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The Virtues Project: an approach to developing good leaders

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ABSTRACT

Virtue words, such as justice, fairness, care, and integrity frequently feature in organizational codes of conduct and theories of ethical leadership. And yet our modern organizations remain blemished by examples lacking virtue. The philosophy of virtue ethics and numerous extant theories of leadership cite virtues as essential to good leadership. But we seem to lack understanding of how to develop or embed these virtues and notions of good leadership in practice. In 2012, virtue ethicist Julia Annas pointed to a training program which she touted as a practical application of virtue ethics. The program Annas (2012) identified is called *The Virtues Project*, and while promising, she warned that in its current state, it lacked theorizing. We address this by aligning its practical strategies to extant theory and evidence to understand what virtues it might develop and how it might facilitate good leadership. Doing so makes two key contributions. First, it lends credence to *The Virtues Project's* potential as a leadership development program. Second, it provides a means of applying theories of good leadership in practice. Our overarching objective is to advance *The Virtues Project* as a means of incorporating virtues into workplace dynamics and embedding virtues in the practice of organizational leadership.

INTRODUCTION

Virtue words, such as justice, fairness, care, and integrity frequently feature in organizational codes of conduct and theories of ethical leadership. And yet our modern organizations remain blemished by examples lacking virtue. Newspapers, social media channels, and for many of us our daily experiences of work, are dominated by instances of dishonesty, lapses of integrity, forgotten fairness, shirked responsibility, misplaced loyalty and a general lack of compassion, justice, and care. Too often, codes of conduct become dust collectors, and our eager theorizing remains ensconced in an echo chamber of academia. In response, this article represents an effort to bring virtue to life within our organizations. We do so by advancing strategies to translate the virtues that feature in various theories of ethical, moral, and virtuous leadership into the daily practices of organizational leaders.

Virtue and the philosophy of virtue ethics are poised to unlock the true potential of our organizations and those who lead them. Virtue offers an ethic of individual excellence, continual moral development, and striving towards a common good. Numerous theories of ethical and virtuous leadership testify to the resonance between virtue and leadership. For example, Pearce, Waldman, and Csikszentmihaly (2006) argue that virtuous vertical leadership leads to virtuous shared leadership which, in turn, fosters organizational learning. While Riggio, Zhu, Reina, and Maroosis (2010) posit that virtuous leaders inspire greater moral identity, empowerment, and organizational identification among followers. Similarly, Cameron (2011) claims virtuous leaders act as rudders to effectively navigate change and encourage instrumental outcomes related to performance. Lang, Irby, and Brown (2012) explain how virtuous leadership creates harmony and stability within organizations. Hackett and Wang (2012) identify three primary effects virtues have on

leaders; behaving ethically, experiencing happiness, and enhancing performance. Further, Fehr, Kai Chi, and Dang (2015) suggest that perceptions of leader morality and virtue foster values consistent behavior among followers. These theories of *good* leadership acknowledge that our ability to live and work together toward common goals is reliant upon the cultivation and practice of virtues (Cameron, 2011; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Without virtues such as justice, temperance, humanity, and wisdom human organizations cannot survive.

Theories of *good* (moral, ethical, virtuous) leadership highlight the alignment between virtue and leading, but a gap remains between our theorizing and the actual practices of organizational leaders and the approaches used by organizations to develop their leaders. The theories referenced above articulate virtues such as care, compassion, empathy, discipline, humility, justice, responsibility, trustworthiness, courage, temperance, transcendence, and love as essential to good leadership (see review by Hackett & Wang, 2012). But, how we actually cultivate virtues to develop good leaders and leadership practices remains unclear. How do we extend our theories of virtuous leadership so that they might be realized in practice? Searches of our academic archives reveal very little theoretical work on explicitly virtues-based leadership development programs, despite calls to refine or develop such interventions (e.g. Hackett & Wang, 2012). The need to practice and embed virtues in organizational leadership is clear. Indeed, the development of virtue and human flourishing has been the topic of philosophizing for millennia (e.g. Aristotle, 350BCE/1962). Despite this long recognized tradition of scholarship, our modern approach to organizational inquiry and leadership development seem to lack focus on these matters.

AIMS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Our aim in this article is to operationalize theories of *good* leadership by discussing how the practical strategies of *The Virtues Project* (TVP) might develop those virtues central to said theories. To understand if and how TVP strategies may develop the virtues deemed essential to theories of *good* leadership, we borrow ideas from the philosophy of virtue ethics and theory and evidence from socio-psychological fields pertaining to organizational leadership. We identify philosophic, theoretical, and extant empirical support for the validity of TVP's strategies for developing the virtues that have been cited as central to moral, ethical, and virtuous leadership theories. Careful attention is paid to how the strategies of TVP resemble processes of positive moralization as articulated by Fehr et al. (2015).

At this point, it is important to acknowledge that this article does not aim to redefine or re-theorize leadership per se. Rather, we endeavour to build on the explanatory power of extant theories of *good* leadership, including ethical, moralized and virtuous leadership by advancing TVP as a program to develop leaders and leadership in accord with said theories. Our aim is to advance understanding of how existing and perhaps even future theories of *good* leadership might be translated into practice through the virtues and strategies of TVP.

By advancing a virtue-based approach to leadership development, we make contributions to virtue ethics and to the study of leadership. The aspirational principles and ancient wisdom of virtue ethics are appealing, but some argue the philosophy does not provide a guide to ethical action and is therefore inapplicable (Annas, 2012). In addressing this critique, Annas (2012) explains that TVP has been successfully using virtues in many countries and intercultural contexts to resolve conflict and develop character. But, while TVP may represent an application of virtue

ethics in practice, Annas (2012) adds that it is currently insufficiently theorized. By identifying theories which provide support for the validity of TVP's virtues development strategies, we contribute to the field of virtue ethics by legitimizing a training program that provides a tangible way of implementing virtue ethics in practice, and thereby, address a critique of the philosophy.

As discussed above, although the scholarly field of leadership encompasses numerous theories of ethical, moral, and virtuous (or *good*) leadership, modern organizations continue to be tarnished by unethical, immoral, and vicious leadership. Compounding this, when organizations invest in leadership development, the majority use in-house and non-academic leadership development programs and evaluations, and then decry their ineffectiveness (Crawford & Kelder, 2018). Thus, to the field of leadership, this article proffers TVP as a program with the potential to develop leaders and inform practice in accordance with theories of *good* leadership such as ethical leadership (e.g. Riggio et al, 2010; Trevino, Hartman & Brown, 2000), moral leadership (e.g. Fehr et al., 2015), and virtuous leadership (e.g. Cameron, 2011; Hackett & Wang, 2012; Pearce et al., 2006; Wang & Hackett, 2015). Our work in this article shows how TVP offers a way to apply theories of *good* leadership via practical strategies and underscores the credibility of TVP by identifying connections between it and the theory of moralized leadership as well as various other socio-psychological theories pertaining to organizational leadership.

We begin by introducing TVP and discussing its list of 100 virtues. Following this we highlight the resonance between virtue and leadership development, before explaining and then theorizing the five development strategies of TVP. The theory we draw on to inform our work comes from virtue ethics, socio-psychological fields pertaining to organizational leadership, and the emerging theory of moralised

leadership. For each strategy of TVP we develop theoretical propositions to explain why and how the strategy is expected to develop *good* leadership.

ABOUT TVP

TVP was founded in Canada in the late 1990s by Linda Kavelin-Popov, her husband Dr. Dan Popov, and her brother John Kavelin. Built on the premise that people are inherently good and that virtues are the most basic elements of that goodness, TVP provides a list of 100 virtues and five language-based strategies designed to develop virtues (Popov & Smith, 2005). Initially designed as a tool to aid parents and teachers in the moral education of children, the strategies of TVP have remained largely unchanged. However, in more recent years TVP has been applied across a range of contexts and for various purposes including moral education, community groups, conflict resolution, and as a tool for counsellors. There are stories of convicted felons embracing TVP strategies and virtues as a way to awaken their "gifts within" and to help other inmates awaken their own virtues. TVP resources also boast stories of inner city schools where TVP strategies have been used to eradicate bullying and transform anti-social behavior (Popov, 2015). Despite accounts such as these, we have found no peer-reviewed empirical or conceptual work assessing the acceptability or efficacy of TVP as an organizational leadership development program.

