



SELF, MOTIVATION & VIRTUE PROJECT NEWS

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INTEGRITY AND ITS PUZZLES



By Jennifer Herdt, Ph.D.

Dr. Jennifer Herdt is the Gilbert L. Stark Professor of Christian Ethics at Yale Divinity School. She is the author of two books: [Religion and Faction in Hume's Moral Philosophy](#) (University of Cambridge Press) and [Putting on Virtue: The Legacy of the Splendid Vices](#) (University of Chicago Press). She is currently researching ethical formation in the Bildungsroman and Christian conceptions of ecstatic happiness in the moral life.

Praising someone as a person of integrity is a sign of great respect. But why do we do so? And why do we aspire to integrity? There are several puzzles about the virtue of integrity. The first has to do with constancy and change. On the one hand, we tend to choose as exemplars of integrity those who remain firm in their commitments in the face of some kind of significant test or temptation. For example, we might be inclined to praise the integrity of an

underpaid inspector who refuses to accept a large bribe in order to overlook shoddy construction, or of an academic who maintains consistently high standards in voting on tenure cases, even when a good friend is likely to be denied tenure. On the other hand, we also praise as persons of integrity individuals who have broken off a longstanding commitment—for instance, a woman who has long proclaimed her commitment to marriage as a lifelong bond of fidelity, but who leaves her husband when he pressures her to cover up the fact that he is embezzling funds from his company. How can we consider integrity to be bound up on the one hand with maintaining commitments and on the other hand with a readiness to change commitments?

"...integrity is a virtue we often grant to persons whom we consider to have made the wrong commitments."

The second puzzle has to do with the fact that integrity is a virtue we often grant to persons whom we consider to have made the *wrong* commitments. For instance, an abortion rights activist might say of a pro-life politician, "Well, I do respect her as a person of great integrity; she knew that she would most likely not secure re-election given the unpopularity of her stance, but she did not try to curry favor with voters." We can resolve these puzzles at the theoretical level by articulating a sufficiently nuanced account of the virtue of integrity. Theoretical resolution still leaves us, of course, with the practical challenges that attend cultivating the virtue of integrity.

Integrity is not simply a matter of remaining true to one's commitments. It is also a matter of being committed to having commitments that are genuinely good, and that are well-ordered in relation to one another. This means that integrity is not just a matter of fidelity come what may, but of being willing to revise or re-order one's commitments in light of evidence that they are flawed or badly ordered.

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MEET OUR RESEARCHERS

MICHEL FERRARI, PH.D.

[MICHEL FERRARI](#) (Ph.D., Université du Québec à Montréal) is Professor of Applied Psychology and Human Development and head of the Wisdom and Identity Lab at the University of Toronto. His lab explores personal wisdom in people of different ages (from children to the elderly) in different countries around the world. Dr. Ferrari received his BA from the Liberal Arts College of Concordia University



and his MA and PhD from the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). He was a Postdoctoral Associate with Robert Sternberg at Yale University and a Research Associate with Michelene Chi and Kurt VanLehn at the Learning research and Development Center (LRDC) of the University of Pittsburgh. Dr. Ferrari has co-authored or co-edited twelve books and numerous scholarly articles and book chapters. You can learn more about Dr. Ferrari at his [faculty webpage](#).



My current area of expertise is in developmental psychology as it relates to personal development, which extends to questions of personal wisdom as an ideal aspiration of personal development. I came to this topic of wisdom and its relation to personal development through the study of expertise; more specifically, an interest in expert knowledge developed in pursuit of the best or most interesting life for oneself. I came to believe that many current studies of personal development were very limited in their approach because they relied on questionnaires and general frames of reference developed in the west that focused on biological or sociocultural influences, but not on personally meaningful efforts to develop oneself. I was originally trained in the humanities, and so believe that concepts and understandings of human life can never be completely divorced from their sociocultural frame of reference, as filtered through our personal biography and what it means to us.

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RICCA EDMONDSON, PH.D.



[RICCA EDMONDSON](#) (D.Phil., Oxford) is Professor Emerita in the School of Political Science and Sociology in the National University of Ireland, Galway. She has been writing about the sociality of reasoning since her book [Rhetoric in Sociology](#) (Macmillan, 1984), and later she came to connect this with the study of ageing, then that of wisdom. Her latest book is [Ageing, Insight and Wisdom: Meaning and Practice Across the Life Course](#) (Policy Press, 2015).

