

## Character and Leadership: Situating Servant Leadership in a Proposed Virtues Framework

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Leadership scholars and practitioners have emphasized the important connection between morality and leadership over the years. This connection is emphasized even more within the field of servant leadership. While the servant leadership models proposed over the past two decades have advanced our understanding of servant leadership and its application, there is an increasingly obvious need for a common vocabulary and framework for engaging the ethical dimensions of leadership that can be used to facilitate further research into the antecedents and philosophical foundations of servant leadership. In this paper the authors (a) provide an overview of virtues and servant leadership, (b) proposes a model of character and virtues that answers a void in the servant leadership literature, and (c) demonstrate how this model relates to several prominent servant leadership models.

In order to discuss virtues and their relationship to servant leadership, there must first be an understanding of what virtues are and how they relate to similar concepts such as character, values, and personal attributes.

Early work in identifying and defining virtues was done by Aristotle, Plato, Aquinas, Confucius, and Buddha, among others (Ciulla, 2001). History contains a long list of those who have developed theories and practical frameworks. Peterson and Seligman (2004) note that every major religion has some articulation of virtues. From a Christian perspective, Winston (2006) lists a number of character traits, enumerated from the Old and New Testaments, that are accepted by many as virtues.

Even with all of the attention devoted to virtues over time, no single dominant view or construct currently exists. Differences of opinion are readily apparent regarding the definition and nature of virtues. With regard to definition, there is little consensus regarding what actually constitutes a virtue. Ciulla (2001) says that virtues are good habits that come from the daily practices of a society or organization. Garrett (2005) defines virtues as admirable character traits – generally desirable dispositions which contribute to social harmony, enable us to act in accordance with reason, enable us to feel appropriately and have the right intention, and are orientations towards a mean, rather than extremes. Note that these definitions, useful as they are in framing desirable leadership traits, lack the philosophical underpinnings that would lend themselves to the consistent interpretation of such phrasings as “good habits”, “admirable character traits”, and “desirable dispositions.”

Offering a contrast to the perspectives common in leadership studies, Peterson and Seligman (2004) define virtues as core characteristics valued by moral philosophers and religious thinkers. While this definition includes, by reference, a moral component, it offers us little in terms of practical application. From yet another perspective, Whetstone (2005) states that virtues are essential moral attributes of individuals. Similarly, Clark and Rakestraw (1994) define virtues as “Specific dispositions, skills, or qualities of excellence that together make up a person’s character, and that influence his or her way of life” (p. 276). It is important to note in this discussion that the focus is on personal attributes and character traits as opposed to observed behaviors, corresponding with Winston’s (2006) assertion that character focuses on the necessity of being good as opposed to simply doing good.

It is also generally recognized that there is little agreement as to the nature of virtues. MacIntyre (in *After Virtue*), as cited by Brookshire (2001) suggests that the virtues enumerated by Aristotle, the New Testament, Ben Franklin, and others, were simply contextual representations of virtues at specific points in history. Winston (2006) demonstrates the contextual nature of virtues, comparing the virtues articulated by Aristotle with those of traditional Christianity and Patterson’s (2003) servant leadership model. Whetstone (2005) is in general agreement, going so far as to state that all virtues are contextual by nature, not only historically, but situationally as well, meaning that what is considered virtuous in one situation might not be so in another. However, we concur with Covey (2006), and Peterson and Seligman (2004), who argue that virtues are essentially universal,

not contextual. In contrast to MacIntyre's observation, the contextual appearance of some virtues, both historically and culturally, is better explained by the fact that certain virtues are emphasized more in some situations or cultures than others. For instance, Pava (2005) considers a model which recognizes only three virtues in a leadership context - restraint, modesty, and tenacity - and omits other identified virtues - courage, optimism, and strength - because the latter are generally required only in heroic circumstances.

From these various perspectives, we propose a practical definition of virtue as:

A set of related personal attributes or dispositions that (a) is universal and not contextual (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), (b) has moral implications that extend beyond the individual (Ciulla, 2001), (c) has recognition that possessing it without excess is considered good and lacking it is considered harmful (Koehn, 1998), and (d) can be attained through practice (Strang, 2005).

