SPINNING STRAW INTO GOLD: DYNAMICS OF A RUMPELSTILTSKIN STYLE OF LEADERSHIP

Karen Denise Smith

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Committee:

Patrick D. Pauken, Co-Advisor

Mark A. Earley, Co-Advisor

Daniel Bragg
Graduate Faculty Representative

Joan Baker

Gregg Brownell
ABSTRACT

Patrick D. Pauken, Mark A. Earley, Advisors

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine gender differences in the approach, analysis, and resolution of ethical dilemmas within professional communication posed by the employment of spin. Spin is defined as the deliberate shading and manipulation of language to achieve a desired reaction from followers, with effective use resulting in the maintenance of organizational and position power. Read against the backdrop of the work of Gilligan (1982), who argues for an ethic of care and responsibility in the resolution of ethical dilemmas, and Kohlberg (1984), who argues the centrality of a morality of justice as integral to this resolution, results of this study challenges the authors’ respective stances relative to a gendered meta-analysis and resolution of ethical dilemmas, particularly when applied within the culture of higher education.

The additional aim of this study was to capture and contrast from male and female participants the variables they viewed as salient in their resolution of what the researcher has argued and posed as an ethical dilemma within professional communication, the employment of spin. Thus, professional communication dynamics, linguistic negotiation of the workplace, and the language and leadership tools necessary for ownership of occupational power were examined and contrasted by gender. The study was limited to five leaders in positions of influence in the field of higher education.

The study addressed five research questions. All of the questions focused on participant interpretation of a researcher-developed instrument labeled Gauge of Language Negotiation. Each of the participants provided an ethical dilemma from their professional experience, an
interpretation of the *Gauge of Language Negotiation*, a representation and charting of each of the ethical dilemmas offered along the gauge continuum, and a conceptual description of their thinking relative to their approach, analysis, and resolution of ethical dilemmas involving spin, with direct application to the *Gauge of Language Negotiation*.

Results of interviews revealed parallel approach, analysis, and resolution of ethical dilemmas employing the use of spin across gender lines. Leader patterns of observation relative to the *approach* to ethical dilemmas were exhibited in five conceptual areas: empathy, focus on players/relationships, focus on issues, focus on rationale, and focus on strategy toward solution. Leader patterns of observation relative to the *analysis* of ethical dilemmas were also exhibited in five conceptual areas: dilemma conflict identification, identification of moral pull, salience, weighing, and resolution of ethical scenarios. The types of dilemmas offered by participant leaders, as well as the end goals sought by the leaders revealed consistent ethics of care and justice in dilemma resolution and effects on leader constituencies.
I thank God for carrying me through all of the years of my education and growth.

In Humble Thanks and Praise
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I am forever indebted to all of the teachers I have had in my life, first and foremost, my parents, who gave me my first critical thinking lessons. I have a very rich familial support for which I am eternally grateful. I wish to express my humblest gratitude to my mother for the record player, the stories, and for modeling excellence, drive, and the importance of challenging myself; I thank my grandmother for showing me true conviction and leadership of the self, and my father for teaching me to view everything with a masterful and critical eye. My academic advisors have offered nourishing support and encouragement throughout my academic journey. I am thankful to Dr. Pauken for showing me to “not be afraid of my own light”, and further, to revel in asking the questions and considering multiple answers. Dr. Earley unveiled myriad approaches and discoveries of learning. My committee member and advisor Dr. Baker remains my professional mentor, mother, and teacher. Dr. Brownell’s passion for media literacy research is contagious! I thank Dr. Bragg for offering many deep insights.

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Rumpelstilzchen

By The Brothers Grimm

English Translation by Margaret Hunt

1994

Robert Godwin Jones
Virginia Commonwealth University

Once there was a miller who was poor, but who had a beautiful daughter. Now it happened that he had to go and speak to the king, and in order to make himself appear important he said to him, "I have a daughter who can spin straw into gold."

The king said to the miller, "That is an art which pleases me well, if your daughter is as clever as you say, bring her to-morrow to my palace, and I will put her to the test."

And when the girl was brought to him he took her into a room which was quite full of straw, gave her a spinning-wheel and a reel, and said, "Now set to work, and if by tomorrow morning early you have not spun this straw into gold during the night, you must die." Thereupon he himself locked up the room, and left her in it alone.

So there sat the poor miller's daughter, and for the life of her could not tell what to do, she had no idea how straw could be spun into gold, and she grew more and more frightened, until at last she began to weep.

But all at once the door opened, and in came a little man, and said, "Good evening, mistress miller, why are you crying so?" "Alas," answered the girl, "I have to spin straw into gold, and I do not know how to do it." "What will you give me," said the manikin, "if I do it for you?" "My necklace," said the girl.

The little man took the necklace, seated himself in front of the wheel, and whirr, whirr, whirr, three turns, and the reel was full, then he put another on, and whirr, whirr, whirr, three times round, and the second was full too. And so it went on until the morning, when all the straw was spun, and all the reels were full of gold.

By daybreak the king was already there, and when he saw the gold he was astonished and delighted, but his heart became only more greedy. He had the miller's daughter taken into another room full of straw, which was much larger, and commanded her to spin that also in one night if she valued her
The girl knew not how to help herself, and was crying, when the door opened again, and the little man appeared, and said, "What will you give me if I spin that straw into gold for you?" "The ring on my finger," answered the girl. The little man took the ring, again began to turn the wheel, and by morning had spun all the straw into glittering gold.

The king rejoiced beyond measure at the sight, but still he had not gold enough, and he had the miller's daughter taken into a still larger room full of straw, and said, "You must spin this, too, in the course of this night, but if you succeed, you shall be my wife." "Even if she be a miller's daughter," thought he, "I could not find a richer wife in the whole world."

When the girl was alone the manikin came again for the third time, and said, "What will you give me if I spin the straw for you this time also?" "I have nothing left that I could give," answered the girl. "Then promise me, if you should become queen, to give me your first child."

"Who knows whether that will ever happen," thought the miller's daughter, and, not knowing how else to help herself in this strait, she promised the manikin what he wanted, and for that he once more spun the straw into gold. And when the king came in the morning, and found all as he had wished, he took her in marriage, and the pretty miller's daughter became a queen.

A year after, she brought a beautiful child into the world, and she never gave a thought to the manikin. But suddenly he came into her room, and said, "Now give me what you promised."

The queen was horror-struck, and offered the manikin all the riches of the kingdom if he would leave her the child. But the manikin said, "No, something alive is dearer to me than all the treasures in the world."

Then the queen began to lament and cry, so that the manikin pitied her. "I will give you three days, time, said he, if by that time you find out my name, then shall you keep your child."

So the queen thought the whole night of all the names that she had ever heard, and she sent a messenger over the country to inquire, far and wide, for any other names that there might be.

When the manikin came the next day, she began with Caspar, Melchior, Balthazar, and said all the names she knew, one after another, but to every one the little man said, "That is not my name."
On the second day she had inquiries made in the neighborhood as to the names of the people there, and she repeated to the manikin the most uncommon and curious, "Perhaps your name is Shortribs, or Sheepshanks, or Laceleg," but he always answered, "That is not my name."

On the third day the messenger came back again, and said, "I have not been able to find a single new name, but as I came to a high mountain at the end of the forest, where the fox and the hare bid each other good night, there I saw a little house, and before the house a fire was burning, and round about the fire quite a ridiculous little man was jumping, he hopped upon one leg, and shouted -

"Today I bake, tomorrow brew,
The next I'll have the young queen's child.
Ha, glad am I that no one knew
That Rumpelstiltskin I am styled."

You may imagine how glad the queen was when she heard the name. And when soon afterwards the little man came in, and asked, "Now, mistress queen, what is my name," at first she said, "Is your name Conrad?" "No." "Is your name Harry?" "No." "Perhaps your name is Rumpelstiltskin?"

"The devil has told you that! The devil has told you that," cried the little man, and in his anger he plunged his right foot so deep into the earth that his whole leg went in, and then in rage he pulled at his left leg so hard with both hands that he tore himself in two.

*********

As a child, I had a collection of children’s books I absolutely adored. I also had a record player, which I would use to play all of my favorite stories, occupying me for hours on end. I would play Rumpelstiltskin, Rapunzel, Dr. Doolittle, Rip Van Winkle, and many other stories, over and over, for my own entertainment. Not only did these tales mesmerize me, but so did all aspects of the stories’ telling: the book illustrations, the characters, the words and language, and the voices of the storytellers who were featured on the records. All allowed me to enter what seemed like exotic, enchanted, and far away lands. Needless to say, Rumpelstiltskin happened to
be one of my favorites. At around age six, as I was preparing to begin my first grade year of school, my mother decided it was time that I move beyond the record player which I had thoroughly worn out. I was crushed!! I acted out with a temper tantrum much like the manikin at the conclusion of the Rumpelstiltskin story. I watched with dismay as my precious record player was taken to the garbage!! It was my mother’s lesson to me that it was time to grow and to experience new things.

In my adult interpretation of the story, I have assigned new meanings and depths, particularly as the story relates to topics that now fascinate me academically: media construction, media literacy, power, leadership, and spin. Media construction is the design of media messages for the purposes of influence and persuasion. Centered on this definition of media construction is the goal of audience influence and persuasion; thus, a necessity balanced on this persuasion is the coloring information to motivate a response. Additionally, media literacy, defined as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media messages, (Center for Media Literacy, 2007) consists of integral skills for consumers of media who look to media, often unsuspectingly, relying upon its outlets to provide objectivity and distilled information. Herein lies a conundrum. The term spin, a concept which denotes the deliberate shading of information to evoke a desired reaction, is commonly associated with news stories and the element of bias inherent in news story construction; however, use of the term spans disciplines and is often employed casually to reflect the need to manipulate language for a desired result.

As I reread Rumpelstiltskin, the story is ripe with delicious themes that make most stories gripping: power, greed, exploitation, and class disparity. At the very minimum, the power the manikin possesses, his ability to spin straw into gold, is thought by the king to be an ability possessed by the miller’s daughter. Noteworthy for readers is the fact that the miller himself lied
to the king about his daughter’s ability, to present himself as favorable in the king’s eyes. Nonetheless, it is the manakin’s ability to spin straw into gold that piques the king’s tendency toward greed. Yet the king marries the miller’s daughter based on a false perception of her abilities, thinking to himself, “even if she be a miller’s daughter”, he “could not find a richer wife in the whole world”. The miller’s daughter is able to wield her position power to learn the manikin’s name from a messenger and to free herself from the manikin’s claim to her first-born child.

Very interestingly, the miller’s daughter is an exploited victim of her father’s lie. The king, who marries her for her beauty and her ability to add to his wealth, exploits her even further.

Nearly all of the characters of *Rumpelstiltskin* apply some element of manipulation, deception, and/or blatant falsity within the tale. The miller lies about his daughter’s ability to spin straw into gold; *Rumpelstiltskin* employs extortion to gain valuables from the miller’s daughter and the newly crowned queen; the king takes the miller’s daughter in marriage to gain additional wealth; and the queen, upon learning Rumpelstiltskin’s name from the messenger, wields her power by pretending ignorance of the little man’s true identity. Read within and applied to a postmodern context of the “multiple meanings of language” (Creswell, 1998, p. 79), the little man’s spinning abilities as depicted in the story function metaphorically, shedding symbolic light upon modern uses and misuses of language for manipulation and control of a message.
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

In all aspects of leadership, public and private, and in the worlds of media construction and political punditry as well, spinning is indispensable; to this end, Paul and Elder (2006) observe:

There are a number of alternative labels for the roles that “manipulators” play, including: the spin master, the con artist, the sophist, the propagandist, the indoctrinator, the demagogue, and often, “the politician.” Their goal is always to control what others think and do by controlling the way information is presented to them. They use “rational” means only when such means can be used to create the appearance of objectivity and reasonability. The key is that they are always trying to keep some information and some points of view from being given a fair hearing. (p. 5)

Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (2001) argue that effective leaders must be able to predict, direct, change, and control behavior. The authors further state, “the motivation of people depends on the strength of their motives” (p. 24). Effective use of language therefore, as a tool of motivation and manipulation, is critical for leaders. “Interaction in the workplace can be productively viewed as social practice in action. Interacting participants are constantly negotiating meaning, and in the process reproducing or challenging the larger social structure within which they operate” (Holmes, Burns, Marra, Stubbe & Vine, 2003, p. 415).

In an analysis of the characteristics of media, including television and newspapers, Canadian educator, philosopher, and scholar, Marshall McLuhan (1967) found that the medium through and by which a message is communicated, impacts the message itself, arguing, the medium is the message. For example, a desktop computer, by virtue of its presence, size and location, dictates how information can be accessed, what type of information can be accessed, and as well, with what characteristics it will be accessed, because of its physical features and the space in which it is utilized. A laptop computer however, offers slightly different options, and
perhaps even more degrees of freedom for information accessibility. For the purposes of this discussion, language, as well as the fluidity and indeterminacies it offers, is the medium of focus.

The *Rumpelstiltskin* tale, from one vantage point of deconstruction, represents a metaphorical example of modern-day spinning in action. The character *Rumpelstiltskin* spins straw into gold; whereas, modern day spinners manipulate language for control of a message—where control of the message, and gains yielded as a result, represent the gold. Defined by Kemper (2001) as “describing a reality that suits your purposes” (p. 8) and also by Gloria Borger (1995), [excerpted from *William Safire’s New Political Dictionary*] as the deliberate shading of news perception and attempted control of political reaction, spin represents the skill of language negotiation, a skill which as a leader, one either commands or lacks.

William Pickett, legendary 19th century African-American cowboy from Taylor, Texas, was a master at his craft. Though the pervasiveness of racism was alive and well in the United States, what mattered most in the culture of the wild West at that time, was whether men and women possessed ability to hold their own in taming the wild, using their ranching skills on the vast frontier. At present, the best and most skilled spinners of the new frontier of information, media-mind control and message manipulation, the Roves, Rices, Carvilles, Morrices, Clintons, and Coulters of the world, ultimately win where partisanship, authorship, followership, and opportunistic capitalist gain are the spoils.

Yet “spin-doctoring” is not a new phenomenon (Esser, Reinemann, & Fan, 2001, p. 40). Boston (1996) offers the example of Winston Churchill’s immobilizing stroke in June of 1953 while dining with an Italian prime minister: “Alcide de Gasperi at 10 Downing Street, it was his newspaper proprietor friend, Lord Camrose who, journalistically as well as euphemistically,
doctored the doctor’s official medical report in order to save the stricken old man from instant political oblivion” (p. 8).

Whether an observer views the employment of spin through a lens of capitalistic and plutocratic punditry in the name of partisan ideals, or through a lens of leadership and position power where leader ability to implement change and cultivate a loyal followership, (the measures by which the leader either succeeds or fails), adeptness at the craft of spinning is the sword through and by which the leader strategically navigates challenges and ultimately defeats the opponent. The following discussion, therefore, is an analysis of spin, including applicable examples from the perspectives of rhetoric, ethics, corporate communication strategy, higher education, and gender and language negotiation.

Background of the Problem

The power of children to bend us to their will comes from a kind of seductive charm that we feel in the presence of a creature less reflective and more graceful than we are. We cannot return to such a state, but we can create the appearance of this kind of ease. We elicit in others the kind of primitive awe that nature has always evoked in humankind. (Greene, 1998, p. 250)

Rhetoric and Language: Instruments of Tactical Strategy

Merriam-Webster defines “rhetoric” as the art of speaking or writing effectively. The term is also defined as the study of writing or speaking as a means of communication or persuasion. Greene (1998) posits laws of power that advise readers of the necessary deception skills required of leaders to obtain and maintain power. Greene’s portentous observations parallel those of Niccolò Machiavelli within The Prince. Machiavelli’s intent was to teach rulers how to take control of other lands and to maintain their power and wealth; however, his teachings read as devoid of morals and ethics. The Foundation for Critical Thinking argues the existence of untrained masses within any citizenry, observing, “At present, the overwhelming majority of
people in the world, untrained in critical reading, are at the mercy of the news media in their own country” (Paul & Elder, 2003, p. 15). If this observation is accepted as fact, and the implications for leadership given serious consideration, the masses are tender and ripe for picking through leader manipulation, control, and deception, by way of skillful rhetoric guised as truth. “Lies and propaganda are so mixed up with headline news that it’s hard to discern the truth anymore” (Rossi, 2005, p. 171). Additionally, and in lieu of these implications, Chomsky (1987) posits, “sophistic politicians and intellectuals search for ways to obscure the fact that the essential and defining property of man is his freedom” (p. 143). As a result,

They attribute to men a natural inclination to servitude, without thinking that it is the same for freedom as for innocence and virtue—their value is felt only as long as one enjoys them oneself and the taste for them is lost as soon as one has lost them. (Chomsky, 1987, p. 143)

As a tactical strategy and further example, therefore, “The Bushies, moreover, have excelled at the manipulation of emotions through symbols, slogans, and stagecraft” (Huberman, 2006, ix). Huberman further argues, “by staking out religious and moral values [of a kind] as its own territory, the GOP has succeeded in identifying itself in millions of Americans’ minds with God and faith and the flag with all that is traditional” (ix). Conversely, liberals are accused of aligning themselves with stances “contrary to God’s desires” by reframing abortion as “a woman’s right to choose”, or renaming what conservatives view very simply as murder, “physician-assisted suicide”; further, gay marriage gets promoted as “same-sex civil unions” (Hayes, 2006, pp. 9-21). Therefore, “whichever pressure group has the strongest and most direct stake in an issue gets its way” (Huberman, 2006, p. 37).

Game Ethics

From a leadership perspective, Carr (1968) offers a distinction between game and religious ethics. The ethical paradigm from which business is practiced is one in which bluffing
is ethical if it is understood on all sides, as in poker, diplomacy, and business. Kemper (2001) asks what an honest communicator in this age of spin is expected to do. Faced with a challenging crisis of integrity, the concept of truth in communication is increasingly under-appreciated.

Kemper (2001) argues further that many of our once dependable “truth-tellers” have been transformed into compliant spinmeisters. “Politicians’ primary professional tool is the manipulation of language” (Lawrence, 2005, p. 60). Paul and Elder (2003) assert that uncritical and un-objective media serve untrained masses within any society’s citizenry. Thus, the foul, heartless invective harnessed at commoners within Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar reflects a general public perceived by the powerful as consisting of those whose only supposed interests were circus antics and frivolity. The working poor are consistently denigrated within Shakespeare’s play, as well as in current-day pundit observations—oft referred to as rabble, commoners, vulgar, mechanical, blocks, stones, and senseless, idle creatures; thus begins Julius Caesar Act I. Bok’s (1988) analysis reflects an elitist paradigm held within leadership positions and high, or noble breeding; noble lies are an entitlement of the “high-minded”, and “well-bred”, as those who “know when to tell the truth and when not to” (p. 130).