My own interest began with exploring everyday reasoning – not from the point of view (for example) of what can be shaky or manipulative about it, but in order to understand how people think and behave when they are reasoning *well*. I was soon attracted to the question how people both rely on and support others in the course of negotiating life questions and problems. It seemed a natural progression, when I came to study ageing, to ask if there can be anything significantly useful or exemplary about the ways older people (at least sometimes) interact with others, and what relationship this might have to what has traditionally been described as wisdom.

I first met Prof. Michel Ferrari, the PI of our project ([Motivating the Self to Virtue in Western and Non-Western Countries: Does Nation or Faith Matter More in the Development of the Moral Self?](#)), through our common interest in wisdom.

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MELANIE MUNROE, M.A..

[MELANIE MUNROE](#) (MA, University of Toronto) is currently a second-year PhD student in the Wisdom & Identity Lab at the University of Toronto working with Dr. Michel Ferrari. She is also the Site Manager for the Canadian team for the "Motivating the Self to Virtue in Western and Non-Western Countries: Does Nation or Faith Matter More" project. To learn more about Ms. Munroe's research, see her [Research Gate profile](#).

My current area of expertise focuses on how adolescents and emerging adults react to and cope with various challenging life events. More specifically, my doctoral dissertation seeks to determine whether coping styles act as a mediator in the relationship between wisdom and post-traumatic growth. My interest in this area of work began during my undergraduate degree at Brock University. I was involved in various research studies that examined undergraduate students who had undergone difficult life events or were struggling with mental health issues. From this point on, I was always interested in why some individuals could become resilient following trauma, and even more interested in those that appeared to have positive change following these difficult life events. Coming into the Wisdom & Identity Lab for my Master's degree to work with Dr. Michel Ferrari, I began to develop an interest in how wisdom is related to growth following adversity.



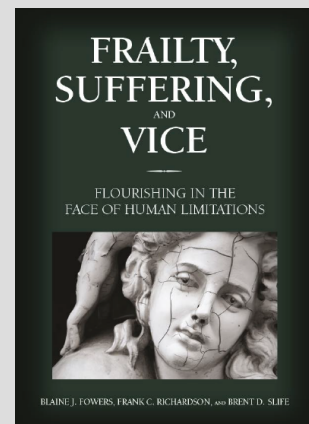
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RECENT PUBLICATIONS & NEWS

CORRECTION: In the February 2017 issue of this newsletter, Dr. Paul Condon was incorrectly noted as having published "[The Perils of Empathy](#)" in the Wall Street Journal (12/2/16). While Dr. Condon's work was featured in that article, it was authored by Paul Bloom.

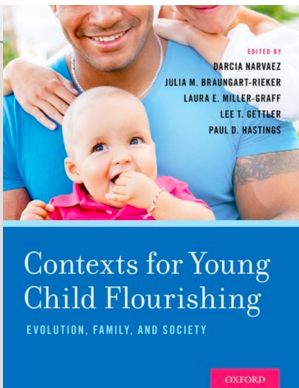
SMV Researcher, Dr. Blaine Fowers recently published [Frailty, Suffering, and Vice: Flourishing in the Face of Human Limitations](#), with his coauthors Dr. Frank Richardson and Dr. Brent Slife. "This volume addresses the human condition in its entirety and discusses the pathways to flourishing in light of the everyday limitations that we all must face. Fowers, Richardson, and Slife discuss what they call the "breathless optimism" of positive psychology and explain how human dependency, limits, and suffering are not just negatives to be overcome. Rather they are part of our journey toward development and thriving."

[Learn more >>](#)



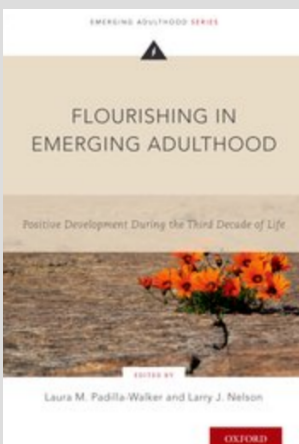
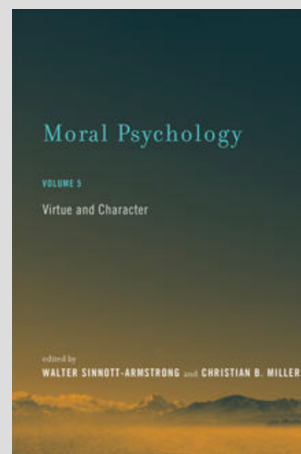
[Contexts for Young Child Flourishing](#),

co-edited by SMV co-Director, Dr. Darcia Narvaez, "uses an evolutionary systems framing to address the conditions and contexts for child



development and thriving. Contributors focus on flourishing-optimizing individual (physiological, psychological, emotional) and communal (social, community) functioning. Converging events make this a key time to reconsider the needs of children and their optimal development in light of increasing understanding of human evolution, the early dynamism of development, and how these influence developmental trajectories." [Learn more >>](#)