First, we propose that virtues are universal and not contextual. This is consistent with the extensive research of Peterson and Seligman (2004), Covey's (2005) discussion regarding conscience, and Garofalo, et al. (2001) in their assertion that many aspects of corruption are also universally recognized.

Second, we propose that virtues have moral implications beyond the individual. For instance, Koehn (2001) describes how a lack of individual trustworthiness affects one's relationships with others. Ciulla (2001), Englebrecht et al. (2005) and Locke (2006) describe how corruption in organizational leaders impacts stakeholders within and beyond the boundaries of the organization. Dyck and Schroeder (2005) discuss the impact of organizational corruption on economic systems.

Third, we propose that possessing virtues is good, and lacking them is harmful. Possession of virtues is good by definition. Corruption, or lack of virtue, is considered harmful, as noted by Garofalo, et al. (2001), Strang (2005), and Koehn (1998).

Finally, we propose that virtues can be acquired through practice. As asserted by Strang (2005),

The acquisition of virtue is like the acquisition of any habit. One must, first, perform acts consistent with virtue and after the habit has formed

(or during the process), one comes to realize that these virtuous acts are valuable in themselves, and then one decides to pursue the acts because one loves acting virtuously. The more virtuous one becomes the easier it becomes to resist corruption (p. 918).

Our definition considers virtues to be categorical or thematic concepts rather than singular concepts. One advantage of this approach is that moral concepts that have eluded definition can be treated with clarity. Audi and Murphy's (2004) exploration of integrity serves as an example, where they demonstrate that virtually every attempt to define integrity as a singular concept has failed. However, if integrity is instead treated as a *category* of attributes, it enables us to include within it many commonly recognized singular attributes, such as honesty, authenticity, trustworthiness, responsibility, faithfulness, and transparency. Additionally, when using this approach, virtues can more easily be distinguished from other concepts such as values, abilities, and personal traits.

The distinction between virtues and values can be recognized based on context. For instance, courage is widely considered a good character trait, leading to its recognition as a virtue. In contrast, independence is considered a good character trait in the United States, but not in Japan. Generally speaking, we propose that values tend to define cultures or characteristics of roles within an organization or social construct, while virtues transcend cultures and other socially-embedded constructs.

The distinction between virtues and abilities can be recognized based on attainment and moral implications. For example, a disposition of gratitude can be acquired through practice and attention to one's attitudes. Once attained, it may cause one's life and relationships to flourish; without it relationships often suffer and die. In contrast to gratitude, there are many people who have no ability when it comes to woodworking, and they are morally no worse off because of it.

One additional characteristic of virtues is that they do not function independently, but interdependently. Consider the virtue of courage without the virtues of discernment and temperance, or diligence without integrity. The interdependency of virtues is useful when considering the virtues that are generally called upon by various leadership models.

Servant leadership has been receiving more attention in recent years, even in the media and popular press. From Stone Phillips' (2004) Dateline interview with Larry Spears of the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership to Gregen's (2006) article in U. S. News & World Report, it is becoming evident that a model of leadership that once was peripheral in discussions of organizational life is receiving greater attention and respect. In his article creatively entitled *Bad News for Bullies* Gregen notes that, "Increasingly, the best leaders are those who don't order but persuade; don't dictate but draw out; don't squeeze but grow the people around them" (p. 54). He adds that rather than holding onto power, these servant leaders, "push power out of the front office, down into the organization, and become a leader of leaders," understanding "that the people in an organization are its No. 1 asset" (p. 54).

Not only is servant leadership receiving more attention in the media and popular press, but many key organizations are implementing servant leadership in practice. Among others, companies such as Starbucks, Southwest Airlines, Vanguard Investment Group, The Men's Wearhouse, Synovus Financial Corporation, and TD Industries are taking seriously principles related to servant leadership. Phillips (2004) has noted that as many as 20% of Fortune magazine's top 100 companies to work for have sought out guidance from the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership.

While interest in servant leadership is growing, the practice of servant leadership is not a new concept. In fact, most students of servant leadership trace its ancient roots to the model and teaching of Jesus Christ. From Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet (John 13), to his challenging the disciples when they were focused on vying for positions of status (Matthew 20:25-27), Jesus called his followers to a different way. On this point Blanchard (2002) notes that in Jesus' teaching, he talked about a "form of leadership very different from the model familiar to the disciples; a leader who is primarily a servant. He did not offer them a Plan B. Servant-leadership was to be their mode of operation. And so it should be for all leaders" (p. xi).