At stake are most often positional and partisan power, elitism, and the maintenance of what Starratt (1991) posits as the legitimacy of social structures, making spin a necessity for the maintenance of power and a perceived legitimacy of these very same social structures. Tumulty (2004) reveals the philosophy of heuristics offered by George W. Bush strategist Karl Rove: “It’s a shortcut to explaining something complex—or in this case, explaining away something complex” (p. 63). Rove’s observation is in direct support of Carr’s distinction between game and religious tactics. Thus, the leader in formation can “create new realities” and become the “creative force” (Kotter, 1996, p. 10). Charen (2004) observes, “The leftist critique of America’s
role in Vietnam set the tone for every Cold War debate that would follow for the next thirty-five years” (p. 28). Therefore, an ethical dilemma looms when we consider the viewpoint further offered from Kotter: “communication comes in both words and deeds. The latter is generally the most powerful form. Nothing undermines change more than behavior by important individuals that is inconsistent with the verbal communication” (Kotter, 1996, p. 10). When we consider how debates are framed and realities engineered, what is communicated and how it is communicated sets the tone for the conceptualization [by the masses] and expectation that follows.

*Corporate Strategy and Language Use: Enron*

Ewers (2006) cites Robert Bruner, Dean of the Darden Graduate School of Business Administration at the University of Virginia, in a discussion of the rise and fall of Enron: “At the core of Enron’s collapse was what I’d call momentum thinking, which is the intense focus on delivering a steady percentage rate of increase in earnings per share, quarter by quarter, year after year”. On the question of whether or not Enron CEOs could have done anything to avoid bankruptcy, Bruner assessed,

> It’s like diffusing a very big bomb. But if Ken Lay had gone public and said “I’ve received this note from Sherron Watkins and we will unwind the special purpose entities, we will clean up the balance sheet, we will separate from the company those individuals who are responsible—we adhere to these core values and I will clean house”—I could imagine that in August or September of that year it might have been early enough to save the company. Not without a serious fall in share price, of course. (Ewers, 2006)

From the perspective of the leader, particularly when stakes are staggeringly high, “Highly skilled egocentric persons use their intelligence to effectively rationalize gaining their selfish ends at the expense of others. They selfishly distort information to serve their own interest” (Paul & Elder, 2004, p. 13). The authors additionally observe, “They are often articulate in arguing for their ends, which they typically cover with altruistic language” (p. 13). The
authors encourage readers to distinguish between egocentric and rational motives, and further explain, “successful people are often intelligent, unreasonable, and unscrupulous—all in one”; however, rational people “have confidence in reason and follow its lead. They are able to enter empathetically into the point of view of others. They do not misuse language” (p. 13). Other CEOs can learn from Enron to avoid creating psychological conditions of continuing to reach for higher and higher growth. Ewers (2006) cites Bruner further as Bruner advises, “There’s no substitute for integrity. The large lesson is that creating a culture that results in various heady percentage increases in earnings stretches integrity internally—and ultimately, it pushes people beyond what is acceptable behavior.” Therefore, just as students of law study the scales of justice and balance of judgment within decision-making, leaders might equally employ a scale or continuum against which to measure the degree of spin necessary for a situational challenge at hand.

Higher Education: The Academic Corporation

[He] changeth the state of the question sophisterlike. (Oxford English Dictionary, 2007)

Movement toward exploration of divergent examples of spin and framing, particularly within the field of higher education, requires understanding of the context in which strategic discourse within the university and college is framed. Arvast (2005) asserts, “As political legislation continues to impact and alter the relationships amongst colleges, I expect that the central tension between the societal purpose of education and the associated economic discourse (financial value of programs both to the college and to society) will be heightened” (p. 81). Arvast also explains how curricular-planning processes are being increasingly fused with economic discourse. Not only has political legislation affected the discourse of higher education, but also the legislation has affected K-12 education policy and planning, as well as a more
pronounced early childhood language of “outcomes”. The language of K-12 education reflects change initiatives fast moving toward such goals as data-driven decision-making, high-stakes testing, and school district and teacher accountability.

At Bowling Green State University in Ohio, ongoing discussions of “values” initiatives have a lengthy history. Though the conversation has evolved over the years, the concept of values, relative to curriculum, [as well as the implementation of programs aimed at developing students’ critical thinking skills concerning values] has not been clearly defined; nor has the concept of values, as intended to be taught, been wholly received and accepted by faculty members. A program known as the Bowling Green Experience (BGX), designed to “foster student success through an enriched academic environment”, was instituted in the fall of 2003 (Nieman, 2006). “Through specialized courses, activities, and residential arrangements, students are exposed to social and academic experiences that assist their transition from high school to college and develop their cognitive skills for a lifetime of learning” (Nieman, 2006). The language, as presented within the learning outcomes, is displayed in Figure 1 and reads as follows:
Figure 1. Bowling Green State University Experience (BGX) Program Values.

Learning Outcomes for BG Experience Pilot Courses

Students in courses focusing on critical thinking about values will:

1. identify, using a vocabulary common to the several courses, values embedded in or appearing in the application of the discipline;

2. identify values conflicts within the discipline and/or between the discipline and the values of its audiences;

3. articulate and explain one’s position on particular value conflicts identified in the course.

The common vocabulary includes the following terms and definitions. VALUE: an abstraction referring to our sense of what is good or right. VALUE CONFLICT: a clash between values. This move from values to value conflicts is tremendously important. It undercuts the idea that some people have values, while others lack them. As long as moral discourse is seen in that dichotomous light, we can separate ourselves into the good and the bad, the noble and the evil, thereby precluding consideration of the basis for our conflicts and differences. Once we accept the idea that acting on a value places us in tension with certain other values, we have entered the intricate space where reflection about values becomes so challenging. VALUE PREFERENCE: a personal commitment to a particular value priority.

Critics of the BGX program question university administrator framing of a “values” initiative guised in a “moral high ground” mask and a “teaching and learning” cloak; further, skeptics accuse administrators of seeking to tap valuable community resources, unleashing a stream of money which would flow directly into the BGX program. Critics also question whether evidence of true benefits of a values-based, critical thinking, college transition program exists. Hence, the framing of an issue as one centered on the fostering of “values” and “critical thinking” has led to a marketing and communications “opportunity”. Professor of Economics at Bowling Green State University, Dr. Neil Browne, has an ethical interest in the framing of this issue. He observed, “Though the program was founded with very good intentions, I believe the language of BGX has evolved from religious rhetoric [reflecting, in his view, the values of the
current university president]; yet there is no scholarship behind the program’s development” (Browne, personal communication, October 27, 2006). As a result, the use of spin has been harnessed toward an aggressive marketing initiative through manipulation of a language of *values education*, aimed at gaining faculty and staff buy-in and higher student enrollment in the program and the university.

To extend this discussion, Arvast (2005) questions how the rhetoric of economics prevents other important conversations from occurring. In a study of technology incorporation within an institution of higher education anonymously labeled Mid-Western Community College for the purposes of the study, Owen and Demb (2004) interviewed nine college administrators who at that time were in a position to strategize and promote change toward technology use on campus. As part of the findings, the researchers identified six leadership strategies in support of technology implementation: understanding fundamentals, forging strategies, identifying champions, supporting innovation, communicating vision and goals, and celebrating success.

The researchers emphasize the critical role of top leadership. The college president “initiated a response by articulating a vision directly addressing technology at an in-service faculty meeting in 1985 and giving away 10 computers. His leadership style focused on the fundamentals of the change process” (Owen & Demb, 2004, p. 643). The leaders engaged stakeholders with a participative leadership style centered on the fundamentals of the change process. “There were no mixed messages here” (p. 643). Though turbulence is identified as a natural part of change, the researchers found that because the leaders engaged and included stakeholders in the decision-making process and were consistent with their mission and vision as leaders, despite inevitable turbulence, the change process was successful for Mid-Western Community College.
To contrast the employment of language within each of these higher education scenarios is to reveal the aforementioned instance, at Bowling Green State University, in which the institution’s purpose, mission, and vision, as viewed through the lens of a number of stakeholders, was not clear; nor was the purpose and meaning of the language of values wholly agreed upon. The perception by members of the university faculty that the university’s mission masked a hidden agenda suggests that all stakeholders did not perceive themselves as completely apprised, to their satisfaction, of the whole objective of the Bowling Green Experience (BGX) program.

In the latter example involving Mid-Western Community College, the leaders involved in the technology initiative were described as “directly addressing technology” at the faculty inservice meeting (Owen & Demb, 2004, p. 643). The leaders’ actions here were aligned with the Formulation of Institutional Objectives outlined by Faulkner (1958) wherein he advises, “the board and the faculty should deliberate in the formulation of the educational objectives of the institution” (p. 429). Faulkner advised further; “the curriculum of the institution must honestly implement the stated objectives of the school” and, as well, “the institutional statement of aims must express the social and economic needs of the constituency and clientele” (p. 427). If college and university administrators heed Faulkner’s recommendations for institutional objectives, the onus of the university and college administrator is great; not only is there a responsibility to ensure the clientele receives curriculum that is aligned with a constantly evolving society, but also communication of the objectives of that curriculum must be forthright; strategic decisions are to reflect honest and transparent communication.

As a result, leaders, in attempt to facilitate buy-in toward a strategic mission, are faced with choices to either use or misuse language. To incorporate what might be deemed healthy
levels of spin and framing, as opposed to toxic levels of manipulation and/or the creation of new realities, suggests need for a gauge of language use, ideally targeted toward clear, decisive means and transparent ends.

Figure 2 represents a researcher-developed gauge that a leader might apply to think through how he or she employed language, as a means toward specific ends, either transparent or deceptive. If a leader sought to present facts, as the means, to stakeholders with the goal of facilitating buy-in, representing ends, toward clear objectives, the upper gauge would be positioned toward the left side of the continuum, on the side of truth/reality. The leader’s ends in this case would be transparent, reflecting a desired result of harnessing relations between members of a constituency, toward said objective; thus the lower gauge would be positioned left as well. However, if a leader sought to present distortions, as means, with the goal of deceiving a constituency, as ends, the upper and lower gauges would be positioned toward the right side of the continuum, on the side of illusion/falsity. Both the upper and lower gauges are movable along any range of the continuum, reflecting leader ability to manipulate language toward desired ends, at any position along the continuum. As a result, truth can be used to generate deception; illusion can be used toward transparent ends and toward deceptive ends, as well. As an example, when Phillip Morris changed the name of its parent company to Altria group, an observer might argue that this change, based in truth and reality, was a strategic decision based in deception, to detract from association and connotation of the real health effects of smoking. Just as the leader can manipulate language, so too can the leader decide the ends, be they beliefs, attitudes, or actions, on the part of those manipulated.
To apply an illustration reflecting the vantage points of the deceiver and deceived, Bok’s (1988) analysis reflects an elitist paradigm held within leadership positions and those of noble breeding; hence the entitlement of the media giants, as an elitist machine, somewhat of a Wizard of Oz-like puppeteer, who decide what the commoner will be fed on a particular day. The gullibility of the ignorant is painted as simply a problem of the ignorant within the literature, past and present. Read between and within the lines; this is the lot of the untrained, as well as a destiny for which they themselves are liable. Yet there will always be poverty; there will always be ignorance. There is much profit to be gained from their state of “bliss”. Secondly, the larger purpose in “fooling” the untrained masses is to keep order and peace. Spin is a necessity; it is an unwritten governmental system of checks and balances, needed to sufficiently numb and confuse the public, offering the appearance of lively debate and objectivity, yet maintaining “balance” and “stability” within societies. The source of contempt seems to lie in the prescribed ignorance, poverty, and commonness of the general public.

As an example, Alberto Gonzales, the United States Attorney General serving in the George W. Bush administration, was accused of spearheading the firing of eight attorneys general in Fall of 2006. Democrats have argued that these firings were for “political reasons”. Underlying this argument is speculation of a political “witch-hunt” in which those not in support of the Bush administration’s agendas have simply been ousted. In a television interview on news magazine program This Week with George Stephanopoulos, George Stephanopoulos asked
senator Chuck Hagel of Nebraska whether or not the attorney general has a credibility problem, to which the senator replied,

He does have a credibility problem. George, as you know because you’ve been in administrations, as well as your service over on Capitol Hill, we govern with one currency and that’s trust. And that trust is all-important and when you lose or debase that currency, then you can’t govern. And I think he’s going to have some difficulties. They’ve changed their stories. They’ve moved back and forth, and I have always believed and I’ve been in and out of this town a little bit, the only way to govern is be straightforward. Be honest. The stories will always come out. There are no secrets and it’s not just because there’s a Bob Woodward in this town. Just be straight out, transparent and if you’ve got a problem, fix it but get out of it.

(ABC News, March 25, 2007)

The problem is one of truth telling and reality versus the creation of illusion and falsity to gain buy-in and to uphold public perception, and additionally, whether stakeholders, constituencies, and followers are treated as means rather than ends. Mayeroff (1995) and Beck (1994) advise against treating people as simply means. The problem is further the danger in what is an important and useful skill, the art of spinning, being employed more as weaponry for the purpose of desired ends rather than as a positive tool for the purposes of fostering cooperation and buy-in for ends which benefit the whole organization. While spin is certainly a necessary tool for leaders, one might argue that a leader faces an ethical dilemma each time he or she prepares to speak. Wolff (2007) argues that good marketing, specifically the development, crafting, and delivering of a message, depends on maintaining an illusion; he asserts, “we admire an efficient and top-notch communications operation but are shocked, shocked at the idea of cynical manipulation” (p. 138). Which should the leader weigh most heavily, integrity and truth telling, or the manipulation that many view as inevitably required for followership? Leaders who choose to lead with integrity and truth can indeed inspire followership. However, under pressures of performance and the need to deliver high numbers of quality products and/or information for profit, on what scale and with what stakes at the helm does the leader assess the level and degree of spin to be employed?
Again, alternatively viewed, spin serves a useful and necessary function. As a means to effective organizational strategizing and change, Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (2001) emphasize to managers and leaders, “When you accept the role of leader, however, you accept along with it the responsibility of having an impact on the behavior of other people— Influencing the behavior of others toward achieving results” (p. 17). The authors distinguish the positive and negative associations with the term “manipulation.” If manipulation results in deceit for selfish interest, then the tactics fall on the questionable means end of the manipulation continuum. “On the other hand, if manipulation means using influence and strategies skillfully and managing people fairly for mutually rewarding and productive purposes, it’s an appropriate and necessary means for goal accomplishment” (p. 17). The authors advise, “Whatever words you choose, your overall effectiveness depends upon understanding, predicting, and influencing the behavior of other people” (p. 17).

Gender, Power, and Language Use

To examine leadership with a focused lens that considers such questions as who leads, how, and with what tactics, steers the discussion toward the topic of gender differences and diversity in organizations. Karakowsky and Miller (2004) conclude, “Diversity in terms of gender continues to receive attention in the management literature, particularly in light of the trend toward a more balanced representation of men and women, along with the increasing desegregation of men and women in the workplace” (p. 50). In an analysis of gendered negotiator styles, the researchers find also that factors other than gender, such as “situational power” and “control of resources” (Greenhalgh et al. 1985, cited in Karakowski & Miller, 2004, p. 52) appear to be better predictors of negotiator behavior and outcomes (cf. Watson, 1994; Dividio et al., 1988; Watson & Hoffman, 1992, cited in Karakowski & Miller, 2004, p. 52).
Applebaum, Audet, and Miller (2003) agree, adding that in North American society, the old boys’ network is alive and well and “not always women’s greatest source of support” (p. 47). Further, “in fact, there is active resistance by men” (p. 47). The existence of an old boys’ network, added to male resistance of women in the organization, combined with contrasts in the communication styles of men and women (designated in terms of powerful and powerless speech respectively), creates a chasm that remains vast and is broadened by differences in communication styles as well as perceptions of those differences between the sexes, on the respective parts of each gender.

Claes (1999) finds, “female speech is said to be less rational and to display greater sensitivity, to use fewer abstract words, a smaller vocabulary and a simpler structure” (p. 433). Also, “the conversational styles of women have been described as cooperative, those of men as competitive” (p. 433). If the distribution of social power in societies favors men, then men as a result have more social power. As well, “male norms are dominant in social interaction” (p. 433). Researchers assert that men and women thus inhabit different worlds; Gilligan (1982), in her questions exploring women’s perceptions of reality and truth, observed, “I saw that by maintaining these ways of seeing and speaking about human lives, men were leaving out women and women were leaving out themselves” (p. xiii). Gilligan further argues the existence of “sounds of disconnection and disassociation in men’s and women’s lives” (p. xiii). Thus, if “skilled egocentric persons may favor either domination or submission, but often combine both in effective ways”…and additionally, often “successfully dominate persons below them”, men would seem to have natural advantage in the area of domination through behavior and words (Paul & Elder, 2004, p. 13). If in a world of leadership where spin is everything and objectivity an illusion, and if adept application and wielding of the skill of spinning requires assertion of
power, whether men and women apply similar philosophies to its application is worthy of question, analysis, and critique.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to examine gender differences in the approach, analysis, and resolution of an ethical dilemma within professional communication posed by the employment of spin from the perspective of leaders, university and college presidents and senior academic executives in the field of higher education. Spin is defined as the deliberate shading and manipulation of language to achieve a desired reaction from followers, resulting in the maintenance of organizational and positional power (Borger, 1995). Read against the backdrop of the work of Gilligan (1982), who argues for an ethic of care and responsibility, and Kohlberg (1984), who argues the centrality of a morality of justice as integral to resolution of ethical dilemmas, results of this study will reveal or challenge consistency in the assertions of each of the authors’ respective stances relative to gendered resolution of ethical challenges.

Gilligan (1982) asserts,

While in Piaget’s account (1932) if the moral judgment of the child, girls are an aside, a curiosity to whom he devotes four brief entries in an index that omits “boys” altogether because “the child” is assumed to be male, in the research from which Kohlberg derives his theory, females simply do not exist. (p. 18)

This study will be limited to leaders in positions of influence in the field of higher education. The emphases and aims of this study are to capture and contrast from male and female participants the variables they view as salient in their resolution of what is posed as an ethical dilemma within professional communication, the employment of spin, to study the dynamics of the communication and linguistic negotiation of the workplace, and to understand the leadership and language tools necessary to take ownership of leader occupational power. Figure 2, entitled Gauge of Language Negotiation, will serve as an instrument of application and interpretation for
the research participants as they think through a dilemma scenario in response to the research questions.

Research Questions

1. How do college presidents and senior academic executives approach, analyze, and resolve ethical dilemmas posed by the employment of spin, defined as the deliberate shading of information to evoke a desired reaction?

2. Does the approach, analysis, and resolution of ethical dilemmas posed by the employment of spin, differ by gender?

Areas of Research

This study builds upon five areas of existing research: spin and framing, gender differences, higher education, professional ethics, and leadership and power. In addition to these research categories, the goal of this study seems to support and complement the work of Gilligan (1982) in her analysis of gender resolutions of ethical dilemmas.

Gloria Borger (1995) provides readers with a definition of “spin” from William Safire’s New Political Dictionary: deliberate shading of news perception; attempted control of political reaction. Lakoff (2006) defines frames as “the mental structures that allow human beings to understand reality—and sometimes to create what we take to that reality” (p. 21). Lakoff and Ferguson (2006) continue with the definition of framing as a tool that “imposes a structure on a current situation, defines a set of problems with that situation, and circumscribes the possibility for solutions” (“The Framing of Immigration”, The Rockridge Institute, 2006).

