conferral. Details of the studies are described below.

### Study 1: Humility

#### Participants, study design, and procedure

I recruited 146 participants (65.1% male) in India and 146 participants (63.0% male) in the U.S. through Amazon's Mechanical Turk Web-based platform (Buhrmester et al., 2011) to

complete a 20-minute study in exchange for \$2.00. The average age of Indian participants was 32.81 (SD = 10.03) and the average age of U.S. participants was 35.22 (SD = 10.14).

Participants were randomly assigned to read a scenario describing a *local* consulting team member (i.e., *Rahul* for Indian participants and *Mike* for U.S. participants) in a task-oriented context. I manipulated humility at three levels (i.e., high, control, and low) according to the three behavioral dimensions identified by Owens & Hekman (2012). The high humility condition states that Rahul/Mike acknowledges his limitations and mistakes, seeks advice from others, and gives credit to others for their strengths and contributions. The low humility condition describes Rahul/Mike as refusing to acknowledge his limitations or mistakes, not seeking advice from others, and taking personal credit for the team's success. The control condition makes no mention of Rahul/Mike's behaviors related to humility. Competence was manipulated by varying whether Rahul/Mike successfully earned a contract from an important client (i.e., the competence condition) or not (i.e., the incompetence condition). Please see Appendix A for details.

After reading the scenario, participants were asked to rate Rahul/Mike's humility, competence, and dominance, report their emotional reactions to Rahul/Mike (i.e., admiration for virtue), and indicate how much status and influence they were willing to confer to him. Finally, I collected information on participants' demographic backgrounds (e.g., gender and age).

## **Measures**

***Perceptions of virtue, competence, and dominance.*** Perceptions of Rahul/Mike were assessed by asking participants to indicate how humble, competent, and dominant they perceived Rahul/Mike to be, using a 7-point Likert scale with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 7 indicating strong agreement. Perceived humility was measured with a three-item scale (i.e.,

“*humble*,” “*teachable*,” and “*appreciative*”). Perceived competence was measured with a three-item scale (i.e., “*competent*,” “*productive*,” and “*skillful*”); and perceived dominance was measured with a three-item scale (i.e., “*arrogant*,” “*pushy*,” and “*bossy*”).<sup>2</sup> Please see Table 2 for Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of all the scales used in Studies 1 to 3.

***Admiration for virtue.*** Admiration for virtue was assessed with a ten-item scale adapted from previous *elevation* scales (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Vianello et al., 2010). The scale captures three major components of admiration for virtue: emotional reactions (e.g., “*admiration*” and “*inspiration*”), physical sensations (e.g., “*I feel warmth in the chest*”), and motivational states (e.g., “*I want to be more like Rahul/Mike*”).

***Status.*** Status was assessed with a five-item scale (e.g., “*Rahul/Mike has a high level of influence in my eyes*” and “*I look up to Rahul/Mike*”) adopted from Anderson and colleagues (2012) and Hardy and Van Vugt (2006).<sup>3</sup> Participants rated each item on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Please see Appendix C for details of the scales used in this dissertation.

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<sup>2</sup> An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using the maximum likelihood (ML) option and oblique rotations (Conway & Huffcutt, 2003) was conducted to determine the factor structure of the interpersonal perception scales. The intended three-factor solution with three items for each of the humility, competence, and dominance factors had a satisfactory model fit, measured by the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA = .047; Browne & Cudeck, 1992), superior to the two-factor solution (RMSEA = .129) and the one-factor solution (RMSEA = .243).

<sup>3</sup> One item (i.e., “I respect Rahul/Mike”) in the status scale appears to overlap with another item (i.e., “respect”) in the admiration for virtue scale. The findings in Studies 1 to 3, however, were not affected when the overlapping item was excluded from the status scale.



## Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations were reported in Tables 3 & 4.

### ***Manipulation checks: Perceived humility.***

*Indian sample.* A two-way ANOVA revealed only a significant effect for the humility manipulations ( $F(2, 143) = 11.46, p < .001$ ). Specifically, the high humility condition ( $M = 5.97, SD = .74$ ) was perceived to be the most humble, followed by the control condition ( $M = 5.34, SD = 1.17$ ) and the low humility condition ( $M = 4.81, SD = 1.31$ ).

*U.S. sample.* The three humility conditions significantly differed in perceived humility ( $F(2, 143) = 65.26, p < .001$ ). Specifically, the high humility condition ( $M = 5.82, SD = .89$ ) was perceived to be more humble than the control condition ( $M = 4.84, SD = 1.02$ ), which in turn was seen as more humble than the low humility condition ( $M = 3.50, SD = 1.19$ ). Perceived humility, however, was also affected by the competence manipulation ( $F(1, 144) = 7.09, p = .009$ ) such that the competence condition ( $M = 4.87, SD = 1.29$ ) was seen as more humble than the incompetence condition ( $M = 4.61, SD = 1.52$ ). The humility manipulations were, in general, effective among both the Indian and U.S. participants.

### ***Manipulation checks: Perceived competence.***

*Indian sample.* A two-way ANOVA found no significant differences in perceived competence between the two competence conditions ( $F(1, 144) = .26, p > .250$ ) among the Indian participants. The competence condition ( $M = 5.57, SD = 1.15$ ) did not increased perceptions of competence compared to the incompetence condition ( $M = 5.48, SD = 1.00$ ). The humility condition, however, had an unexpected positive effect on perceived competence ( $F(2, 143) = 8.18, p < .001$ ) such that the high humility condition ( $M = 5.91, SD = .87$ ) was seen as

more competent than the control ( $M = 5.73$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ) and the low humility conditions ( $M = 5.14$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ).

*U.S. sample.* Significant differences existed in perceived competence between the two competence conditions ( $F(1, 144) = 29.79$ ,  $p < .001$ ) among the U.S. participants. The competence condition ( $M = 5.64$ ,  $SD = .98$ ) was perceived to be significantly more competent compared to the incompetence condition ( $M = 4.74$ ,  $SD = 1.29$ ). Again, perceived competence was affected by the humility manipulations ( $F(2, 143) = 12.08$ ,  $p < .001$ ) such that the low humility condition ( $M = 4.54$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ) was seen as less competent than the control ( $M = 5.50$ ,  $SD = 1.17$ ) and high humility conditions ( $M = 5.47$ ,  $SD = .96$ ). The manipulation of competence hence was effective among the U.S. participants but not among the Indian participants.

***Hypothesis testing.*** To empirically test the aforementioned hypotheses, I first conducted two-way (virtue  $\times$  competence) ANOVA for the Indian and the U.S. samples, respectively, and reported means by condition for admiration for virtue and status in Table 5. Manipulated virtue (humility, cleanliness, and rights), however, is an ordinal variable with three levels (high, control, and low) of virtuousness, with which it is difficult to test sophisticated moderation and mediation models (Hayes, 2013). Therefore, in this dissertation, I chose to use measured or perception of virtue, an interval variable, as the main independent variable (IV) in regression models, and present results from regression analyses, as well as moderation, mediation, and moderated mediation analyses, with perceptions of competence and dominance as statistical controls.

***Admiration for virtue.*** Means by condition were reported in Table 5, and regression results with measured humility were reported in Tables 6 & 7.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Multicollinearity was not a problem for the regression analyses reported in this dissertation.

The variance inflation factor (VIF) scores for the predictor variables were all well below 5, and

*Indian sample.* Regression analyses showed that, overall, perceived humility significantly increased admiration for virtue ( $b = .43, t = 7.27, p < .001$ ), over and above perceived competence and dominance. Humility did not interact with Rahul's perceived competence levels to affect admiration for virtue ( $b = .02, t = .51, p > .250$ ).

*U.S. sample.* Perceived humility significantly increased admiration for virtue ( $b = .37, t = 4.12, p < .001$ ), over and above perceived competence and dominance. Humility did not interact with Mike's competence levels on admiration for virtue ( $b = .08, t = 1.93, p = .056$ ). Moderation analyses (Hayes, 2013) showed that even when Mike was perceived to be relatively low in competence (i.e., one standard deviation below the mean level of competence), humility still had a significant positive impact on admiration for virtue ( $b = .30, t = 3.05, p = .003$ , 95% confidence interval (CI) = [.105, .491]). Hypothesis 1 was thus supported.

*Status.* Means by condition were reported in Table 5, and regression results were reported in Tables 6 & 7.

*Indian sample.* Perceived humility increased status conferral to Rahul ( $b = .31, t = 7.08, p < .001$ ), over and above his perceived competence and dominance. Again, perceived humility did not interact with competence to affect status ( $b = -.04, t = -1.31, p = .193$ ).

*U.S. sample.* Perceived humility had a positive effect on status conferral to Mike ( $b = .20, t = 3.42, p < .001$ ), over and above Mike's perceived competence and dominance. Importantly,

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the tolerance levels were all above 0.2, across the four studies conducted. In addition, controlling for perceptions of competence in the regression analyses teased out the possibility of a positive "halo" bias, which may lead to inflated evaluations for both humility and competence. The positive effects of humility on admiration for virtue and status did decrease after including the controls, but remained significantly positive.

perceived humility did *not* interact with competence to affect status ( $b = -.03, t = -1.14, p > .250$ ). Hypothesis 2 was hence supported.

### ***Mediation analyses.***

*Indian sample.* Mediation analyses (Hayes, 2013) found that the positive effect of humility on status conferral was mediated by admiration for virtue (95 % confidence interval (CI) for *indirect* effect = [.076, .229]).

*U.S. sample.* Admiration for virtue mediated the positive effect of humility on status conferral (95 % confidence interval (CI) for *indirect* effect = [.048, .179]). Hypothesis 3 was also supported (please see Figures 2 & 3).

***Culture.*** To compare the effects of humility on status conferral through admiration for virtue between the Indian and the U.S. samples, I pooled the two samples and conducted moderation analyses (Hayes, 2013). Results showed that humility did *directly* interact with culture (India = 1, U.S. = 0) to affect status conferral ( $b = .10, t = 2.12, p = .035$ ). In other words, the positive effect of humility on status conferral was significantly stronger among the Indian participants ( $b = .32, t = 7.90, p < .001$ , 95% confidence interval (CI) = [.241, .400]) than that among the U.S. participants ( $b = .22, t = 5.45, p < .001$ , 95% confidence interval (CI) = [.142, .303]). A first-stage moderated mediation test (i.e., Model 7 in Hayes, 2013), however, found that the *indirect* effects of humility on status conferral through admiration for virtue did not differ between the two cultures (Index of moderated mediation = .002, 95% confidence interval (CI) = [-.037, .043]). Hypothesis 4 was hence *partially* supported.

### **Discussion**

Study 1 found that demonstrating humility, a *communal* virtue, elicited admiration for virtue, which in turn led to status conferral towards a humble actor, beyond the humble actor's

competence and dominance. Importantly, the positive effects of humility did not depend on the humble actor's perceived competence. In other words, expressing humility can help individuals to garner admiration and attain status even when they lack superior competence. Study 1, moreover, found preliminary evidence for the cultural boundary of the virtue route—expressing humility was more effective in status attainment in a collectivistic culture (i.e., India) than in an independent culture (i.e., U.S.). The indirect effects of humility on status conferral through admiration for virtue, however, did not differ across cultures. One possible explanation is that the scale used to measure admiration for virtue might not be adequate to capture the unique emotional responses to witnessing virtue (as opposed to excellent skills). Particularly, the external validity of the admiration for virtue scale in non-Western context might be a limitation as admiration for virtue did not fully explain the positive effect of humility on status attainment in India. Another limitation was that the competence manipulation was ineffective among the Indian participants. Post-hoc analyses found that among the Indian participants, the competence manipulation failed to substantially increase perceptions of competence when Rahul was low in humility—the Indian participants seemed to believe that Rahul earned the business contract because he took advantage of other group members' contributions, instead of owning superior competence.

## **Study 2: Cleanliness**

### **Participants, study design, and procedure**

I recruited 140 individuals (61.4% male) in India and 149 individuals (55.7% male) in the U.S. through Amazon's Mechanical Turk Web-based platform (Buhrmester et al., 2011) to participate in this study. The average age of Indian participants was 32.12 (SD = 8.89) and the average age of U.S. participants was 32.30 (SD = 9.84).

Like Study 1, participants were randomly assigned to read a scenario describing Rahul/Mike in a task-oriented context. Cleanliness was manipulated at three levels (i.e., high, control, and low). The high cleanliness condition states that Rahul/Mike maintains high levels of physical hygiene and makes an effort to keep his work space clean and tidy. The low cleanliness condition describes Rahul/Mike as having relatively low hygiene standards and failing to keep his workplace clean and tidy. The control condition makes no mention of his physical hygiene. Competence was manipulated in the same way as in Study 1. Please see Appendix A for details.