Beyond mentoring his disciples in service, and showing them the way by modeling such acts as washing their feet, Jesus provided the ultimate example of service and self-sacrifice in his death on the cross. As Stone Phillips (2004) pointed out in his interview with Larry Spears, "Being willing to give his life on the cross... in service of others," was "the ultimate example of this [service]" in the life of Jesus. With this ultimate act of service in view, early church leaders emphasized the importance of

following this model. For instance, in Philippians 2 the church is called to: “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus” (2:5). What specifically was this attitude or mind that they were to have? The passage goes on to describe Jesus Christ as the one,

“who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (2:6-8).

The attitude of humility and service that characterized Jesus Christ in life and death is the attitude that is to characterize his followers as well. This ancient call is making its way into the present as contemporary leaders seek to engage in the practice of servant leadership in their organizations.

While the practice of servant leadership has both present and ancient examples, the contemporary study of servant leadership traces its roots primarily to Robert K. Greenleaf (1977), who captured the essence of servant leadership for a modern audience through his writing and work with AT&T. Posing the question “Who is the servant-leader?” in his book, Greenleaf answered by stating:

The servant-leader *is* servant first. . . . It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is *leader* first (p. 27).

This “servant first” emphasis is a hallmark of servant leadership studies and has captured the attention of leadership scholars and practitioners alike. Built upon this understanding, Laub’s (1999) definition of servant leadership emphasizes the understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader. Emphasizing the means by which servant leaders accomplish this, Whetstone (2005) notes that servant leaders are characterized by persuasion and example rather than command and control.

From Greenleaf’s early work in the 1970s, servant leadership theories began to emerge in the 1990s and early 2000s. The following table from Irving and McIntosh (2007, p. 788) provides an overview of several of these key models.

Table 1  
*Servant Leadership Theories*

Graham (1991)	Buchen (1998)	Spears (1998)	Farling et al. (1999)	Laub (1999)	Russell (2001)	Patterson (2003b)
Inspirational	Self-identity	Listening	Vision	Valuing people	Vision	Love
Moral	Capacity for reciprocity Relationship building	Empathy	Influence	Developing people	Credibility	Humility
		Healing	Credibility	Building community	Trust	Altruism
	Preoccupation with the future	Awareness	Trust	Displaying authenticity	Service	Vision
		Persuasion	Service	Providing leadership	Modeling	Trust
		Conceptualization		Sharing leadership	Pioneering	Empowerment
		Foresight			Appreciating others	Service
		Stewardship			Empowerment	
		Commitment				
Community building						

Based upon these models, the field of servant leadership studies has been gradually shifting from theory and conceptualization to empirical testing. These empirical studies include Barbuto and Wheeler (2006), Bekker (2005, 2006), Dannhauser (2006), Dennis (2004), Dennis and Winston (2003), Dingman and Stone (2006), Drury (2004), Hebert (2004), Helland (2003), Irving (2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c), Irving & Longbotham (2006, 2007a, 2007b), Koshal (2005), Laub (1999, 2003, 2005), Ledbetter (2003), Parolini (2005), Rennaker and Novak (2006), Sendjaya (2003), Washington, Sutton, and Field (2006), and Winston (2004).

#### Connections between virtues and Servant Leadership

Having considered virtues and servant leadership separately, what are the connections between them? There is general agreement as to the connection between morality and leadership. For example, Covey (2006) proposes that moral authority is what makes formal authority work, Ciulla (2001) states that leadership is morality and immorality magnified, and Engelbrecht, et al. (2005) assert that integrity lies at the heart of leadership.