In an illustrative mirage analogy used to reveal differences in ways of seeing and weighing moral dilemmas, and relevant to the present study wherein spin is examined as an ethical dilemma, Gilligan (1987) posits that what is salient for some in a moral dilemma is not
salient for others. This observation is poignant when considering that what is deemed spin may not in fact be spin, but simply a reflection of what a leader deems salient in the context of a situational challenge. This analogy is applied within the context of a discussion centered on justice and caring, argued as moral orientations respectively assigned to men and women. However, leaders, regardless of gender, are subject to the pressures of the university enterprise and thus must apply the tactics of the marketplace to succeed. Hence, applying the strategies of the marketplace to higher education weighs pertinent in lieu of a growing ideology of “performativity” (Lyotard, 1984, cited in Henkel, 1997, p. 135), a phenomenon wherein the university has been incorporated into an entity in which observers can view the effects of a national drive for efficiency and productivity, requiring executive behavioral and institutional models, along with “adoption of language and concepts which are framed with what George Orwell might have called “business speak” (Arvast, 2005, p. 82).

Because the literature reflects a trend in the college and university toward corporatization, executive communication therefore becomes a focus. To this end, Birnbaum and Umbach (2001) assign four career paths to the college president—the scholar, steward, spanner, and stranger—in an examination of the types of people, as well as the types of education and experiences brought to the college presidency. Allan, Gordon, and Iverson (2006) identify dominant discourses that reflect and shape contemporary images of leadership in higher education with the intent of aiding reader understanding of the necessary strategic positioning of leaders within the complexity of the college and university environment. Henkel (1997) defines the university as a corporate enterprise. Complementing this characterization, Jackson (2004) explores the work of academic deans, paralleling their schedule demands to those of the business executive.
Implications for professional ethics and the maintenance of power are examined by what Carr (1968) refers to as the “pressure to deceive” (p. 69). In an observation of American work and culture, he adds, “We live in what is probably the most competitive of the world’s civilized societies. Our customs encourage a high degree of aggression in an individual’s striving for success” (p. 71). Therefore, the research includes an analysis of what constitutes an ethical dilemma in light of the viewpoint of the necessity of deception argued as indispensable for effective leadership and the maintenance of power.

Considering these orientations in the realms of professional ethics of the leader, Northouse (2004) defines leadership as influencing a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (2001) agree, evidenced in their discussion of the importance and salience of influence as a critical component to effective leadership. Schubert’s (2005) discussion of vertical position and power reveals that “people construct power as vertical difference in language, in nonverbal communication, and in physical manifestations” (p. 3). Within Schubert’s analysis, Fiske (1992, 2004) observed that “in order to differentiate between persons with and without power, people typically use metaphors of spatial order and magnitude” (Schubert, 2005, p. 3). People of virtually all cultures employ vertical markers for authority ranks in their language. As an example, George W. Bush’s employment of the “thousand points of light” metaphor during his 1988 presidential run was intended to represent hope, as well as a vision of endless opportunities for the future. Though many questioned the meaning and aptness of the metaphor, its use in crafting a vision for the direction of the country is a technique leaders often use to create imagery for their audiences.

Thus, a focus of the present study was to capture gendered approaches to a philosophy and interpretation of the employment of spin, with the goal of determining how men and women
college presidents and senior academic executives view the employment of spin itself, as a conceptual frame; therefore, examined herein is a *gendered meta-analysis* of spin and framing from the vantage point of the university president. Resulting from this meta-analysis will be leader perceptions of spin as an issue of professional ethics, along with leader perception of the wielding of spin as indispensable to leader maintenance of power.

The literature consistently reveals spin and leadership as inextricably connected and interrelated. Successful leaders must know how to effectively employ spin as a manipulation tool. And, as women continue to ascend to positions of leadership, this study aims to test whether women are employing the same or similar tactics as members of the old boys’ network to protect position power and ensure results. An additional question concerns whether leaders view spin as an ethical dilemma, with anticipated findings that employment of spin is viewed as merely a given and necessary strategic tactic, and further, an acceptable and highly functional navigational tool. In Greene (1998) and Machiavellian fashion, it is further anticipated that the leader who wishes to protect his or her “land” and “assets”, must adeptly employ use of spin and framing.

**Significance of the Study**

The results of this study will provide leaders with a comparative portrait of gendered approaches to the necessity of language manipulation viewed as indispensable to the leader’s ability to maintain all variations of positional power: coercive, connection, referent, legitimate, reward, information, and expert, presented within Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (2001). The results will allow leaders to explore varying interpretations and perceptions of the employment of spin and framing, whether viewed as indispensable and balanced on a continuum of truth and reality, extending toward illusion and falsity.
Analysis of the differences of Kohlberg (1984) and Gilligan (1982) reveals arguments toward a male application of justice, fairness, respect, and reciprocity to ethical dilemmas from Kohlberg’s assessment; while applications of nonviolence, care, relationships, and harmony are assigned to women in Gilligan’s evaluation. Results of this study will allow leaders to measure whether or not participant responses follow the logic and arguments of Gilligan and Kohlberg in dilemmas involving spin. Additionally, if power and politics are interdependent, and whether the nature of politics requires the manipulation of language for desired results, leaders will be able to determine participant perceptions of the degree of language manipulation required as determined by the challenge and the means at stake. Leaders will be able to continue to engage in an exploration of the necessity and the employment of spin, as well as the implications of each.

Definitions of Terms

For the purpose of the present study, the following terms are defined:

*Spin* denotes the deliberate shading of news perception, or the attempted control of a political reaction (Borger, 2004). The term is applied to the use, negotiation, and manipulation of language to achieve a desired result.

*Framing* is a tool that imposes a structure on a current situation; defines a set of problems within that situation and circumscribes the possibility for solutions (Lakoff & Ferguson 2006, “The Framing of Immigration”, The Rockridge Institute).

*Leadership* is defined as influencing a group of individuals to achieve a common goal Northouse (2004).

*Power* reflects the ability of the leader to control the behaviors of others Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson (2001).
Delimitations

This study will confine itself to leaders in positions of influence in the field of higher education. The participants selected will have maintained their current position for five years.

Limitations

Because the study is limited to five leaders, two female and three male college presidents and senior academic executives, purposive, criterion-sampling procedures decrease the generalizeability of the findings.

Organization of Remaining Chapters

Chapter II summarizes the literature related to spin and framing, gender differences, higher education, professional ethics, and leadership and power. Chapter III highlights the methods for this study, including the research design, participants, observations, interview protocols and documents, as well as data collection and analysis procedures. Chapter IV and V present findings from the study in the form of ethical dilemmas and research question results, respectively. Chapter VI is an analysis of the results applied to an extended literature review, discussion, and summary.
CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a summary of the literature related to the following areas of research: spin and framing, gender differences, higher education, professional ethics, and leadership and power.

Spin and Framing

“The line between spin and deception is a thin one indeed” (Stolberg, 2004, p. 1). Gaber (1999) defines spin as a process to setting a political agenda. While “worldwide news sources are increasingly sophisticated in media logic (the art of persuading and manipulating large masses of people) this enables them to create an aura of objectivity and ‘truthfulness’ in the news stories they construct” (Paul & Elder, 2003, p. 2). “On the other hand, only a small minority of citizens are skilled in recognizing bias and propaganda in the news disseminated in their country” (Paul & Elder, 2003, p. 2). Bok (1988) adds, “They [public officials] argue that vital objectives in the national interest require a measure of deception to succeed in the face of powerful obstacles” (p. 151). Yet to maintain power, Greene (1998) argues that leaders must be skilled in what [Baldassare 1528] defines as sprezzatura, the capacity to make the difficult seem easy. Greene (1998) adds that “this idea of sprezzatura is relevant to all forms of power, for power depends vitally on appearances and the illusions you create” (p. 250).

From a critical thinking perspective, returning to the observations of Paul and Elder (2003), an ethical dilemma surfaces when we consider the lack of a skilled majority citizenry that can discriminate objectivity from bias. The authors observe, “they are unreflective thinkers, their minds are products of social and personal forces they neither understand, control, nor concern themselves with” (Paul & Elder, 2004, p. 3).
To uncover the causes of the unreflective thinking to which Paul and Elder (2003) refer, it is helpful to consider the analysis of Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (2001), as they deconstruct the work of Douglas McGregor, pioneer in the study of behavioral science and originator of Theory X and Theory Y, a theoretical model based on assumptions of human behavior and motivation. “Theory X assumes that most people prefer to be directed, are not interested in assuming responsibility, and want safety above all” (p. 60). Theory Y assumes that work is as natural as play if the conditions are favorable, and, additionally, that “motivation occurs at the social, esteem, and self-actualization levels, as well as at the physiological and security levels” (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2001, p. 60). Theory X and Theory Y are attitudes and predispositions toward people. Though assumptions about human behavior, when applied universally, are often inaccurate, the authors apply McGregor’s theory to the paradigms through which managers of organizations might view subordinates. Applied to a discussion of critical thinking, there is opportunity to analyze diametric spectra of human motivation and human thinking.

Returning to the views assumed by Paul and Elder (2004), a predisposition which parallels McGregor’s Theory X, observing that the personal beliefs of this untrained majority are often based in prejudices, their thinking comprised of stereotypes, caricatures, and oversimplifications (to capture a few of the forms of fallacy), then the implications for leaders, spanning all fields and professions, who have need to control the behaviors of their subordinates, are indeed sobering. “The best deceptions are the ones that seem to give the other person a choice: your victims feel they are in control, but are actually your puppets” (Greene, 1998, p. 254). “Spin is everything; substance is irrelevant” (Paul & Elder, 2004, p. 4).
Because a central component to leadership is influence (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2001), it is necessary to wield and to maintain power, to carefully and deliberately frame issues to attract buy-in and followership. Yet on a continuum, or scale of manipulation and mental trickery, when ends justify means that support narrowly focused interests and not the broad interests of stakeholders of an organization, from the utilitarian perspective offered by Strike, Haller, and Soltis (2005) and coined ‘benefit maximization’, observers must question both the means and the ends, as well as who controls said means and ends. Starratt (1991) describes the importance of studying how language is used to maintain the legitimacy of social structures. Additionally, he cautions that no social arrangement is neutral. Observers therefore, must additionally question the degree of spin as well as the qualifying circumstances necessary for its employment as a component to successful leadership.

Coburn (2006) introduced the role of authority into understanding of the social process of what the researcher cites as sense-making, the act of constructing meaning by placing new information into cognitive frameworks, otherwise known as world view, during policy implementation. The researcher posits, “Policy problems do not exist as a social fact waiting discovery. Rather, they are constructed as policy-makers and constituents interpret a particular aspect of the social world as problematic” (p. 343). Lakoff (2006) confirms this process of events, adding, “Nothing is ‘just’ common sense. Common sense has a conceptual structure that is usually unconscious. That’s what makes it common sense” (p. 4). Additionally, Lakoff concludes, “When we think, we use an elaborate system of concepts, but we are not usually aware of just what those concepts are like and how they fit together into a system” (p. 4). Therefore, in a study of one school’s response to the California reading initiative, Coburn found that the school’s response depended upon how school staff collectively constructed meaning and
understanding of the relevant problems to be solved. Authority, privilege, formal and informal organizational structures, as well as motivation, were integral components influencing the power behind the message. The researcher found, “…frames put forth by those with greater authority tend to be privileged in the social negotiation of meaning, although formal authority in particular does not guarantee that school leaders’ problem framing will be successful in motivating action” (p. 373). Ultimately, how leaders think about and ultimately frame a problem determines policy implementation and thereby limits the degrees of freedom for the best and most appropriate solutions.

Lundy (2006) determined the effect of framing on cognitive processing and found that subjects in the study produced a significantly different number of thoughts in response to messages with different frames. Three messages, framed and categorized as moral norms, mutual benefit, or facts frames, each reported on the international experience of a fictitious extension agent (an advisor employed by the government to assist people in rural areas with methods of farming and home economics). The first message presented a picture and a caption depicting the experience of the agent. Message one (mutual benefit) focused on highlighting the value of the work to the agent and the group with which the agent worked; the second message (moral norms) highlighted the good work done by the agent; the third message (facts) highlighted the agent’s activities on the trip. Participants presented with the mutual benefit frames related messages to their own lives and jobs. Participants presented with moral norms frames shared thoughts related to moral considerations, responsibility to helping others, and the sharing of global knowledge; lastly, participants presented with the facts frames requested more information due to unanswered questions. Implications of this study reflect the need for those in
public relations to understand the internal motivations of the audiences they wish to reach, and to construct and contextualize messages accordingly for effective persuasion.

Applying the message of cognitive processing to media message construction, Esser, Reinemann, and Fan (2001) found metacommunication, a term denoting “the news media’s self-referential reflections on the nature of the interplay between political public relations and political journalism” (p. 16) to be a new development in political journalism. The researchers develop a new media theoretical concept known as metacoverage, designating it a “third new force in news making: professional political PR” (p. 39). Painting journalism as in a permanent state of development, the researchers additionally cite, “In the 1960’s, issue coverage predominated, which is characterized by a descriptive style of reporting. Candidates’ policy statements were of inherent news value; candidates were the main agenda setters, and their words carried the story” (p. 16). The researchers attribute one of the key characteristics of this emergence to “politician’s increasing dependence on specialist marketing and communication strategists who have assumed a new and influential role at the center of modern media-driven democracies” (p. 39). Reinemann et al. find additionally that the news media have difficulty reporting about political PR professionals in a neutral and educational way. In the United States, media view the character of spin-doctors within media negatively; however the competence of spin-doctors is positively viewed. In an analysis of the term spin-doctor, which often means an “unusually partisan and determined high-ranking expert in political PR who tries to influence public opinion by putting a favorable bias on information presented to the media” (p. 39), the term has differing meanings and associations depending upon the country analyzed. Implications lead to a general tone of mistrust of political institutions in the United States, as well as
adversarial role models in news making, all leading to news managers who try harder to influence the media.

Gaber (1999) characterizes the basic operation of spin-doctoring as more of a process than an event. With the objective of controlling the quality and the amount of information provided to journalists, the spin doctor will release morsels of information to journalists at a time, with the aim of building tension and anticipation through use of framing, imposing a structure on a current situation by appealing to the thinking of the masses, for a leader or politician’s speech. Politicians can both set and drive a news agenda; in either case, little is left to chance. Gaber finds that parties spend much time during election campaigns, but also during ‘peace-time’ between elections, attempting to control the media’s news agenda.

Paul and Elder (2004) equate the logic of constructing news stories to the logic of writing history. In both cases, because there is a vast background of facts and a highly restricted amount of space allotted for those facts, the result in both cases is the same: “99.9999% of the facts are never mentioned at all” (p. 4). Thus, if fairness and objectivity is thought of as equivalent to presenting all of the facts, then fairness and objectivity are illusions. The authors cite The Wall Street Journal, May 7, 2004, “Most people, having given up on getting a set of unadorned facts, align themselves with whichever spin outlet seems comfortable” (Paul & Elder, 2004, p. 5).

The job of any country’s media therefore, is to highlight the positives of that country through dominant viewpoints, which only serve to reinforce a country’s perception of itself. “All countries’ media project a favorable self-image of their own culture through a selection of what is and is not covered, what is given a positive spin, and what a negative spin “ (Paul & Elder, 2004, p. 33). Questioning the possibility of the emergence of a critical society, the authors cite William Graham Sumner (1906), who recognized that only through critical thinking is there a
guarantee against delusion, deception, superstition, and misapprehension of our earthly circumstances and ourselves. Education is valuable only if it produces a well-developed critical faculty. Without understanding of how to critically analyze deception and spin, the citizenry is held hostage to its own country’s media.

To contrast the subtleties of spin and framing, Lakoff and Ferguson (2006) define “framing” as a tool that “imposes a structure on a current situation, defines a set of problems with that situation, and circumscribes the possibility for solutions” (“The Framing of Immigration”, The Rockridge Institute). A component of rhetoric, the art and study of using words persuasively, framing builds upon the fundamentals of cognitive science, the “unconscious system of concepts …how we think and talk using that system of concepts” (Lakoff, 1996, p. 4). For instance, Lakoff describes a variation of framing in the form of what he calls a ‘conceptual metaphor’, “a conventional way of conceptualizing one domain of experience in terms of another”, often unconsciously. Lakoff explains that many people are unaware of the common conceptualization of morality for instance, in terms of financial transactions and accounting, “If you do me a big favor I will be indebted to you, I will owe you, and I will be concerned about repaying the favor” (p. 5). Hairston, Ruszkiewicz, and Friend (1999) explain rhetorical frameworks writers have traditionally used to organize and generate ideas: “Among the oldest are the four categories of questions classical rhetoricians used to explore topics: questions of fact, definition, value, and policy” (p. 34). These categories echo the Barthesian “codes”, which are a linguistic distillation, or system of semiology, representing a science of signs and symbols used to decode and to uncover layers of meaning within literature (Miller, 1974, p. 18). As a practical example, Lakoff (1996) metaphorically deconstructs an excerpt from
a column by William Raspberry as it appeared in the *Houston Chronicle* (section A, p. 30, February 4, 1995). The column reads:

The government of the District of Columbia is reeling from a newly discovered budget shortfall of at least $722 million and there is growing talk of a congressional takeover of the city. What is about to do us in…is the poor but compassionate mother with a credit card.

To put it another way, a huge amount of the city’s stupendous debt is the result of the local government’s effort to do good things it can’t afford.

But a good chunk of the underlying problem is the compassionate mom attitude that says: If it’s good for the kid to have, then I ought to buy it—and worry later about where the money will come from.

Well, mom has not only reached her credit limit: she’s in so much trouble that scrimping and saving now won’t solve the problem. She’ll need a bailout from Congress. But then, she has to learn to say no—not just to junk food but to quality cuts of meat she can’t afford. (Lakoff, 1996, p. 4)

Lakoff (1996) emphasizes that Raspberry’s readers do not have any problem understanding this column. Though he writes it “common-sensically”, the article’s reasoning contains an elaborate conceptual metaphor. Situated around the facts of a budget shortfall, Raspberry presents readers with the concept of the “overindulging mother”, the logic of which he defines by example. Raspberry places value on the irresponsibility of this overindulgent mother by criticizing her inability to solve the problem by scrimping and saving. Underlying Raspberry’s strategy is a judgment of irresponsible governmental policy and practice, shown in its lack of financial prudence. Thus, the thinking behind the metaphorical construction is reflects the values of conservatism. As earlier observed, Lakoff posits that nothing is common sense. Political discourse, while often guised as common sense, is really based on an elaborate, conscious and unconscious organized cognitive schema.

Hairston, Ruszkiewicz, and Friend (1999) qualify questions of fact as the investigation of statistical information already available, and further, as an investigation of policies already in place. Questions of definition interpret those facts and place them into a larger context.
Questions of value ask the writer to make a judgment of whether the idea in formation is a good or bad one; lastly, questions of policy allow the writer to consider a course of action, weighing what should be done in response to a given issue.