### **Measures**

Perceived cleanliness was measured with a three-item scale (i.e., “*clean*,” “*tidy*,” and “*orderly*”). Perceived competence and dominance, admiration, and status were measured with the same scales used in Study 1.<sup>5</sup> Please see Table 2 for Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of the scales used in Studies 1 to 3.

### **Results**

Descriptive statistics and correlations were reported in Tables 8 & 9.

#### ***Manipulation checks: Perceived cleanliness.***

*Indian sample.* A two-way ANOVA found significant differences in perceived cleanliness only among the three cleanliness conditions ( $F(2, 137) = 62.65, p < .001$ ). Specifically, the high cleanliness condition ( $M = 5.83, SD = .95$ ) was perceived to be the cleanest, followed by the control condition ( $M = 4.89, SD = 1.00$ ) and the low cleanliness condition ( $M = 3.03, SD = 1.71$ ).

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<sup>5</sup> An EFA found the intended three-factor solution for the interpersonal perception scales superior (RMSEA = .020) to the two-factor solution (RMSEA = .202) and the one-factor solution (RMSEA = .291).

*U.S. sample.* The three cleanliness conditions differed significantly in perceived cleanliness ( $F(2, 143) = 300.16, p < .001$ ). Specifically, the high cleanliness condition ( $M = 6.24, SD = .96$ ) was perceived to be cleaner than the control condition ( $M = 4.92, SD = 1.00$ ). The low cleanliness condition was perceived to be the least clean ( $M = 1.61, SD = 1.01$ ). Perceptions of cleanliness were not affected by the competence manipulation ( $F(1, 147) = 1.05, p > .250$ ). The cleanliness manipulations were therefore effective among both the Indian and the U.S. participants.

***Manipulation checks: Perceived competence.***

*Indian sample.* A two-way ANOVA revealed significant differences in perceived competence between the two competence conditions ( $F(1, 138) = 24.53, p < .001$ ). The competence condition ( $M = 5.66, SD = .95$ ) substantially increased perceptions of competence compared to the incompetence condition ( $M = 4.70, SD = 1.29$ ). Perceived competence, however, was also affected by the cleanliness manipulations ( $F(2, 137) = 4.09, p = .019$ ) such that the high cleanliness condition ( $M = 5.46, SD = 1.22$ ) was seen as more competent than the low cleanliness condition ( $M = 4.80, SD = 1.25$ ), but not more so than the control condition ( $M = 5.12, SD = 1.20$ ).

*U.S. sample.* The two competence conditions differed significantly in perceived competence ( $F(1, 147) = 71.32, p < .001$ ). The competence condition ( $M = 5.79, SD = 1.05$ ) was seen as more competent than the incompetence condition ( $M = 4.44, SD = 1.41$ ). The cleanliness manipulations also affected perceived competence ( $F(2, 143) = 23.81, p < .001$ ) such that the high cleanliness condition ( $M = 5.60, SD = 1.01$ ) and the control condition ( $M = 5.49, SD = 1.07$ ) were seen as more competent than the low cleanliness condition ( $M = 4.29, SD = 1.67$ ).

**Admiration for virtue.** Means by condition were reported in Table 5, and regression results were reported in Tables 10 & 11.

*Indian sample.* Perceived cleanliness significantly increased admiration for virtue ( $b = .29, t = 6.75, p < .001$ ), over and above perceived competence and dominance. Cleanliness did not interact with Rahul's perceived competence on admiration for virtue ( $b = .03, t = 1.04, p > .250$ ).

*U.S. sample.* Perceived cleanliness had a positive effect on admiration for virtue ( $b = .37, t = 4.12, p < .001$ ), over and above perceived competence and dominance. Cleanliness, however, had a significant interactive effect with Mike's competence levels on admiration for virtue ( $b = .08, t = 3.83, p < .001$ ). Moderation analyses (Hayes, 2013) showed that when Mike was perceived to be relatively low in competence (i.e., one standard deviation below the mean level of competence), cleanliness ceased to have a significant positive impact on admiration for virtue ( $b = .04, t = .96, p > .250$ , 95% confidence interval (CI) =  $[-.045, .130]$ ). Hypothesis 1 was thus *partially* supported.

**Status.** Means by condition were reported in Table 5, and regression results were reported in Tables 10 & 11.

*Indian sample.* Perceived cleanliness had a positive effect on status conferral to the actor ( $b = .27, t = 8.53, p < .001$ ), over and above perceived competence and dominance. Moreover, perceived cleanliness did *not* interact with competence to affect status ( $b = -.003, t = -.11, p > .250$ ).

*U.S. sample.* Perceived cleanliness increased status conferral to the actor ( $b = .20, t = 7.46, p < .001$ ), over and above perceived competence and dominance. Again, perceived cleanliness interacted with perceived competence to affect status ( $b = .04, t = 2.10, p = .037$ ).



Nevertheless, even when Mike was seen as relatively low in competence, cleanliness still had a significant positive impact on status conferral ( $b = .14, t = 3.80, p < .001$ , 95% confidence interval (CI) = [.068, .215]). Hypothesis 2 was hence supported.

### ***Mediation analyses.***

*Indian sample.* Mediation analyses (Hayes, 2013) revealed that the positive effect of cleanliness on status conferral was *partially* mediated by admiration for virtue (95 % confidence interval (CI) for indirect effect = [.066, .173]).

*U.S. sample.* Admiration for virtue also mediated the positive effect of cleanliness on status conferral (95 % confidence interval (CI) for indirect effect = [.044, .114]). Hypothesis 3 was supported (please see Figures 4 & 5).

***Culture.*** To examine the cultural boundary, I pooled the two samples and conducted moderation analyses (Hayes, 2013). Results showed that cleanliness did not *directly* interact with culture (India = 1, U.S. = 0) to affect status conferral ( $b = .03, t = .91, p > .250$ ).

The *indirect* effects of cleanliness on status conferral through admiration for virtue, nevertheless, did differ between the two cultures (Index of moderated mediation = .06, 95% confidence interval (CI) = [.024, .095]). In other words, the *indirect* effect of cleanliness on status conferral through admiration for virtue was significantly stronger among the Indian participants ( $b = .11$ , 95% confidence interval = [.079, .152]) than that among the U.S. participants ( $b = .06$ , 95% confidence interval = [.035, .085]). Hypothesis 4 was hence *partially* supported.

### **Discussion**

Study 2 found that expressing cleanliness, a *divine* virtue, could elicit admiration for virtue and lead to status attainment, beyond a virtuous actor's competence and dominance.

Moreover, culture affected the *indirect* effects of cleanliness on status conferral through admiration for virtue—expressing cleanliness was more effective to attain status through garnering admiration in a collectivistic culture (i.e., India) than in an individualistic culture (i.e., the U.S.). Study 2, however, also found some evidence that in the U.S., the impact of expressing cleanliness on admiration for virtue and status conferral might depend on one’s perceived competence. Physical cleanliness may be seen as more of a social convention or personal preference (Turiel, 2006), rather than a moral virtue, in individualistic cultures. Being considered a social convention, cleanliness is perhaps, indeed, a modifier of the competence route to status attainment (Cheng & Tracy, 2014; Ridgeway, 1982).

### **Study 3: Rights**

#### **Participants, study design, and procedure**

I obtained participation from 145 individuals (63.4% male) in India and 146 participants (52.7% male) in the U.S. through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk Web-based platform (Buhrmester et al., 2011). The average age of Indian participants was 31.73 (SD = 8.21) and the average age of U.S. participants was 33.40 (SD = 9.37).

Like the first two studies, participants were randomly assigned to read a scenario describing Rahul/Mike in a task-oriented context. The virtue of upholding human rights was manipulated at three levels (i.e., high, control, and low). The high rights condition describes that Rahul/Mike advocates for the right to adequate housing and shelter for the homeless. The low rights condition depicts Rahul/Mike as protesting the building of low-income housing and as believing that the poor should live on their own. The control condition makes no mention of Rahul/Mike’s advocacy for or against this basic human right. Competence was manipulated in the same way as in Studies 1 and 2. Please see Appendix A for details.

## Measures

***Perceptions of virtue, competence, and dominance.*** The perceived virtue of advocating for the right to housing and shelter was measured with two items (i.e., “*egalitarian*” & “*fair*”).<sup>6</sup> Perceived competence and dominance, admiration, and status were measured with the same scales used in Studies 1 and 2. Please see Table 2 for Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of all the scales used in Studies 1 to 3.

## Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations were reported in Tables 12 & 13.

### ***Manipulation checks: Perceived egalitarianism.***

***Indian sample.*** A two-way ANOVA found that there were significant differences in perceived egalitarianism among the three rights conditions ( $F(2, 142) = 3.15, p = .046$ ). Specifically, the high rights condition ( $M = 5.63, SD = 1.25$ ) did not differ from the control condition ( $M = 5.22, SD = 1.56$ ) in perceptions of egalitarianism, but was seen as significantly more egalitarian than the low rights condition ( $M = 4.92, SD = 1.57$ ). The competence manipulation, however, also had a significant impact on perceptions of egalitarianism ( $F(1, 143) = 8.76, p = .004$ ) such that the competence condition ( $M = 5.57, SD = 1.33$ ) was seen as more egalitarian than the incompetence condition ( $M = 4.85, SD = 1.58$ ).

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<sup>6</sup> A third item (i.e., “*prejudiced*”) was originally created to measure perceptions of the rights virtue, but was later excluded as an EFA found it not loading on the intended factor (i.e., rights). After excluding this item, the intended three-factor solution for the interpersonal perception scales was found satisfactory (RMSEA = .030) and superior to the two-factor solution (RMSEA = .112) and the one-factor solution (RMSEA = .258).

*U.S. sample.* The three rights conditions differed significantly in perceived egalitarianism ( $F(2, 143) = 29.31, p < .001$ ). Specifically, the high rights condition ( $M = 5.46, SD = 1.38$ ) and the control condition ( $M = 5.17, SD = 1.38$ ) were perceived to be more egalitarian than the low rights condition ( $M = 3.52, SD = 1.49$ ). Perceived egalitarianism was also affected by the competence manipulation ( $F(1, 143) = 8.51, p = .004$ ) such that the competence condition ( $M = 5.03, SD = 1.50$ ) was seen as more egalitarian than the incompetence condition ( $M = 4.26, SD = 1.74$ ).

***Manipulation checks: Perceived competence.***

*Indian sample.* A two-way ANOVA revealed only the competence manipulation had a significant impact on perceived competence ( $F(1, 143) = 16.22, p < .001$ ). The competence condition ( $M = 5.62, SD = 1.05$ ) increased perceptions of competence compared to the incompetence condition ( $M = 4.85, SD = 1.37$ ).

*U.S. sample.* Significant differences existed in perceived competence between the two competence conditions ( $F(1, 144) = 65.47, p < .001$ ). The competence condition ( $M = 5.90, SD = .83$ ) was seen as more competent than the incompetence condition ( $M = 4.38, SD = 1.36$ ). The manipulation of competence was hence effective. Perceived competence was also affected by the rights manipulations ( $F(2, 142) = 5.24, p = .006$ ) such that the high rights condition ( $M = 5.48, SD = 1.25$ ) was seen as more competent than the control condition ( $M = 5.23, SD = 1.45$ ) and the low rights condition ( $M = 4.70, SD = 1.32$ ).

***Admiration for virtue.*** Means by condition were reported in Table 5, and regression results were reported in Tables 14 & 15.

*Indian sample.* Perceived egalitarianism significantly increased admiration for virtue ( $b = .31, t = 5.70, p < .001$ ), over and above perceived competence and dominance. Moreover,

rights virtue did not interact with Rahul's competence levels to affect admiration for virtue ( $b = .04, t = 1.38, p = .169$ ).

*U.S. sample.* Regression analyses showed that, overall, perceived egalitarianism significantly increased admiration for virtue ( $b = .31, t = 5.70, p < .001$ ), over and above perceived competence and dominance. Perceived egalitarianism had a significant interactive effect with Mike's competence levels on admiration for virtue ( $b = .12, t = 4.55, p < .001$ ). Moderation analyses (Hayes, 2013), nevertheless, showed that even when Mike was perceived to be relatively low in competence (i.e., one standard deviation below the mean level of competence), perceived egalitarianism still had a positive impact on admiration for virtue ( $b = .15, t = 2.58, p = .011$ , 95% confidence interval (CI) = [.037, .278]). Hypothesis 1 was thus partially supported.

*Status.* Means by condition were reported in Table 5, and regression results were reported in Tables 14 & 15.

*Indian sample.* Perceived egalitarianism increased status conferral to the actor ( $b = .30, t = 7.19, p < .001$ ), over and above perceived competence and dominance. Perceived egalitarianism did not interact with competence to affect status ( $b = -.01, t = -.278, p > .250$ ).