As noted previously, contemporary leadership theory has emphasized the moral dimension of servant leadership from the days of Greenleaf’s work. More recently, this dimension has received

increasingly open discussion. Patterson (2003) clearly established that servant leadership is a virtuous theory, describing it as encompassing seven virtuous constructs, which work in processional pattern. The virtues Patterson described are *agapáo* love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service. Wong and Page (2003) identify integrity, humility, and servanthood as relevant components of the servant leader's character. Matteson and Irving (2005, 2006) found a correlation between servant leadership and self-sacrificial leadership in the virtue of altruism. In evaluating team effectiveness and servant leadership themes, Irving and Longbotham (2007b) identified the virtues of providing accountability, valuing and appreciating, and engaging in honest self-evaluation among leadership themes. Cerff and Winston (2006) argue for the inclusion of hope as a virtue in the servant leadership model. Lawson (2007) demonstrates the connections between servant leadership and virtue ethics, and additionally connects virtue ethics to the virtuous constructs contained in Patterson's (2003) servant leadership model. Covey (2007) connects servant leadership with the virtues of humility, integrity, love, courage, patience, self-control, gratitude, and respect. As noted by Spears (2002), the concepts of character and virtue are inseparably tied to servant-leadership.

Making the case for a philosophical foundation for servant leadership more directly, Wallace (2006) explores the connections between servant leadership and various worldviews and philosophical approaches. He rightly observes that absent some form of metaphysical grounding, any ethic as a basis for action is simply another expression of relativism; aside from utilitarian outcomes, there would be no compelling reason to choose one form of leadership over another. In discussing character as a component of the Judeo-Christian worldview, he enumerates essential character traits from a Christian perspective, including wisdom, teachableness, lovingkindness, joyfulness, peace making, humility, meekness, longsuffering, gentleness, patience, self-control, courage, self-sacrifice, trustworthiness, truthfulness, empathy, and foresight.

The case can be made for a philosophical foundation for servant leadership. However, there is considerable variety in what is recognized as virtuous and differentiation among authors in the definitions of individual virtues. While there is significant value in the work that has already been done in servant leadership studies, the literature points to the need for a common vocabulary and a



consistent approach to distinguishing virtues from other essential leadership traits. With this in mind, we propose a model for character and virtues as a response to this need in the literature.

#### A Model of Character and Virtues

Figure 1 shows a hierarchical construct that consolidates virtue constructs from many sources into eight categories or themes. Each category contains a set of example attributes that clarify the scope of the category, but do not fully represent its definition. This model is drawn primarily from a Judeo-Christian worldview through the study of character and virtues in the Old and New Testaments. Additionally, it reconciles in many respects with the majority of virtue constructs from other world religions and writings in the field of virtue ethics. Wallace (2006) has extensively explored the appropriateness of the Judeo-Christian worldview as a complementary ethical basis for servant-leadership theory, concluding it provides the best fit when compared to other major world religions. Although the model has not been reconciled with sources from leadership studies because those sources are necessarily contextual, we present comparisons with several servant-leadership models.

In comparisons with research done in the field of psychology, and positive psychology in particular, there are many similarities but also some notable differences. For instance, comparison with Peterson and Seligman's (2004) character strengths model yields similarity in terms of hierarchical structure, but a mixture of similarities and differences in terms of the contents of the hierarchy. The reason for this is twofold and highly instructive. The first reason is that the rules used for selection of virtues differ considerably between the two models. Our criteria consist of four components—(a) universal and not contextual, (b) moral implications that extend beyond the individual, (c) recognition that possessing it without excess is considered good and lacking it is considered harmful, and (d) attainment through practice—that are focused on personal attributes, while Peterson and Seligman's criteria consist of ten components that include behavioral criteria, resulting in what they call "character strengths" in addition to virtues. The second reason is the contrast in accounting for the origins of virtue. Our work is based upon a Judeo-Christian worldview, while theirs is based upon a biological origin process (p. 13). Nonetheless, their work was well executed and has much to commend in it.