Professors Walter Sinnott-Armstrong and Christian Miller edited a collection of essays titled, [Moral Psychology: Virtue and Character, Volume 5](#), published by MIT press. Contributors include several scholars affiliated with the SMV Project, including Dr. William Fleeson, Dr. Daniel Lapsley, Dr. Nancy Snow and Dr. Valerie Tiberius.



Edited by Dr. Laura M. Padilla-Walker and Dr. Larry J. Nelson, [Flourishing in Emerging Adulthood Positive Development During the Third Decade of Life](#) "highlights the third decade of life as a time in which individuals have diverse opportunities for positive development. There is mounting evidence that this time period, at least for a significant majority, is a unique developmental period in which positive development is fostered." This book features a variety of essays, including one from SMV Core Project Team member, Dr. Daniel Lapsley. [Learn more >>](#)

[Varieties of Virtue Ethics](#), edited by Dr. David Carr, Dr. James Arthur and Dr. Kristján Kristjánsson, explores recent developments in ethics of virtue. While acknowledging the Aristotelian roots of modern virtue ethics – with its emphasis on the moral importance of character – this collection recognizes that more recent accounts of virtue have been shaped by many other influences, such as Aquinas, Hume, Nietzsche, Hegel and Marx, Confucius and Lao-tzu. The authors also examine the bearing of virtue ethics on other disciplines such as psychology, sociology and theology, as well as attending to some wider public, professional and educational implications of the ethics of virtue. [Learn more >>](#)



We are actively seeking submissions for the SMV Project's [Moral Self Archive](#). Submit materials [here](#), or contact Max Parish (smvproject@ou.edu) with any questions.

SELECTED RECENT PUBS & PRESENTATIONS FROM THE SMV LEADERSHIP TEAM



Dr. Owen Flanagan

- Caruso, G. D., & Flanagan, O., Eds. (forthcoming). *Neuroexistentialism: Meaning, Morals, and Purpose in the Age of Neuroscience*. Oxford University Press. The preface and introduction are [available online](#).
- Flanagan, O. & Graham, G. (2017). Truth and sanity: Positive illusions, spiritual delusions, and metaphysical hallucinations. In J. Poland & S. Tekin, Eds., [Extraordinary science and psychiatry: Responses to the crisis in mental health research](#) (pp. 293- 311). The MIT Press.



Dr. William Fleeson

- Jayawickreme, E., & Fleeson, W. (2017). Does whole trait theory work for the virtues? In W. Sinnott-Armstrong & C. B. Miller, Eds., [Moral Psychology: Virtue and Character, Vol. 5](#) (75-104). The MIT Press.



Dr. Douglas Fry

- Anwar, F., Fry, D. P., & Grigaityte, I. (2017). [Aggression prevention and reduction in diverse cultures and contexts](#). *Current Opinions in Psychology* (April 5).
- Söderberg, Patrik & Fry, Douglas P. (2017). Anthropological aspects of ostracism. In K. D. Williams & S. A. Nida, Eds., [Ostracism, exclusion, and rejection](#) (pp. 258-272). New York: Routledge.
- Fry, D. P., and Souillac, G. (2017). [The original partnership societies: Evolved propensities for equality, prosociality, and peace](#). *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies*, 4(1), 1-27.
- Anwar, F., Fry, D. P., & Grigaityte, I. (2017). Reducing aggression and violence. In B. Bushman, Ed., [Aggression and violence: A social psychological perspective](#) (pp. 307-320). New York: Routledge.



Jennifer Herdt, Ph.D.

- Herdt, J. (2017). "The lofty vocation of the humble." Presented at: *Joy and Humility Consultation*, Yale Center for Faith and Culture, 28 April.
- Herdt, J. (2017). "Flourishing beyond the prudence/morality divide." Presented at: *Values and Flourishing in the Social Sciences and Humanities*, 24 March.
- Herdt, J. (2016). "The joy of humility." Presented at: Biola University, Center for Christian Thought, 24 February.