*U.S. sample.* Perceived egalitarianism had a positive impact on status conferral to the actor ( $b = .16, t = 3.46, p < .001$ ), over and above perceived competence and dominance. Perceived egalitarianism, again, interacted with competence to affect status ( $b = .06, t = 2.81, p = .006$ ). Even when Mike was perceived to be relatively low in competence (i.e., one standard deviation below the mean level of competence), egalitarianism still had a significant positive impact on status conferral ( $b = .13, t = 2.58, p = .011$ , 95% confidence interval (CI) = [.029, .221]). Hypothesis 2 was hence partially supported.

### ***Mediation analyses.***

*Indian sample.* Mediation analyses (Hayes, 2013) found that the positive effect of egalitarianism on status conferral was partially mediated by admiration for virtue (95 % confidence interval (CI) for indirect effect = [.089, .199]).

*U.S. sample.* Similarly, the positive effect of egalitarianism on status conferral was partially mediated by admiration for virtue (95 % confidence interval (CI) for indirect effect = [.038, .142]) among the U.S. participants. Hypothesis 3 was hence supported (please see Figures 6 & 7).

***Culture.*** Like in the first two studies, I pooled the two samples and conducted moderation tests (Hayes, 2013) to examine the cultural boundary. Results showed that perceived egalitarianism did not *directly* interact with culture (India = 1, U.S. = 0) to affect status conferral ( $b = .08, t = 1.81, p = .071$ ).

The *indirect* effects of humility on status conferral through admiration for virtue also did not differ between the two cultures (Index of moderated mediation = .03, 95% confidence interval (CI) = [-.021, .078]). In other words, neither the *direct* effect nor the *indirect* effect of perceived egalitarianism on status conferral was affected by culture. Hypothesis 5 was not supported.

### **Discussion**

Study 3 found that advocating for a crucial human right elicited admiration for virtue and led to status conferral in both a collectivistic culture (i.e., India) and an individualistic culture (i.e., the U.S.). The impacts of expressing the rights virtue, however, were not affected by culture. One issue is that the items (i.e., “*egalitarian*” & “*fair*”) used to measure perceived egalitarianism had relatively low internal consistency, and might not tap on the intended construct. Another

possibility is that the effectiveness of expressing rights virtue might be more affected by other social contexts (e.g., SES) than national culture (e.g., Côté, Piff, & Willer, 2013; Haidt et al., 1993). Post-hoc analyses found that among the U.S. participants, those from higher social classes conferred more admiration and status to the virtuous actor than their lower class counterparts.

### **Summary: Studies 1 to 3**

In sum, Studies 1 to 3 provided initial support for the moral virtue theory of status attainment—demonstrating virtue could elicit admiration for virtue and lead to status attainment, beyond competence and dominance, in both a collectivistic culture (i.e., India) and an individualistic culture (i.e., the U.S.). Importantly, virtue is not merely a component and modifier of the competence route to attaining status. Expressing virtue, in general, remains a positive predictor of status conferral towards a virtue actor even when the virtuous actor lacks superior competence. Moreover, there is some modest evidence that culture affects the effectiveness of the virtue route. Humility, a communal virtue, and cleanliness, a divine virtue, are more effective in enhancing one's status in India than in the U.S., as predicted by the moral virtue theory.

There are, nevertheless, two limitations in these studies. First, Studies 1 to 3 adopted a scenario design in which participants read a short description about an actor who is more or less virtuous, and then self-reported admiration and status conferred to the actor without any interaction with the actor. Because no interaction was involved, it is unclear whether participants would indeed be more likely to *defer to* the actor conferred higher status than to the actor conferred lower status. Second, Studies 1 to 3 used a cross-cultural design to investigate the impact of *national* culture on the virtue route with some modest empirical support. Extant research, nevertheless, has shown substantial and meaningful within-nation, in addition to between-nation, cultural differences (e.g., Fincher et al., 2008; Talhelm et al., 2014; Varnum et

al., 2010). These within-nation cultural differences may have an even stronger impact, than national culture, on moral judgement of virtue and consequently on status conferral toward a virtuous actor.

## **Study 4**

Study 4 aimed to address these limitations. Specifically, Study 4 experimentally manipulated an actor's virtuous acts in video clips and used a collaborative task (i.e., the contrast sensitivity task; Willer, 2009a) between the actor and participants to behaviorally measure status conferral. A pilot study (i.e., Study 4a) was first conducted to ensure the effectiveness of the experimental manipulations. Moreover, instead of examining the effect of virtue on status conferral across cultures, Study 4 assessed the impact of individual differences in interdependent-independent self-construals (Singelis, 1994) on the virtue route to status. Among the three moral virtues under investigation, I found the strongest support for the effect of expressing humility, a communal virtue, on admiration for virtue and status conferral. Study 4 hence confined attention to *humility* as a first step to extend the first three studies.

### **Study 4a: Pilot**

#### **Participants, study design, and procedure**

I recruited 125 participants (60.8% male) located in the U.S. through Amazon's Mechanical Turk Web-based platform (Buhrmester et al., 2011) to complete a 10-minute study in exchange for \$1.00. The average age of the participants was 33.48 (SD = 10.80).

Participants were told that they would watch a short video clip about a student and answer a few follow-up questions. An experienced student actor was recruited and memorized a script about a fictitious part-time work experience, saying the lines with three different levels of



humility (i.e., high, control, and low). In the high humility condition, the student actor talked humbly, along the three behavioral dimensions identified by Owens and Hekman (2012), about how his colleagues at work helped him to get promoted. In the low humility condition, the student actor bragged about how his colleagues at work relied on him to get work done and had to promote him. The control condition excluded the content related to humility while maintaining other relevant information (please see Appendix B for the details of each condition). Immediately following the manipulation, participants were asked to rate the student actor on interpersonal perceptions of humility, competence, and dominance.

### **Measures**

***Interpersonal perceptions.*** Participants rated how humble, competent, and dominant they perceived their student partner (the actor) to be with the same scales used in Study 1.<sup>7</sup> Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for humility was .92; Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for competence was .89; and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for dominance was .94.

### **Results**

***Manipulation checks.*** A one-way ANOVA found that there were significant differences in perceived humility among the three experimental conditions ( $F(2, 122) = 114.24, p < .001$ ). The high humility condition had the highest perceived humility ( $M = 5.91, SD = 1.06$ ), followed by the control condition ( $M = 4.79, SD = 1.14$ ) and the low humility condition ( $M = 2.14, SD = 1.07$ ). The experimental manipulations of humility were successful.

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<sup>7</sup> The intended three-factor solution for the interpersonal perception scales had a satisfactory model fit (RMSEA = .046), superior to the two-factor solution (RMSEA = .103) and the one-factor solution (RMSEA = .161).

In addition, the humility manipulations did not differ significantly in perceptions of competence ( $F(2, 122) = 2.13, p = .123$ ). Perceptions of dominance, however, were affected by the experimental conditions ( $F(2, 122) = 58.99, p < .001$ ). The low humility condition was seen as the most dominant ( $M = 5.50, SD = 1.08$ ), followed by the control condition ( $M = 3.43, SD = 1.55$ ) and the high humility condition ( $M = 2.14, SD = 1.27$ ). Given their potential confounding impacts, it is necessary to control for perceptions of competence and dominance in subsequent analyses. I hence move forward to conducting Study 4b, a laboratory experiment using the same experimental manipulations of humility.

## **Study 4b**

### **Participants, study design, and procedure**

I recruited 137 participants (30.1% male) who were paid for \$10.00 for their participation from the research participant pool at the University of British Columbia. The average age of the participants was 20.69 ( $SD = 5.09$ ).

Participants were told that they would complete a cognitive task (i.e., the contrast sensitivity task; see details in Willer, 2009a), and would first have the opportunity to watch a short video clip of a student partner who would also be completing the task. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the three experimental conditions piloted in Study 4a.

Immediately following the manipulation, participants were asked to rate: (1) the student partner on interpersonal perceptions of humility, competence, and dominance, (2) their admiration for the student's virtue, and (3) whether they would nominate the student for a leadership position. Participants then did the contrast sensitivity task. Participants had five seconds to make an initial decision on which of two checkerboards designs contains more white area. After submitting their initial solutions, participants were informed of the solutions made by

the student partner (actor) and were given the opportunity to change their original solutions. The two designs shown to participants, in fact, contain exactly equal space of white area (please see Appendix D for an example). The student partner was “programmed” to disagree with participants’ initial solutions in 15 out of 20 total trials. Finally, participants completed a questionnaire on their cultural self-construals and background information (e.g., gender and age), before being debriefed, compensated, and thanked for their participation.

## Measures

***Interpersonal perceptions.*** Participants rated how humble, competent, and dominant they perceived their student partner (the actor) to be with the same scales used in Studies 1 and 4a.<sup>8</sup> Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for humility was .85; Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for competence was .81; and Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for dominance was .89.

***Admiration for virtue.*** Admiration was assessed with a 13-item scale similar to the ones used in Studies 1 to 3. Three items (i.e., “*gratitude*,” “*love*,” and “*compassion*”) were added to better capture the *unique* emotional responses to witnessing virtue as opposed to excellent skills (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Aquino, McFerran, & Laven, 2011). Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for the admiration for virtue scale was .87.

***Status.*** Status was assessed by two measures—leadership nomination and behavioral influence. First, participants rated how likely they would be to nominate the student partner as their own leader *at work*, using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = “Not at all” to 5 = “Extremely”). Second, the number of trials in which participants changed their initial solutions to agree with the

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<sup>8</sup> Again, the intended three-factor solution had a superior model fit (RMSEA = .021) than the two-factor solution (RMSEA = .103) and the one-factor solution. (RMSEA = .161).

student partner in the contrast sensitivity task was used as the behavioral measure of status (Willer, 2009a).

**Cultural values.** Individual differences in cultural values were measured by the 24-item interdependence-independence self-construals scale (Singelis, 1994). In the self-construal scale, participants indicated how much they agreed with 12 interdependent statements (e.g., “*I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group I am in*”; Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .79$ ) and 12 independent statements (e.g., “*Being able to take care of myself is a primary concern for me*”; Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .75$ ), using a 7-point Likert format (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). The final score was the difference between mean ratings given to interdependent and independent statements.

## Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations were reported in Table 16.

**Manipulation checks.** A one-way ANOVA found that perceived humility differed significantly among the three experimental conditions ( $F(2, 134) = 76.99, p < .001$ ). The high humility condition had the highest perceived humility ( $M = 5.27, SD = 1.07$ ), followed by the control condition ( $M = 4.55, SD = .98$ ) and the low humility condition ( $M = 2.60, SD = 1.15$ ). The manipulations of humility hence were successful.

**Admiration for virtue.** Means by condition were reported in Table 17, and regression results were reported in Table 18. Regression analyses showed that perceived humility did increase admiration for virtue towards the student partner ( $b = .19, t = 2.85, p = .005$ ) after controlling for perceptions of competence and dominance. The positive effect of perceived humility on admiration for virtue was stronger ( $b = .35, t = 6.83, p < .001$ ) without the controls. Hypothesis 1 was supported.

**Status.** Perceived humility had a positive main effect on leadership nomination ( $b = .31, t = 3.48, p < .001$ ). The main effect of perceived humility on behavioral influence was also positive but did not remain significant ( $b = .32, t = 1.56, p = .120$ ) after including the controls. Hypothesis 2 was thus partially supported.

**Mediation analyses.** Results from mediation analyses (Hayes, 2013) found that the positive effect of perceived humility on leadership nomination was partially explained by increased admiration for virtue (95 % confidence interval (CI) for indirect effect = [.025, .186]). Importantly, despite a non-significant main effect, perceived humility had a significant and positive *indirect* effect on behavioral influence through admiration for virtue (95 % confidence interval (CI) for indirect effect = [.014, .287]). Hypothesis 3 thus was supported (please see Figures 8 & 9).

**Culture.** Moderation analyses showed that perceived humility did not *directly* interact with interdependent-interdependent self-construals to affect leadership nomination ( $b = .07, t = 1.26, p = .210$ ) nor behavioral influence ( $b = .15, t = 1.17, p = .243$ ).

Nevertheless, moderated mediation analyses (i.e., Model 7 in Hayes, 2013) showed that the *indirect* effects of humility on leadership nomination (Index of moderated mediation = .04, 95% confidence interval (CI) = [.010, .094]) and behavioral influence (Index of moderated mediation = .05, 95% confidence interval (CI) = [.003, .160]) through admiration for virtue were contingent on participants' interdependent-independent self-construals. Particularly, the *indirect* effect of humility on leadership nomination through admiration for virtue was stronger among those with high interdependent self-construals ( $b = .12$ , 95% confidence interval (CI) = [.042, .241]) than that among those with low interdependent self-construals ( $b = .04$ , 95% confidence interval (CI) = [-.025, .123]). Similarly, the *indirect* effect of humility on behavioral

influence was also stronger among those with high interdependent self-construals ( $b = .15$ , 95% confidence interval (CI) = [.018, .367]) than that among those with low interdependent self-construals ( $b = .05$ , 95% confidence interval (CI) = [-.022, .182]). Hypothesis 4 was hence partially supported.