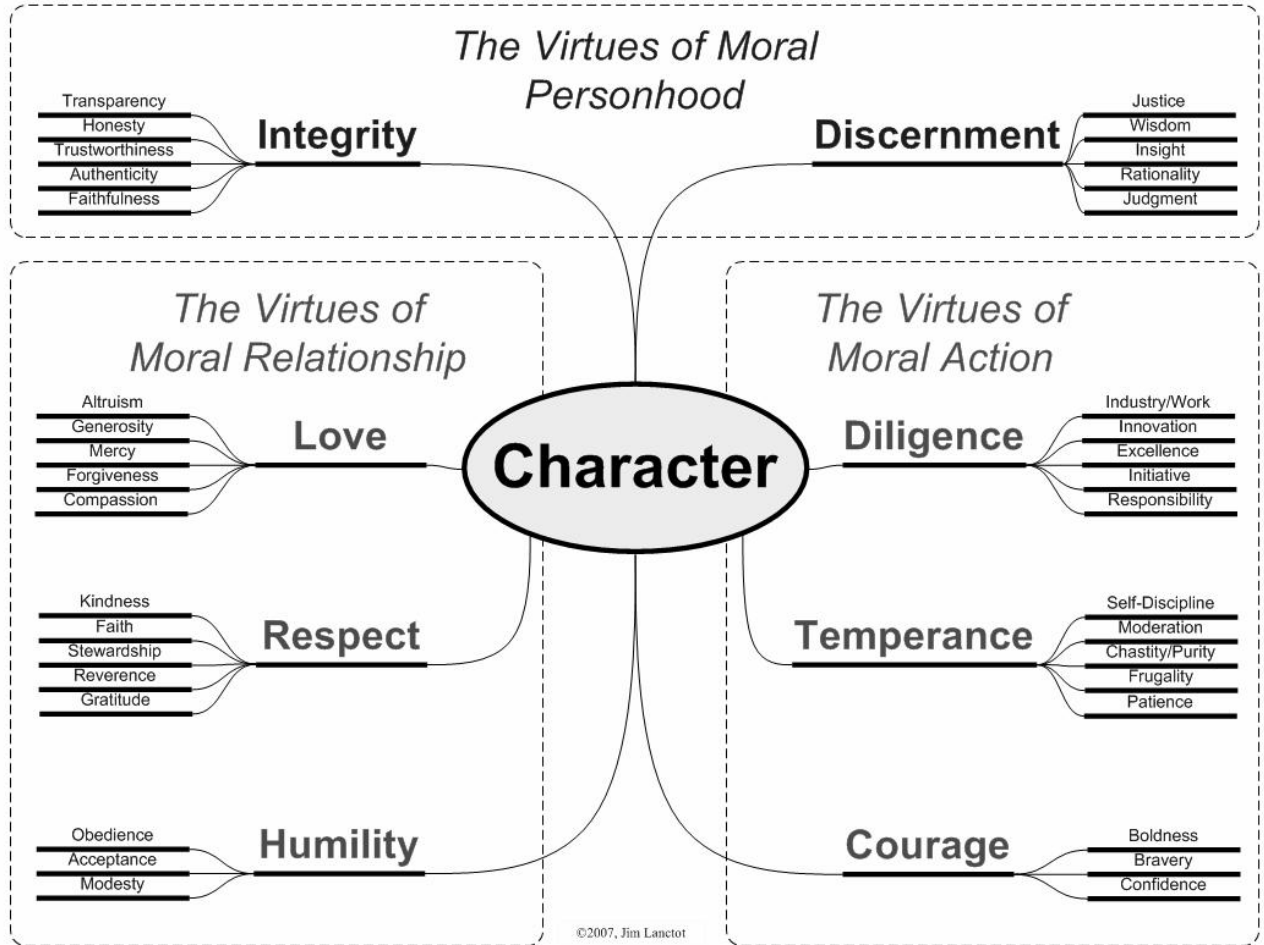


Figure 1. Character/Virtue Model

#### Definitions of the Virtues

As previously stated, we propose that virtues are categorical rather than singular concepts. This idea originated in an attempt to reconcile lists of virtues from a variety of sources into a single comprehensive set. The attempt proved quite unwieldy, leading to the construction of categories as shown in Figure 1. Definitions were then developed for each of the categories by using related terms from the original languages in the Old Testament (Hebrew) and New Testament (Greek). These definitions were then compared back to the source lists to determine whether or not there was general agreement between the sources and the definitions. While there will likely be ongoing discussion regarding these definitions and the approach used to derive them, we are confident they can serve as the foundation for a common vocabulary in the context of servant leadership and for advancing research into its ontological foundations. Following are definitions for each of the virtue categories:

**Integrity** – Personal attributes related to the consistent alignment of motives, words, actions, and reality over time. Examples of attributes in this category include transparency, honesty, trustworthiness, authenticity, and faithfulness.

**Discernment** – Personal attributes related to accurate moral perception and distinction. Examples of attributes in this category include justice, wisdom, insight, rationality, and judgment.

**Love** – Personal attributes related to unselfish concern for the needs, best interests, and wellbeing of others. Examples of attributes in this category include altruism, generosity, mercy, forgiveness, and compassion.