Fundamental to the program theory of TVP (Nielsen & Abildgaard, 2013; Nielsen & Miraglia, 2017) are the assumptions that (i) individuals possess a character composed of virtues in potential; and (ii) language is the best way to develop virtues. The assumption that character consists of virtues in potential aligns to a virtue ethics approach. Virtue ethics articulates our reason for being as the pursuit of developing virtuous character (Annas, 2012, 2015; Aristotle, 350BCE/1962; MacIntyre, 1985).

According to a virtue ethics perspective, “character consists of virtues that enhance human flourishing” (Arjoon, 2008, p. 226). Cultivating virtues is the means of attaining a good character and a happy life. Recent work applying this perspective to leadership research has argued that virtues compose an essential component of leader character (Crossan, Mazutis, Seijts, & Gandz, 2013; Crossan et al., 2017). According to Annas (2012, 2015), we first learn virtues as children and continue to develop virtues throughout life in a continual pursuit of eudemonic happiness. The assumption TVP makes about character consisting of virtues in potential, aligns to the virtue ethics perspective which teaches the pursuit of virtue as the means of attaining meaningful happiness.

Implicit in the strategies of TVP, is an assumption about the suitability of language to virtues development. This assumption finds support in both leadership research and virtue ethics. Leadership is a relational process embedded in communication; how else, other than via communication does a leader move people to action? It is through communication that institutional realities are created. Communication is multifaceted and complex, but a fundamental element of communication is language. According to a virtue ethics perspective, moral characteristics and virtues are developed when leaders engage in moral rhetoric (Holt, 2006). The communicative processes of leadership and the influence of moral communication suggest that the daily practices of leadership such as inspiring (Conger, 1991), motivating (Mayfield, Mayfield, & Kopf, 1998), collaborating (Grint, 2010), and meaning making (Barge, 2014) all provide opportunities for leaders to voice and model virtues. By assuming language as the best way to develop virtue, TVP strategies build on the inherently communicative nature of leadership, echo the

virtue ethics perspective pertaining to the importance of moral rhetoric, and overlay the daily dynamics of organizational leadership.

THE 100 VIRTUES OF TVP

Within the leadership literature, there are many conflicting lists of which 'the' virtues are. Attempts to catalogue universal virtues (e.g. Peterson & Seligman, 2004) and the theories of *good* leadership that are built on virtue (e.g. Cameron, 2011; Riggio, Zhu, Reina, & Maroosis, 2010; Wang & Hackett, 2015) usually enumerate lists of fewer than 10 virtues. In contrast, TVP proffers a list of 100 virtues. A key distinction and a feature we think makes TVP most promising is that where extant theories of *good* leadership say, 'these virtues make *good* leadership', TVP says, 'these strategies can develop *any* virtues'. The point being, that which specific virtues are displayed is an issue of subjective interpretation (I interpret the act as *helpful*, you interpret it as *fair*), and which virtues are in need of developing is an issue of context and *telos.* According to the principle of *telos,* as individuals and organizations we need to determine for ourselves which virtues are essential in achieving our purpose, and focus on developing those virtues, rather than the virtues determined as theoretically essential in *good* leadership.

The inclusivity of a list of 100 virtues allows TVP to capture diverse and sometimes conflicting lists of which 'the' virtues are. For instance, Hackett and Wang (2012) identify the six virtues of courage, temperance, justice, prudence, humanity, and truthfulness in their conceptualization of virtuous leadership; while Riggio et al. (2010) consider prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice to be the cardinal virtues of leadership. All of these virtues appear in TVP's list of 100 (see Table 1). The difference between a list of four or six virtues and a list of 100 virtues is striking. As

explored through social-scientific approaches, leadership theory tends to focus on measurable performance-oriented virtues, objectivity, and theoretical parsimony. Whereas, the 100 virtues of TVP were derived from ancient sacred texts and indigenous oral traditions focused less on instrumental outcomes and more on human flourishing (Popov & Smith, 2005), an approach that echoes a humanities based orientation more than a social-scientific one. In line with a cross-disciplinary approach, we suggest that TVP can enhance even those theories of leadership which are not explicitly grounded in virtues.

Much leadership theorizing that does not espouse an explicit virtues orientation still contains implicit reference to the importance of virtues and facilitating ethical and prosocial leadership. For example, Heifetz and Linsky's (2017) consideration of the ethics or goodness implied by questions speaking to higher values and opportunities to make a difference, or Grint's (2010) consideration of the wicked problems of leadership. Kempster, Jackson, and Conroy's (2011) exploration of leadership purpose also points to the moral or ethical aspects of leading and implies the role of virtues by drawing on the work of virtue theorist Alasdair MacIntyre (1985, 1999). These approaches to leadership, while not overtly focused on virtues or grounded in virtue ethics, can still be enriched by advancing TVP as a program to develop virtues and therefore facilitate ethical and prosocial leadership.

In 2012 Hackett and Wang conducted a review of the moral, ethical, spiritual, servant, charismatic, transformational, and visionary leadership literatures. Their review produced a list of 59 virtues conceptualized as leader character traits in these literatures (Hackett & Wang, 2012). Some leadership theories articulate virtues as core dimensions, while others simply mention virtues within their literatures explaining *good* leaders and leadership processes as according to their theory. Table 1

provides a comparison of the list of virtues compiled by Hackett and Wang (2012) and the list of virtues provided by TVP. In the left-hand columns are the virtues recorded by Hackett and Wang (2012) and which leadership theories reference each. The right-hand columns indicate whether each virtue is listed verbatim or by synonym in TVP's list of 100 virtues and enumerates those virtues of TVP which do not appear in Hackett and Wang's (2012) list.

The virtues in Hackett and Wang's (2012) that are not matched verbatim by the list from TVP seem to be those with a task-focus or extrinsic orientation. We suggest this relates to our previous comment about TVP's focus on human flourishing, while leadership research is more focused on measurable instrumental outcomes. One concern we have about TVP's list of virtues is its omission of prudence. This is troubling because from an Aristotelian perspective, it is prudence that tells a person which virtue to enact at what time and how (Aristotle, 350BCE/1962). While the virtues of discernment and wisdom may be argued to combine as prudence, we would advocate for the inclusion of prudence in TVP's list. Other than this concern, the inclusive list of 100 virtues proffered by TVP seems to account for the many virtues referenced within various theories of *good* leadership and implies that the strategies of TVP are poised to develop the virtues deemed desirable in *good* leaders and *good* processes of leadership.

TABLE 1 – Virtues from leadership theories and the 100 virtues of TVP

Virtues referenced in leadership theory (Hackett & Wang 2012)	Which leadership theories cite the virtue	Included verbatim or by synonym in TVP list of 100 virtues	TVP virtues not found in theories reviewed by Hackett and Wang (2012)
Ability	SR	Excellence	*Accountability*
Acceptance	SR, V	✓	*Appreciation*
Ambition	V	Initiative	*Assertiveness*
Autonomy		Independence	*Awe*
Benevolence	SR, T	Charity	*Beauty*