## **Discussion**

Study 4 found that expressing humility led people to nominate a humble actor as their own leader at work and accept the humble actor's influence in a collaborative cognitive task, over and above perceptions of the actor's competence and dominance. Admiration for virtue mediated the positive relationships between expressed humility and status conferral, supporting the moral virtue theory. Moreover, humility and cultural self-construals interacted to affect one's status *indirectly* through admiration for virtue. Specifically, individuals with high interdependent self-construals admired humility to a greater degree, than those with low interdependent self-construals, which in turn led them to confer higher status to the humble actor. Study 4 hence *corroborated* the virtue route to status and its cultural boundary.

## General Discussion

In the preceding pages, I have reviewed the broad literature on status attainment with an emphasis on the role of morality. Drawing on the ideas from Mencius (trans. 2009) and recent developments in anthropology, psychology, and organizational behavior, I present a more *generalized* treatment of the existing morality-status research, suggesting that demonstrating a broad class of moral characteristics can enhance status by costly signaling a general desirable trait—*virtue*. In contrast to competence traits (e.g., intelligence), virtues do not necessarily facilitate, and can at times hinder, collective task achievement. Following a tradition in anthropology and cultural psychology (Haidt et al., 1993; Miller & Bersoff, 1992; Rai & Fiske, 2011; Rozin et al., 1999; Shweder et al., 1997; Shweder & Sullivan, 1993), I conceptualize virtues as culturally relativistic (e.g., Mele & Sanchez-Runde, 2013) and propose that they can manifest in a variety of forms—not only as generosity and altruism, but also as humility, purity, and (advocating for) rights (Barkow, 1975; Haidt, 2012; Shweder et al., 1997; Tangney, 2000; Zhong & Liljenquist, 2006).

My central argument is that witnessing acts of virtue elicits a positive other-praising emotion—admiration for virtue or elevation (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Haidt, 2003)—towards a virtuous actor, consistent with the social intuitionist model (Haidt, 2001). Furthermore, this elicited emotion by witnessing virtue, as Mencius (trans. 2009) suggested, leads witnesses to confer status and defer to the virtuous actor. Importantly, the rationale underlying this virtue route to status, I propose, is that demonstrating virtue leads to the belief that an actor is willing to forgo self-interest to uphold moral ideals, which further induces the expectation that the virtuous actor, when conferred higher status and influence, will advance the good of others and the collective even at his or her own expense. This cognitive process is likely intuitive, and

admiration for virtue hence plays a crucial mediating role in guiding individuals to confer status to the virtuous actor.

Furthermore, I argue that the virtue route to status attainment is culturally bound. The relativistic view of moral virtue posits that different groups or communities develop different moral virtues gradually from the specific experiences in dealing with moral issues prominent in their local cultural contexts (e.g., Walzer, 1983). The cultural context, in terms of individualism-collectivism (e.g., Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Triandis, 1995; Varnum et al., 2010), determines the *scope* and *priority* of moralities endorsed by a moral community, and therefore influences which moral characteristics or acts are deemed virtuous and admirable. Specifically, I propose that virtues related to family and community (e.g., humility and loyalty) and to religion (e.g., cleanliness and purity) are more admirable and relevant for attaining status in collectivistic cultures; whereas virtues related to autonomy, justice, and rights are more admirable and relevant for attaining status in individualistic cultures.

To empirically test the moral virtue theory of status attainment, I conducted four experimental studies, focusing on three specific virtues, humility (i.e., Studies 1 & 4), cleanliness (i.e., Study 2), and rights (Study 3), corresponding to the moralities of community, divinity, and autonomy (Shweder et al., 1997). Studies 1 to 3 adopted a similar scenario design, describing an actor acting more or less virtuously in a task-oriented context. The first three studies found consistent evidence that expressing virtue—in terms of humility, cleanliness, or rights—elicited admiration for virtue, which in turn led to status conferral towards a virtuous actor, beyond the actor's competence and dominance. In general, the positive effects of virtue on status conferral were not contingent on the virtuous actor's competence level. In other words, expressing virtue can help individuals to attain status even when they lack superior competence. There was also



modest evidence that the virtue route was bound by culture. Expressing humility, a *communal* virtue, and cleanliness, a *divine* virtue, appeared to be more effective in attaining status in a collectivistic culture than in an individualistic culture.

Study 4, focusing on humility, extended the first three studies by adopting a *behavioral* measure of status in the laboratory and by using interdependent-independent self-construals to measure individual differences in cultural values. Study 4 found *corroborating* evidence that expressing humility elicited admiration for virtue, which in turn led witnesses to nominate a humble actor as their own leader at work and to willingly accept the humble actor's influence in a collaborative task. Moreover, the positive effects of expressing humility on status conferral were affected by witnesses' cultural values—*collectivistic* individuals admired humility to a greater degree, than their *individualistic* counterparts, which in turn led them to confer higher status to the humble actor. In sum, the aforementioned studies provide *initial* support for the moral virtue theory of status attainment.

## **Theoretical contributions**

First, this dissertation presents the first integrative review of the research on morality and status attainment, and develops the moral virtue theory to address remaining questions in the literature. The integrative review reveals that extant research on the morality-status link confines its attention to a narrow scope of morality, focusing on altruism and generosity particularly relevant in collective action situations (e.g., Willer, 2009b). The moral virtue theory extends this literature by providing a more *generalized* treatment, suggesting that virtue is the general desirable trait that is costly signaled by a broad class of (outstanding) moral behavior and motivation beyond normative moral standards or character. Adopting a broader perspective of morality, this generalized treatment expands the repertoire of moral characteristics that may lead

people to attain status beyond generosity and altruism to include others, such as humility (Tangney, 2000) and cleanliness (e.g., Zhong & Liljenquist, 2006), which may be particularly relevant outside the WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) context (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). The moral virtue theory thus largely enhances the generality of the prior work on morality and status attainment and broadens the scope of potential applications. Moreover, the proposed three-route model of status attainment, including a generalized virtue route, complements the “big picture” of human status attainment beyond the two-route model previously of focus in the literature (Cheng et al., 2013; Levine & Moreland, 1990).

Second, this dissertation delineates the general psychological mechanism through which virtue leads to status attainment. Prior theories based on a costly signaling account (e.g., Hardy & Van Vugt, 2006; Willer, 2009b) have yet to fully answer how and why signaling virtue enhances one’s status. To address this missing link, the moral virtue theory draws on the classic ideas from Mencius to suggest that virtue elicits a pleasure in witnesses’ hearts, which in turn leads to status conferral, and extends Mencius’ thesis by specifying the cognitive process underlying the virtue route to status. Furthermore, it identifies admiration for virtue as the virtue-elicited pleasure that Mencius referred to and that plays a crucial role in guiding people to confer status to a virtuous actor, probably, in an intuitive manner. By distinguishing admiration for virtue from respect for skills underlying the competence route, the moral virtue theory explicitly disentangles the virtue route from the competence route. Instead of being a component or modifier of the competence route as previously theorized (Cheng & Tracy, 2014; Ridgeway, 1982), the moral virtue theory emphasizes that virtue serves as a distinct and independent path for aspiring individuals to attain status. This dissertation hence helps to clarify a major source of

confusion in the literature regarding the interrelationship between the competence and the virtue routes to status.

Third and finally, this dissertation advances the literature by elucidating how cultural variances in moral values critically moderate the process by which virtue is perceived and conferred with status. Extant research tends to conceptualize virtue as universally valued (Dahlsgaard et al., 2005) and overlook the impact of the cultural context on the morality-status relationship (see Torelli et al., 2014 for an exception). The moral virtue theory, instead, adopts a relativistic view of virtue, suggesting that virtues are not necessarily universal but culturally bound. In other words, the cultural context (e.g., individualism-collectivism) determines whether and to what extent a certain moral trait or act is deemed virtuous by a moral community. A moral act (e.g., honor killing; Rai & Fiske, 2011) may be seen a virtue, leading to status in some cultures, but a vice, or even a crime, resulting in sanctions in others. In addition, Torelli et al. (2014) recently suggests that morality or warmth is valued to a greater degree and therefore more important to attain status in collectivistic cultures than in individualistic cultures. While acknowledging certain moral characteristics (e.g., humility and cleanliness), pertaining to the moralities of community and divinity, may indeed be associated with status to a greater degree in collectivistic cultures, the moral virtue theory also points out that other moral characteristics (e.g., advocating for human rights), pertaining to the morality of autonomy, may be associated with status to a greater degree in individualistic cultures. It therefore contributes to the literature by stressing the importance of matching moral characteristics with the cultural context for the virtue route to be effective in status attainment.

## **Practical implications**

This dissertation has practical values for (aspiring) individuals, managers, and organizations. First, it points out an alternative path to get ahead for individuals striving for higher status. It resonates with Grant's (2013) thesis that "give," instead of "take," can lead people to succeed. Such moral behavior, however, has to be indicative of outstanding moral characteristics, over and beyond normative standards, endorsed by a moral community to be effective to enhance status. Importantly, even individuals who lack superior competence can, nevertheless, advance their status by demonstrating virtue at work. Moreover, this dissertation largely extends the repertoire of virtues that can help people to attain status beyond altruism and generosity. For example, in addition to humility, cleanliness, and rights under investigation here, expressing *loyalty*, *purity (chastity)*, or *liberty* may also elicit admiration for virtue in others' eyes and enhance one's status at work under appropriate circumstances.

Second, the moral virtue theory of status attainment implies that, in a diverse work environment, an individual who demonstrates a specific moral act (e.g., advocating for homosexual rights) may elicit admiration for virtue and attain status from some of his or her coworkers, but might elicit disapproval and even social sanction from others. Organizations intending to benefit from workplace diversity need to convey a *relativistic* perspective of morality to their employees from diverse sociocultural backgrounds, which encourages communication between different groups to better understand each other's moral principles.

## **Limitations and future directions**

The moral virtue theory of status attainment laid out above represents one of the first attempts to integrate research and theories from various disciplines to understand the "big picture" of human status attainment. Admittedly, given its theoretical breadth and novelty, direct

empirical evidence for the moral virtue theory is still scarce, and a few limitations remain. First, it is crucial to empirically investigate the interrelationships among the three routes to attaining status. A meaningful question is whether and how virtue will interact with both competence and dominance to affect status perception and conferral. To address this question, future research should make serious investment in designing full factorial designs among the three routes (i.e., virtue  $\times$  dominance  $\times$  competence). Relatedly, in most of the studies reported in this dissertation, there remained a positive main effect of virtue on status attainment that cannot be explained by admiration for virtue. It is unclear whether the remaining main effect of virtue can be explained by the other routes to status (i.e., respect for skills and fear). An important issue here is that *admiration for virtue* and *respect for skills* are difficult to discern empirically. Instruments that accurately and reliably measure these distinct emotions have yet to be developed. Some items (e.g., “*respect*” and “*inspiration*”) used to measure admiration for virtue appear to overlap with those intending to capture respect for skills (Algoe & Haidt, 2009). Future studies should first develop and validate *separate* instruments to measure the three routes (i.e., admiration for virtue, respect for skills and fear of harm), and then simultaneously examine these distinct paths to status, particularly in real groups or groups working together in the laboratory, with advanced mediation analyses (e.g., , parallel mediation model; see Model 4 in Hayes, 2013).

Second, the experimental manipulations for each virtuous behavior used in this dissertation were fairly conservative in the sense that they might be seen generally as positive characteristics or traits, rather than specifically as moral virtues. Furthermore, this dissertation did not measure and control for interpersonal liking as an alternative explanation for the positive impact of virtue on status conferral. It seems possible that all positive characteristics or traits—not only virtue and competence, but also funniness, agreeableness, and attractiveness, to name a

few—may enhance status attainment through eliciting interpersonal liking. Although most positive characteristics or traits can elicit interpersonal liking, only those indicating moral virtue or (excellent) competence may be sufficient to elicit admiration or respect (e.g., Algoe & Haidt, 2009). There is little, if any, evidence suggesting that interpersonal liking alone can lead to status conferral. Indeed, I may like an agreeable person just because he or she always pays attention and defers to me. Interpersonal liking is thus likely to be insufficient for bringing about admiration or respect, and thus unlikely to lead to status conferral. Nevertheless, an investigation is warranted whether other positive characteristics, beyond moral virtue and (excellent) competence, can also enhance one's status, and whether interpersonal liking mediates the relationship between these positive characteristics and status attainment.