Daniel Lapsley, Ph.D.



- Lapsley, D., & Hardy, S. A. (2017). Identity formation and moral development in emerging adulthood. In L. M. Padilla-Walker & L. J. Nelson, Eds. (2017). [Flourishing in emerging adulthood: Positive development during the third decade of life](#) (14-39). Oxford University Press.
- Lapsley, D. (2017). Situationism and the pyrrhic defense of character education: Commentary on Sreenivasan. In W. Sinnott-Armstrong & C. B. Miller, Eds., [Moral psychology: Virtue and character, Vol. 5](#) (pp. 171-184). The MIT Press.



Dr. Darcia Narvaez

- Narvaez, D. (2017). [Getting back on track to being human](#). *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies*, 4(1), 1-21.
- Narvaez, D. (2017). The ontogenesis of human moral becoming. In A. Fuentes & A. Visala (Eds.), [Verbs, bones and brains: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Human Nature](#) (pp. 114-121). Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Narvaez, D. (2017). Evolution, childrearing and compassionate morality. In Paul Gilbert (Ed.), [Compassion: Conceptualisations, Research and Use in Psychotherapy](#) (pp. 78-186). London: Routledge.
- Christen, M., Narvaez, D., & Gutzwiller, E. (2017). [Comparing and integrating biological and cultural moral progress](#). *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 20: 55.



Dr. Howard Nusbaum

- Poljacik, G., Decety, J. & Nusbaum, H. (2017). [Loving-kindness language exposure leads to changes in sensitivity to imagined pain](#). *The Journal of Positive Psychology*.
- Dr. Nusbaum was recently interviewed by Charles Cassidy, with [Evidence-Based Wisdom](#). The interview, "[On wisdom, language, and attention](#)", is posted on the website of the Center for Practical Wisdom.



Dr. Ross Thompson

- Newton, E., Thompson, R., & Goodman, M. (2016). [Individual differences in toddlers' prosociality: Experiences in early relationships explain variability in prosocial behavior](#). *Child Development*, 87(6), 1715-1726.
- Thompson, R. (2016). [The personality artist and the personality scientist shake hands](#). *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 47, 30-31.



Dr. Nancy Snow

- Snow, N. (2017). The nature of humility: A critical perspective on Nadelhoffer and Wright. In W. Sinnott-Armstrong & C. B. Miller, Eds., [Moral psychology: Virtue and character, Vol. 5](#) (pp. 351-360). The MIT Press.
- Snow, N. (2017). From 'ordinary' virtue to Aristotelian virtue. Invited lecture, *The William R. Connolly Ethics Lecture Series*, University of Evansville, Evansville, IN, Mar 28.
- Snow, N. (2017). The perils of magnificence. Invited presentation at the University of Miami,

Miami, FL, Mar 23.



Dr. Linda Zagzebski

- Zagzebski, L. (2016). "[Divine motivation theory and exemplarism](#)." *European Journal of Philosophy of Religion* (April 2017).
- Zagzebski, L. (2016). Faith and reason. In J. Hawthorne, H. Cappelen and T. Gendler (Eds.), [Oxford handbook of philosophical methodology](#). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Zagzebski, L. (2016). [Virtuous exemplars: Moral understanding, emulation, and resentment](#). Presented at Loyola Marymount University, CA, Sept. 27. Also presented as the Malcolm Reid Lecture, Gordon College, MA, Oct. 27. [Watch the Video](#)



Dr. Michael Zampelli

- Zampelli, M. (2017). 'You are to be living actors in...the theatre of the world': The Role and Significance of the Performing Arts in 19th and 20th-Century US Jesuit Education. Loyola Chair Lecture, given at Fordham University, Lincoln Center, March 1 and Fordham University, Rose Hill, March 9.
- Zampelli, M. (2017). Behind Thucydides Stands Aristophanes: Jesuit Performance in the United States. Presented at: *Comparative Drama Conference*, April 5, Orlando, Florida.

If you would like to contribute a news item, publication, or newsletter article, please contact Max Parish at smvproject@ou.edu.



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The Self, Motivation & Virtue Project
The University of Oklahoma
620 Parrington Oval, RM 207, Norman, OK 73019
405.325.4574 | smvproject@ou.edu | www.smvproject.com

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