Caring	M, E, SP, SR, C, T, V	✓	*Certitude*
Compassion	M, E, SP, SR, C, V	✓	*Cheerfulness*
Competence	M, V	Confidence	*Cleanliness*
Concern for others	E, SP, SR, C	Gentleness	*Commitment*
Conscientiousness	E	Faithfulness	*Contentment*
Consideration	T	✓	*Courtesy*
Consistency	C	Steadfastness	*Decisiveness*
Cooperativeness	V	✓	*Detachment*
Courage/fortitude	M, E, SP, SR, C, T, V	✓	*Diligence*
Creativity	C, T, V	✓	*Endurance*
Dedication	T, V	Devotion	*Faith*
Dependability	E, SR, V	Trustworthiness	*Flexibility*
Determination	E, T, V	✓	*Forbearance*
Discipline	SR, C, V	Self-discipline	*Fortitude*
Empathy	E, SR, C, T, V	✓	*Grace*
Enthusiasm	E, V	✓	*Gratitude*
Equity	SR, T	Fairness	*Helpfulness*
Faithfulness/faith/loyalty	M, E, SP	✓	*Idealism*
Fidelity	E, V	✓	*Mercy*
Forgiveness	SP,SR	✓	*Mindfulness*
Friendliness	T	✓	*Moderation*
Generosity	SR	✓	*Nobility*
Honesty	M, E, SP, SR, C, T, V	✓	*Optimism*
Honor	SR	✓	*Orderliness*
Hope	SP, V	✓	*Peacefulness*
Human-heartedness	T	Humanity	*Perceptiveness*
Humility	M, E, SP, SR, T, V	✓	*Prayerfulness*
Independence	V	✓	*Purity*
Integrity	M, E, SP, SR, C, T, V	✓	*Purposefulness*
Justice/fairness	M, E, SP, SR, C, T, V	✓	*Reverence*
Kindness	SR	✓	*Serenity*
Love	M, E, SP, C, T, V	✓	*Simplicity*
Loyalty	E, SP,SR, V	✓	*Sincerity*
Magnanimity	V	Joyfulness	*Strength*
Modesty	SR	✓	*Tact*
Openness	V	✓	*Thankfulness*
Passion	M, T, V	✓	*Trust*
Patience	E, SP, SR, C	✓	*Understanding*
Perseverance/ persistence	E, SP,SR, T, V	✓	*Unity*
Pride	E	Dignity	*Wonder*
Prudence	M, E, SP, SR, C, T, V	Discernment/Wisdom	*Zeal*
Reliability	E, V	✓	
Respect for others	M, E, SP, SR	✓	
Responsibility/ accountability/duty	M, E, SP, SR, C, T, V	✓	
Righteousness	C, T	✓	
Self-sacrifice	E, SR, C, T	✓	
Sensitivity	E, SP	Thoughtfulness	
Service to the common good	SR	✓	

Temperance/ moderation/ self-control	M, E, SP, SR, C, T, V	✓	
Tolerance	E, SP	✓	
Toughness	SR	Resilience	
Trustworthiness	M, E, SP, SR, C, T, V	✓	
Truthfulness	M, C	✓	
Wisdom	SP, SR, T, V	✓	

M = moral leadership; E = ethical leadership; SP = spiritual leadership; SR = servant leadership; C = charismatic leadership; T = transformational leadership; V = visionary leadership

TVP's list of 100 virtues relates to an important feature of virtue ethics, that being the unity of virtue and universality of some virtu*es*. A recent reconceptualization of virtue, based in Aristotelian virtue ethics, defines virtue as "the human inclination to think, feel, and act in ways that express moral excellence and contribute to the common good" (Newstead, Macklin, Dawkins & Martin, 2018, p. 446). Reflected in this definition is the multilayered nature of virtue. Virtue arises as an internal inclination towards *goodness*, it is then expressed as virtuous behavioral events, that are experienced subjectively by those witnessing the event. As an internal inclination, virtue is unified – it is a singular leaning towards *goodness,* sometimes referred to as the *heliotropic* effect (e.g. Cameron, Mora, Leutscher, & Calarco, 2011). But when expressed in words or actions, virtuousness is interpreted as one or more discrete virtu*es;* the ascribing of virtu*es* to words or actions is a subjective exercise. For example, person X acts on good inclination (acts on virtue) and shares his lunch with person Y who has none. Some might ascribe this behavior an act of charity, while others might consider it as indicative of the virtu*es* of generosity, fairness, justice, self-sacrifice, humanity, and so on.

TVP's list of 100 virtues also provides a lexicon broad enough to account for the subjective ascribing of specific virtues to virtuous events. The process of determining which virtues are most important to recognize and develop speaks to the

virtue ethics principle of *telos*. *Telos* has to do with the importance of each individual determining for his or herself which virtues are most essential to the development of his or her moral character (e.g. Arjoon, 2008; Barker, 2002; Heugens, Kaptein, & van Oosterhout, 2008). A list of 100 virtues allows for a diversity of *telos,* some may identify patience and humanity as core to their *telos,* while other may focus on self-discipline and truthfulness. By accounting for a diversity of *telos* TVP's list of 100 virtues can inform the moral development of diverse individuals and can accommodate a plurality of cultural and moral orientations.

Having introduced TVP by discussing its assumed relationship between virtues and character, its language-based approach to virtues development, and its inclusive list of 100 virtues, we will briefly highlight the resonance between developing virtue and developing leadership. Following which, we will commence with theorizing the five strategies of TVP.

THE RESONANCE BETWEEN VIRTUE AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The fundamental argument for a virtues-based approach to leadership development is the relationship between leadership, character, and virtue. Leadership is a human phenomenon (Ciulla, 2004), human leaders possess a moral character, and moral character is composed of virtues (Aristotle, 350BCE/1962). Virtue is defined as the human inclination to think, feel, and act in ways that express moral excellence and contribute to the common good or *eudemonia* (Newstead et al., 2018). Therefore, developing virtue is a means of developing moral character, and moral character informs how and why individual leaders engage in the practices and processes that they do. The role of leader character has begun to attract the interest of scholars

interested in understanding *good* leadership as evidenced by bourgeoning literature on the topic (e.g. Crossan et al., 2013; Crossan et al., 2017; Hannah & Avolio, 2011; Sarros & Cooper, 2006). In this article we use the term 'moral character' to refer to the part of a person which inclines towards the 'good', the moral self, or the culmination of the virtu*es* a person possesses.

Both leadership and virtue are deeply complex, ancient, lifelong, multifaceted, non-static, relational phenomena. Recent work by Wilson (2016) provides a vivid and critical account of the ongoing evolution of leadership studies. Indeed, a plethora of work in the fields of both leadership and virtue attests to ancient and continued interest both in what it means to lead (and how to lead well), and, what it means to be virtuous (and how to develop virtue) (e.g. Alzola, 2008; Aristotle, 350BCE/1962; Bauman, 2017; Cameron, 2011; Hannah & Avolio, 2011; Kilburg, 2012; Levine & Boaks, 2014; MacIntyre, 1999, Narvaez, 2008; Pearce et al., 2006; Riggio et al., 2010; Whetstone, 2001, 2017). The continual effort required to develop both virtue and leadership, and the contextual, relational nature of both phenomena highlight the sagacity of virtues-based leadership development.

Virtue and Leadership as a Continual Development Exercise

The processes of learning both virtue and leadership begin in early childhood and continue throughout life. We first learn of virtues such as fairness, love, and courage early in life, however, our practice of these and other virtues continues to develop throughout life (Annas, 2015). As adults, we may practice the same virtues as in childhood, but we do so in different ways. Instead of showing fairness by sharing a toy, an adult might show fairness in budget allocations across departments. Similarly, early lessons of leadership are learned in childhood and contribute to how one leads in the workplace but continually evolve (Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, & McKee,

2014). We might first learn about leadership by being class leader in kindergarten, leading our classmates from music class to gym class. These early lessons of leadership are important, but our practices of leadership evolve past this initial learning. As head of a project team, one's understanding of leadership is far more complex than walking in a linear direction at the head of a single-file. Both virtue and leadership development are lifelong processes.

Virtue is developmental in that the virtuous life is a life lived in *pursuit* of eudemonia, not the *arrival at* eudemonia (Annas, 2012; Aristotle, 350BCE/1962). One is never the perfect virtuous person. Nor is one ever the perfect leader. Leadership as we know it, experience it, and study it, and the reality of our shared human condition is that we are not perfect; we are inherently flawed (Ciulla, 2004). And yet, according to a virtue ethics perspective, we have a *heliotropic* inclination toward what is 'right', toward the common good, toward virtue (Annas, 2015; Aristotle, 350BCE/1962). In its developmental orientation, virtue is very much like leadership. Leadership, too, is learned and can be taught, but good leadership needs to develop beyond simple instruction and the leadership lessons learnt early in childhood (Day et al., 2014). Good leadership develops in consideration of trigger events and a complexity of life experience (Avolio & Hannah, 2008; Day et al., 2014; Day & Harrison, 2007). Developing virtue and developing leadership both require continued learning, refining, and cementing good habits. Both virtue and leadership are learned in early life and remain a continual development exercise.