Third, the external validity of the moral virtue theory has yet to be established. Although this dissertation found some evidence that individualism-collectivism might serve as a cultural boundary of the virtue route to status, the cultural distinction based on individualism-collectivism is rather general as research has documented both between- and within-nation cultural variances in the East, as well as in the West (e.g., Fincher et al., 2008; Talhelm et al., 2014; Varnum et al., 2010). Focusing on only one, although arguably the most important, form of culture may run the risk of being *reductionistic* and over-simplifying the cultural boundary affecting the virtue route (e.g., Greenfield, Keller, Fuligni, & Maynard, 2003). It is crucial to consider other forms of social *context* (e.g., social class; Kraus, Piff, & Keltner, 2011) that may influence the admiration for different forms of virtue and status conferral. For example, extant research has shown that social class or SES might be a stronger predictor of moral judgment than national culture (e.g., Haidt et al., 1993). Moreover, the intergroup context may also play an important role in shaping the moral values and virtues that are endorsed by, as well as salient to,

a group (Hogg, 2001; van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005), and group members who exemplify or uphold these group ideals may earn acceptance and status within the group (e.g., Pagliaro et al., 2011). An investigation is warranted whether and how these other forms of social context affect the virtue route. Relatedly, a limitation in this dissertation is that in all the studies, the actor was portrayed as a male in a middle-class occupation. Future research needs to investigate whether and how a virtuous actor's social background or identity affects the virtue route to status. There may be different thresholds of virtue applied to individuals of different social roles and identities, for example, or what is considered virtuous for an individual with one identity may be not be relevant for individuals of another. For example, purity may be considered an important virtue for women but not for men in some cultures.

Fourth and finally, this dissertation does not discuss how witnesses' moral character traits affect the virtue route; instead, it assumes that people are, in general, moral beings who genuinely care about others (e.g., Batson, 1990), and who desire to maintain a positive moral identity (e.g., Aquino & Reed, 2002; Strohmingner & Nichols, 2015). Yet personality research (T. R. Cohen, Panter, & Turan, 2012; T. R. Cohen et al., 2014) has shown substantial individual differences in a variety of moral character traits—empathy, moral identity, agreeableness, and honesty-humility, to name a few—that affect to what extent people admire virtue (Aquino et al., 2011; Diessner et al., 2013). For example, Aquino and colleagues (2011) found that individuals high in moral identity experienced more intense feelings of admiration in response to witnessing acts of virtues (e.g., forgiveness and sympathy) and were more likely to make a donation afterwards than those with low moral identity. On the contrary, immoral people or “takers” may instead exploit or persecute a virtuous actor for their personal interests (Grant, 2013). As Grant suggests, perhaps the key for a virtuous actor to attain status is to be able to identify “takers” and

avoid being surrounded by them. Future studies should explore how and when individual differences in witnesses' moral character can affect the virtue route to attaining status. Finally, witnesses' moral characters may also interact with the cultural context—perhaps, the “good” persons in one culture may indeed admire the “evils” condemned in another (Nietzsche, 1887/2007).



## Tables

**Table 1: Moral foundations and virtues**

Moral foundation	Harm/Care	Fairness/Reciprocity	Liberty/Oppression	In-group/Loyalty	Authority/Respect	Purity/Sanctity
Moral domain	An ability to feel (and dislike) the pain of others.	Ideas of justice, rights, and autonomy with an emphasis on proportionality.	The feelings of reactance and resent people feel towards those who dominate them and restrict their liberty.	Shaped by our long history as tribal creatures able to form shifting coalitions.	Shaped by our long primate history of hierarchical social interactions.	Shaped by the psychology of disgust and contamination and underlies the widespread idea that the body is a temple which can be desecrated by immoral activities and contaminations.
Relevant virtues	Kindness, gentleness, and nurturance	Fairness, justice, rights, and trustworthiness	Liberty and autonomy	Loyalty, patriotism, self-sacrifice for the group	Deference, respect to tradition, leadership, and followership	Cleanliness, purity, and chastity

**Table 2: Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for scales used in Studies 1 to 3**

Cronbach's $\alpha$	<i>N</i>	Humility	Cleanliness	Rights	Competence	Dominance	Admiration	Status
Overall	292	.84			.87	.83	.89	.93
Study 1	Indian	146	.80		.83	.74	.85	.93
	U.S.	146	.86		.91	.90	.87	.92
Overall	289		.94		.90	.76	.86	.93
Study 2	Indian	140	.88		.88	.55	.87	.92
	U.S.	149	.98		.92	.90	.82	.94
Overall	291			.57	.87	.82	.87	.92
Study 3	Indian	145		.50	.83	.71	.86	.92
	U.S.	146		.56	.91	.91	.83	.92

**Table 3: study 1 descriptive statistics and correlation matrix (Indian sample)**

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Gender (1 = female)	.35	.48								
2. Age	32.81	10.03	.05							
3. Humility (Manipulated) <sup>a</sup>	.88	.84	-.01	-.06						
4. Humility (Measured)	5.31	1.22	-.003	.16	.39**					
5. Competence (Manipulated) <sup>b</sup>	.60	.49	.05	-.06	-.14	-.03				
6. Competence (Measured)	5.54	1.09	.03	.09	.31**	.71**	.04			
7. Dominance	3.98	1.36	.07	-.17*	-.19*	-.23**	-.03	-.13		
8. Admiration for virtue	5.03	1.02	-.01	.10	.23**	.74**	.06	.72**	-.02	
9. Status	3.81	.92	.06	.11	.29**	.79**	-.07	.82**	-.16	.81**

Note. *N* = 146.

<sup>a</sup> High humility condition = 2, control condition = 1, and low humility condition = 0.

<sup>b</sup> Competence condition = 1, incompetence condition = 0.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

**Table 4: Study 1 descriptive statistics and correlation matrix (U.S. sample)**

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Gender (1 = female)	.37	.48								
2. Age	35.22	10.14	.04							
3. Humility (Manipulated) <sup>a</sup>	1.02	.83	.22**	-.04						
4. Humility (Measured)	4.74	1.41	.27**	-.06	.68**					
5. Competence (Manipulated) <sup>b</sup>	.49	.50	-.12	.03	-.11	.09				
6. Competence (Measured)	5.18	1.23	.16	-.10	.31**	.66**	.37**			
7. Dominance	3.15	1.48	-.20*	-.04	-.56**	-.74**	.02	-.39**		
8. Admiration for virtue	3.76	1.16	.15	-.03	.49**	.66**	.25**	.63**	-.45**	
9. Status	3.26	.93	.24**	-.06	.44**	.73**	.24**	.78**	-.53**	.76**

Note. *N* = 146.

<sup>a</sup> High humility condition = 2, control condition = 1, and low humility condition = 0.

<sup>b</sup> Competence condition = 1, incompetence condition = 0.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

**Table 5: Admiration for virtue and status means by condition in Studies 1 to 3**

	Study 1: Humility				Study 2: Cleanliness				Study 3: Rights			
	Admiration for		Status		Admiration for		Status		Admiration for		Status	
	Virtue				Virtue				Virtue			
	Indian	U.S.	Indian	U.S.	Indian	U.S.	Indian	U.S.	Indian	U.S.	Indian	U.S.
1. Low virtuousness, Incompetence	4.71 <sub>a</sub> (.95)	2.69 <sub>a</sub> (.73)	3.72 <sub>ab</sub> (.85)	2.42 <sub>a</sub> (.97)	3.86 <sub>a</sub> (1.17)	2.74 <sub>a</sub> (.70)	2.67 <sub>a</sub> (.95)	1.74 <sub>a</sub> (.99)	4.09 <sub>a</sub> (1.21)	2.80 <sub>a</sub> (.65)	3.02 <sub>a</sub> (1.07)	2.27 <sub>a</sub> (.86)
2. Low virtuousness, Competence	4.85 <sub>a</sub> (1.05)	3.17 <sub>a</sub> (1.05)	3.45 <sub>a</sub> (1.11)	2.91 <sub>a</sub> (.86)	3.95 <sub>a</sub> (1.13)	3.01 <sub>ab</sub> (.85)	2.88 <sub>ab</sub> (.93)	2.42 <sub>b</sub> (.84)	4.92 <sub>b</sub> (1.07)	3.24 <sub>ab</sub> (1.13)	3.79 <sub>b</sub> (.84)	2.74 <sub>a</sub> (.91)
3. Control virtuousness, Incompetence	4.88 <sub>a</sub> (1.21)	3.39 <sub>ab</sub> (.80)	3.85 <sub>ab</sub> (.78)	2.89 <sub>a</sub> (.79)	4.12 <sub>ab</sub> (1.08)	3.70 <sub>bc</sub> (1.03)	3.09 <sub>abc</sub> (.79)	3.33 <sub>c</sub> (.72)	4.62 <sub>ab</sub> (.92)	3.33 <sub>ab</sub> (.76)	3.46 <sub>ab</sub> (1.01)	2.69 <sub>a</sub> (.88)
4. Control virtuousness, Competence	5.18 <sub>a</sub> (1.15)	4.40 <sub>c</sub> (.82)	3.89 <sub>ab</sub> (.99)	3.79 <sub>b</sub> (.58)	5.10 <sub>bc</sub> (1.03)	4.00 <sub>cd</sub> (1.28)	3.76 <sub>cd</sub> (.68)	3.64 <sub>cd</sub> (.96)	4.97 <sub>b</sub> (.99)	4.28 <sub>c</sub> (1.26)	3.87 <sub>b</sub> (.80)	3.74 <sub>b</sub> (.70)
5. High virtuousness, Incompetence	5.29 <sub>a</sub> (.61)	4.13 <sub>bc</sub> (1.14)	4.08 <sub>ab</sub> (.47)	3.59 <sub>b</sub> (.83)	4.53 <sub>abc</sub> (1.38)	3.63 <sub>bc</sub> (.77)	3.54 <sub>bcd</sub> (.81)	3.14 <sub>c</sub> (.68)	5.11 <sub>b</sub> (.94)	4.01 <sub>bc</sub> (1.09)	3.92 <sub>b</sub> (.75)	3.47 <sub>b</sub> (.97)
6. High virtuousness, Competence	5.43 <sub>a</sub> (.88)	4.66 <sub>c</sub> (1.01)	4.20 <sub>b</sub> (.70)	3.78 <sub>b</sub> (.63)	5.35 <sub>c</sub> (.56)	4.54 <sub>d</sub> (.74)	4.07 <sub>d</sub> (.45)	3.96 <sub>d</sub> (.70)	5.50 <sub>b</sub> (1.00)	4.60 <sub>c</sub> (.99)	4.20 <sub>b</sub> (.74)	3.75 <sub>b</sub> (.77)
<i>N</i>	146	146	146	146	140	149	140	149	145	146	145	146

Note. Standardized deviations are in parentheses. Column means that do not share any subscript differ from each other at  $p < .05$  level.

**Table 6: Study 1 regression results (Indian sample)**

Variable	Admiration for virtue			Status			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
1. Humility (Measured)	.62 (.05) **	.43 (.06) **	.33 (.21)	.59 (.04) **	.32 (.04) **	.51 (.16) **	.17 (.05) **
2. Competence (Measured)		.36 (.06) **	.26 (.20)		.44 (.05) **	.62 (.15) **	.32 (.05) **
3. Dominance		.14 (.04) **	.14 (.04) **		.002 (.03)	-.002 (.03)	-.05 (.03)
4. 1 × 2			.02 (.04)			-.04 (.03)	
5. Admiration for virtue							.33 (.06) **
$R^2$	.55	.66	.66	.62	.76	.76	.80
$\Delta R^2$			.00			.003	

Note.  $N = 146$ . Unstandardized beta coefficients are reported along with standard errors in parentheses.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

**Table 7: Study 1 regression results (U.S. sample)**

Variable	Admiration for virtue			Status			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
1. Humility (Measured)	.55 (.05)**	.37 (.09)**	.001 (.21)	.48 (.04)**	.20 (.06)**	.34 (.14)*	.09 (.05)
2. Competence (Measured)		.32 (.08)**	.003 (.18)		.42 (.05)**	.54 (.11)**	.33 (.05)**
3. Dominance		.01 (.07)	.03 (.07)		-.06 (.04)	-.06 (.05)	-.06 (.04)
4. 1 × 2			.08 (.04)			-.03 (.03)	
5. Admiration for virtue							.29 (.05)**
$R^2$	.44	.50	.52	.53	.69	.69	.75
$\Delta R^2$			.013			.003	

Note.  $N = 146$ . Unstandardized beta coefficients are reported along with standard errors in parentheses.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

**Table 8: Study 2 descriptive statistics and correlation matrix (Indian sample)**

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Gender (1 = female)	.39	.49								
2 Age	32.12	8.89	.05							
3 Cleanliness (Manipulated) <sup>a</sup>	.96	.83	.07	.07						
4 Cleanliness (Measured)	4.52	1.75	.10	.04	.67**					
5 Competence (Manipulated) <sup>b</sup>	.44	.50	.07	.22**	.003	.07				
6 Competence (Measured)	5.12	1.25	.13	.25**	.22**	.48**	.38**			
7 Dominance	3.67	1.13	-.03	-.14	-.09	.11	.01	-.02		
8 Admiration for virtue	4.41	1.21	.18*	.14	.35**	.65**	.24**	.68**	.04	
9 Status	3.27	.93	.21*	.19*	.46**	.71**	.24**	.66**	.04	.81**

Note. *N* = 140.