Returning to the definition of spin offered by Borger (2004), defined as a process of shading perception for the attempted control of a reaction, observers can begin to see a relationship between the necessary questions the leader and rhetorician must consider when forming arguments for persuasion of stakeholders, buy-in, movement from one policy to another [rhetorical strategy], verbal argumentative presentation and shading of impending policy [spin], and selection of language reflecting intricate cognitive schemas with which to present said policy [framing].

Nicoll and Edwards (2004) examine governmental policy within the United Kingdom, applying a rhetorical analysis, which helps to point to the politics of discourse at play in the policy-making process. Quite similarly to the work of Friedman (2006), summoning the attention of readers to the existence of a new, flat world and economy of which those who plan to thrive in their chosen career must be aware, the authors here examine the discourse of the New Labour government in existence in the UK since 1997. Traditional public services, including education and training are presented in modernized discourse wherein each is described as no longer meeting the challenges of the 21st century. A new age of information and global competition offer no choice but preparation for this new age. With clever and skillful manipulation of spin, rhetoric, and framing, all three components appear to the intended audience as natural cautioning and summoning of action necessary for the success of the citizenry in the 21st century.
In this example, the New Labour Party has followed the template set forth by Greene (1998): “Give people options that come out in your favor whichever one they choose. Force them to make choices between the lesser of two evils, both of which serve your purpose. Put them on the horns of a dilemma: they are gored whichever they turn” (p. 254). This method is parallel with skills the explainers must model, as presented by Friedman (2006) “If you can explain the complexity well, you can see the opportunities better. For instance, you can see what parts to synthesize” (Friedman, 2006, p. 285). For the leaders and influencers, as well as the policy-makers, these skills are critical. They are the benchmarks of success. Maxwell (1998) agrees, adding, “Remember that leadership is influence—nothing more, nothing less” (p. 20).

Gender Differences

Reviews of the latest research evidence and experimental studies also conclude that many sex differences in personality and behaviour are not eroding over time; that public stereotypes of sex differences correspond closely to research findings and are hence based in reality; and that there are persistent sex differences in individualism versus collectivism. (Hakim, 2006, p. 280; cited in Babcock & Laschever, 2003; Eagly, 1995; Hakim, 2004a; Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1988; Pinker, 2002; Swim, 1994)

Gilligan (1982) found that “women impose a distinctive construction on moral problems, seeing moral dilemmas in terms of conflicting responsibilities” (p. 105). Male participants in Gilligan’s study show a propensity to deconstruct moral dilemmas by way of hierarchical ordering of priorities in order to resolve conflicts between “desire and duty” (p. 33). Implications of these described differences in approaching and resolving moral conflicts reveal “the contrast between a self defined through separation and a self delineated through connection, between a self measured against an abstract ideal of perfection and a self assessed through particular activities of care…” (p. 35). When the question of responsibility to self as opposed to responsibility to others is posed, the male participant responds, “You go about one-fourth to the others and three-fourths to yourself” (p. 35), while the female participant responds,
Well, it really depends on the situation. If you have a responsibility with somebody else, then you should keep it to a certain extent, but to the extent that it is really going to hurt you or stop you from doing something that you really, really want, then I think maybe you should put yourself first. But if it is your responsibility to somebody really close to you, you’ve just got to decide in that situation which is more important, yourself or that person, and like I said, it really depends on what kind of person you are and how you feel about the other person or persons involved. (Gilligan, 1982, p. 36)

In sum, Braebeck (1983) organizes Gilligan’s Morality of Care and Responsibility and contrasts it with Kohlberg’s Morality of Justice by providing first a primary moral imperative: for Kohlberg, justice stands singly; for Gilligan, non-violence and care prevail. Additionally, on the Kohlberg scale, the sanctity of the individual, rights of self and others, fairness, reciprocity, respect, and rules and legalities are among the list of salient moral considerations. Conversely, for Gilligan, relationships, responsibility for self and others, care, harmony, compassion, and selfishness/self sacrifice stand among the salient considerations.

Kohlberg (1984) developed six stages of moral reasoning grouped according to three levels: preconventional, conventional, and postconventional, or principled levels. Kohlberg’s work is based upon 84 male participants whose development the researcher followed for a period of 20 years. Though Kohlberg claims universality of the experiment and findings, to be inferred from Gilligan’s (1982) critique is the purposive and limited nature of the study, which is criticized for its lack of inclusiveness of women.

The preconventional level represents a largely egocentric point of view that might be evidenced in children and/or disassociative criminals. The conventional level reflects an ability to distinguish a societal point of view from interpersonal agreement or motives. Within this level, the individual is able to engage in perspective taking as well as relationships with other people. The postconventional level reflects what is referred to as a ‘prior to society’ perspective wherein the individual considers moral and legal points of view, recognizing conflict and the
possibility of difficulty in integration. Implications to be considered from the work of Kohlberg are the nature and methodology of the study and despite criticism of the nature of the study’s methodology, the relevance and applicability of the findings to current research in the area of gender differences.

Tavris (1982) employs a ‘game’ metaphor to further explain the stances assumed by Freud and Kohlberg. Because of their fascination with the procedures and the litigiousness of settling disputes, boys typically play games in which rules dominate. This legal sense is regarded as illustration of the highest form of morality. However, to girls, one’s success does not necessarily imply another’s loss or failure, an illustration in itself, another moral lesson. Further, if a quarrel occurs, girls are said to be more likely to end the game. At stake for the boys is the upholding and just resolution of procedures; at stake for girls is the relationship.

Supporting this summation are the findings from Hasseldine and Hite (2003), wherein women were found to be more compliant when a positively framed tax compliance message response was required. Men were found to be more tolerant of tax evasion and more compliant when a negatively framed tax compliance message was required. To apply the views of Freud and Kohlberg to a modern ethical scenario involving tax compliance, it would seem to follow that men, more inclined toward an orientation of justice than care, might respond in the necessary and appropriate ways to a positively framed tax compliance message, out of a sense of duty to the legal requirements and personal responsibility. In another light, however, perhaps this example indeed exemplifies a justice orientation assigned to men. Risky choice framing effects occur when willingness to take a risk depends upon whether the potential outcomes are positively or negatively framed (Hasseldine & Hite, 2003); thus, Levin, Gaeth, and Schreiber (2002) find people in general are “more apt to take risks to avoid a loss than to achieve a gain”
(p. 414). In the present example therefore, men respond in higher number only upon receiving negatively framed messages of possible loss; thus, men ultimately respond in the necessary way, however, seemingly more pressure [in the negatively framed message] must be applied to men to gain their appropriate response to the tax message.

Additionally and in lieu of a male tendency toward litigiousness and pragmatism, Ong and Lai (2006) found men’s rating of computer self-efficacy, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and behavioral intention to use e-learning to be higher than women’s. Women showed a propensity toward influence by perceptions of computer self-efficacy and ease of use; men’s decisions were more significantly influenced by perception of usefulness of e-learning. The authors describe a male tendency to concentrate on the usefulness of the new technology and specifically note that men “appear to be fairly pragmatic, considering productivity-related factors when using this new technology” (Ong & Lai, 2006, p. 825). Conversely, “Although perceived ease of use was not considered an important ‘direct’ determinant of men’s behavioral intention to use e-learning, it was the most significant determinant of behavioral intention to use for women when compared with men” (Ong & Lai, 2006, p. 825). Relative to the consideration of a solution to the “problem” of a new technology, the researchers’ findings are consistent with the comparisons of gendered considerations within the moral orientations of Gilligan and Kohlberg cited in Braebeck (1983).

Belenky, Clichy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) found the emergence of voice and self as central to the mind and development of women; results from their study delineate five categories leading to the development of women’s knowledge: silence, received knowledge, subjective knowledge, procedural knowledge, and constructed knowledge. *Silence* is a position in which women experience themselves as mindless and voiceless and subject to the whims of external
authority. In this stage, words are perceived as weapons used to separate and diminish people, not to connect or empower them. Received knowledge is a perspective from which women conceive of themselves as capable of receiving, even reproducing knowledge from an external world, however the women still view themselves as incapable of constructing knowledge at this stage. Subjective knowledge is a perspective from which truth and knowledge are conceived of as personal, private, and subjectively known or intuited. Procedural knowledge is a position in which women are invested in learning and applying objective procedures for obtaining and communicating knowledge. Constructed knowledge is a position in which women view all knowledge as contextual, experience themselves as creators of knowledge and value themselves as creators of knowledge, valuing both subjective and objective strategies for knowing.

To move forward from the highest level of knowing prescribed by Belenky, Clichy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986), constructed knowledge, and applying the creation of self-knowledge to perception of individual power, Karakowski and Miller (2006) found that “perceived power in a multiparty negotiation can be affected by numerical status, as well as social status with the result that a minority female in a group dominated by males will act differently from a male in a female dominated group” (p. 50). In essence, factors affecting male and female negotiator styles and influences include “proportional representation of men and women in the negotiation, socialized gender roles, and perceived status” (p. 54). Implications for the study explore the practical question of whether men and women behave differently at the bargaining table, as well as the role of gender in multi-party negotiations. The researchers cite the work of Lewicky, Litterer, Saunders, and Minton (1993) who identify gendered differences in negotiator styles. Masculine tendencies include visualization of a one-shot deal, seeking of a sports-type victory, emphasis on rules-of-the-game and power positions, explanations of the
logic of their position, speaking in a dominating manner, intransigence about their position, interruptions and deceptions of the other party. Feminine tendencies include visualization of long-term relationship, seeking of mutual gain, emphasis on fairness, inquiry about others’ needs, use of powerless speech, willingness to compromise, and avoidance of tactics that might harm long-term relationship. Karakowski and Miller analyze social role theory that observes men and women as socialized in different ways, consequently encouraging different types of behavior in groups—women tend toward a higher level of social-emotional behavior (collectivist), while men are more task oriented (agentic).

To view negotiation in the context of leadership, Applebaum, Audet, and Miller (2003) found that women’s leadership style is different from men’s, yet men can learn from and adopt “women’s” style and use it effectively. “Effective leadership is not the exclusive domain of either gender and both can learn from the other” (p.43). The researchers posit that women’s leadership styles are more likely to be effective within the “context of a team-based, consensually driven organizational structures that are more prevalent in today’s world” (p. 43). The authors posit “the inescapable reality is that, within the senior ranks of corporate America (and elsewhere), women remain conspicuous by their absence” (Applebaum, Audet, & Miller, 2003, p. 43). With trends toward flatter, team-based, and globalized organizations, the differences in men and women’s leadership styles become increasingly important, with women’s leadership styles increasingly valuable in light of this trend.

In an application of framing to gender, Hasseldine and Hite (2003) found women to be more persuaded by a positively framed message of tax compliance, while men were more persuaded by a negatively framed message of tax compliance. Framing literature classifies three types of framing effects, risky choice, attribute, and goal framing; and “all frames are not created
equal” (p. 519). Risky choice framing reflects the presentation of a choice involving “options with different risk levels (e.g., a sure thing option vs. a risky option), with both framed either positively or negatively” (p. 519). An example might surface in a presentation to consumers of the benefits of a diet of oatmeal as opposed to the deleterious health effects of a diet lacking oatmeal.

Attribute framing involves the positive or negative framing of a single attribute, with the frame affecting item evaluation. A strategy used frequently in marketing, consumer perception of quality depends upon the framing manipulation, i.e., beef described as 75% lean or 25% fat.

In goal framing, “the impact of a persuasive communication has been shown to depend on whether the original message stresses the positive consequences of performing the behavior, or the negative consequences of not performing the behavior” (p. 520). Within the definition of goal framing, two objectively equivalent messages (one positive, one negative) are communicated to participants. As an example, the researchers cite a Meyerowitz and Chaiken (1987) finding centered on a health context, (breast self-examination) wherein participants who read a loss-framed pamphlet “showed significantly more positive attitudes, intentions, and actual behavior four months after an experiment than subjects in a gain-framed group” (p. 520).

Implications of the researchers’ findings suggest the increased likelihood of women’s responsiveness to appeals to conscience contrasted with a higher success rate in appeals to negative consequences or impact within men.

When presented with ethical scenarios for individual resolution, Loo (2006) found women to be more ethical than men in their judgments of behaviors presented in ethical vignettes. Loo employed Reidenbach and Robin’s (1990) multidimensional ethics scale which taps five major normative ethical theories: justice, relativism, egoism, utilitarianism, and
Important to note in the researcher’s methodology are the divergent ways in which individuals are believed to organize and use ethical approaches with regard to questionnaire scale items. “Individuals do not use a single ethical approach, but a mix of aspects (i.e. items) from different theories” (p. 170). Three studies were used to examine whether or not men are more ethical than women by presenting ethical vignettes or scenarios, presenting key information or data pertinent to a situation. Study one draws upon Lyonski and Gaidis’ (1991) ten ethical dilemmas vignettes. A sample question read as follows: “You are asked by one of your largest customers to accept their bid for a construction project to expand your plant. The bid is more costly than other firms” (p. 178). Study two presents participants with ethical dilemma vignettes for the planning, execution, and termination of research phases. The research phase vignette provides a scenario in which a research manager of a large management and consulting firm has just presented a proposal on an employee satisfaction survey. Reidenbach and Robin’s (1990) development of a multidimensional ethics scale, which includes a 30-item a priori response scale was applied. Participants judged problems within each scenario according to ethical theories of justice, relativism, egoism, utilitarianism, and deontology. Lastly, study three incorporated the same method used in study two, however the focus of the vignettes was the planning, execution, and termination phases in project management.

Applying ethical vignettes as a foundation from which to measure gendered approaches to ethical dilemmas, Loo (2006) found gender to have “some effect in judging the ethics of the behaviors presented in the vignettes” (Loo, 2006, p. 176). In all three studies, Loo assessed that women were more ethical than men in their judgments of the behaviors presented in some vignettes. The finding from study three indicates that men are more ethical than women in some situations. Loo cites Glover et al. (2002, p. 223) in their conclusion that “men made the more
ethical choice in the scenarios where the moral intensity was extreme, either unethical or a clearly ethical situation” suggesting that when the situation falls in the grey area, men are less likely to make the more ethical choice (Loo, 2006, p. 176).

Higher Education

This section will survey the literature concentrating on the office of the college and university president, career path and trajectory, perceptions of the roles and duties of the office, higher education corporatization, and practical dilemmas within the higher education institution. Allan, Gordon, and Iverson (2006) identify “discourses of autonomy, relatedness, masculinity, and professionalism as most prominent in conveying images of leaders in higher education” (p. 58).

Fisher and Koch (2004) present data comparing and contrasting men and women college presidents within their survey group. The researchers found several statistically significant gender differences. Compared with men presidents, women are less likely to hold a doctorate, are less likely to have earned a Ph.D. and more likely to have earned an Ed.D., are more likely to have earned an honorary degree, and are more likely to have taken two or more courses in statistics, but less likely to have taken two or more courses in accounting. Additionally, compared with the institutions in which men presidents “hold sway”, institutions where women are presidents are about 1,100 students smaller in headcount, are more likely to be public, are less likely to be a Carnegie research extensive institution, are more than one-third more likely to be a two-year institution, are more than seven times as likely to be a sing-sex institution, and have slightly lower peer ratings in the annual U.S. news and World Report survey. The researchers’ findings extend beyond what is presented for the purposes of this study, however the
statistics captured and included serve to provide a demographic snapshot of who ascends to the college presidency, as well as the gender variables prior researched.

Birnbaum and Umbach (2001) assign four college presidential professional trajectories under the categories of traditional and nontraditional. Traditional paths include the scholar and the steward. The scholar-president represents one who has had full-time higher education teaching experience, including two prior positions in higher education. The researchers cite this as a “normative” (Cohen & March, 1974 cited in Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001, p. 206) presidential career path. Steward college presidents have never taught; however they have held two prior higher education positions.

Nontraditional college president career paths include the spanner and the stranger. Spanners are “boundary spanners” who have had significant commitments to both higher education institutions and other institutions or organizations (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001, p. 206). Stranger college presidents have never taught and have held two previous positions outside of higher education.

Levin (1998) found that “community college presidents are perceived as having considerable influence on organizational functioning and are viewed as primary agents of organizational change” (p. 405). The community college is distinctive in that “in these institutions, a formal, administrative leader has the potential to influence organizational decisions, actions, and outcomes” (p. 406). Allan, Gordon, and Iverson (2006) surveyed the discourse within articles and opinion pieces published in The Chronicle of Higher Education in 2002 and found four dominant discourses shaping images of leadership: autonomy, relatedness, masculinity, and professionalism. The researchers concluded, “these discourses are consistently evident, simultaneously circulating, and at times coalescing to shape different, and often
competing, subject positions including: expert, beneficiary, tyrant, hero, negotiator, and facilitator” (p. 48). As a result, dominant concepts of masculinity and femininity “shape expectations of what is considered acceptable behavior for women and men in a given context” (p. 48). Critical to note are the subcategories falling within the heroic leader are the statesman and the warrior. The statesman image is aligned with the discourse of professionalism, while the warrior is aligned with images of masculinity.

Fisher and Koch (2004) cited additional statistics from the American Council on Education, an organization that observed, “since 1986, the percentage of women college presidents has increased from 9.5 percent to 21.1 percent, while the percentage of minority presidents has increased from 8.1 percent to 12.8 percent” (p. 79). The authors present a discussion offering speculated differences in women leader and college presidential modes of thought from those of men. Included are observations from Chliwniak (1997), who asserted that women adopt “A more democratic and participative style, whereas men tended to adopt a more autocratic and directive style” (p. 79). Regardless of gender, however, it is noted amongst researchers that ultimately, excellent leaders utilize the same tools of power and leadership to move institutions toward accomplishment of their ends. To this end, Fisher and Koch explored the notion of the emergence of the entrepreneurial president, the leader who, because of increased emphasis on revenue generating activities, has evolved into a creative force in the increase of profits.

Henkel (1997) found “significant movement toward the university as corporate enterprise in the context of a largely state regulated market, but by means of a not necessarily conscious mix between bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic modes of management” (p. 136). The effect of this fusion of management and operational styles reflect “institutions needs to incorporate
ambiguities and to manage uncertainty: strong leadership combined with maximum devolution of responsibilities” (p. 136). Pusser, Slaughter, and Thomas (2006) agree, finding, “The widely noted pressure for universities to rely on emerging corporate models of organization and to raise substantial amounts of income from private sources highlights a number of concerns relating to the missions and social responsibilities of these institutions (Bok, 2003; Press & Washburn, 2000; Pusser, 2002, forthcoming; cited in Pusser, Slaughter, & Thomas, 2006, p. 747).

Blackmore (2002) adds, “There is now significant debate as to whether universities are in crisis, in demise, or merely being restructured to meet the needs of knowledge-based economies” (p. 419).