Virtue and Leadership as Contextual and Relational

According to Aristotle, virtue must be practiced in the right way and at the right time (Aristotle, 350BCE/1962). For example, during the Milgram studies, researchers asked participants to administer electric shocks to others; and most participants

obliged. Participants were guided by the virtue of obedience to researchers. Obedience is a virtue, but in this context, it was not the *right* virtue (Ciulla, 2017). A more humane virtue to have practiced in this case would have been compassion towards participants who appeared to suffer. Virtue, we can see, is contextual. One virtue, such as obedience, is not always the *right* virtue and even the *right* virtue must be practiced in *the right way* (Annas, 2012; Aristotle, 350BCE/1962; Ciulla, 2017). To be virtuous, an individual must enact virtue in a way that is contextually appropriate (Newstead et al., 2018).

Leadership is invariably informed by and informing of context. Leaders play a profound role in the shaping of organizational culture, especially in terms of virtuous or ethical aspects (e.g. Brown et al., 2005; Ciulla, 2014; Whetstone, 2017). The importance of leaders adapting behavior and style to suit the contextual factors of a given situation is well attested to by theory and evidence in the fields of contingent and situational leadership (e.g. Dinh et al., 2014; Graeff, 1983; Hersey & Blanchard, 2007). What works to move some people to action in some contexts will not always work to move other people to action in other contexts. Much like virtue, leadership must be enacted in the right way at the right time; it is deeply contextual.

Similarly, both virtue and leadership are relational. Relationship and experience are central to the development of virtue (Weaver, 2017). Moral character is composed of habituated virtues which are “intentionally and unintentionally taught, changed, or learned from others and the social environment” (Ciulla, 2017, p. 948). For its part, leadership does not occur in a vacuum. For the processes of leadership to occur people must engage in relational processes. As a process of one or more people moving other people to do something, the very nature of leadership implies the relating of people.

The development of virtue and leadership are deeply intertwined. Both are lifelong and continued projects of a distinctly developmental orientation. Both are also inherently contextual and must be enacted in the right ways at the right times. Finally, leadership and virtue are fundamentally human phenomena and depend on relational processes. The sagacity of virtue-based leadership development is grounded in these intersections and in the notion that the development of virtue and leadership may be mutually constructive. Considering how leadership looks without virtue further highlights the resonance between the two phenomena. Untempered by virtue, leadership would become a process of power and coercion. Dynamics of leading are often tainted by the absence of fairness, compassion, forgiveness, honesty, and integrity. Indeed, as argued by extant theories of *good* leadership, it is the inclination towards virtue and discrete virtues which make leadership *good*.

THE FIVE STRATEGIES OF TVP

TVP articulates five strategies which it claims 'cultivate character' by developing virtues. The five strategies of TVP are designed to support and enable the learning, application, and development of the 100 virtues enumerated by the program. As such, the strategies are pedagogical in tone and orientation. In this section we provide a description of each strategy as based on our reading of TVP's *Educator Guide* (Popov & Smith, 2005) and website (www.virtuesproject.com). We then align each strategy with extant theory from the fields of virtue ethics, the social psychology of leadership and organizational studies, and the theory of moralized leadership.

The first strategy of TVP is to Speak the Language of Virtues. Speaking the Language of Virtues includes seeing and hearing the virtues implicit in a person's actions, followed by naming and acknowledging the identified virtues. Naming

virtues in someone else's behavior increases that person's capacity to realize they have that virtue and that they can choose to use that virtue in future (Popov & Smith, 2005). Speaking the Language of Virtues assumes that what we say and how we speak to one another influences who and how we become, and that shaming and name-calling reaffirm negative beliefs, whereas acknowledging virtues builds confidence and moral character. Speaking the Language of Virtues, while positive and relational in tone, does not imply an avoidance of difficult or critical conversations. The strategy can be used to strongly guide and correct behavior, by inviting a person to virtues rather than exchanging harsh words or avoiding the conversation all together.

TVP's *Educator Guide* (2005) stresses the importance of 'catching them in the act of committing a virtue'. This means looking for instances where individuals are practicing a virtue that does not come easily to them. For instance, when a person usually prone to shyness speaks up in a meeting, he can be acknowledged, or 'caught' for his courage; when a person who is usually task-focused shows concern for a colleague, she could be recognized for her compassion.

Speaking the Language of Virtues can be used to a) acknowledge behavior, b) guide behavior, and c) correct behavior and includes three parts. The three parts to Speaking the Language include 1) an acknowledgement or invitation, 2) a specific virtue that the person is being recognized for or invited to practice, and 3) the situation or evidence. For example, if an employee put in extra effort on a project, his leader might offer a virtues acknowledgment by saying, "(1) thank you for (2) the determination (3) you showed in your sustained efforts to get the project up and running". However, if the staff member missed the first deadline on a project, his leader might offer virtues guidance by saying, "(1) you need to be (2) responsible (3)

in meeting your deadlines." And, if the employee were to continue missing deadlines, his leader might offer a virtues correction along the lines of, "(1) I need you to show (2) diligence and responsibility and (3) have your part done by the end of the week".

Speaking the Language of Virtues employs specific virtues in providing positive and constructive feedback. Whereas one might say, "Nice work dealing with the difficult customer", someone Speaking the Language of Virtues would say, "nice work remaining *courteous* with that difficult customer". Speaking the Language of Virtues calls for the articulation of a specific virtue (courtesy) and a specific situation (dealing with a difficult customer). TVP claims that speaking the language of virtues supports moral development by linking virtues to behavior, thus building the capacity to call on that virtue again when needed. Speaking the Language of Virtues is the first and foundational strategy of TPV; the one upon which the other four strategies are built (Popov & Smith, 2005).

The second strategy of TVP is to Recognize Teachable Moments. Recognizing Teachable Moments represents "an attitude towards life as a process in which each of us is a life-long learner" (Popov & Smith, 2005, p. 30). A major focus of Recognizing Teachable Moments is to "turn stumbling blocks into stepping stones". In the face of challenges or obstacles, TVP resources suggest asking, "What virtue do you need?" (Popov & Smith, 2005).

One TVP resource tells the story of the principal of an alternative school in the USA, and how he used Teachable Moments to guide the discipline he practiced with his students, many of whom had criminal records. When a student was sent to his office, the principal would ask what had happened and allow the student to tell their story. Then he would point to a list of virtues and ask the student, "What virtues were you forgetting?" or "What virtues would have helped you do the right thing?" Once

the student identified one or two virtues, the principal would then ask, "How can you fix this by using that virtue?" (Popov & Smith, 2005, p. 33). By focusing on lessons learned and implicit virtues, Recognizing Teachable Moments provides a way to learn from mistakes in a way that develops virtues and guides future action.

The third strategy of TVP is to Set Clear Boundaries. TVP claims that clear, positive, virtues-based boundaries and restorative justice can create safe environments, and that safe environments allow for flourishing. Setting Clear Boundaries based on "virtues of peace, justice, respect, caring, kindness…" creates "safe havens" (Popov & Smith, 2005, p. 57). According to TVP, Setting Clear Boundaries creates atmospheres that value virtue as much as achievement, that favour restitution over retribution, and that facilitate the cultivation of character (Popov & Smith, 2005, p. 58).

Setting Clear Boundaries guides behavior by stating virtue-based expectations; for example, a leader might highlight excellence as an aspiration rather than giving a directive to do better work (Popov & Smith, 2005). Clear boundaries, as outlined by TVP, are moderate in number, specific, based on encouraged behavior (rather than prohibited behavior), have relevant, restorative consequences, are consistent and clearly communicated, easily understood, non-negotiable, and clear (Popov & Smith, 2005).

The fourth strategy of TVP is to Honor Spirit. According to TVP, 'spiritual' pertains to, "a sense of meaning and purpose, beliefs and values, mastery of the virtues in our character" (Popov & Smith, 2005, p. 83). Honoring Spirit means making time for reflection, reverence, and appreciation of beauty as a way of enhancing emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Honoring Spirit is about remembering that there is more to life and living than physical needs and extrinsic rewards.

Honoring Spirit is connection to self, others, and the greater world. TVP speaks about Honoring Spirit in terms of inspiration, reverence, reflection, integrity, and core beliefs. Recommended activities for Honoring Spirit include nature walks, celebrations and ceremonies, meditation, mindfulness, prayer, reflection, honoring others, reflecting on teachings from elders, and reflecting on one's virtues (Popov & Smith, 2005).