<sup>a</sup> High cleanliness condition = 2, control condition = 1, and low cleanliness condition = 0.

<sup>b</sup> Competence condition = 1, incompetence condition = 0.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .



**Table 9: Study 2 descriptive statistics and correlation matrix (U.S. sample)**

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Gender (1 = female)	.44	.50								
2 Age	32.30	9.84	.19*							
3 Cleanliness (Manipulated) <sup>a</sup>	1.02	.83	-.07	.01						
4 Cleanliness (Measured)	4.29	2.19	-.01	.04	.87**					
5 Competence (Manipulated) <sup>b</sup>	.51	.50	-.07	-.09	-.04	-.02				
6 Competence (Measured)	5.13	1.41	.10	-.03	.38**	.53**	.48**			
7 Dominance	2.85	1.23	.04	.02	-.11	-.19*	-.13	-.34**		
8 Admiration for virtue	3.62	1.07	-.03	.05	.46**	.60**	.20*	.68**	-.22**	
9 Status	3.06	1.08	-.02	-.04	.54**	.69**	.23**	.76**	-.26**	.82**

Note. *N* = 149.

<sup>a</sup> High cleanliness condition = 2, control condition = 1, and low cleanliness condition = 0.

<sup>b</sup> Competence condition = 1, incompetence condition = 0.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

**Table 10: Study 2 regression results (Indian sample)**

Variable	Admiration for virtue			Status			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
1. Cleanliness (Measured)	.45 (.04)**	.29 (.04)**	.12 (.17)	.38 (.03)**	.27 (.03)**	.28 (.13)*	.16 (.03)**
2. Competence (Measured)		.46 (.06)**	.33 (.14)*		.31 (.04)**	.32 (.10)**	.13 (.05)**
3. Dominance		.001 (.06)	.005 (.06)		-.01 (.04)	-.01 (.04)	-.01 (.04)
4. 1 × 2			.03 (.03)			-.003 (.02)	
5. Admiration for virtue							.38 (.05)**
$R^2$	.43	.60	.60	.62	.63	.63	.73
$\Delta R^2$			.003			.000	

Note.  $N = 140$ . Unstandardized beta coefficients are reported along with standard errors in parentheses.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

**Table 11: Study 2 regression results (U.S. sample)**

Variable	Admiration for virtue			Status			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
1. Cleanliness (Measured)	.29 (.03)**	.16 (.03)**	-.24 (.11)*	.34 (.03)**	.20 (.03)**	.01 (.09)	.13 (.02)**
2. Competence (Measured)		.39 (.05)**	.16 (.08)*		.43 (.04)**	.32 (.07)**	.25 (.04)**
3. Dominance		.02 (.05)	.04 (.05)		.01 (.04)	.01 (.04)	-.001 (.04)
4. 1 × 2			.08 (.02)**			.04 (.02)*	
5. Admiration for virtue							.44 (.06)**
$R^2$	.36	.54	.58	.48	.70	.71	.79
$\Delta R^2$			.04			.01	

Note.  $N = 149$ . Unstandardized beta coefficients are reported along with standard errors in parentheses.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

**Table 12: Study 3 descriptive statistics and correlation matrix (Indian sample)**

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Gender (1 = female)	.37	.48								
2 Age	31.73	8.21	.01							
3 Egalitarianism (Manipulated) <sup>a</sup>	.88	.84	-.04	.15						
4 Egalitarianism (Measured)	5.21	1.50	.03	.18*	.20*					
5 Competence (Manipulated) <sup>b</sup>	.50	.50	.01	.10	-.08	.24**				
6 Competence (Measured)	5.24	1.28	.04	.19*	.11	.70**	.30**			
7 Dominance	3.93	1.36	-.12	-.11	-.24**	-.17*	-.06	-.10		
8 Admiration for virtue	4.83	1.11	.10	.24**	.28**	.72**	.23**	.73**	-.06	
9 Status	3.68	.95	.01	.21*	.27**	.78**	.25**	.76**	-.20*	.85**

Note. *N* = 145.

<sup>a</sup> High egalitarianism condition = 2, control condition = 1, and low egalitarianism condition = 0.

<sup>b</sup> Competence condition = 1, incompetence condition = 0.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

**Table 13: Study 3 descriptive statistics and correlation matrix (U.S. sample)**

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Gender (1 = female)	.47	.50								
2 Age	33.40	9.37	.26**							
3 Egalitarianism (Manipulated) <sup>a</sup>	.95	.85	.03	-.10						
4 Egalitarianism (Measured)	4.63	1.67	-.05	.01	.50**					
5 Competence (Manipulated) <sup>b</sup>	.48	.50	-.11	-.06	.05	.23**				
6 Competence (Measured)	5.11	1.37	-.05	.14	.24**	.56**	.56**			
7 Dominance	3.50	1.59	-.09	-.01	-.49**	-.62**	-.05	-.28**		
8 Admiration for virtue	3.66	1.17	.05	.05	.48**	.64**	.30**	.54**	-.52**	
9 Status	3.06	1.03	-.06	.01	.47**	.68**	.30**	.64**	-.58**	.76**

Note. *N* = 146.

<sup>a</sup> High egalitarianism condition = 2, control condition = 1, and low egalitarianism condition = 0.

<sup>b</sup> Competence condition = 1, incompetence condition = 0.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

**Table 14: Study 3 regression results (Indian sample)**

Variable	Admiration for virtue			Status			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
1. Egalitarianism (Measured)	.53 (.04)**	.31 (.05)**	.13 (.14)	.49 (.03)**	.30 (.04)**	.32 (.11)**	.16 (.04)**
2. Competence (Measured)		.38 (.06)**	.22 (.13)		.31 (.05)**	.34 (.10)**	.14 (.04)**
3. Dominance		.04 (.04)	.06 (.04)		-.05 (.03)	-.06 (.03)	-.07 (.03)**
4. 1 × 2			.04 (.03)			-.01 (.02)	
5. Admiration for virtue							.44 (.05)**
$R^2$	.52	.62	.62	.60	.70	.70	.80
$\Delta R^2$			.005			.000	

Note.  $N = 145$ . Unstandardized beta coefficients are reported along with standard errors in parentheses.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

**Table 15: Study 3 regression results (U.S. sample)**

Variable	Admiration for virtue			Status			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
1. Egalitarianism (Measured)	.45 (.04)**	.24 (.06)**	-.28 (.13)*	.42 (.04)**	.16 (.05)**	-.09 (.10)	.08 (.04)
2. Competence (Measured)		.25 (.06)**	-.23 (.12)		.30 (.05)**	.07 (.09)	.21 (.04)**
3. Dominance		-.17 (.06)**	-.08 (.06)		-.20 (.04)**	-.16 (.04)**	-.14 (.04)**
4. 1 × 2			.12 (.03)**			.06 (.02)**	
5. Admiration for virtue							.36 (.06)**
$R^2$	.41	.49	.55	.47	.62	.64	.70
$\Delta R^2$			.065			.020	

Note.  $N = 146$ . Unstandardized beta coefficients are reported along with standard errors in parentheses.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

**Table 16: Study 4 descriptive statistics and correlation matrix**

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender (1 = female)	.70	.46									
2. Age	20.69	5.09	-.25**								
3. Humility (Manipulated) <sup>a</sup>	.89	.80	-.07	-.04							
4. Humility (Measured)	4.00	1.56	.11	-.01	.71**						
5. Competence	5.27	.94	.11	-.03	-.07	.19*					
6. Dominance	4.46	1.46	-.01	.04	-.59**	-.71**	-.12				
7. Admiration for virtue	3.28	1.03	.13	-.02	.32**	.51**	.46**	-.47**			
8. Leadership nomination	2.93	1.46	.12	.02	.42**	.59**	.29**	-.57**	.59**		
9. Behavioral influence	3.00	2.61	.25**	-.19*	.09	.17*	.09	-.09	.24**	.20*	
10. Interdependence-Independence	.26	.98	.26**	-.20*	.02	.08	.07	.04	.13	.15	.33**

Note. *N* = 137.

<sup>a</sup> High humility condition = 2, control condition = 1, and low humility condition = 0.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .



**Table 17: Admiration for virtue and status means by condition in Study 4**

Humility	<i>N</i>	Admiration for virtue	Leadership nomination	Behavioral influence
Low	52	2.85 <sub>a</sub> (.97)	2.06 <sub>a</sub> (1.30)	2.67 <sub>a</sub> (2.94)
Control	48	3.45 <sub>b</sub> (.83)	3.42 <sub>b</sub> (1.27)	3.17 <sub>a</sub> (2.52)
High	37	3.67 <sub>b</sub> (1.26)	3.51 <sub>b</sub> (1.35)	3.24 <sub>a</sub> (2.22)

Note. Standardized deviations are in parentheses. Column means that do not share any subscript differ from each other at  $p < .05$  level.

**Table 18: Study 4 regression results**

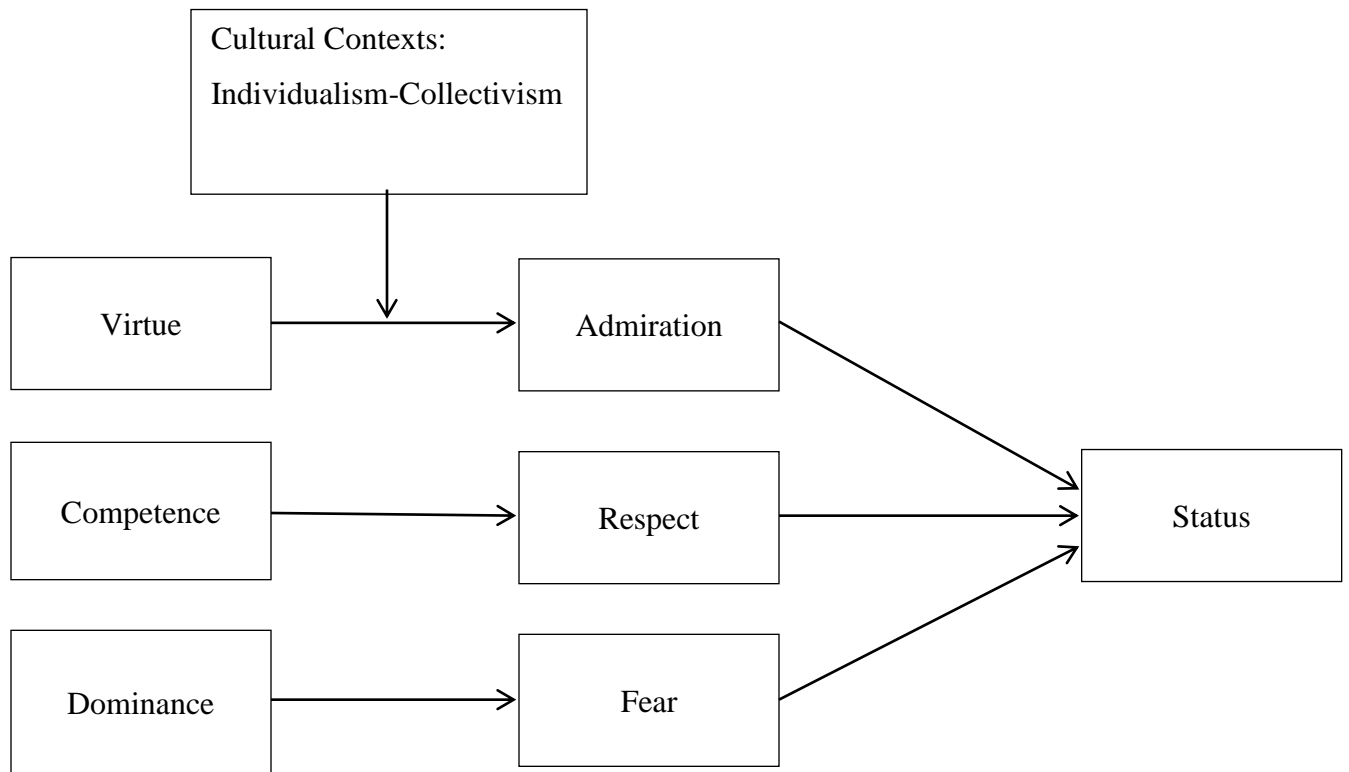
Variable	Admiration for virtue			Leadership nomination				Behavioral influence			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
1. Humility (Measured)	.25 (.05)**	.19 (.07)**	.15 (.07)*	.55 (.07)**	.31 (.09)**	.23 (.09)*	.27 (.09)**	.28 (.14)*	.32 (.21)	.22 (.21)	.17 (.20)
2. Competence		.43 (.08)**	.44 (.08)**		.30 (.10)**	.11 (.11)	.30 (.10)**		.16 (.24)	-.08 (.26)	.14 (.23)
3. Dominance		-.17 (.07)*	-.18 (.07)**		-.31 (.09)**	-.23 (.09)*	-.33 (.09)**		.09 (.22)	.18 (.22)	-.02 (.21)
4. Admiration for virtue						.45 (.11)**				.57 (.27)*	
5. Interdependence-Independence			-.23 (.17)				-.08 (.23)				.31 (.51)
6. 1 × 5			.09 (.04)*				.07 (.06)				.15 (.13)
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.26	.42	.45	.34	.42	.49	.45	.03	.03	.06	.14

Note.  $N = 137$ . Unstandardized beta coefficients are reported along with standard errors in parentheses.