In an analysis of the work of deans of colleges of education, Jackson (2004) found that “similar to business executives, academic executives performed a large volume of work activities that were varied, short in duration, and often interrupted” (p. 420). Parallel to Mintzberg’s study (1973), college deans “exhibited a preference for live action encounters” (p. 412). Additionally, deans and academic executives were found to be involved in consuming and disseminating information. The researchers conclude a possible transformation in the nature of administrative work in higher education toward that of business. To that end, Arvast (2005) asserts an initial belief that “leaders in our institutions of higher education were becoming so focused on the economic aims of institutions that they themselves were losing sight of other important academic aims” (p. 80). Arvast’s views mirror those of Lakoff (2006) in her later observation that “Power does not come from ‘on high’ but is much more intricately orchestrated and lived through the language we use and the meanings which are acceptable to various dominant ideologies, not necessarily according to dominant leaders or policies” (p. 80). Thus, to Arvast, consent is
achieved largely through discourse, through the formation of ideologies and values, which are transmitted through conversations, documents, and words we use to construct our social realities.

As a practical example, Browne (personal communication, October 27, 2006) analyzed the effects of the Bowling Green State University Experience (BGX) program during a telephone interview wherein he observed a personal distinction between the university and business, though he conceded that the university is a business. Therefore, at Bowling Green State University, stakeholders must be concerned with how its constituency perceives the university. In a candid explanation, however, Browne admitted uncertainty as to what the university is to do if it does not hide deficits; thus, at the university, the office of Marketing and Communications must “spin as aggressively as the Whitehouse does”.

Browne has watched the BGX program evolve and has divergent feelings about the program. What initially began as a program created by current university president Dr. Sidney Ribeau’s desire to make a contribution to the university community and stakeholders, to aid student transition from high school to college, has evolved into program pedagogy of values interwoven with critical thinking that is ambiguous in its aims and learning outcomes, according to Browne. Though no one has ever admitted to instituting the program because it would “sell”, the program has grown into very much a public relations initiative. Browne further asserts, “This was a top-down mission” (Browne, personal communication, October 27, 2006).

Questioning where spin moves into fraud, Browne, an attorney, makes distinction between fraud and puffing. The former denotes misrepresentation of facts; while the latter denotes the ordinary effect when one sells something by emphasis of the merits and the concealment of flaws. For instance, to define “light potato chips” as light in weight, as opposed to light in caloric value, Browne’s example provides illustration of a marketer’s rhetoric which,
as underwritten and unspoken in intention, was directly marketed to consumers with the former claim. When asked what problem the BGX program was intended to solve, Browne could name no direct dilemma; it was founded with the genuine intentions of making an enriching contribution the Bowling Green State University community. However, skeptics criticize the learning outcomes as nebulous, and the marketing strategy as aggressive.

Professional Ethics

He sets his house in order so that the bodily appetites do not take over the ruling position that reason should have. (Lavine, 1984, p. 55)

“Ethics, as a formal field of philosophical inquiry, is the philosophical study of morality” (Callahan, 1988, p. 7). Where morality is concerned with the rightness of human conduct, moral issues “raise normative questions about the rights and welfare of persons and other sentient beings, and about the character of the agent, in particular, about the kinds of persons we should strive to become” (Callahan, 1988, p. 6). Normative questions as questions of value as opposed to questions of mere fact; though questions of fact are of importance in moral decisions. Hairston, Ruszkiewicz, and Friend (1999) explain rhetorical frameworks traditionally used to organize and generate ideas, “questions of fact, definition, value, and policy” (p. 34). To clarify the distinction between a question of value and a question of fact, to ask, for instance, *whether stem cell research is morally right*, as opposed to *asking the function of the embryos otherwise unused for research*, delineates a value laden question from a factual one; the former question reflects a value laden question, the latter a fact laden question. Callahan further explains that moral issues involve questions of value; and “moral problems involve value dilemmas” (p. 7). Merriam Webster defines a dilemma as a problem or situation involving a difficult choice. A dilemma may encompass the protection or furthering of one value by the sacrifice of another, or the acceptance of one set of values by default, or inaction.
To O’Neill and Hern (1991), “ethical problems arise in systems, and systems must respond to them” (p. 129). The researchers urge acceptance of this inevitability. Arguing for a systems approach to the resolution of ethical dilemmas, lineal-casual thinking is downplayed because of its propensity to reduce the resolution of dilemmas to sources of blame. Critical to the application of spin, accepted as an ethical dilemma, is their recognition that “one person’s ethical dilemma may be another’s political contest, competition for resources, or cultural clash” (p. 132). A systems thinking, or holistic approach to solving problems, one that considers the interrelation of the system’s parts, is advocated because “Some members of the system will, almost inevitably, define the problem in different ways, and those different perspectives must be accommodated in solving the problem” (p. 132). Key factors are indispensable to the acceptance or dismissal of spin as an ethical dilemma: leader awareness of spin, leader perception of spin as a necessary and positive tool for buy-in and organizational change, leader perception of spin as a tool of deception and/or manipulation, leader experience with and employment of spin for either positive or negative gain, and leader approach and thinking applied to its use as a leadership tool.

Integral to a systems approach to ethical decision-making are four concepts: boundary, information, complexity, and goals. “A boundary holds together the components that make up the system, protects them from environmental stresses, and controls entry of resources and information” (Miller, 1978, p. 56, cited in O’Neill & Hern). The term micro-manager carries negative connotation because of the association with the actions of this managerial style as intrusive. Boundary is important to respecting privacy, confidentiality, and autonomy.

Relative to information as a key concept in systems thinking, “All crucial decisions begin with information that presents a challenge to the status quo” (Janis & Mann, 1977, cited in O’Neill and Hern, 1991, p. 134). As practical examples, a school district might experience the
influx of immigrants, or a mother may learn of her child’s use of illegal drugs. Systemic
variables may complicate the evaluation of this information. The principal may acquire the
information from a racially insensitive resident of the district community, the superintendent
may be under pressure from the board to implement curricular change; thus, the manner in which
the information is provided affects how the recipient will filter the information and respond.
Systems may also transform information, making it either conform to information already
known, or the system may change the information to make it less threatening.

“The more complex a system, the more important coordination becomes” (O’Neill &
Hern, 1991, p. 137). The researchers observe that complex systems have difficulty making swift
and quality decisions. Relative to the need to implement change and coordinate stakeholder buy-
in, the implications for internal public relations, or spin-doctoring within the organization is
apparent, as “a complex system makes decisions best when someone has the responsibility for
coordinating information flow and access to the decision-making process” (p. 138).

Lastly, systems fulfill purposes. The system must have capacity to order its priorities or
it will be indecisive. Supporting the tenets of chaos theory, the more indecisive the organization,
the more propensity for a state of confusion. Thus, an ethical dilemma within a system
represents conflicting objectives, such as the conflict between student privacy and the protection
of school property. The complexity and interrelatedness of the systems within organizations
supports a systems approach to ethical decision-making. Spin, therefore, borders the blatant
falsity required of lying. Yet, if “falsehood ceases to be falsehood if it is understood on all
sides… the truth is not expected to be spoken” (Carr, 1968, cited in Callahan, 1988, p. 69), then
leaders must consider whether a degree of manipulation of language is expected in a given
profession, as in the game tactics of poker.
Reynolds (2006) builds upon current knowledge of the brain’s neurocognitive model of ethical decision-making. He finds ethical decision-making to involve two interrelated yet functionally distinct cycles, a reflexive pattern matching cycle and a higher order conscious reasoning cycle, thereby describing not only reasoned analysis, but also the intuitive and retrospective aspects of ethical decision-making. “While many animals have systems comparable to the X-system, a reflexive pattern matching system, humans are distinct in the extent to which they can process not only perceptions of the environment, but also complex thoughts about those perceptions” (Reynolds, 2006, p. 739). “The C-system is the mechanism by which complicated reasoning is accomplished” (Reynolds, 2006, p. 739) Through the C-system, humans can take facts of a situation and apply abstract and rule-based analysis. The C-system performs a regulatory role over the X system; and the latter is dependent upon the former for its prototype supply. Upon being introduced to an individual, for example, it is the C-system that conducts the analysis for memory storage by the X-system to be accessed for later recognition to this newly introduced individual.

“In terms of ethical decision-making, the behaviors of the C-system are best conceptualized as a cycle of either rationalization or active judgment, depending on whether or not the reflexive pattern matching cycle was able to match a prototype and arrive at a decision, and the restructuring of prototypes” (Reynolds, 2006, p. 741). The researcher offers four general explanations for unethical behavior. First, if the individual fails to match a situation with the correct prototype, an unethical decision could be made. In other words, if the Enron executives had a prior example to follow, they might have made ethical decisions that included the stakeholders. “Presumably, this is why euphemistic language is considered to be dangerous to an organization’s culture” (Ashforth & Anand, cited in Reynolds, 2006, p. 742). Secondly,
unethical behavior might occur if the individual holds prototypes that incorrectly specify broader opinions on the moral appropriateness of an action; for instance, a thought paradigm that allows that stealing is ethical. Third, “if an individual holds ill-conceived or misdirected moral rules, (e.g., strict egoism), unethical behavior could result” (Reynolds, 2006, p. 739). Finally, though an individual might hold socially sanctioned rules, she still might make a morally unsound decision by applying the rules inappropriately. Reynolds uses the example of the masochist’s application of the Golden Rule, an application not in keeping with society’s expectations.

In recent research revealing American’s ethical pressures in the workplace, O’Toole and Lawler (2006) found that the percentage of workers who disagreed with the statement that they “had to do things that went against their conscience” on the job increased from 24% in 1977 to 69% in 2002 (p. 113). However, over one quarter of Americans report they are facing ethical dilemmas at work. Additionally, “more negatively, the recent spate of corporate ethical lapses appears to be indirectly increasing performance pressures on employees in large corporations” (p. 113).

Kemper (2001) states, “many communicators are not alert enough to see they’re being cooked to death by forces outside of themselves” (p. 6). Because these forces have become increasingly cleverly covert—how are stakeholders certain of what they are communicated? Are they informed of that which is representative of an authentic leadership task of benefit maximization, or that which is convenient for narrow interests? Are stakeholders able to distinguish the difference? The gauge is increasingly difficult to read and to monitor.

Overman and Foss (1991) found professionals to have distinctly different ethics from citizens. “These professionals do have separate ethics, but more in degree than in kind and with greater emphasis on individual ethics than on social or substantive ethics” (p. 131). Ellin (1982)
concurs, questioning whether special rules govern professionals in professional conduct. Ellin distinguishes between ordinary reflective morality and professional morality. The former “imposes the standards which govern all of us in our ordinary, that is, non-special life encounters” (Callahan, 1988, p. 130). Conversely, professional morality consists of a set of rules exclusive to the expectations of a profession. The National Football League’s continued endorsement of William Romanowski, a hostile-aggressive football player with a 16-year career who intentionally hurt players on opposing teams to ensure team wins and ‘personal victories’, reflects characteristics of a special professional morality. In the interest of the NFL, the organization overlooked the harm inflicted upon opposing team players by the ball player himself.

Overman and Foss’s (1991) explanation of the ‘separatist thesis’, one “which assumes that professionals have separate, identifiable ethical positions that are different from the ethical positions held by “ordinary citizens”, i.e., people not in their profession” (p. 133). Implications are broad for the assignment of the privilege to manipulate language and the truth in the client/professional agreement and exchange. Ellin offers a practical application, “Lawyers, for example, who defend the interests of clients whose interests are indefensible, might think they are doing their duty as lawyers, and that in so doing they act in the face of ordinary morality, not with the ultimate sanction of ordinary morality” (Carr, 1988, p. 130).

As an example, Vlad, Sallot, and Reber (2006) found Merck to employ a new type of mortification—rectification without assuming responsibility—by making rectification through its corrective action of recalling Vioxx but without ever admitting fault, apologizing, or asking forgiveness for causing grave injury and death to Vioxx consumers. The researchers assessed Merck’s use of “rebuilding-mortification and reinforcing-ingratiation responses” (p. 357). Merck
was cited as employing a new “crisis events misrepresented” denial and “too soon to know/no answer yet” distance strategies, perhaps to its detriment…” (p. 357).

Along similar lines, Brinson and Benoit (1999) examined rhetorical strategy with regard to Texaco’s damaged public image upon the surfacing of a secret tape in which African-Americans were heralded with disparaging racial epithets. Their study explored management’s response to this image crisis. The researchers found the enactment of four image restoration strategies: “bolstering, corrective action, mortification, and shifting the blame” (p. 483).

“However, the blame was not transferred to an external entity but to a subgroup of the accused (a small group of employees characterized as “bad apples”). For this strategy to be effective, the target group must be identified and clearly distanced from the rhetor engaging in image repair” (p. 483). In a tabled list of self-defense strategies, bolstering is defined as stressing good traits; corrective action denotes a plan to solve/prevent recurrence of the problem, exemplified by AT&T’s promise to customers to spend billions more to improve service; mortification is defined also by Vlad, Sallot, and Reber (2006) and denotes apologizing; lastly shifting the blame explains the nature of the action within the title and was exemplified by Tylenol: “a madman poisoned the capsules” (Brimson & Benoit, 1999, p. 487).

Coombs and Schmidt (2000) challenge the predictive validity of the work of Brimson and Benoit (1999) and recommend more rigorous application of image restoration theory to unpack its utility for crisis management and public relations. The researchers argue, “Neither mortification or separation were more effective than the other image restoration strategies at protecting the organizational image, winning acceptance of the account, or facilitating potential supportive behavior” (Coombs & Schmidt, 2000, p. 173). The researchers emphasize that restoration theory is more a taxonomy than a true theory to be used for making predictions.
Ihlen (2002) found that “the characterological coherence of standing one’s ground must be weighed against argumentative and material coherence. Characterological coherence might instead be reached by admitting error” (p. 185). Through an examination of Mercedes’ crisis response strategies after the test drive overturn of the W168 model, the researcher urges the reaching characterological coherence by admission of wrongdoing, apology, and maintenance of consistency in language references to the wrongdoing; “a critique of these studies reveals that they often treat the responses of organizations as static and linear when in reality they are dynamic and variable (Hearit, 2001, p. 509 cited in Ihlen, 2000). Ihlen’s observations parallel the systems approach to ethical decision-making posited by O’Neill and Hern (1991), “a systems approach may be more appropriate for understanding and changing the contexts in which ethical dilemmas occur” (p. 131).

**Leadership and Power**

Hitt, Ireland, and Hoskisson (2001) define strategic leadership as “the ability to anticipate, envision, and empower others to make strategic change as necessary”; as well, it is the ability to maintain flexibility (p. 489). If a significant component of leadership depends on influence, with influence requiring the motivation of followers to act for the benefit of organizational goals; and further, if the definition of leadership is viewed in light of Douglas McGregor’s Theory X (people dislike work and prefer direction), then important for leaders to consider is whether employment of spin is a necessary political and motivational tool, even more than it is an ethical dilemma, depending upon the means and ends to which it is employed (see Figure 2, *Gauge of Language Negotiation*). O’Neill and Hern (1991) cite Riger (1989), “a dilemma that seems ethical from one perspective may seem political from another” (p. 130).
Greene (1998) advises that the success of a leader depends upon the illusions he creates. To apply the *Gauge of Language Negotiation* to Greene’s argument, the creation of illusions, or falsities, may qualify as both political and deceptive tools. This creation of falsity allows for necessary and skillful maneuvering to achieve desired ends, and deceives a constituency unaware of these ends. For many Americans, the War on Terror, when distinguished from the War in Iraq, exemplifies this very continuum of manipulation. Moore and Slater (2006) observe, “Ultimately, Karl Rove will be measured not just by the tactics and strategies he uses to achieve his goals but by whether he reaches his distant visionary finish line. Rove wants nothing more than Republican domination of American politics, a GOP realignment so powerful it creates a virtual one-party nation” (p. 6). Conversely, truth and reality can equally be used as both political and deceptive tools. A principal faced with increasing enrollment numbers is forced to act quickly to ensure curricular preparation and classroom accommodation for future students. She must reveal the facts to her staff in a timely manner to gain buy-in for appropriate action. As a tool of deception, however, considering the tactics of Phillip Morris, upon admission that tobacco products cause lung cancer, heart disease, emphysema and a host of other illnesses, attempted to whitewash its name by changing its parent holding company name to Altria Group, and further, by instituting a Youth Smoking Prevention campaign despite its production and sale of tobacco products proven to be detrimental to health. Thus, the truth/reality—illusion/falsity grid illustrates how both of these means can result in either or both politically transparent and deceptive ends.

Mann (1995) presents control of information and knowledge as sources of power. “Skillful organizational politicians control the information flow and the knowledge that is made available to different people, thereby influencing their perception of situations and hence the
ways they act in relation to those situations” (p. 10). Known as gatekeepers, these politicians open and close channels of communication and filtering and shape knowledge in accordance with a view of the world that favors their interests. The concepts of organizational gatekeeping and control of perception, when aligned with Paul and Elder’s (2004) view of egocentric motives, present an ethical conflict when observers consider whose interests are advanced, who dominates, and who has greater access to information, resources and power within an organization. “Many aspects of organizational structure, especially hierarchy and departmental divisions, influence how information flows and are used readily by unofficial gatekeepers to advance their own ends” (Mann, 1995, p. 10). Further, skilled egocentric persons “..know how to tell people what they want to hear. They are consummate manipulators and often hold positions of power” (Paul & Elder, 2004, p. 13).

Power and leadership are closely intertwined and have a fragile, yet symbiotic relationship. Kouzes and Posner (2002) explain that it is “gratifying to have influence, and exhilarating to have scores of people cheering your every word. In many all-too-subtle ways, it is easy to be seduced by power and importance. All evil leaders have been infected with the disease of hubris” (p. 396-397). To effectively lead, one must possess power; yet power does not necessarily yield sound leadership.

Power is defined, “the ability to create the results you desire while simultaneously adding value to the lives of others” (Robbins & McClendon, 1997, p. 41). Kouzes and Posner (2002) argue, “Leaders accept and act on the paradox of power: we become most powerful when we give our own power away” (p. 284). Sifonis and Goldberg (1996) concur, offering a discussion of empowerment, which in their reference denotes, “the sharing of knowledge, the development of trust, and cooperation, but with clear boundaries on responsibility and authority” (p. 109).
Kouzes and Posner extend their definition of power by adding, “We get our power from the people we lead” (p. 284).

Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (2001) offer leader power bases, or types of leader behavior. The power to punish or sanction defines coercive power; the leader’s perceived ability to link with other influential leaders denotes connection power; reward power is the leader’s ability to give the followers incentives pleasing to them, while legitimate power denotes the perceived power the leader possesses by virtue of the leader’s title, position, or role. Referent power reflects the leader’s perceived affability and likeability; while information power is the leader’s perceived access to necessary critical or important information. Lastly, expert power is the leader’s perceived knowledge, education, and expertise in a given professional area.

Perception is salient in the parameters of each of the types of power, becoming clearer when we revisit Greene’s (1998) observation, “for power depends vitally on appearances and the illusions you create” (p. 254). All of the power variations are both fixed and fluid variables at once; the leader may indeed possess all or some of the power types, however the perceptions held by followers may shatter depending on the leader’s errant actions and/or decisions.