**Respect** – Personal attributes related to correctly estimating the value of everything external to one's self. Examples of attributes in this category include kindness, faith, stewardship, reverence, and gratitude.

**Humility** – Personal attributes related to correctly ascertaining one's place in life and one's value in relation to others. Examples of attributes in this category include obedience, acceptance, and modesty.

**Diligence** – Personal attributes related to timeliness and excellence in outcomes. Examples of attributes in this category include industry, work, innovation, excellence, initiative, and responsibility.

**Temperance** – Personal attributes related to restraint in appetites, desires, attitudes, thoughts, words, and actions. Examples of attributes in this category include self-discipline, moderation, chastity, frugality, and patience.

**Courage** – Personal attributes related to confidently advancing or defending what is true or right in the face of opposition or uncertainty. Examples of attributes in this category include boldness, bravery, and confidence.

#### Comparisons to Other Virtue Constructs

Development of a model that represents the virtues enables one to engage in comparisons of various models. Table 2 presents comparisons of several models, revealing model-specific concentrations in some virtues and gaps in others. For instance, Benjamin Franklin's 13 virtues are largely centered on facets of temperance, but courage is absent from his list. A weakness in Locke's

model is that independence is counted as a virtue, but independence is better defined as a value among Western cultures, especially the United States.

Table 2  
Virtue/Character Trait Comparisons

Virtue Category	Plato/ Aquinas (Drefcinski, 1998)	Franklin (1868)	Lewis (1952)	Maitland (1997)	Peterson & Seligman (2004)	Locke (2006)
<b>Integrity</b>		Sincerity		Trustworthiness	Courage	Honesty Integrity Rationality Justice
<b>Discernment</b>	Justice Wisdom	Justice	Justice Prudence	Fairness Justice	Justice, Wisdom	
<b>Love</b>			Charity Forgiveness	Sympathy	Humanity	
<b>Respect</b>		Silence	Faith Hope		Transcendence	
<b>Humility Diligence</b>		Humility Industry	Humility	Industry Inventiveness Self-Control	Temperance Courage	Earned Pride Productivity
<b>Temperance</b>	Moderation	Chastity Frugality Moderation Order Resolution Temperance Tranquility	Temperance Chastity		Temperance	
<b>Courage</b>	Fortitude		Fortitude		Courage	
Additional Attributes		Cleanliness				Independence

### The Concept of Virtue and Vice

Patterson (2003) describes servant leadership virtues as constructs that are components of the servant leader’s character, and that these constructs have a moderating effect on the leader’s behavior. This corresponds with Aristotle’s assertion that a virtue is an ideal situated between extremes. Following these concepts, Figure 2 shows each virtue as a midpoint between deficiency and excess.