The fifth strategy of TVP is to Offer Companioning. Offering Companioning is a means of meeting the need people have to feel heard. People need to be seen, heard, and taken seriously; telling our stories is how we find meaning and purpose in life events. Companioning is a strategy that is employed when someone has strong positive or negative emotions, feels confused, or is facing a moral dilemma. The process of Companioning prescribes compassionate curiosity and is articulated in the follows seven steps:

1. Open the door: ask "what's happening" or "what's going on for you?"
2. Offer receptive silence.
3. Ask cup emptying questions: "what is the worst thing?" or "what is the hardest part?"
4. Focus on sensory cues.
5. Ask virtues reflection questions: "what would give you the courage to...?" or "how can you show determination in..." or "what would help you be patient...?"
6. Ask integration questions: "has this been helpful?" or "what is clearer to you now?"

7. Give a virtue acknowledgement: "I admire the loyalty you have shown for..." or "I have really heard your compassion in wanting to..." (Popov & Smith, 2005).

Companioning is based on the belief that "the wisdom needed to resolve a problem, a loss, a disappointment is within us rather than something to be imposed from someone else" (Popov & Smith, 2005, p. 109). This resonates with approaches to counselling and coaching which are based on helping the speaker find his or her own best way forward.

ALIGNING TVP TO THEORY

Strategy five, Offer Companioning, prescribes 'compassionate curiosity' to the individual employing the strategy. But other than this, none of the TVP strategies are prescriptive or predictive in terms of which virtues they can or will develop. This non-prescriptive aspect of TVP accounts for the virtue ethics principle of *telos*. The principle of *telos* explains that each individual must determine for his or her self which virtues (e.g. from the list of 100) he or she wants to develop (Arjoon, 2008; Barker, 2002; Heugens et al., 2008). For example, Speaking the Language of Virtues does not promise to develop respect above all other virtues. Rather, Speaking the Language of Virtues is a practice-based strategy that can be employed to recognize, guide, or correct with *any* virtue, and thus build capacity for that virtue to be enacted again.

TVP strategies encourage and develop the internal inclination towards good, or the virtue, of both the doer (leader) and the done to (a leader's counterpart). However, it is impossible to predict which virtu*es* individuals will focus on developing. For example, in organization **A**, a leader may wish to cultivate increased

creativity and therefore might Speak the Language of Virtues to acknowledge *creativity* when he sees a counterpart trying something new. While in organization **B**, a leader might be striving to cultivate courage and so might Speak the Language of Virtues to acknowledge *courage* when she sees a counterpart trying something new. Similar behaviors might be recognized as opportunities to acknowledge and develop different virtues, as per the principle of *telos*. Therefore, instead of proposing which strategies will develop what virtues, we identify the socio-psychological outcomes that might result from leaders (doers) practicing TVP strategies with counterparts (the done to). Our theorizing focuses on the practice aspect of each strategy, and in particular how each aligns to the behaviors proposed to result in positive moralization as according to the emerging theory of moralized leadership (Fehr et al, 2015).

By adopting a leader-centric tone in our propositions, we do not mean to suggest a unidirectional follow of influence from leader to follower. Neither do we intend to imply that there are clear distinctions between leaders and followers as "two kinds of people" (Alvesson, 2017, p. 6). Our focus on leaders represents the generally accepted notion that leaders wield proportionately greater influence and power within organizations (legitimate, authoritarian, referent, or other). Our focus on leaders also recognizes that leaders are gatekeepers and influencers within organizations and targeting leaders with development interventions, such as TVP provides an opportunity to affect the whole organization (e.g. review by Avolio, Reichardb, Hannah, Walumbwa, & Chan, 2009). To temper the tendency of reductionism, we refrain from speaking explicitly about 'leaders' and 'followers'. The relationships between 'leaders' and 'followers' is often over simplified and functionalist. To avoid this, as we theorize the strategies of TVP and articulate corresponding propositions, we speak of leaders and *counterparts*. By counterparts, we mean any other individual

the ‘leader’ (or individual who receives TVP training) might engage with, including subordinates, peers, or superiors within an organizational hierarchy. Where extant theory conceptualizes leaders and followers, we echo such language, but in our own theorizing, we consider the behaviors, strategies, experiences, and outcomes of leaders and their counterparts.

Moralized Leadership

We focus on moralized leadership (Fehr et al., 2015) because it describes leader behaviors and practices rather than leader traits. Moralized leadership explains that the behaviors and practices of leaders leads to followers’ positive (or not) moralization and values consistent behavior. This is substantially different to the theories of *good* leadership, such as Wang & Hackett’s (2015) conceptualization of virtuous leadership which focuses on six virtues as essential leader traits.

Moralized leadership articulates six moral foundations consisting of care/harm, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, sanctity/degradation, authority/subversion, and liberty/oppression. This broad, pluralistic approach contrasts most ethical leadership theory, which focuses narrowly on the ethics of care and justice (Fehr et al., 2015). Fehr et al. (2015) explains how followers will moralize leader behavior that resonates with the follower’s own moral orientation towards one or more moral foundations, and describes leader behaviors likely to result in followers’ positive moralization. In other words, the representative behaviors identified by Fehr et al. (2015), are likely to be deemed ‘right’ or ‘good’ by followers. These behaviors, and the positive moralization they prompt, are also expected to result in followers adopting values congruent behaviors. Moralized leadership and TVP focus on behaivors and practices, rather than specific virtues or traits. This

shared orientation makes moralized leadership a fitting theory to help explain how and why TVP strategies may work to develop *good* leadership.

In the sections that follow we align each TVP strategy to theory by highlighting how it resonates with the philosophy of virtue ethics and aligns to extant socio-psychological theory and evidence. Our aligning of each strategy will culminate in a proposition regarding how it is expected to contribute to *good* leadership, including processes of positive moralization as described by the theory of moralized leadership (Fehr et al., 2015). Our propositions have been developed as if the ‘leader’ were the ‘doer’ and the ‘counterpart’ the ‘done to’. We do this in consideration of the fact that assuming simplistic and unidirectional power relations between ‘leaders’ and ‘followers’ “is a fundamental misrepresentation of social relations” (Alvesson, 2017, p. 6). It is overly simplistic to think that there are absolute, clear, or unidirectional distinctions between a leader or ‘doer’ and a follower or ‘done to’. Yet, this seems to be the norm within leadership scholarship, much of which emphasizes leaders’ traits and behaviors and resulting outcomes among followers. For example, ethical leadership (Brown, Trevino, & Harrison, 2005) is predicted to increase the extra effort of followers; while virtuous leadership (Wang & Hackett, 2015) is correlated with follower in-role and extra-role performance. Similarly, moralized leadership (Fehr et a., 2015) is proposed to foster follower moralization of leaders’ behaviors, thereby resulting in follower prosocial, pro-organizational, and pro-leader behavior. While we adopt a similar tone in crafting our propositions, we attempt to temper the potential for an undercurrent of reductionism and functionalism by referring to leaders and counterparts, which include subordinates, peers, and superiors of leaders within an organizational hierarchy. In our propositions by ‘leader’ we simply mean the

individual ‘doing’ the TVP strategy, and by ‘counterpart’ we mean the person the strategy is ‘done to’.

Aligning Strategy 1

Speaking the Language of Virtues could inform the dynamics of providing feedback. Providing positive and constructive feedback is paramount to leadership roles, and this strategy provides a way of doing so with virtue. Language is an effective way to develop character because one’s concept of self is created through communication with others (Arjoon, 2000, p. 166). It is through language and communication that the norms of culture are transmitted and reinforced. If it is communication and the processes of relating to others that create culture and one’s self-concept, and if virtue represent inherent goodness, or eudemonia, (Aristotle, 350BCE/1962; MacIntyre, 1999), then it follows that virtues language would facilitate the moral development of those engaged in a virtues-based conversation.

There is ample evidence that virtues language, or using virtues explicitly in communication with others, is well suited to the development of moral character. For instance, the practice of rhetoric, which is not simply persuasion but, “the practice by which institutional reality is created” (Holt, 2006, p. 1175) is a way of developing moral characteristics, or virtues, in leaders and their followers (Holt, 2006). Indeed, discourse practices within the workplace influence virtue development and are a prime opportunity to practice virtue (Weaver, 2017). The everyday directives of a leader have “the potential to support or erode the virtues of their followers” (Ciulla, 2017, p. 947).