On the continuum of persuasion and manipulation, Paul and Elder (2004) distinguish between uncritical persons, skilled manipulators, and fair-minded critical persons. The uncritical consumer’s motivations are often traceable to irrational fears and attachments, personal vanity and envy, and intellectual arrogance and simple-mindedness. The authors describe a smaller group of people skilled in the art of manipulation and control. Shrewdly focused on pursuing their own interests, they are unconcerned with how their pursuit affects others. An even smaller group of people, though intellectually skilled, has no interest in manipulating and controlling others; they combine critical thought, fair-mindedness, self-insight, and a genuine desire to serve
the public good. Sophisticated enough to understand how rhetoric is used to pursue selfish ends, they are too insightful to be manipulated.

What are motivations then, for manipulation and followership? Using Bass’ Successful and Effective Leadership Continuum (1960), Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (2001) make distinction between successful and effective leadership. A successful leader, in attempt to influence a follower to complete a task, is successful largely dependent upon the leader’s position power. Thus, the follower completes the task not because of intrinsic motivation, but because of the leader’s control of rewards and punishment. If the follower completes a task because of respect for the leader, and because the task is personally rewarding, the leader is observed to have positional, as well as personal power. “Success has to do with how the individual or the group behaves. On the other hand, effectiveness describes the internal state, or predisposition, of an individual or a group, and thus it is attitudinal in nature” (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2001, p. 128).

Complementing this perspective are the data findings of Gupta and Case (1999). Relative to managers’ outward influence tactics and their consequences, cultivating relationships by building trust over time, as well as encouraging, are frequently associated with successful outward influence attempts. Outward influence attempts included behaviors such as logical presentation of facts and ideas with supporting documentation and communicating facts and data in a rational manner. These strategies were most commonly used as methods of outward influence. The authors find, “Targets who have a trusting, long-term connection with managers in other organizations may be more open to their influence attempts, especially when facts and data are being encouraged by their “friends” to “give it a try” (Gupta & Case, 1999, p. 304).
Charbonneau (2004) found rational persuasion and inspirational appeals to contribute significantly to perceptions of idealized influence. “Rational inspiration aims at changing the target’s beliefs that a request or proposal is feasible and consistent with task objectives through the use of explanations, factual evidence, and logical arguments (Yukl, 2002; Yukl & Seifert, 2002, cited in Charbonneau, 2004, p. 566). Inspirational appeals are effective when the request is presented in a way that resonates with the target’s needs, values, and ideals. The effect is essentially the propagandizing of information within organizations to inspire followership.

Keller and Cacioppe (2000) present attachment theory as an important addition to development of leadership theory. “Attachment theory posits that parents’ attachment styles, formed during past experiences with attachment figures, may have implications for their subsequent relationships with their children” (Rholes et al., 1995, cited in Keller & Cacioppe, 2000, p. 72). Parents with insecure attachment styles are likely to form insecure attachment styles with their children. Thus, leader attachment with followers is affected by both the attachment styles of the leader and follower. Both an avoidant leader and follower might be reluctant to confront a conflict. What the researchers designate an anxious-ambivalent leader might need to be less sensitive to negative employee response to criticism and feedback. A secure leader might have difficulty forming a relationship with an avoidant follower. The researchers evaluate attachment theory as research of great potential to enlightening observers to how leaders and followers relate.

Implications of attachment theory lead to Hoy, Gage, and Tarter’s (2006) measurement of the relationship between school mindfulness and faculty trust. The researchers revealed anticipated results; faculty trust in the school leader is a strong predictor of leader mindfulness. The findings support the theoretical rationale that trust and mindfulness are inextricably related.
Clear and succinct dispositions for leaders and organizations surface from the study conducted by Hoy, Gage, and Tarter (2006).

Effective leadership strategy requires foresight and anticipation of challenges. Therefore, close attention to the *dispositions* of both individual and organizational mindfulness is necessary. The authors make a distinction between individual and organizational mindfulness. Displayed in key dispositions, *individual mindfulness* is displayed by: creation of new categories for analysis, openness to new information, and consideration of multiple perspectives. *Organizational mindfulness* is exemplified by: preoccupation with mistakes, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to day-to-day operations, resilience, and deference to expertise. Conversely, Hoy, Gage, and Tarter (2006) present the dispositions of individual and organizational mindlessness. Individuals who display mindlessness exhibit the use of standard categories for analysis, resilience of current information, and limitedness to a single perspective. A key disposition signifying mindlessness in individuals is the misconception that routine translates into success. The authors speak to the propensity in humans toward consistency, “people are so accustomed and so efficient at one way of behaving that they become seduced by the nominal success of their routines. When the routines don’t work well, their typical response is to do more of the same” (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006, p. 237). Concurrently, organizational mindlessness is revealed by complacency, oversimplification, insulation from day-to-day operations, rigidity, and reliance on formal authority.

In an empirical analysis of language and power, Morand (2000) examines linguistic strategies used in superior—subordinate communication. Power had a strong effect on the overall politeness of a request. Further, speakers low in power relative to their addressee used significantly higher levels of politeness. “Polite language is thus envisioned as a finite menu of
weighted tactics that users choose from, liberally or sparingly, as circumstances require”. Additionally, “The tactics accounted for roughly 60 percent of the variance in all politeness” (Morand, 2000, p. 244). Terms relative to politeness theory are defined: face threatening acts, or (FTAs), “occur when one person has occasion to threaten or otherwise imperil the face of another” (Morand, 2000, p. 237). Acts of contradicting, criticizing, disagreeing, interrupting, and embarrassing are examples of FTAs. *Negative* politeness denotes tactics that function by establishing or recognizing social distance between the speaker and hearer. Use of hedges, minimization of an imposition, and apologies represent examples of negative politeness. *Positive* politeness tactics work through insinuation or establishment of a sense of commonality or familiarity. The show of interest, or acknowledgement and compliment of another’s admirable qualities or possessions are examples of positive tactics of politeness. The implications are far reaching for understanding and recognizing the dynamics of positional power within organizational hierarchies.

Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2002) found superiors to use soft and rational strategy more often than hard strategy. The agent’s power, as well as the target’s power affected the superior’s choice of particular influence strategies. The researchers urge discussion of power in relative and not absolute terms. Associated with legitimate power, hard strategies describe direct means whereby the agent expects compliance. Logic and bargaining are indicators of rational strategy; whereas soft strategies are invoked when the agent “seeks compliance in a polite, friendly, or humble manner” through use of flattery and sympathy (Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2002, p. 168). The researchers explain that use of soft, rational strategies may have been perceived as less costly, thereby decreasing likelihood of provocation or retaliation from the target of influence.
Kubow and Fossum (2007) analyze Hofstede’s analytic framework within the context of comparative education. Hofstede’s model is comprised of four dimensions: *power distance*, *uncertainty avoidance*, *social principledness* and *locus of control*. The degree to which citizens tolerate social inequities and accept power balances, viewing them as ‘normal’ describes *power distance*. Avoidance and nervousness relative to unpredictable and complex situations defines *uncertainty avoidance*; *social principledness* refers to cultural acquiescence, without question, to authority, as well as acceptance of norms and values; and lastly, *locus of control* consists of generalized beliefs or expectancies about how positive and negative reinforcements are obtained.

“The general population’s toleration of social inequalities, or power distance, occurs because an elite group is able to convince those with less power that their situation is a result of their own inadequacies” (Kubow & Fossum, 2007, p. 269).

Whether constituencies are led by “highly skilled egocentric” (Paul & Elder, 2004, p. 13) leaders, or “skillful organizational politicians”, ultimately, these kinds of cultural and organizational norms make it difficult for many to ascend to positions of high authority; thus the ‘elite’ “ensure that this source of power” is out of reach (Mann, 1995, p. 10).
CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

This chapter details the application of interviews as a data collection strategy, describing the rationale for its selection as the chosen methodology. As well, the research design, participants, interview protocol, and procedures used to gather, analyze, and synthesize participant responses is presented.

Research Questions

1. How do college presidents and senior academic executives approach, analyze, and resolve ethical dilemmas posed by the employment of spin, defined as the deliberate shading of information to evoke a desired reaction? (Borger, 1995)

2. Does the approach, analysis, and resolution of ethical dilemmas posed by the employment of spin, differ by gender?

Case Study Research Design

This study is qualitative in design. Creswell (1998) defines qualitative research as “an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, [and] reports detailed views of informants” (p. 15). Maxwell (2005) constructs a sewing metaphor for the definition of qualitative research, adding, “Design in qualitative research is an ongoing process that involves ‘tacking’ back and forth between the different components of the design, assessing the implications of the goals, theories, research questions, methods, and validity threats for one another” (p. 3). The intent of the present research study was to understand gendered differences in the approach, analysis, and resolution of an ethical dilemma within professional communication posed by the employment of spin and to present case studies that capture participants’ thinking as they ‘worked through’ the logic of their approach to a past
dilemma calling upon the leaders’ employment of spin. An additional goal was to capture participants’ interpretations of a researcher designed conceptual instrument entitled, *Gauge of Language Negotiation* (see Appendix E). The complete case study of each leader includes his or her personal viewpoints, vantage points, and rationalization of the necessity for the manipulation of language to obtain buy-in from followers.

From a postmodernist perspective, and relative to the purposes of this study, it is necessary to return to the view offered by Starratt (1991), who observed that with regard to the negotiation of language, at stake is most often positional and partisan power, elitism, and the maintenance of what Starratt posits as the *legitimacy* of social structures, making spin a necessity for the maintenance of power and a *perceived* legitimacy of these very same social structures. Supporting this view, and, in a description of the effects of postmodernism, Creswell (1998) observes, “These are negative conditions, and they show themselves in the presence of hierarchies, and the multiple meanings of language” (p. 79). Creswell further explains that included in the conditions of postmodernism are “the importance of different discourses, the importance of marginalized people and groups (the “other”), the presence of “meta-narratives” or universals that hold true regardless of the social conditions, and the need to “deconstruct” texts in terms of both reading and writing, bringing to the surface concealed hierarchies as well as dominations, oppositions, inconsistencies, and contradictions” (Creswell, 1998, p. 79).

Because the focus of this study centered on the points of view of each of the participants selected, examining more specifically how leaders employed spin *as cases*, case study methodology best captured the divergent views and experiences of the participants as those experiences relate to the negotiation of language. Merriam (1998) narrows the attributes of the case study by arguing, “The nature of the research questions, the amount of control, and the
desired end product are issues to be considered when deciding whether case study is the most appropriate design for investigating the problem of interest” (p. 9). Merriam further defines case study as a “bounded system—collected because it is an instance of concern, issue, or hypothesis” (p. 10). Also, because the aim of the study was to illustrate employment of spin, or the deliberate shading of information for a desired result, through leader engagement and interaction with the research questions, the cases are used instrumentally. Additionally, five leaders participated in the study, thereby entering the study into the category of collective case study. As a result, each case stands alone. However, also conducted was a cross-case analysis to explore the similarities and differences in language negotiation and leadership amongst the cases when viewed collectively.

Participants

The participants in the sample included five university/college presidents and senior administrative executives, two female and three male. The selection of these participants was criterion-referenced and purposive (Creswell, 1998) in nature. The leaders selected have maintained their positions of leadership and influence for a minimum of five years. The intent was to purposefully select experienced college presidents, equally representative of both genders, to capture divergent perspectives of spin as a tool of linguistic navigation, negotiation, and persuasion, in order to learn more about leader perception of language negotiation, with the goal of understanding whether, “the effects of changing gender socialization and sex roles” are factors which “de-emphasize gender differences” (Loo, 2003, p. 169).

Role of Researcher

For the purposes of this study, I decided it best to introduce myself to each of the participants in a formal letter before the interview. Before beginning with the discussions, I
provided necessary background about my education and professional experience. The interview questions guided the context of the interviews; thus, my role as researcher was passive, one of facilitator of the question as opposed to ‘expert’ on the topic of spin. To this end, Creswell (1998) asserts, “To study these topics, we ask open-ended research questions, wanting to listen to the participants we are studying and shaping the questions after we ‘explore,’ and we refrain from assuming the role of the expert researcher with the ‘best’ questions” (p. 19).

The targeted audience for my dissertation research is the academician, intellectual, and leader practitioner who wishes to engage in a critical discussion of spin and negotiation/manipulation of language in a postmodern world. As I pursued my research, I found that I approached the discussion, as well as the leader participants, with the assumption that they understood the necessity of linguistic negotiation, again, in the age of what Lyotard (1984) deems an ideology of ‘performativity’ (Cited in Henkel, 1997, p. 135). Under pressure to increase enrollment and funding, the college president is in many ways an entrepreneurial executive. Fisher, Koch, and McAdory (2005) add, “the most successful college presidents tend to be transformational leaders who find the ways and means to inspire and move their institutions and colleagues to higher levels of achievement” (Inside HigherEd, 2005). The authors find further, “The successful presidents raised more money than the other presidents and raised the quality of their student bodies as measured by SAT scores. Thus, the research describes a trend in the college and university president as an entrepreneurial thinker. Their institutions also grew more rapidly than similarly situated colleges and universities” (Inside HigherEd, 2005).

It was my goal to extract from college presidents their views on a topic to which we are all subject as citizens, as parents, as children, as siblings, and as leaders and professionals: the purposeful manipulation of language for a desired result, or spin. I wish to contribute to the
body of work in leadership and higher education by revealing the perceptions of leaders at the helm who are ultimately responsible for the direction of very complex institutions of higher education.

Anticipated Ethical Issues

Merriam (1988) finds ethical dilemmas likely to emerge at two points: during the collection of data and in the dissemination of the findings. Citing Walker (1980), Merriam lists five specific problems case study investigators have encountered in conducting research: (a) researcher involvement in the issues, events, and situations under study; (b) confidentiality of data; (c) competition for control of data by varying interest groups; (d) publication and preservation of participant anonymity; (e) and audience ability to distinguish actual data from researcher interpretation. Merriam additionally observes, “The emergent design of a case study makes it difficult to assess, for example, potential harm to participants” (p. 179).

To add to these concerns, Maxwell (2005) warns against researcher subjectivity, referred to as bias. To guard against inserting a subjective and personal “perceptual lens”, it becomes important to let the question, as well as the participant responses, guide the discussion, with myself as researcher functioning as a passive facilitator whose only supposed function is clarification, extension, and listening for concepts and ideas. As well, Maxwell advises researchers against reactivity, where the influence of the researcher interferes with the data collection procedures. Maxwell emphasizes the importance of each researcher understanding how he or she might influence “what the informer says, and how this affects the validity of the inferences you can draw from the interview” (p. 109). To abate these ethical issues, participants’ direction of interpretation to research questions, as well as their responses, were elevated and given prominence in the context of the interview discussions and within the summary of
findings. Additionally, responses were returned to participants following each interview for fact and accuracy checking, allowing participants the opportunity to clarify personal statements.

Interview Procedures

I first scheduled interviews with each of the participants. Three methods of gathering responses were incorporated: participant prior review of the interview prompts and questions, participant questioning in a formal interview, and participant interpretation and application of a visual diagram. As part of the data collection procedures, I kept and maintained descriptive field notes during the conversations as well to record key concepts and ideas.

The participants were mailed in advance the interview prompts and questions (see Appendix E). My goal was that the participants would respond with a communication dilemma in advance of the formal interview. Upon receipt of each of the five participants’ dilemmas, I presented all five participant-framed dilemmas in one document, so that each participant was provided with all five leaders’ dilemmas. During the formal interviews, participants then responded to the first three of the interview questions, (1-3), and discussed their individual interpretation of the definition of spin and their personal conceptualization of the *Gauge of Language Negotiation*; after which each participant charted his and her personal dilemma on a diagram of the gauge. I then scheduled a second round of interviews, during which participants were exposed to the dilemmas of all five leaders, charting and applying their perceptions of all of the leaders’ experiences and observations according to the *Gauge of Language Negotiation* (see Appendix E).

Interview Protocol

The foci of all of the interview questions captured the following:

1. *Definition of spin*

2. *Illustration of ways in which spin is used*
3. Call for participant example of past employment of spin, centering on a “dilemma”

4. Participant description of the nature of the situation

5. Review of example ethical scenarios requiring spin to public(s)

6. Interpretation of meaning and implications of diagram (Figure 2) Gauge of Language Negotiation

7. Application of the Gauge of Language Negotiation to four additional (5 total) leader-framed communication dilemmas

To proceed with qualitative case studies, each of the college presidents and senior administrative executives were contacted to obtain permission to proceed with the interviews. With Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board Approval, I then proceeded with the interviews (see Appendix A).

Once permission was granted, I sent letters to each of the participants to confirm their agreement to participate and the scheduled time for the interview (see Appendix B). I mailed along with the letters the interview questions, allowing participants sufficient time to either prepare responses before the scheduled discussion time, and to allow time for review and clarification on the part of the participants.

Data Analysis

Upon leader responses to the research questions, I incorporated findings within sections devoted to each participant to capture ‘portraits’ of each leader by case study. On review of the interview transcriptions, I organized participant responses to interview questions 1-3. I described the nature of the responses, the examples given, and participant perceptions of the situations as each summarized them. I then transcribed responses to interview questions 4-5, wherein participants expounded upon dilemma examples with their views of professional communication dilemmas. The goal of the interviews in entirety was to capture participants’ perceptions of the meaning and implications of the Gauge of Language Negotiation, as well as participant
engagement in a discussion of an actual dilemma faced by other college presidents. I then
designated thematic categories from participant discussions. These thematic categories
determined the organization of the extended review of literature in Chapter VI. I proceeded with
the analysis and summaries of participant responses. Because of the sensitive nature of the
information to be extracted from the interviewees, the privacy of the interviewees was respected
and their names excluded from the analysis.
CHAPTER IV. CHARTING THE ETHICAL DILEMMAS

This chapter presents results of data collected from interviews with five college and university presidents and senior executives, including two presidents, two vice presidents, and one past president, serving as a current chancellor. The participant pool consisted of three male and two female academic executives. The data collected were transcribed from a combination of telephone conversations and scheduled meetings. Each of the participants was mailed a description of the study foci and parameters in advance of the interviews. Upon agreement to participate, interviews were scheduled. Each of the leaders requested his or her identity be anonymous; therefore, participants are referred to herein as Transformative Transactions (Leader A-Female), Halting Achilles (Leader B-Female), Chancellor Utilitarian (Leader C-Male), Machiavelli Greene (Leader D-Male), and Dancing with Wolves (Leader E-Male).