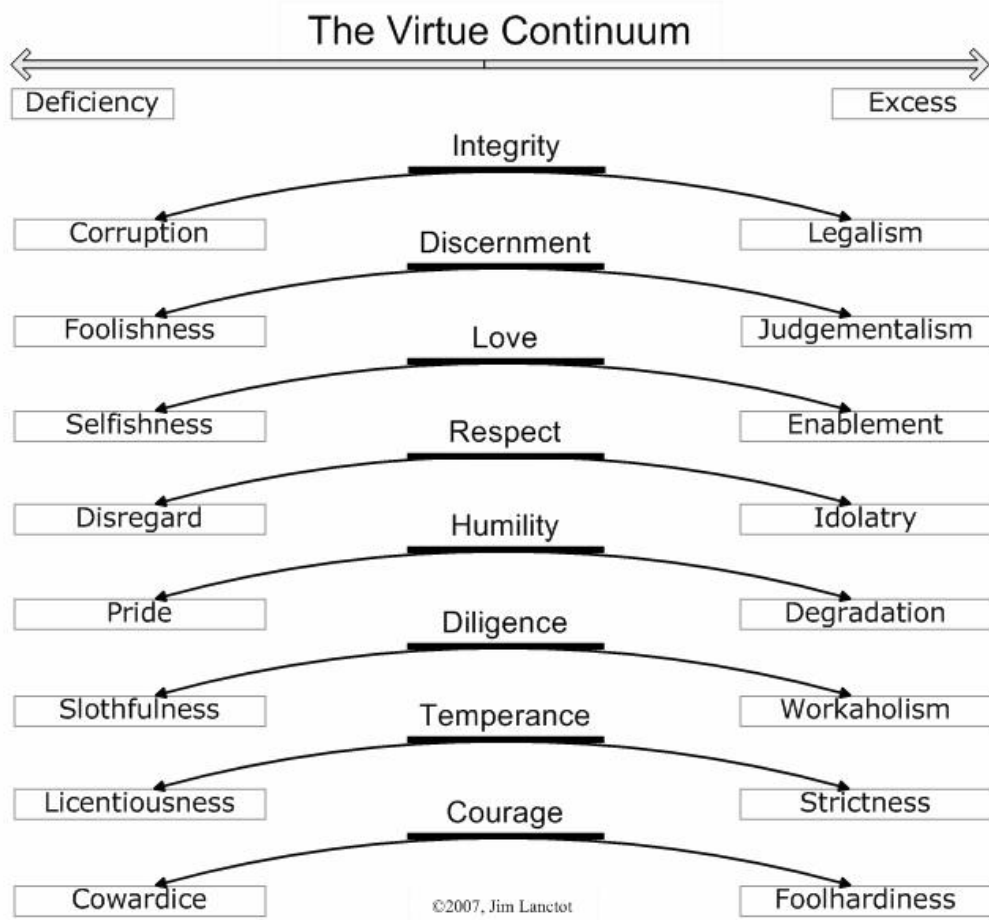


Figure 2. The Virtue Continuum

Overlap with Current Servant-Leadership Models

A number of models for servant-leadership have been advanced in the literature. Without exception, they consider the moral requirements of servant leaders. Perhaps one reason for the attention to moral and ethical considerations is that servant-leadership demands more in the way of virtuous behaviors than any other style of leadership. Under command-and-control styles of leadership, the minimal virtues required for success are Integrity and Discernment. By contrast, servant-leadership requires demonstration of all, or nearly all, virtues. Patterson’s (2003) discussion of servant leadership provides an example, where a number of servant leader behaviors are mentioned. Table 3 lists those behaviors and corresponding virtues.

Table 3  
Patterson’s Servant Leadership Behaviors and Corresponding Virtues

<b>Patterson’s Servant Leader Behaviors</b>	<b>Corresponding Virtues</b>
Love unconditionally	Love
Genuinely appreciate followers	Respect
Inspire courage	Courage
Esteem and honor people	Respect
Demonstrate humility	Humility
Show more care for people than the organization’s bottom line	Love, Respect
Demonstrate calm determination	Temperance, Diligence
Able to see the handwriting on the wall	Discernment

Winston’s (2003) extension of Patterson’s servant leadership model demonstrates how virtues can be cultivated within an organization through follower reciprocation. This ultimately leads to what Lawler (2004) has referred to as a virtuous spiral organization.

Covey (2007) also connects servant-leadership with a number of virtues as shown in Table 4, emphasizing the need for moral authority as a necessary feature of servant-leadership.

Table 4  
*Covey’s Servant Leadership Behaviors and Corresponding Virtues*

<b>Covey’s Servant Leader Characteristics</b>	<b>Corresponding Virtues</b>
Love	Love
Gratitude	Respect
Courage	Courage
Respect	Respect
Humility	Humility
Patience	Temperance
Self-Control	Temperance
Integrity	Integrity

Spears (2002), in reviewing Robert Greenleaf’s articulation of servant-leader qualities, summarizes them into ten distinct characteristics, which can be approximately linked to virtue categories as shown in Table 5. Interestingly, themes of Love and Respect are prominent in Spears’ review, demonstrating the relational nature of servant-leadership. This is in contrast with the command-and-control nature of transactional leadership styles which arguably require neither of these virtues.

Table 5  
*Spears’ Servant Leadership Characteristics and Corresponding Virtues*

<b>Spears’ Servant Leader Characteristics</b>	<b>Corresponding Virtues</b>
Listening	Love/Respect/Temperance
Empathy	Respect
Healing	Love
Awareness	Humility/Respect
Persuasion	Respect
Conceptualization	Discernment

Foresight	Discernment
Stewardship	Respect
Commitment to the growth of people	Love
Building Community	Love

Laub (2003) discusses the development of the Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA) instrument, which measures key characteristics of servant-leadership. The six characteristics identified by Laub are shown in Table 6, aligned with corresponding virtues by the comparison of definitions.