In everyday activities and tasks such as, “answering phones, filling out forms, or ordering food from a server, we are more likely to demonstrate the virtues that we really possess or fail to possess as habitual ways of doing familiar activities” (Ciulla,

2017, p. 947). Engaging in everyday communication processes that employ virtues recognition provides the opportunity to facilitate the building and habituation of virtue. Sometimes it can be hard to know which virtue to practice in a new situation (Ciulla, 2017), which suggests that there might be some merit in leaders using virtues language to guide behavior and navigate a new or challenging situation. Be it through guiding or acknowledging it seems that virtues language is closely correlated with the development of moral character and virtue.

Assisting counterparts in developing themselves and their skills through Speaking the Language of Virtues, represents leaders' behaviors congruent with the care foundation of MFT. Leader behavior of this kind is likely to result in counterparts' prosocial behavior (Fehr et al., 2015). Additionally, when leaders recognize high performers it is likely to result in counterparts' positive moralization based on the foundation of fairness and to encourage followers' prosocial behavior (Fehr et al., 2015). Speaking the Language of Virtues is poised to positively influence the dynamics of providing feedback.

The implications of leaders Speaking the Language of Virtues could be multiple. By prompting counterparts' positive moralization along the care and fairness moral foundations (Fehr et al., 2015; Graham et al., 2013), it could encourage increased prosocial behavior among counterparts. Additionally, drawing attention to the virtues implicit in behavior and focusing on identifying which virtues are needed in a given context represent the moral reasoning of a virtuously mature individual (Annas, 2015). It may be unreasonable to expect leaders to demonstrate virtuous maturity or virtuous reasoning. However, the aspirational nature of virtue ethics is grounded in the principle that we are constantly striving towards 'the good life' (Annas, 2015). While it may seem unconventional or uncomfortable at first, virtues

language is learnable and using virtues language is inextricably tied to the development of virtue (Vasalou, 2012). Were a leader to practice Speaking the Language of Virtues it might be expected that her mastery of virtues language and her virtuous reasoning would increase. Were a leader to adopt Speaking the Language of Virtues, it might be expected that its effects would be felt among counterparts.

Speaking the Language of Virtues represents a way of providing positive, guiding, and corrective feedback in a way that makes explicit the role of virtues and character. Feedback tied to virtues and character, as opposed to general feedback or feedback tied only to task or procedure, may inspire positive affect and resultant broadening of learning repertoires and building of future performance (Fredrickson, 2001). Recognition and acknowledgment of virtues may also trigger intrinsic motivation, and intrinsic motivation is associated with positive affect, enhanced creativity, increased persistence, and cognitive flexibility (Grant & Berry, 2011). Learning to Speak the Language of Virtues may take conscious effort, but it is learnable (Vasalou, 2012) and the use of virtues language has been argued to increase the moral reasoning and maturity of leaders (Annas, 2015) as well as to trigger positive affect, intrinsic motivation, and prosocial behavior among counterparts.

Proposition 1: Speaking the Language of Virtues develops leader moral reasoning and encourages counterparts' positive affect, intrinsic motivation, and prosocial behavior.

Aligning Strategy 2

Recognizing Teachable Moments is poised to foster the dynamics of organizational learning. Reframing obstacles or negative experiences into opportunities to learn and grow is the essence of cognitive reframing which has been applied within psychological traditions and is well evidenced within the nursing literature as aiding

in recovery (Robson & Troutman-Jordan, 2014). Cognitive reframing includes altering negative beliefs and converting negative thinking into positive thinking. Doing so increases perceived personal control, promotes wellbeing, and facilitates positive behavioral change (Robson & Troutman-Jordan, 2014). Shifting focus to the positive with virtues builds the capacity of the individual to draw on his or her virtues in the future, an ability which leads to increased wellbeing and happiness (Aristotle, 350BCE/1962; Cameron, Quinn, & Dutton, 2003; MacIntyre, 1999). This is a principle that is echoed in the positive approaches to organizational scholarship.

Psychological capital is composed of the measurable construct consisting of hope, optimism, efficacy, and resilience (Luthans & Youssef, 2007). Interventions that aim to develop psychological capital leverage learning from hardship by having participants recount challenges and how they overcame them (Luthans, Avey, Avolio, Norman, & Combs, 2006). Such activities are used because the act of reflecting on and distilling learnings from challenges enhance participants' optimism and efficacy in facing future hardship. Reframing challenges as learning opportunities also echoes efforts within positive organizational scholarship to adopt a positive perspective to challenges in order to grow and learn from them (Cameron & McNaughtan, 2014; Lara, 2012). The clinical psychological process of cognitive reframing and evidence from psychological capital interventions suggest that reframing challenges as opportunities to learn does increase capacity.

Allowing counterparts to learn from mistakes and determine how to complete their tasks is likely to influence the dynamics of organizational learning and prompt counterparts moralization based on the liberty foundation. Positive moralization along the liberty foundation is associated with values such as autonomy, empowerment, and

independence and is likely to result in pro-individual behaviors among counterparts (Fehr et al., 2015).

Other than leaders encouraging counterparts to act in a way that is autonomous, the implications of Recognizing Teachable Moments are many. From a virtue ethics perspective, Ciulla's (2017) work on morality in the miniature highlights the importance of practicing and habituating virtue through everyday experiences. Leadership research tends to focus on the power, vision and charisma of leaders, but Ciulla (2017) stresses paying attention to how leaders conduct daily tasks and assessing how these tasks increase or diminish virtues. For instance, how does the CEO treat a waiter at lunch? Does the General Manager ask her assistant to tell a caller she is out, when she is not? Reframing daily activities as opportunities to either develop or diminish virtues highlights that "the small things actually do matter" (Ciulla, 2017, p. 942) and that there is benefit in actively using daily events as opportunities to practice and develop virtues.

If the strategy of Recognizing Teachable Moments equips leaders with the skills to turn obstacles into learning opportunities, further implications may include increased psychological safety among leaders' teams (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). A greater focus on learning may also enhance the dynamics of organizational learning (e.g. Crossan, Lane, & White, 1999; March, 1991). The concept of cognitive reframing (Robson & Troutman-Jordan, 2014), the 'developability' of virtue (Annas, 2012; Aristotle, 350BCE/1962), and the importance of learning and habituating virtue in everyday encounters (Ciulla, 2017) combine to suggest that reframing challenges as opportunities to learn virtues will develop virtue and moral character.

Proposition 2: Recognizing Teachable Moments fosters morality in the miniature, increased psychological safety and learning, and encourages counterparts' pro-individual behavior.

Aligning Strategy 3

Setting Clear Boundaries could influence workplace dynamics relating to staff policies, dispute resolution, and organizational ethics. Teleological and deontological approaches to ethics focus on either ends justifying means or the most benefit for the greatest number. However, "…no rule or set of rules by itself ever determines how to respond rightly" (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 93). Rather it is the quest of the virtuous person to continually refine how to live rightly, as guided by virtue 'rules' such as 'be kind' or 'be honest' (Annas, 2015). It is virtues rules, or boundaries, such as these as well as an individual's moral reasoning and maturity that guide right action. It follows then that when boundaries are breached and harm or wrong doing occurs, moral reasoning and individual restitution might guide the necessary repair, as per processes of restorative justice.

Restorative justice is based on the idea that a crime is a violation of a *person*, not a rule. As such, restitution focuses on restoring the damage done to the victim rather than administering an arbitrary consequence designed to punish the offender. Restorative justice emphasises the importance of an offender coming to understand the harm he or she has done to the victim and taking action to rectify this harm as well as expressing a commitment to avoid harmful behavior in the future. These practices facilitate the repair of relationships and the restoring of trust (Johnstone, 2013). Restorative practices that facilitate renewed trust and understanding often lead to forgiveness and reconciliation (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2014).