Interviews were conducted in two rounds. During the first set of conversations, I presented three questions. Participants were first asked to provide a professional ethical dilemma involving language negotiation and spin. Secondly, participants were asked to provide a definition of the Gauge of Language Negotiation, presented in Chapter I, for the purposes of my extraction of the meaning and implications of the diagram. The Gauge of Language Negotiation is a visual representation introduced to leader participants as a hypothetical model that captures polarity of language use, from truth and reality to illusion falsity. Where language is the means by which leaders communicate, their objectives, or ends, might range in polarity from transparent to deceptive. The gauge is intended to illustrate how a leader might think through his or her employment of language, as means toward specific ends, either transparent or deceptive. Lastly, the final question in the first round of interviews required participants to chart their personal dilemmas according to the Gauge of Language Negotiation.
Prior to conducting the second round of interviews, I read and interpreted the transcripts and extracted the dilemmas from each of the scenarios. Transcriptions were forwarded to participants for fact and accuracy checking, after which the dilemmas were captured in prose form and sent to each of the leaders individually in preparation for the second round of discussions.

In the second round of discussions, participants were encouraged to comment freely about each of the dilemmas presented. Participants were asked their opinions about each of the dilemmas, their ability to relate to the issues within the dilemmas, and the meaning and implications of the *Gauge of Language Negotiation*. I compiled all of the transcriptions and forwarded them a second time to participants for fact and accuracy checking.

The emphases and aims of this study were to capture and contrast the variables male and female participants viewed salient in their resolution of what I posed as an ethical dilemma within professional communication, the employment of spin. My further goal was to study the dynamics of communication and linguistic negotiation of the workplace with the goal of insight into the leadership and language tools necessary to take ownership of leader occupational power.

All five participants studied and responded to all five dilemmas, including their own. Each case centered on how each leader addressed the four additional dilemmas of their professional peers and esteemed colleagues. A summary and conclusion will follow the cases in entirety. Figures 3-7 reflect cases and leaders A, B, C, D, and E, respectively. Each case, therefore, corresponds with the leader’s scenario it describes. What follows are five cases depicting the leaders as they ‘worked through’ the four dilemmas (those of the other participants) illustrated. Cases are presented from first to last, in order (A, B, C, D, E). The reader is then provided the case studies in entirety, including individual participant observations as each
engaged in thinking about the problems posed. Lastly, leaders charted their own dilemmas; additionally, each responded to the other participants’ dilemmas presented them, so that Leader A is recorded as having responded to the dilemmas of Leaders B, C, D, and E; and Leader B has responded to Leaders A, C, D, and E, successively, throughout the interview rounds. Participants are referred to as Leader A, B, C, D, and E, respectively, for reader clarity. The participants are indeed practicing leaders within higher education, assigned with letter pseudonyms to aid the reader in navigating the content of the dilemmas presented.

Figure 3. Leader A-Transformative Transactions.

The Vice President of an academic institution has the current charge of facilitating the mission of her staff toward accreditation. When considering whether or not she truly believes in the mission, or is “selling” it to her staff, Leader A communicates to them that working toward this goal will be fun; they respond flatly, and even sarcastically, “yeah right,” thinking her in jest for implying that a mission of this nature could be fun. When the leader herself considers whether or not she believes in the mission of accreditation, or is selling it, Leader A responds that if ever doubt sets in, and her belief in the “cause” arises and/or becomes a problem, she leaves the organization. As she perceives it, it is at this point that she becomes no longer part of the solution, but part of the problem. Leader A observes, “My staff enjoys working with me. I think this is because I listen to them and make an effort to look the issue at hand, in this case, accreditation, [linking] it to their reality. On the issue of accreditation, my staff might view it as more hurdles, more people coming in here and telling us what we have to do. I try to view it as an opportunity to look at ourselves, to be more transparent, more transformational.”

Figure 4. Leader B-Halting Achilles.

Leader B served as Vice President of an institution, working with a president she describes as a “dictator.” This president ethically compromised her by asking that she fire without warrant one employee, while keeping on another, this one more deserving of the firing, but who would further the president’s agendas. Further, in the area of decision-making, Leader B observed, “The president with whom I worked, moved full speed ahead in everything he did, and the faculty, needing more time to reflect and ruminate, moved at a slower pace.” “I ended up being a ‘buffer’ between this president and his staff.” She ultimately resigned from the post before securing a new position. On the question of how to communicate her reasons for resigning to potential employers, she responded that at issue was upholding her personal ethics by refusing to denigrate the leader/institution she left, commenting, “Therefore, while I omitted negatives when speaking with potential new employers, I did not lie. I spoke the truth of what happened, reflecting as much of the positive as I could. I saw no benefit to talking with a potential employer about an incident I faced.”
Leader C is the Chancellor of a southern institution. Beginning his presidency, he undertook the challenge of adding a medical school to the university. A central issue was whether or not the medical school would drain resources from other schools within the university. Continuing with the charge of creating a medical school, this president raised millions of dollars through public and private initiatives and by partnering with the community. There were some factions who were not wholly committed to the mission to which this president wanted to adhere, that of ensuring the medical school served those most in need, in rural and urban areas. He commented, “Some wanted the school of medicine without a concern for the real needs of the community, when the focus should not be on what is good for this university, but what is good for this state.” The president, persistent in communicating to stakeholders the mission to serve the underserved, created a medical school where 65 percent of its graduates currently live, work, and serve in the state.

Leader D, current president of an institution, was approached and confronted by the FBI about an infraction on the part of some individuals at the university. He admits using language harshly to “fend them off” and to protect his staff. “I let them know that I am not going to be pushed around and nor am I easily intimidated.” Arguing this was not an ethical dilemma, he believed he had a responsibility to his staff and communicated to the FBI his lack of intimidation.
Leader E is current president of an academic institution in the Midwest. The state gubernatorial executive branch proposed a budgetary item about which there was much media buzz. While the proposed budget was not advantageous to higher education, it was considered by this president to be a step in the right direction, (increased funding from the state, but a required cap on tuition increases). The response from the president and members of his constituency was that they were ‘grateful’ but not ‘satisfied’. An aggressive media, hungry for a sound bite, would consistently ask whether academic leaders were ‘on board’ or ‘not on board’.

In negotiating a response to the media, Leader E commented, “I would agree with the direction [of the proposal], but I would hold my endorsement until I understood the details. It was a bit disingenuous; but the numbers did not work. So on the top of my head I knew there were more state dollars and a larger percentage, yet the proposal took away a large revenue source. I knew it was not going to work. Yet you cannot disagree with a public official [in context of media dealings]… I had to keep an open dialogue.” Leader E further added, “It was an ethical situation in that I was not exactly certain how, but I knew it would not work. Yet I had to express agreement and withhold what I knew to get more out of the deal.”

Leader A-Transformative Transactions

The interpretations in this case reflect the views of Leader A-Female. Leader A is the Vice President of an institution. Her dilemma, reflected in Figure 3-Leader A, centers on the mission of accreditation. The central question with which she engages considers whether she is selling the idea of accreditation to her staff, or motivating her staff based on her own buy-in, or true beliefs in the mission of accreditation. Leader A first charts her own dilemma and subsequently works through the dilemmas of Leaders B, C, D and E in the following case study. The case guide provides reference to each leader and case reviewed by the participant of current focus, Leader A.

Leader A-Dilemma Self-Perception

When asked whether or not she had a visceral response to the Gauge of Language Negotiation, Leader A-Female expressed strong reactions and objections to the polarity of the model. She explained, “As I looked at the gauge, I disliked the polarity of the conceptual model.
I thought about this a lot and I struggled with it. I don’t think I would ever share something false.” While her response, in one interpretation, is partial disdain at the suggestion that language could be used to create illusion for deceptive ends, this leader nonetheless agreed that those in positions of power often misuse language. The participant here reacted equally to the notion that this is done, acknowledging that she herself would not engage in this type of language misuse. Leader A-Female observed that the diagram also implies, through the words means and ends, that both means and ends are utilitarian and instrumental in achieving a desired goal. As an alternative solution to the model presented, Leader A suggested the use of three-dimensional circles, (collapsing cups) representing different levels of the truth, as a visual metaphor that might more accurately capture gradations of truth. I then asked her what each of the circles would represent. Leader A created an analogy to capture her ideas,

As an example, if we were climbing a mountain, we would start at the foot of the mountain. When we got to the top, we would discover we were at the foot of another mountain. Trust means that we are climbing this mountain together—we would discover more truth together. I think, “let’s discover the truth together, what we don’t know.

Leader A summarized her interpretation of the diagram as an attempted conceptual understanding of how language is used to communicate to other people. She also felt that the words “means” and “ends” made the diagram more complicated.

When asked how she would apply the gauge of language negotiation to describe her ethical dilemma centering on the issue of accreditation, Leader A drew circles around the truth and reality portion of the diagram, (Figure 8).
This concluded our first interview discussion. I would talk with Leader A-Female a second time to review each of the additional peer dilemmas in entirety.

**Leader A-Perceptions of Peer Dilemmas**

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<tr>
<th>Case Guide:</th>
<th>Leader B- Halting Achilles</th>
<th>Leader C- Chancellor Utilitarian</th>
<th>Leader D- Machiavelli Greene</th>
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I telephoned the office of Leader A on April 10, 2007. We began our conversation abruptly with general comments and observations about each of the four dilemmas. When presented with the dilemma of Leader B, participant A immediately focused on the plight of a Vice President, who is also a female, who worked with and under a president described as a ‘dictator’. Leader A empathetically placed herself into the figurative shoes of Leader B, observing, “her reality was that the faculty was slow to be on the same page as the president, and she couldn’t get the faculty’s and the president’s realities to match.” In resolving the issue and question of how Leader B communicated the negatives of a prior work experience to a potential employer, Leader A further noted that Leader B did not lie; she simply opted to omit the negatives of the experience. Leader A summarized the decision of Leader B, saying, “She didn’t lie, so there was no deception going on…but in terms of conflict, she was not open about it”. Viewing Leader B as speaking the partial truth of her experiences under a dictator to potential employers, and as well, viewing her ends as less than transparent, in assigning this dilemma to
the *Gauge of Language Negotiation*, Leader A concluded that Leader B fell as illustrated, according to the gauge, in Figure 9.

*Figure 9. Leader A perception of Leader B dilemma.*

When Leader A was presented with the dilemma of Leader C, and when asked whether or not Leader C engaged in use of spin at all, Leader A concluded that an important question, the question of whether or not any monies were indeed taken away from the other university programs, was not addressed in the context of the dilemma as presented. As a result, Leader A concluded the impossibility of knowing what really happened in the entirety of the situation. Given the information provided by Leader C, Leader A assigned Leader C according to the gauge as follows in Figure 10.

*Figure 10. Leader A perception of Leader C dilemma.*
Struck by the candor of participant D, Leader A commented on the duality of the scenario presented in the dilemma of Leader D. Leader A found in Leader D’s expressions of the nature and purpose of communication, the propensity for lack of authenticity. Further, Leader A noted Leader D’s contradictions in communication, evidenced in his statements of attempts to avoid deception, juxtaposed with his view of the natural tendency of humans to communicate toward selfish interests.

Analyzing the second portion of this dilemma, and the way in which Leader D addressed the FBI confrontation, Leader A deduced Leader D’s acceptance of a ‘Big Brother’ role. To Leader A, Leader D wanted to be Big Brother, thereby letting his ego predominate, as opposed to the issue at hand. Finally, noting Leader D’s attempts to not be deceptive, Leader A charted Leader D as follows in Figure 11.

*Figure 11. Leader A perception of Leader D dilemma.*

Leader A found Leader E’s example dilemma to be substantive. Observing that in all of the examples provided, no one lied, yet no one told the whole truth, Leader A found that in the final example, while Leader E spoke the truth, he did not disclose his *true* feelings of the situation. Leader A, in a global analysis and reflection upon all of the dilemmas, observed that *all* of the leaders felt that if they told the whole truth, “..bad things would happen.” With that, Leader A found Leader E’s admissions to fall as charted, according to the gauge, in Figure 12.
This concluded the analysis of Leader A-Female.

Leader B-Halting Achilles

The interpretations in this case reflect the views of Leader B-Female. Leader B is the Vice President of an institution whose dilemma is reflected in Figure 4-Leader B. The focus of her dilemma centered on how she would communicate to potential employers her past work experience; yet complete forthrightness in communication of this past experience would reveal her tenure under a leader she characterized as a ‘dictator.’ Leader B first charts her own dilemma and subsequently works through the dilemmas of Leaders A, C, D and E in the following case study. The case guide provides reference to each leader and case reviewed by the participant of current focus, Leader B.

Leader B-Dilemma Self-Perception

When asked whether she had a visceral response to the Gauge of Language Negotiation, Leader B observed that the diagram suggests leaders might “falsify what they are attempting to justify”. She immediately concluded that spin could be used to present a real or false reality. She added,

We see this in politics all the time where spin is used to manipulate the public toward political ends. The war in Iraq is an example. We believed that weapons of mass destruction existed, though there was no solid data to support this. I believe there are those who use/practice spin in ways that are unethical. This is not something I would engage in.
Spin can also be used to make a good situation sound better. I am not certain however that this is spin. [In professional situations] I present the facts; I also present the positives and negatives of those facts, arguing for the positives. Under the definition of spin, this is spin. Isn’t it?

We then began to delve into a deeper examination of the differences between selling and spinning. We considered the variable of coloring information, for leader advantage. If selling or motivating involves the coloring of information, then I offered that the spin line has been crossed. I also put forward that perhaps spin is presenting information in a way that the information generates a desired response, or a response that suits the leader’s purposes. I additionally suggested that perhaps in her mind, spin has a negative connotation. Leader B-Female asserted her belief that spin takes on a connotation depending on the situation. She argued that the former president with whom she worked could “spin anything…he had no moral problem with any of it. Some people have no moral compass; they lack moral fiber.” I asked Leader B-Female the meaning and implications of the gauge. She re-asserted her original position, namely, that spin could be used to present a reality, real or false.

When asked how she would chart the dilemma she provided for the purposes of the study, Leader B-Female placed circles centered between the “truth/reality and the means” portions of the diagram, both at the top and bottom (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Leader B self-perception of professional dilemma.
This portion of the discussion concluded our first interview. I would meet with Leader B-Female at a second interview, during which we would review the other dilemmas in entirety. During our second meeting, Leader B had in advance charted her dilemma a second time, this time charting the dilemma at a different polarity, aligned more at the center of the diagram (Figure 14). When asked how she arrived at the second charting and polarity, Leader B offered an explanation for this variation in self-charting,

I feel that the differences in my personal ratings reflect my better understanding of the concepts that resulted from our conversations and my reflection on our discussions. As you may recall, initially I had problems with identifying a situation in which I felt I had used spin/illusion. As we discussed the concept more and I reflected on our conversations, I felt that I was better able to understand how I used it and to what degree. I do think the second chart is the most accurate reflection of my use of language in the scenario I presented.

Figure 14. Leader B second self-perception of professional dilemma.

![Diagram showing Truth/Reality and Illusion/Falsity dimensions with Leader B's perceptions.]

Leader B-Perceptions of Peer Dilemmas

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I met with Leader B at her office on April 17, 2007. An urban institution with a sprawling campus, the building housing the administration was in its former life a hospital, lending an elegant and clinical feel to the environs. I found my way to Leader B’s office as she was walking down the hallway. She welcomed me in; we sat at a cherry roundtable and
immediately began our discussion. Leader B spent time in advance reading and thinking about the dilemmas, as well as the interview context, and had made notes for herself. She began with questions of clarification concerning the gauge. I addressed her questions, after which I began asking her interpretations of the dilemmas. On reflection of the dilemma of Leader A, *Transformative Transactions*, Leader B expressed empathy for the challenge faced by Leader A, adding that she would have approached the issue of accreditation in the same way as Leader A. Leader B saw accreditation as a way to be transformational. Though she admitted that no one finds a task of this nature enjoyable, she chooses to view the positives of the challenge and to move forward from this perspective. Salient for Leader B was viewing the situational challenge as a positive and looking for “what we can get out of it.” She added, “let’s look at what we can get out of it and let’s focus on that. This is where the spin comes in.” Leader B viewed Leader A as having communicated along the truth and reality portion of the grid, toward transparent ends (Figure 15).

*Figure 15. Leader B perception of Leader A dilemma.*

However, Leader B separated the communication of accreditation from the *task* of accreditation itself, noting that the *task* of accreditation consists of both positives and negatives. Because the task required balance, Leader B labeled the means and ends of the *task* as falling in the center of the grid (Figure 16).
We went forward with Leader B’s analysis of dilemma C. Leader B viewed the Chancellor as “speaking from the heart about the mission of the medical school.” Upon thinking further, she observed, “In reality, I am sure there was some illusion in what he was talking about; but in the paragraph that you gave me it appeared that this was something that this person truly believed should be the mission; this was the population that should be served, even though there was opposition to his direction in the mission.” It was based on these observations that Leader B placed Leader C toward the truth/reality and transparent ends of the gauge (Figure 17).

Leader B perceived the observations of Leader D regarding language use to reveal the qualities of a very good salesman. Leader B commented, “…they can sell anything…they are charismatic; they use their language and their charm to sell things.” Admitting skepticism of the leadership style exhibited in Leader D’s dilemma, Leader B felt Leader D’s communication to be
aligned with a leadership style she does not often trust. “I think that they are so accustomed to using spin for whatever means that they aren’t always truthful.” In light of Leader D’s caveat that he does indeed make an effort to not be deceitful in his communication, Leader B charted Leader D at the illusion/falsity end of the scale (Figure 18).

Figure 18. Leader B perception of Leader D dilemma.

Leader B noted the stridence of Leader D’s remarks, as well as his handling of the FBI confrontation. She felt it Leader D’s responsibility to cooperate with the Federal authorities and not attempt to subvert their efforts. Leader B shared her reflections from her thinking about the interview questions since the first scheduled preliminary meeting; though she admitted using spin in her professional communication, she felt that Leader D’s language was indicative of a “salesman personality.”

In her analysis of the dilemma provided by Leader E, Leader B empathized with Leader E’s challenge of facing an aggressive media. Leader B felt Leader E did a good job of riding right in the middle. She observed, “…he even says he was a bit disingenuous...the reality of it is, if he had stood up and said, hey governor, these numbers don’t work, and went up against him, then he [wouldn’t have] won either.” Leader B saw as salient from this dilemma the need to follow one’s conscience and walk that middle line as part of a bargaining process. Therefore
Leader B labeled Leader E as having communicated toward the center of the gauge in both means and ends (Figure 19).

*Figure 19. Leader B perception of Leader E dilemma.*

This concluded the analysis of Leader B-Female.

**Leader C-Chancellor Utilitarian**

The interpretations in this case reflect the views of Leader C-Male. Leader C is the current Chancellor and past President of an institution whose dilemma is reflected in Figure 5-Leader C. The focus of his dilemma was his commitment to the mission of serving the underserved when faced with the challenge of adding a medical school to the university. While some were in favor of building the medical school, their commitment was not to serving the underserved, but to the prestige the medical school would lend to the university. Leader C first charts his own dilemma and subsequently works through the dilemmas of Leaders A, B, D and E in the following case study. The case guide provides reference to each leader and case reviewed by the participant of current focus, Leader C.