Table 6  
*Laub’s Servant Leadership Activities and Corresponding Virtues*

<b>Laub’s Servant Leader Activities</b>	<b>Corresponding Virtues</b>
Valuing people	Love/Respect
Developing people	Integrity/Respect
Building community	Love
Displaying authenticity	Integrity/Humility
Providing leadership	Courage/Discernment
Sharing leadership	Humility

Several other examples exist. One important observation from the examples presented is that careful attention must be given to the definitions of attributes. In many cases, individual servant-leader attributes span multiple virtues. Laub’s (1999) model of servant-leader activities (Table 6) serves as an excellent example. It should be noted that this phenomenon does not imply any defect in servant-leader attributes that have been presented over time, but that servant-leader characteristics and behaviors can be complex in nature.

#### Basis for Ontology-Driven Approach for Servant Leadership

Boyum (2006) states that there is a void in the literature regarding the connections between philosophical underpinnings and leadership approaches. This appears generally to be the case. A review of a variety of servant-leadership models does indeed provide little evidence of deliberate links to any one predominant philosophical approach. This is not to say that such connections have not been made. For instance, Winston and Patterson (2006) find a base for servant leadership in the seven Beatitudes found in Matthew chapter 5. Wallace (2006), in examining characteristics of the world’s five major religions, carefully makes the case from a worldview perspective that the Judeo-Christian worldview most closely aligns with the various attributes of servant-leadership. These

examples demonstrate that while ontological connections are being made in the literature, there exists no unifying standard.

Other works, while stating no allegiance to any particular philosophical approach, beg to be drawn into a common moral semantic. Matteson and Irving (2006) touch on the ontological dimensions of servant-leadership in the characteristics of love, authenticity, and humility. Spears (2002) articulates a set of servant-leader characteristics that connect well with a variety of moral constructs. Covey (2007) identifies a list of servant-leader traits that exude a Judeo-Christian ethic without stating an explicit connection.

The lack of a common vocabulary and framework makes it difficult to engage the ethical dimensions of leadership with consistency and hinders the progress of meaningful research. The character/virtue model proposed in this work, with its foundations in the Judeo-Christian worldview and its affirmation in a wide variety of other virtue constructs, provides the philosophical underpinnings and unifying semantics needed to resolve these issues.

#### Challenges to the Character/Virtue Model

The character/virtue construct we propose is not without its own challenges. The first is that identifying virtues is a somewhat subjective task. Dozens of virtue models have been proposed over the last two millennia, and none has emerged as a standard. We have considered a number of them and present this model as a work in progress, knowing that there will be ongoing discussion and improvement.

The second challenge is that there is a lack of agreement on the definitions of various virtues. The definitions proposed in our model may well serve as a foundation for further research. However, we recognize that definitions will always be a challenge because of the nature of language. For instance, Patterson (2003) defines humility in leadership as the ability to grasp the idea of not knowing, understanding, or having all the answers. Peterson and Seligman (2004) define it as letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not seeking the spotlight; not regarding oneself as more special than one is. Parolini (2004) says it is a display of character that supports leaders in overcoming egotistical tendencies of thought, feeling, and action. We define it as a set of personal attributes related to correctly ascertaining one's place in life and one's value in relation to others. While there are similarities in these definitions, there are also differences. There may never be



complete agreement on which definition best represents a given virtue. We believe this is at least partially addressed by treating virtues as categorical, rather than singular, concepts.

In considering the effects of language on the challenge of defining virtues, we also recognize that extending our model into other languages may require as much effort as that required for the initial version in English.

#### Further Research Recommendations

There are a number of areas in which further work will be beneficial. Further validation of the model's categories and definitions against other constructs will provide confidence in the validity of the model overall.

Additionally, work is required to better understand how various proposed leadership models relate to this construct. We believe this model will help better explain the differences between servant-leadership and other leadership styles, and provide the ability to clarify the distinctions and emphases among various proposed servant-leadership models.

Finally, development and validation of testing instruments to measure virtues and vices will provide empirical means to understand the antecedents to servant-leadership, and to evaluate a servant-leader's areas of moral strength.

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