By actively involving both victim and offender in the restitution process, restorative justice provides a more satisfactory way to resolve interpersonal conflict at work than conventional third-party resolution (Kidder, 2007). By allowing for individual propriety, restorative justice in the workplace might increase the justice with which members feel they are treated, and by doing so, increase perceived organizational justice (Cropanzano, Bowen, & Gilliland, 2007). Theoretical and empirical research on psychological safety provides strong support for the notion that humans need to feel safe in order to speak up, share knowledge, learn, and contribute to ongoing dialogue (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Clear, virtue-based boundaries may foster workplace environments that are safe and enabling of psychological safety and its associated performance benefits (Edmondson & Lei, 2014).

It is important to also consider what happens when Clear Boundaries are breached. As per Strategy 3, when boundaries are breached, there may be processes of restorative justice or mandated restorative consequences, but more importantly there is the opportunity to practice Strategy 2, Recognize Teachable Moments. Failures or breaches of boundaries provide leaders and counterparts the chance to reflect on what went wrong, and which virtues might facilitate repair, restitution, or improvement as per Recognizing Teachable Moments. This linking of and between the strategies is important in understanding TVP as a holistic program, rather than merely the deployment of five discrete or independent strategies. The relationship between Setting Clear Boundaries and Recognizing Teachable Moments is particularly important when we consider the sharp edge of authority, or what can happen when counterparts abdicate their own moral responsibility, such as in the Milgram study referenced above, instead of reflecting on what virtues they can call on to make repair or restitution.

The restorative nature of Setting Clear Boundaries speaks to leader behaviors along the care foundation by indicating compassion and forgiveness. When moralized as such, Setting Clear Boundaries might result in counterparts' prosocial behavior (Fehr et al., 2015). However, this strategy also speaks to the moral foundation of authority. Authority entails a leader's behaviors regarding the assignment of followers to tasks and roles, and establishment of clear goals (Fehr et al., 2015). When leaders behave in this way, it leads to follower behaviors indicated by values of deference, respect, and obedience and contributes to followers' pro-leader behavior. Thus, Setting Clear Boundaries can be seen as indicative of behaviors along both the authority and care foundations. And when moralized by counterparts, Setting Clear Boundaries might lead to counterparts' prosocial or pro-leader behavior. Pairing this with the aspirational nature of 'virtues-rules', Cameron's (2011) example of positive practices, and Edmondson and Lei's (2014) review of psychological safety research both support the notion that Setting Clear Boundaries can create safe environments, and that safe environments allow for increased performance and flourishing. The greatest responsibility of leaders is to create the conditions "under which people can and do flourish" (Ciulla, 2004, p. 326). And the implications of leaders adopting the strategy of Setting Clear Boundaries may be an increased ability to do just that.

Proposition 3: Setting Clear Boundaries based on virtues rules and encouraging restorative practices creates safe environments indicated by trust and forgiveness and is conducive to flourishing.

Aligning Strategy 4

The strategy of Honoring Spirit could inform workplace dynamics such as culture, diversity, stress management and wellbeing. Our age of infinite pluralism and ever increasing sensitivities to diversity challenge, and may even prohibit, the integration

of religion into workplaces, except those which are explicitly religious organizations. However, a growing body of literature attests to the interest in spirituality at work (e.g. Ashar & Lane-Maher, 2004; Karakas, 2010; Loehr & Schwartz, 2001; Tourish & Tourish, 2010). Aspects of spirituality include feelings of interconnectedness, trusting that things will work out, striving to serve humankind, and feeling a part of a bigger picture. An etymological definition of spirituality, or *spirare,* means "to breathe", which suggests that spiritual expression is "the essence of our aliveness (sic)" (Manz, Marx, Neal, & Manz, 2006, p. 107). Nevertheless, knowing how to express and celebrate spirituality in an inclusive manner within organizations poses some challenges.

The central themes of good intention and connectedness link spirituality to virtue ethics in that virtue represents an individual's internal inclination towards good (Newstead et al., 2018), and virtu*es* enable people to live together communally (Aristotle, 350BCE/1962; MacIntyre, 1999; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Manz et al (2006) highlight the importance of educating new managers in issues of spirituality as relevant to workplaces and urges virtues as a way of discussing and celebrating spirituality in an inclusive way.

To cultivate flourishing and peak performance, there must be allowance for renewal and honoring of spirit – through whichever practices are appropriate for the individual, leader, or organization (Loehr & Schwartz, 2001; Spreitzer, Porath, & Gibson, 2012). Research emerging in the field of mindfulness echoes this premise by demonstrating that increased consciousness and mindful practices increase performance and wellbeing (Burke, Page, & Cooper, 2015). Expressing and honoring spirit strengthens groups, builds joyfulness through celebration, is an antidote to depression and sadness, allows new perspectives, levels hierarchy, reduces

judgement, and increases the likelihood of more celebration (Johnson, 2005). Spiritualty fosters purpose and connectedness – connecting a person to the work they do and to the people they do it with. It is about people feeling inspired, passionate and engaged, involved, and committed to the people they are doing it with (Manz et al., 2006). Honoring Spirit speaks to a growing interest in workplace spirituality and mirrors the virtue ethics principles of moral excellence and orientation towards a common good. The implications of implementing the strategy of Honoring Spirit could influence workplace dynamics including an organization's culture, attitude and accommodation of diversity, stress management and reduction, wellbeing and leadership.

The moral foundation of sanctity is represented when leaders conduct their personal lives in a pure manner and engage in spiritual cleanliness (Fehr et al., 2015). Fehr et al. (2015) suggest that when leaders do so, their behaviors are likely to be moralized by followers and result in pro-organizational follower behaviors congruent with the values of piety and temperance. There is ample evidence supporting the benefits of Honoring Spirit on both an individual and communal level within organizations. Any hesitation to do so based on the grounds of exclusion or fear of dogmatic connotations can be mitigated by using a language of virtues that offers a universal vocabulary for managers to discuss spirit and spirituality (Manz et al., 2006). As an inclusive lexicon, virtues can facilitate spiritual expression and foster purpose, connection, and pro-organizational behavior.

Proposition 4: Honoring Spirit indicates sanctity and encourages purpose, connection, and pro-organizational behavior.

Aligning Strategy 5

Offering Companioning, a practice of offering 'deep listening' to individuals experiencing 'heightened emotion', speaks to the complex dynamics of managing emotion and stress in the workplace. The sheer number of industries that offer counselling and coaching services attests to the catharsis of being heard. Talking to others about troubles can alleviate stress, strengthen relationships and improve physical and mental health (Bodie, Vickery, Cannava, & Jones, 2015). Active listening, it is generally understood, is an approach to listening that provides unconditional acceptance of and reflection for the speaker's thoughts and feelings. Outcomes of active listening include reduced distress, stronger relationships, and improved mental and physical health (Bodie et al., 2015).

There is a wide range of diverse theories and bodies of evidence suggesting the benefit of deep, mindful listening and positive regard. The existence and popularity of healing industries based on listening suggests the potency of being heard. The theory of active listening explains how listening processes can be healing. Telling troubling personal stories to a "witness" helps people to heal and "…understand themselves and shape possible futures from drawing from the rich stores of their pasts" (Brahnam, 2012, p. 54). It is through verbalizing one's story to another that one makes sense of experiences and comes to understand the present. The person-centeredness of unconditional positive regard whereby the listener allows the speaker to freely express his or her own feelings, reflects TVP's strategy of companioning (Wilkins, 2000), as do the healing effects of storytelling as illustrated by Rosenthal (2003). There are a wide range of theories and bodies of evidence suggesting the benefit of the deep, mindful listening and positive regard.

By prescribing ‘receptive silence’ and prompting open-ended questions, the strategy of Companioning seems to echo a counselling approach and draw on processes similar to active listening, which suggests that when employed with genuine intent, the strategy may lead to healing or at least a more positive mindset and affect of the speaker. However, it is important to consider that learning the Companioning strategy does not substitute counselling training, nor is the workplace necessarily an appropriate context for a counselling conversation. Offering Companioning could be misconstrued as encouraging victimhood or perseverance on perceived slights or challenges. The phrase ‘receptive silence’ is important in that it provides an opportunity for the shar*er* to share as much (or as little) as he or she likes, without overstepping the bounds of privacy. Were a leader to employ the Companioning strategy with skill and good intent, it might be expected to increase perceptions of psychological safety because the speaker would be met with support and receptivity instead of criticism or embarrassment (Edmondson, Kramer, & Cook, 2004). Fehr et al. (2015) suggest that showing compassion leads followers to moralize leader behavior based on the care foundation. This in turn encourages followers’ prosocial behavior based on the values of caring, compassion, and kindness (Fehr et al., 2015).