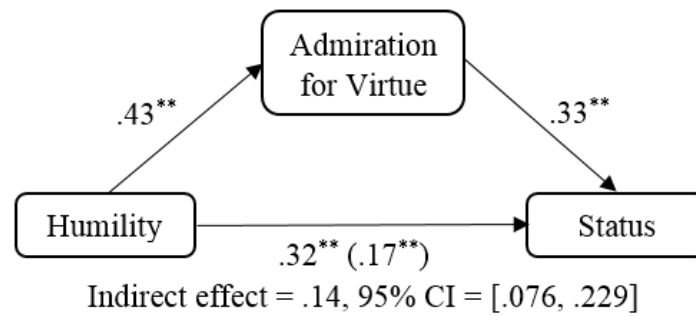
\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

## Figures

**Figure 1: Three routes to status attainment**



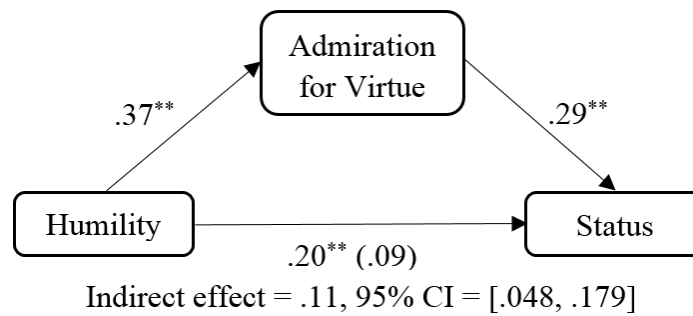
**Figure 2: Mediation model of the effect of humility on status, with admiration for virtue as the mediator (Study 1: Indian sample)**



Notes. Path coefficients are unstandardized regression coefficients, where the values in parentheses are the coefficients after the inclusion of admiration for virtue into the regression model.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

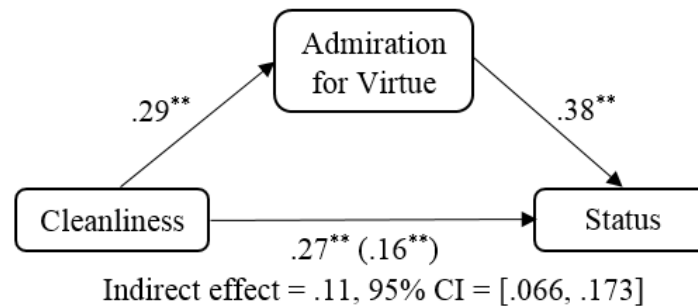
**Figure 3: Mediation model of the effect of humility on status, with admiration for virtue as the mediator (Study 1: U.S. sample)**



Notes. Path coefficients are unstandardized regression coefficients, where the values in parentheses are the coefficients after the inclusion of admiration for virtue into the regression model.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

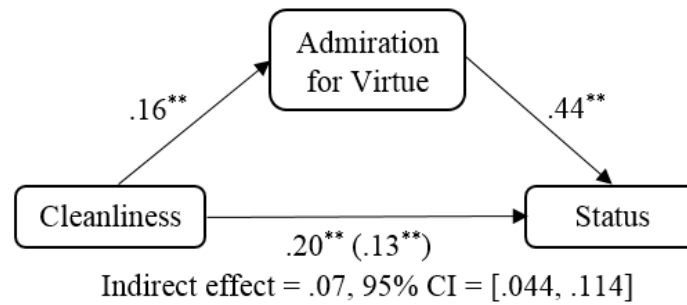
**Figure 4: Mediation model of the effect of cleanliness on status, with admiration for virtue as the mediator (Study 2: Indian sample)**



Notes. Path coefficients are unstandardized regression coefficients, where the values in parentheses are the coefficients after the inclusion of admiration for virtue into the regression model.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

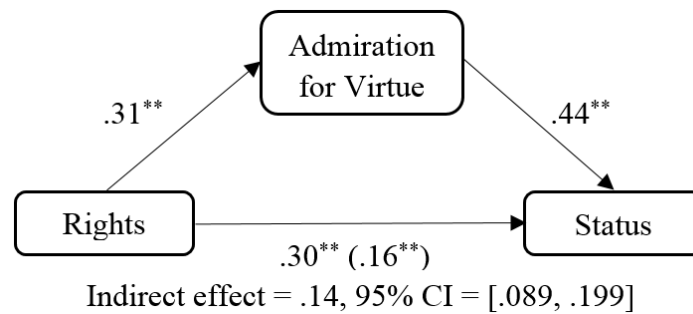
**Figure 5: Mediation model of the effect of cleanliness on status, with admiration for virtue as the mediator (Study 2: U.S. sample)**



Notes. Path coefficients are unstandardized regression coefficients, where the values in parentheses are the coefficients after the inclusion of admiration for virtue into the regression model.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

**Figure 6: Mediation model of the effect of egalitarianism (rights) on status, with admiration for virtue as the mediator (Study 3: Indian sample)**

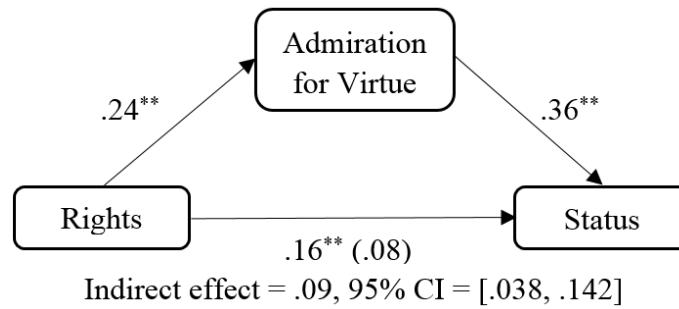


Notes. Path coefficients are unstandardized regression coefficients, where the values in parentheses are the coefficients after the inclusion of admiration for virtue into the regression model.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .



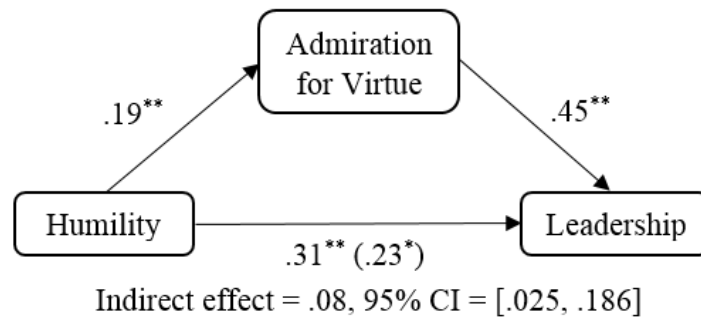
**Figure 7: Mediation model of the effect of egalitarianism (rights) on status, with admiration for virtue as the mediator (Study 3: U.S. sample)**



Notes. Path coefficients are unstandardized regression coefficients, where the values in parentheses are the coefficients after the inclusion of admiration for virtue into the regression model.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

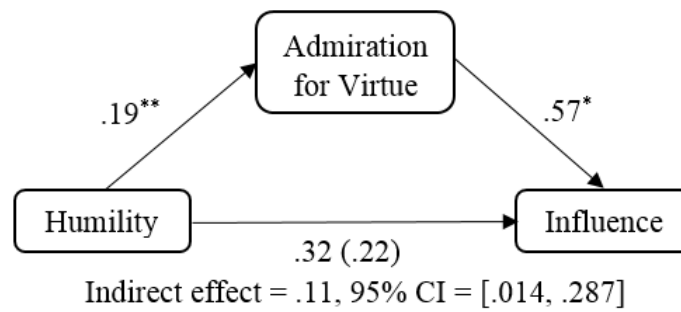
**Figure 8: Mediation model of the effect of humility on leadership nomination, with admiration for virtue as the mediator (Study 4b)**



Note. Path coefficients are unstandardized regression coefficients, where the values in parentheses are the coefficients after the inclusion of admiration for virtue into the regression model.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

**Figure 9: Mediation model of the effect of humility on behavioral influence, with admiration for virtue as the mediator (Study 4b)**



Notes. Path coefficients are unstandardized regression coefficients, where the values in parentheses are the coefficients after the inclusion of admiration for virtue into the regression model.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Study 1 scenarios<sup>9</sup>

Instructions: In the passage below, you will read a description of Rahul/Mike, a member of a consulting team in India/in the United States. As you read the passage, please imagine that you are one of Rahul/Mike's colleagues and then answer the questions that follow.

#### Scenario #1.1: Manipulation of high humility

Rahul/Mike is a member of a consulting team at a middle-sized company in the consulting business. In this team, members work together and cooperate intensively to complete multiple projects for different clients at the same time. Rahul/Mike was responsible for creating a business plan for an important client. He recently got feedback from the client, indicating that they were disappointed and did not believe the plan would work. After receiving the feedback, Rahul/Mike said in the team's weekly meeting, "You know what, *I messed up*. We need to redo this." *Even though Rahul/Mike already had some ideas about ways to improve the plan, he still asked for input and advice from the rest of the team.* With support from the rest of the team, Rahul/Mike revised the plan and presented the new plan to the client this morning. **Competence condition:** *The client seemed quite impressed by the new plan and decided to go with it. Instead of taking all the credit, Rahul/Mike made sure that the client knew that everyone on the team deserved credit for the new plan.* **Incompetence condition:** *The client, however, was still not impressed by the new plan and decided to go with a plan offered by another consulting company.*

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<sup>9</sup> Participants from India read the actor's name as Rahul; participants from the United States read the actor's name as Mike. Manipulated texts are italicized.

*Despite the unsuccessful bid, Rahul/Mike thanked everyone on the team for their hard work and dedication.*

### **Scenario #1.2: Control (humility) condition**

Rahul/Mike is a member of a consulting team at a middle-sized company in the consulting business. In this team, members work together and cooperate intensively to complete multiple projects for different clients at the same time. Rahul/Mike was responsible for creating a business plan for an important client. He recently got feedback from the client, indicating that they were disappointed and did not believe the plan would work. After receiving the feedback, Rahul/Mike said in the team's weekly meeting, "You know what. We need to redo this." With support from the rest of the team, Rahul/Mike revised the plan and presented the new plan to the client this morning. **Competence condition:** *The client seemed quite impressed by the new plan and decided to go with it. /Incompetence condition:* *The client, however, was still not impressed by the new plan and decided to go with a plan offered by another consulting company.*

### **Scenario #1.3: Manipulation of low humility**

Rahul/Mike is a member of a consulting team at a middle-sized company in the consulting business. In this team, members work together and cooperate intensively to complete multiple projects for different clients at the same time. Rahul/Mike was responsible for creating a business plan for an important client. He recently got feedback from the client, indicating that they were disappointed and did not believe the plan would work. After receiving the feedback, Rahul/Mike said in the team's weekly meeting, "You know what. We need to redo this *because the client is fussy.*" *Rahul/Mike did not ask for input or advice, but the rest of the team offered some good ideas about ways to improve the plan.* With support from the rest of the team, Rahul/Mike revised the plan and presented the new plan to the client this morning. **Competence**

**condition:** *The client seemed quite impressed by the new plan and decided to go with it. In the end, Rahul/Mike got all the credits for the new plan from the client.* /**Incompetence condition:** *The client, however, was still not impressed by the new plan and decided to go with a plan offered by another consulting company. In the end, Rahul/Mike blamed the client for making a bad decision.*



## Appendix B: Study 2 scenarios

Instructions: In the passage below, you will read a description of Rahul/Mike, a member of a consulting team in India/in the United States. As you read the passage, please imagine that you are one of Rahul/Mike's colleagues and then answer the questions that follow.