We do not suggest Companioning as a panacea for all instances of emotion at work, and indeed potential issues of oversharing, perceptions of prying, privacy concerns, and individual differences in regard to verbalizing emotions would need to be balanced with the benefits of sharing and listening. However, the Companioning strategy provides a listening technique that might help speakers engage in self-reflection and have their feelings validated. As such, Offering Companioning would

contribute to creating respectful and safe environments where employees can speak-up and where counterparts are likely to engage in prosocial behavior.

Proposition 5: Offering Companioning demonstrates caring and can prompt self-reflection, validation, and prosocial behavior.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The resonance of virtue and leadership development attest to the sagacity of virtues-based leadership development. TVP's list of 100 virtues allows it to develop the virtues deemed essential by extant theories of *good* leadership. And, we have aligned TVP's five development strategies to explain how each might result in outcomes evidencing increased virtue and *good* leadership. Table 2 highlights each TVP strategy and corresponding theoretical proposition.

TABLE 2

TVP Strategies and Theoretical Propositions

Summary of TVP strategy	Theoretical Proposition
1. **Speak the Language of Virtues** *Using explicit virtues linked to specific situation or outcome to acknowledge and thank, or guide and correct behavior.*	**Proposition 1** *Speaking the Language of Virtues develops leader moral reasoning and encourages counterparts' positive affect, intrinsic motivation, and prosocial behavior.*
2. **Recognize Teachable Moments** *Reflecting on challenges or obstacles, considering which virtues may have enabled a better outcome, and identifying which virtues to call on in future.*	**Proposition 2** *Recognizing Teachable Moments fosters morality in the miniature, increased psychological safety and learning, and encourages counterparts' pro-individual behavior.*

3. **Set Clear Boundaries** *Using virtues language to create clear boundaries and expectations; and using virtues language to guide and correct behavior when it violates said boundaries.*	**Proposition 3** *Setting Clear Boundaries based on virtues rules and encouraging restorative practices creates safe environments indicated by trust and forgiveness and is conducive to flourishing.*
4. **Honor the Spirit** *Engaging in practices that enhance physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing.*	**Proposition 4** *Honoring Spirit indicates sanctity and encourages purpose, connection, and pro-organizational behavior.*
5. **Offer Companioning** *A seven step listening process whereby one person 'listens' another to his or her own best answer.*	**Proposition 5** *Offering Companioning demonstrates caring and can prompt self-reflection, validation, and prosocial behavior.*

It should be noted that TVP predates some of the theory and evidence we cite. We are not suggesting that the authors of TVP consciously drew on the theories we have, nor are we trying to presuppose their sources. Rather we attempt to assess the relevance and applicability of TVP by theorizing the strategies it proffers with theory relevant to the development of *good* leadership.

Our theorizing suggests that training leaders in these five strategies might develop virtue among leaders and counterparts, foster a learning orientation, create the conditions for flourishing, provide a means of inclusive spiritual expression, and instruct leaders in a supportive listening process. Additionally, incorporating theory from the emerging field of moralized leadership indicates that the strategies of TVP may result in counterparts' prosocial, pro-organizational, pro-leader, and pro-individual behavior (Fehr et al., 2015). But these claims need to be further substantiated.

The work we have undertaken in this article is but a spillway to a larger stream of research. As a first step, we suggest that future work explore how practicing

leaders experience TVP and what outcomes result when leaders are trained in TVP strategies. Following some such initial exploratory study, we propose comprehensive field studies to understand if or how TVP may actually result in any outcomes resembling the aforementioned and or to assess how the content or training process of TVP may be adapted to better support leadership development. Simultaneous studies could more comprehensively survey the various virtues discussed as desirable within extant leadership theories and survey which virtues people deem necessary to facilitating flourishing at work

We think it is important that future research efforts probe the leader – follower dichotomy that is assumed in much leadership scholarship (Alvesson, 2017). We advocate work that explores how TVP might facilitate the development of good leader*ship* as well as good leaders. By which we mean, investigations into how TVP training might influence the relational processes that emerge between people to produce leadership, as well as how TVP might influence the skills or capabilities of individual leaders (e.g. Day & Liu, 2018). Additional questions include, how might TVP be experienced by non-leaders, or as an entire organization intervention? How might the virtues-based strategies of TVP develop the virtue of both leaders and counterparts or of any individual regardless of influence potential? And how or if TVP strategies may spill from professional to personal contexts. Of particular interest would be to assess how TVP strategies might develop leader and follower virtue and result in the transition from virtuous vertical leadership to virtuous shared leaders (Pearce, Waldman, & Csikszentmihaly, 2006), or perhaps even reduce the need for formal leadership at all. Key to these future research directions would be establishing clarity regarding how virtue might be measured.

A potential limitation to implementing TVP in practice is that, like any tool, it might be misused. For instance, Speaking the Language of Virtues might be manipulated and misused to soften or subvert workplace communications to the point of obscurity. Honoring Spirit may prove uncomfortable for some leaders or within some organizational contexts. And there is the possibility that the strategies of Setting Clear Boundaries and Recognizing Teachable Moments could be taken to the extreme in the sense of an unrealistic number of boundaries, unwarranted attention dedicated to correcting unintended slights, the portraying of a 'poor-me' attitude, or the unfair public condemning of an individual's mistakes, learnings, or perceived lack of virtue. We argue empirical work is needed to assess if and how TVP might influence workplace dynamics such as these.

CONCLUSION

The virtue-based approach we advocate represents a shift away from our debates regarding a single definition of leadership (Kalshoven & Taylor, 2018) and our extensive generation of descriptive leadership theories (Antonakis, 2017). Because "we are not confused about what leaders do, but we would like to know the best way to do it" (Ciulla, 2004, p. 308). Virtue is our human inclination to think, feel, and act in ways that express moral excellence and contribute to the common good (Newstead et al., 2018), and leadership is a human process of one or more people moving other people to do something (Ciulla, 2004). By adopting a virtue-based leadership development perspective and advancing TVP as a proposed approach this article makes a number of contributions. First are theoretical implications for understanding how we might enable leaders to be and do good, and second are the practice implications for leaders who are driven to lead well.

From a theoretical perspective, this article has advanced a virtues-based approach to developing *good* leaders. TVP was recommended as a practical means of employing virtues to resolve conflict and develop character, but it was flagged for its lack of theory (Annas, 2012). We have provided the theory previously lacking by drawing on the philosophy of virtue ethics, the socio-psychological fields relating to leadership and management, and the emerging theory of moralized leadership to demonstrate the theoretical alignment of TVP's five strategies. Theoretically aligning TVP as we have done is an essential step to take prior to testing in the field (Brousselle & Champagne, 2011; Nielsen & Miraglia, 2017; Pawson, 2013). Our work in this article therefore provides a solid foundation for field studies of if or how TVP develops *good* leadership.

From a practice perspective, we now know there is a readily accessible virtues-based training program that is well aligned to extant theory, and which promises many positive impacts. When employed with skill and good intent, the implications of leaders adopting TVP strategies could range from leaders enhancing their moral reasoning and an increasing positive affect among counterparts (Strategy 1, Speak the Language of Virtues), or allowing for the expression of workplace spirituality (Strategy 4, Honor Spirit). Importantly, TVP is easily accessible via the web and leaders wishing to engage with the content or pursue their own virtues-based development are free to do so.

Anecdotal evidence attests to the positive impact TVP has had in moral development and conflict resolution in many countries over many years (Annas, 2012; Popov, 2015; Popov & Smith, 2005). However, until now its program theory and five development strategies have remained undertheorized (Annas, 2012). Additionally, our scholarly efforts have lacked a focus on holistic approaches to

virtue-based leadership development. By theorizing TVP we have advanced it as a leadership development training program that offers the potential to develop *good* leaders in accordance with extant theories and we have explained how and why it is expected to do so. Our efforts reflect the imperative to understand how we scholars can help practicing leaders be and do *good,* and to positively impact their counterparts, organizations, and communities.

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