### Scenario #2.1: Manipulation of high cleanliness

Rahul/Mike is a member of a consulting team at a middle-sized company in the consulting business. In this team, members work together and cooperate intensively to complete multiple projects for different clients at the same time. *Every morning, Rahul/Mike takes a shower, brushes his teeth, and wears clean clothes before leaving for work. At the company, Rahul/Mike makes an effort to keep the office that he shares with a colleague tidy and orderly, and he always smells clean when others are around.* Rahul/Mike was responsible for creating a business plan for an important client. He recently got feedback from the client, indicating that they were disappointed and did not believe the plan would work. After receiving the feedback, Rahul/Mike said in the team's weekly meeting, "You know what, we need to redo this." With support from the rest of the team, Rahul/Mike revised the plan and presented the new plan to the client this morning. **Competence condition:** *The client seemed quite impressed by Rahul/Mike's plan and decided to go with it.* **Incompetence condition:** *The client, however, was not impressed by Rahul/Mike's plan and decided to go with a plan offered by another company.*

### Scenario #2.2: Control (cleanliness) condition

Rahul/Mike is a member of a consulting team at a middle-sized company in the consulting business. In this team, members work together and cooperate intensively to complete multiple projects for different clients at the same time. Rahul/Mike was responsible for creating a business plan for an important client. He recently got feedback from the client, indicating that

they were disappointed and did not believe the plan would work. After receiving the feedback, Rahul/Mike said in the team's weekly meeting, "You know what, we need to redo this." With support from the rest of the team, Rahul/Mike revised the plan and presented the new plan to the client this morning. **Competence condition:** *The client seemed quite impressed by Rahul/Mike's plan and decided to go with it.* **Incompetence condition:** *The client, however, was not impressed by Rahul/Mike's plan and decided to go with a plan offered by another company.*

### **Scenario #2.3: Manipulation of low cleanliness**

Rahul/Mike is a member of a consulting team at a middle-sized company in the consulting business. In this team, members work together and cooperate intensively to complete multiple projects for different clients at the same time. *In the morning, Rahul/Mike sometimes skips showers and brushing his teeth before leaving for work, even though he has plenty of time to do so. He often wears the same clothes for several days in a row. At the company, Rahul/Mike rarely tidies up the office that he shares with a colleague, and sometimes does not smell very good when others are around.* Rahul/Mike was responsible for creating a business plan for an important client. He recently got feedback from the client, indicating that they were disappointed and did not believe the plan would work. After receiving the feedback, Rahul/Mike said in the team's weekly meeting, "You know what, we need to redo this." With support from the rest of the team, Rahul/Mike revised the plan and presented the new plan to the client this morning. **Competence condition:** *The client seemed quite impressed by Rahul/Mike's plan and decided to go with it.* **Incompetence condition:** *The client, however, was not impressed by Rahul/Mike's plan and decided to go with a plan offered by another company.*

## Appendix C: Study 3 scenarios

Instructions: In the passage below, you will read a description of Rahul/Mike, a member of a consulting team in India/in the United States. As you read the passage, please imagine that you are one of Rahul/Mike's colleagues and then answer the questions that follow.

### Scenario #3.1: Manipulation of high egalitarianism (rights)

Rahul/Mike is a member of a consulting team at a middle-sized company in the consulting business. In this team, members work together and cooperate intensively to complete multiple projects for different clients at the same time. *Aside from being a consultant, Rahul/Mike volunteers his time to advocate on building more low-income housing for the poor in his city. He believes that everyone, regardless of their wealth, should have the right to adequate housing and shelter.* Rahul/Mike was responsible for creating a business plan for an important client. He recently got feedback from the client, indicating that they were disappointed and did not believe the plan would work. After receiving the feedback, Rahul/Mike said in the team's weekly meeting, "You know what, we need to redo this." With support from the rest of the team, Rahul/Mike revised the plan and presented the new plan to the client this morning. **Competence condition:** *The client seemed quite impressed by Rahul/Mike's plan and decided to go with it.* **/Incompetence condition:** *The client, however, was not impressed by Rahul/Mike's plan and decided to go with a plan offered by another company.*

### Scenario #3.2: Control (rights) condition

Rahul/Mike is a member of a consulting team at a middle-sized company in the consulting business. In this team, members work together and cooperate intensively to complete multiple projects for different clients at the same time. Rahul/Mike was responsible for creating a business plan for an important client. He recently got feedback from the client, indicating that

they were disappointed and did not believe the plan would work. After receiving the feedback, Rahul/Mike said in the team's weekly meeting, "You know what, we need to redo this." With support from the rest of the team, Rahul/Mike revised the plan and presented the new plan to the client this morning. **Competence condition:** *The client seemed quite impressed by Rahul/Mike's plan and decided to go with it.* **Incompetence condition:** *The client, however, was not impressed by Rahul/Mike's plan and decided to go with a plan offered by another company.*

### **Scenario #3.3: Manipulation of low egalitarianism (rights)**

Rahul/Mike is a member of a consulting team at a middle-sized company in the consulting business. In this team, members work together and cooperate intensively to complete multiple projects for different clients at the same time. *Aside from being a consultant, Rahul/Mike volunteers his time to lobby against building more low-income housing for the poor in his city. He believes that the government should not help the homeless, who should live on their own.* Rahul/Mike was responsible for creating a business plan for an important client. He recently got feedback from the client, indicating that they were disappointed and did not believe the plan would work. After receiving the feedback, Rahul/Mike said in the team's weekly meeting, "You know what, we need to redo this." With support from the rest of the team, Rahul/Mike revised the plan and presented the new plan to the client this morning. **Competence condition:** *The client seemed quite impressed by Rahul/Mike's plan and decided to go with it.* **Incompetence condition:** *The client, however, was not impressed by Rahul/Mike's plan and decided to go with a plan offered by another company.*

## **Appendix D: Study 4 scripts for humility manipulations**

### **High humility condition:**

Hi, my name is George. I am a second-year student in Economics at UBC. I also work part-time as an assistant business analyst for a local consulting company. Recently, I got promoted to the position of junior analyst. To be honest, I was surprised! When I first started a year ago, I made a few bad mistakes in my first assignment. My ex-boss and coworkers helped me a lot and spent hours training me how to get the job done. With their support, I caught up with the job quickly, and was awarded “Employee of the Month” a couple of times last year. I still ask them for advice even though I don’t work with them any more after the promotion. Anyway, it’s been a great experience working there, and I am really grateful!

### **Control (humility) condition:**

Hi, my name is George. I am a second-year student in Economics at UBC. I also work part-time as an assistant business analyst for a local consulting company. I was awarded “Employee of the Month” a couple of times last year. Recently, I got promoted to the position of junior analyst.

### **Low humility condition:**

Hi, my name is George. I am a second-year student in Economics at UBC. I also work part-time as an assistant business analyst for a local consulting company. Recently, I got promoted to the position of *junior* analyst. To be honest, it was not a surprise to me at all! I guess I am just naturally talented as a business analyst. It did not take me much time to figure out how to get the job done, and I didn’t need anyone’s help, though people gave me help anyway. I was awarded Employee of the Month a couple of times last year. Now my boss and coworkers totally

count on me to get stuff done although they have been doing this for years. They really cannot afford losing me and had to promote me. Anyway, it is an easy job for me!

## Appendix E: Measures

### Interpersonal perceptions

Please indicate how well the qualities below described this person on a 7-point Likert scale with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 7 indicating strong agreement.

	<b>Humility</b>	<b>Cleanliness</b>	<b>Rights</b>	<b>Dominance</b>	<b>Competence</b>
1.	Humble	4. Clean	7. Prejudiced <sup>10</sup>	10. Arrogant	13. Competent
2.	Teachable	5. Tidy	8. Egalitarian	11. Pushy	14. Productive
3.	Appreciative	6. Orderly	9. Fair	12. Bossy	15. Skillful

### Moral elevation

1. In this moment, how much do you feel each of the following emotions for [the actor's name]?

1. Admiration
2. Respect
3. Inspiration
4. Awe
5. Gratitude
6. Love
7. Compassion

2. In this moment, how much do you feel each of the following sensations?

1. Warmth in the chest
2. Lump in the throat

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<sup>10</sup> This item was excluded from data analyses as an EFA found it not loading on the intended factor (i.e., rights).

3. Muscle relaxed

3. In this moment, how much do you experience each of the following desires?

1. Be [humble, clean, or egalitarian]
2. I want to be more like [the actor's name]
3. I want to become a [humble, clean, or egalitarian] person

**Perceived status**

Please indicate to what extent you agree with each of the following statements:

1. [The actor's name] has a high level of influence in my eyes
2. I respect [the actor's name]
3. [The actor's name] has high social standing
4. [The actor's name] is prominent in my eyes
5. I look up to [the actor's name]

**Interdependent-independent self-construals**

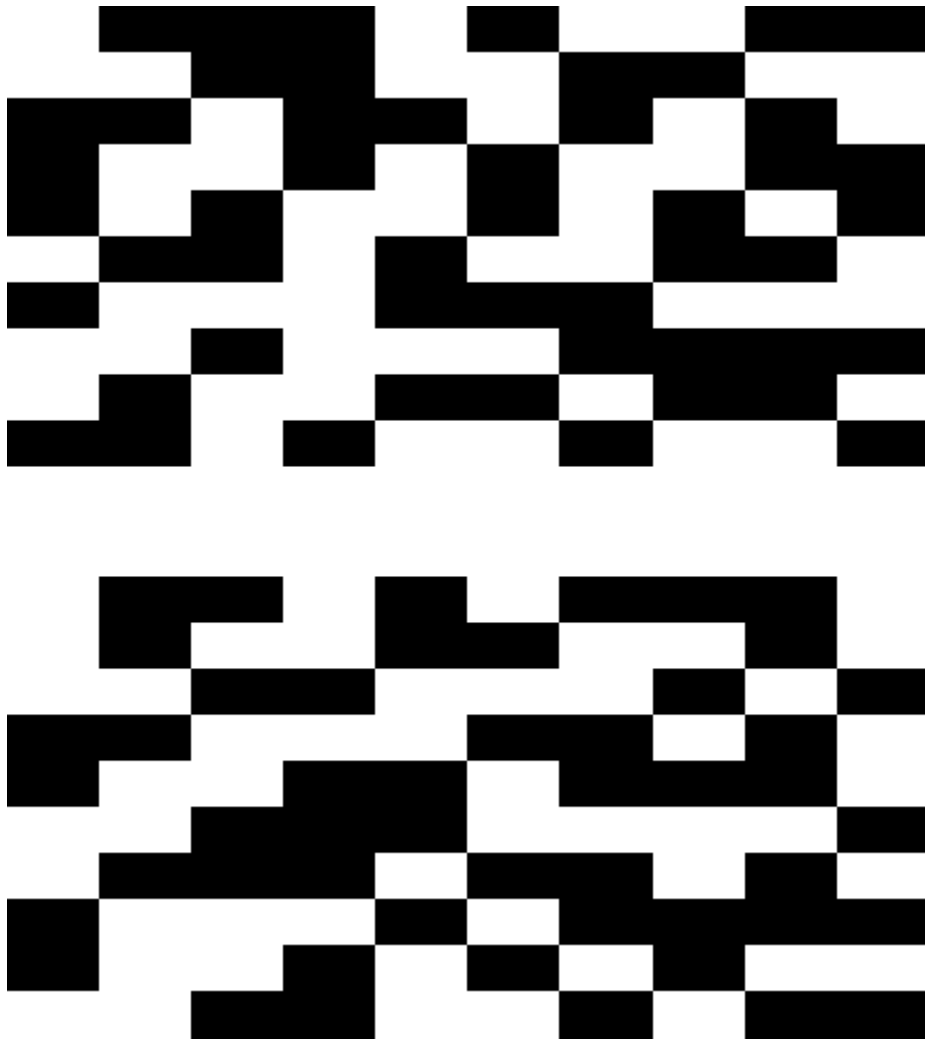
Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements below:

1. I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact
2. It is important for me to maintain harmony within my group
3. My happiness depends on the happiness of those around me
4. I would offer my seat in a bus to my professor
5. I respect people who are modest about themselves
6. I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group I am in



7. I often have the feeling that my relationship with others are more important than my own accomplishment
8. I should take into consideration my parents' advice when making education/career plans
9. It is important to me to respect decisions made by the group
10. I will stay in a group if they need me, even when I am not happy with the group
11. If my brother or sister fails, I feel responsible
12. Even when I strongly disagree with group members, I avoid an argument
13. I'd rather say "No" directly, than risk being misunderstood
14. Speaking up during a class is not a problem for me
15. Having a lively imagination is important to me
16. I am comfortable with being singled out for praise or rewards
17. I am the same person at home that I am at school
18. Being able to take care of myself is a primary concern
19. I act the same way no matter who I am with
20. I feel comfortable using someone's first name soon after I meet them, even when they are much older than I am
21. I prefer to be direct and forthright when dealing with people I've just met
22. I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects
23. My personal identity independent of others, is very important to me
24. I value being in good health above everything

## Appendix F: An example of the contrast sensitivity task<sup>11</sup>



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<sup>11</sup> Materials and instructions related to the Contrast Sensitivity Task were kindly provided by Prof. Murray Webster at University of North Carolina—Charlotte.