**Leader C-Dilemma Self-Perception**

When asked the meaning and implications of the *Gauge of Language Negotiation*, though expressing uncertainty as to the meaning of the question, Leader C observed, “We clearly use language as a means to achieve ends.” Relative to the dilemma he provided, he asserted that his
means were real and his ends transparent. He added, “The reality was the growing health care needs of this community. I am not sure of the sliding scale.” I asked him whether or not he agreed that leaders could at times use or misuse language, creating falsities toward deception. Leader C agreed that they could. Though Leader C was not able to provide a example that would fit into what the diagram implies, Leader C agreed when asked, that he was able to insert the dilemma he provided within the context of the diagram.

When asked to elaborate on the spin used within the scenario he provided, Leader C-Male clarified that in his communication with potential stakeholders, he emphasized the need for medical care in the rural areas and in small towns, promising the people of the state, as well as representatives, his focus on addressing the real health-care needs of the community. Leader C added that the spin was in defining the mission in a way that warranted public support. In carrying out the mission and communicating it in this fashion, serving the underserved would remain at the forefront of his goal.

When asked to chart his dilemma, Leader C reiterated the reality and transparency of the means and ends he employed to accomplish the addition of the medical school. Therefore, Leader C charted his dilemma as presented in Figure 20.

*Figure 20.* Leader C self-perception of professional dilemma.
This concluded our first interview discussion. I would speak with Leader C a second time by telephone, during which we would review the other dilemmas in entirety.

Leader C-Perceptions of Peer Dilemmas

I spoke with Leader C on April 12, 2007. With limited time for discussion, we began with interpretations and a close reading of the dilemmas. Though we did not proceed with the dilemmas in direct order, the results are presented in order for reader clarity and understanding. Leader C noted Leader A’s attempt to sell the concepts of accreditation to generate interest. Leader C felt Leader A genuinely believed in the mission of accreditation; yet he added, “believing in it [the mission] and getting people to do it are two different things.” Leader C therefore felt that on this issue, Leader A communicated in truth and reality for transparent ends (Figure 21).

As Leader C continued his analysis, he thought further about Leader A’s framing of the task of buy-in for accreditation as “fun”. Leader C was not certain this was a constructive way to frame this message. Because Leader C had experienced the task of accreditation many times and felt he empathized with the demands of the process, that it was important to acknowledge that a task
of this magnitude needed to be framed as one requiring much dedication and work, for a worthy cause. This portion of the Leader A’s dilemma Leader C concluded was part illusion, “saying a task is fun to get others to act was the means. [A leader] needs to express a task as hard work that has benefits for the institution; the task requires extra effort.”

We proceeded to the dilemma of Leader B. On reading this dilemma, Leader C first focused on the portion of Leader B’s dilemma that involves communication to potential employers, communication that Leader C found to be neither truthful nor deceptive. Leader C-Male found the ends of Leader B-Female to be less than transparent, therefore charting her ends slightly more to the right of the center. Leader C characterized Leader B-Female’s decision to leave the institution at which she worked, with a president she characterized as a dictator, as a moral decision. Leader C described the ‘dictator’s’ actions as “capricious” and “unjustified.” Therefore, in terms of the moral actions, specifically Leader B’s decision to leave the institution, Leader C saw them as truthful and transparent. Though it was neither expected nor required of participants to chart dilemma/tasks twice, some participants initiated a second charting (Figures 22 and 23).

Figure 22. Leader C perception of Leader B dilemma.
Leader C took particular interest in the dilemma of Leader D. Leader C understood and concurred with Leader D’s characterization and philosophy of the instrumentation of language, observing, “In certain respects, all language is interpretation. Spin has a negative connotation in our society. When we talk about it, what we mean is how we present information to favor our situation.” Leader C believed that if we talked about the interpretation involved in spin, we would dilute this negative connotation. I then asked Leader C how he would chart the dilemma provided by Leader D. Because Leader C saw Leader D’s means as unclear, particularly in what Leader C qualifies as speaking harshly, intimidating as a way of protecting to get an effect, to fend off the FBI, Leader C saw the communication style and manner of Leader D to fall closer toward the illusion and falsity ends of the continuum (Figure 24).
On the last dilemma reflecting the experiences of Leader E, Leader C felt leader E handled the challenge before him with exact judgment. Leader C agreed that the media did not need full access to the leader’s sentiments of the lack of feasibility of the budget item. Though Leader C agreed with Leader E’s handling of the dilemma, he felt Leader E’s communication strategy to yield toward illusion, with slightly less than transparent ends (Figure 25).

Figure 25. Leader C perception of Leader E dilemma.

This concluded the analysis of Leader C-Male.

Leader D-Machiavelli Greene

I scheduled a conference call appointment with Leader D on March 30, 2007. The transcripts of the telephone conversation are represented in Figure 26. Following this preliminary interview, Leader D withdrew from the study.
Leader D

Interviewer: Spin is used in media punditry, in leadership, and in general social situations and is defined as negotiating language for a desired result. Can you think of a professional situation in which you used spin, the negotiation of language, for your benefit?

Leader D-Male: I use spin every minute of every day. Every word that comes out of my mouth is spin. Now as an ethical person I try not to use language toward deceptive ends; however, I believe that every utterance is spun to a degree. Language is living. Language is alive. No one says anything without having a desired impact. All we say has spin, however we should make efforts to not be deceitful in our communication.

Thomas Hardy says that “all things merge into all”, implying that there is no real truth. I try to use blunt speech. I communicate with audiences and try to effect what they hear. This morning I met with the FBI about an infraction on the part of some individuals [university constituency]. I used language harshly to communicate to them that I was protecting my staff. This was not an ethical dilemma, but I had a responsibility to my staff. I am not easily intimidated and I wanted them to know this.

Interviewer: Is this a situation in which you felt morally compromised or challenged? Did you perhaps feel that the FBI used deceitful tactics, therefore in turn you pushed back using spin, to protect the members of your staff?

Leader D-Male: I hope I am not disrupting your interview or making things difficult. I let them know that I am not going to be pushed around and nor am I easily intimidated. Reverting to what I said earlier about language, this was my concern at the time.

Interviewer: If I could go on to the second question, which requires your interpretation of a diagram. I am going to describe the diagram as best as I can. Where language is the means by which leaders communicate, toward ends that are transparent or deceptive, how would you assign meaning to this explanation?

Leader D-Male: As I have stated in my earlier responses, I am not sure there is any truth. I am certain you know of Pontius Pilate who said that there is no truth. Again I don’t mean to be difficult, but I am not certain there is a clear delineation between truth and falsehood. If your diagram reflects gradations of truth and falsehood, then I think what you have said is correct. This is not a quantum, but a spectrum.

Leader E-Dances with Wolves

The interpretations in this case reflect the views of Leader E-Male. Leader E is the current President of an institution whose dilemma is reflected in Figure 7-Leader E.
of his dilemma features his communications to an aggressive media amidst a gubernatorial proposed budgetary item, discussion of which was surrounded by much media buzz. Leader E first charts his own dilemma and subsequently works through the dilemmas of Leaders A, B, C and D in the following case study. The case guide provides reference to each leader and case reviewed by the participant of current focus, Leader E.

**Leader E-Dilemma Self-Perception**

When asked his initial response to the *Gauge of Language Negotiation*, Leader E-Male advocated the use of the diagram to aid readers in thinking more deeply about how leaders communicate professionally, as well as the thinking behind this communication. Leader E elaborated this point, explaining that the linearity suggested by the diagram does not reflect the vacillations of real-time communication. Noting the complexity and fluidity of communication, he argued that the absoluteness of the diagram does not capture the multi-dimensional nature of language. This leader added, “It helps to get a handle on a tendency, a direction of language in professional settings. Relative to each of these situations, I was able to get a sense of the polarity—direction of the communication…leaders vacillate in their communication.” Leader E-Male concluded, “We clearly use language as a means to achieve ends.”

When asked how he charted his own dilemma concerning the gubernatorial budgetary item, Leader E shared that he did in fact tell the truth on what he decided to disclose, with full knowledge that the media wanted a story. With his omissions in mind, Leader E charted his communication at the center of the diagram (Figure 27).
This concluded our first interview and telephone conversation. I would meet personally with Leader E for a second interview, during which we would review all of the dilemmas in their entirety.

**Leader E-Perceptions of Peer Dilemmas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Guide:</th>
<th>Leader A- Transformative Transactions</th>
<th>Leader C- Chancellor Utilitarian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leader B- Halting Achilles</td>
<td>Leader D- Machiavelli Greene</td>
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I visited the office of Leader E on April 9, 2007. Leader E’s warm and gregarious personality was immediately welcoming. We settled at a round table in the center of his traditional, dark cherry-wood paneled office. Leader E, having been presented with the dilemmas in advance of the interview, was familiar with each of the scenarios on the surface; therefore we reviewed each as we went forward in our discussion, in order of presentation. Our conversation was academically light and engaging.

I began by describing the “pull” of the first dilemma, which to Leader E would be *Transformative Transactions*, the case of Leader A. Where the pull of the dilemma seemed to be the notion of ‘selling’ versus ‘motivating’ staff toward a mission, in this case, accreditation, Leader A resolved this challenge by opting to view the mission of accreditation as an “opportunity to be more transparent, more transformational.” Leader A further explained that when she no longer believes in the mission with which she is charged, she as a result becomes...
part of the problem rather than part of the solution. For Leader A, this is a sign that it is time to resign.

Leader E saw this as a line too clearly drawn. Observing that many factors contribute to the decision to leave an organization, Leader E saw as salient the issue of commitment. Commitment, to Leader E, forces one to engage in self-persuasion, in the ‘tempering’ of our beliefs and professional stances. An internal dialogue aids us in adopting certain viewpoints we may not find favorable—this to Leader E is the more political part of our jobs as leaders. Leader E believes as well in the importance of consistency within our communication; teams cannot receive conflicting messages from its leaders. Nor can leaders leave their posts when opposing a certain mission. Leader E therefore positioned Leader A as shown in Figure 28.

Figure 28. Leader E perception of Leader A dilemma.

Upon review of the next scenario, that of Leader B, *Halting Achilles*, in which Leader B elevates as salient her personal moral conviction to not denigrate a past employer with whom she experienced a negative personal dynamic. Within the dilemma, Leader B resolved this issue by not lying; she simply chose to omit the negatives and to present the positives of the professional experience. Leader E saw this as an issue of selective emphasis, the *emphasis* of some things, and the *de-emphasis* of others. I asked Leader E whether this indeed was an ethical dilemma or an issue of social/professional convention, as American professional social conventions stipulate
and assign a lack of professionalism with talking negatively about a previous employer in the context of an interview with a potential employer. Leader E admitted that if an interviewee committed a professional infraction of this nature, he would indeed doubt the professionalism of the candidate. Leader E viewed this as an issue more of social convention than one of ethics. Because of the selective emphasis of Leader B when communicating to potential employers, Leader E plotted the communication pattern of Leader B as highlighted in Figure 29.

*Figure 29. Leader E perception of Leader B dilemma.*

We then went on to our analysis of the third case before us, that of Leader C, the *Chancellor Utilitarian.* The moral pull of the dilemma of this case reflects the addition of a medical school to a university. Whether or not buy-in was predicated on the prestige of the medical school, or full commitment to the mission of serving the underserved, was the central issue. Leader C clearly chose commitment to the mission of building a medical school for the purpose of serving those most in need, those in the rural and urban areas of the state. Leader E exhibited stimulated interest in this case. Leader E observed the risk in which Leader C was involved. Leader E observed, “He could have compromised the success of the program! Leader E reiterated his observation that at stake was loss of the entire program. Yet his commitment to the mission won the day.” I posed the question to Leader E of whether or not he perceived that Leader C used any spin at all. Leader E responded that in his view, Leader C exercised his conviction. Leader E saw no spin exercised here at all. Leader E acknowledged that if indeed
there was spin used here, that the needs of the underserved would have indeed been under-communicated. Instead, Leader E sold the program on its merits; to Leader E this was a high-risk, high-gain initiative. Thus, Leader E plotted Leader C’s communication pattern within the dilemma as follows in Figure 30.

*Figure 30. Leader E perception of Leader C dilemma.*

On this observation, we went forward with analysis of the next dilemma. Leader E professed earnest interest in this dilemma as well. We acknowledged that there were two issues at work in the case of Leader D, *Machiavelli Greene*. The first striking observation was the perception of Leader D of the use of language. Leader D holds strident viewpoints on the instrumentation of language, believing that humans communicate for the purpose of selfish interest and to achieve a desired impact. As well, and barring this point, Leader D does make attempts to not be deceitful in his communication. The second issue of the Machiavelli Greene case is Leader D’s confrontation by the Federal Bureau of Investigations. Leader D viewed the nature of the confrontation, and his subsequent imperative, as protecting his staff. In Leader E’s analysis, he resolved that language is not always used as an instrument. Leader E’s academic background is socio-linguistics; therefore the topic was close to home for him. Leader E felt that there are times language is spoken out of emotion or out of anxiety, as examples. Leader E added that this is an issue of personal conviction, summarizing, “We [as leaders] have the power
to make this choice.” As well, our choice as to how we use language is not always as intentional as Leader D portrays. Yet with the power to choose how we use language, our moral compass guides us, and either allows us to use or misuse language as we choose. Following these observations Leader E plotted Leader D as having expressed a philosophy of communication that yields toward the right ends of the gauge (Figure 31).

Figure 31. Leader E perception of Leader D dilemma.

This concluded the analysis of Leader E-Male.

Individual and Peer Perceptions of Dilemmas: Interrelationships

All of the participants were able to use and apply the *Gauge of Language Negotiation* to their own ethical dilemmas as well as the dilemmas of their peers. Based on the given scenarios, participants perceived their own dilemmas and the dilemmas of their peers to be “chartable”. Each of the participants, excluding Leader D, who withdrew from the study after the first interview, was able to use the diagram to chart his/her individual scenarios. Participants indeed understood that each of the grids representing language as a *means*, and the end results or goals, as *ends*, were movable along the continuum. When charting their personal dilemmas, participants *did not* exercise use of the two separate sliders as “movable.” However, when charting the dilemmas of their peers, participants tended to exercise use of each of the grids as movable along varying positions of the continuum. Therefore, in the summary of graphs presented in Figure 32, there was no difference in initial placement for both variables.
Participants who engaged in fact omission used the diagram to chart their personal dilemmas, as well as those of their peers, along the center of the continuum, at both *means* and *ends*. Therefore, on close examination of Figures 32 and 33, patterns in the charting of dilemmas began to emerge. In sum, each of the participating leaders charted his or her personal dilemma as representing communication in truth and reality for transparent ends, or as representative of communication including omission of facts, for the benefit of the institution or individual professional welfare. Leader A-Female charted herself as having communicated in truth and reality for transparent ends; Leader B-Female, though charting her professional dilemma twice, having admitted to the omission of facts, charted her dilemma at the center of the continuum. Leader C-Male, argued that both his communication and his objectives were transparent, therefore charting his professional dilemma at the far left of the continuum; while Leader E-Male admitted his omission of facts to benefit the institution he serves, thereby charting his professional dilemma at the center of the continuum.

Three participants, Leaders A and B-Female and Leader E-Male, viewed the creation of illusion for the purposes of deception as a tactic they themselves would not employ. Leader D admitted his belief that while every word he uses is spin, he makes an attempt to not use language to be deceptive. Leader C was not averse to using illusion for transparent ends, but was uncertain how truth could be used to deceive. All of the participants excluding Leader D viewed omission of facts as not falling under the category of a lie. Leaders A, B, C, and E perceived omissions of facts to fall in the center of the diagram, and therefore charted them as such.

Figure 32 summarizes the data collected from each participant, revealing how each participant charted him/herself. Leader A perceived herself as communicating fully in truth and reality toward transparent ends; while Leader B, when first asked how she perceived herself as
communicating in the scenario she provided, Leader B perceived herself as having communicated in partial truth toward ends not wholly transparent, thereby charting her diagram as shown. When charting the dilemmas of all of the leaders in entirety, Leader B charted herself again at a different polarity, the second time at midpoint in both means and ends (see chart “Leader B2” in Figure 32). Leader C charted his communication as representative of truth and reality toward transparent ends; while Leader E charted his communication with acknowledgement of fact omission, thereby placing his dilemma at midpoint.

*Figure 32. Summary of graphs-Leader self-perceptions of professional dilemmas.*

![Diagram showing Leader self-perceptions of professional dilemmas.]

Figure 33 is a summary of Leader perceptions of each of their peers’ dilemmas. Each participant’s dilemma is labeled accordingly, with the assigned charter and leader labeled to the right of the chart. Therefore, beginning with the dilemma of Leader A-Female, Leader B-Female charted Leader-Female as having communicated in truth and reality with transparent ends. Though two leaders additionally charted the “tasks” and “actions” of leaders separately, Figure 33 contains the charting of peer dilemmas only. As illustrated, two participants viewed Leader A-Female as having communicated at midpoint of the Gauge of Language Negotiation, with transcriptions of two leaders (B, E) viewing Leader A-Female as having communicated at
midpoint of the gauge, and Leader C-Male viewing Leader A-Female as having communicated in truth and reality toward transparent ends.

**Figure 33.** Summary of graphs-Leader perceptions of peer dilemmas.

When comparing the graph summaries of Figures 32 and 33, additional patterns emerge. More questions surfaced upon analysis of the graph summaries. How were leader comparisons of self-perceptions and perceptions of peers the same? How were they different? What was the sum of leader peer perceptions? Was there sameness in polarity? Were outliers present?
Scrutiny of the graphs reveals similarity in how the participants perceived and charted their personal dilemmas, as well as how the leaders perceived and charted peer dilemmas. Leader A-Female perceived herself as communicating in truth/reality toward transparent ends. Her peers, on review of Figure 33, agree, with one exception. Because of Leader A-Female’s attempt to characterize accreditation as “fun”, in attempt to gain buy-in, Leader E aligned her communication and ends as less than transparent. The summary of the pattern of communication of Leader A-Female’s dilemma is split, with a decision of two to one. On review of the self-charting of Leader B-Female, it is important to recall that Leader B charted her professional dilemma twice, explaining that the second of the charts was the more accurate of the two upon deeper reflection. Considering her observation, the other participants tend to agree, with two split decisions. Leaders A-Female and C-Male charted Leader B in similar patterns, both perceiving the communication of Leader B to be neither truthful nor deceptive, with her ends slightly less than transparent, or “not open”. Leader C-Male charted his professional dilemma as one in which both communication and objectives were truthful and clear. His peers tended to agree. Leaders A and B-Female had questions concerning the distribution of funds, adding to their skepticism of the levels of spin as well as the actual outcome and parties affected, though this did not greatly impact their perception of Leader-C’s dilemma. Leader E-Male viewed the communication and strategy of Leader C as upright and transparent; therefore he charted the dilemma as such. Though Leader D-Male chose to withdraw from the study, his peers agreed in their charting of Leader D in polarity. The factor contributing to the variation was Leader D’s admission was that though he believes utterances are made for selfish interests, he himself makes an effort to not be deceptive in his communication. Though the participants charted Leader D’s dilemma at slightly varying ranges, their reasoning was the same. Lastly, though all of the
participants were in agreement with the communication strategy of Leader E-Male, all agreed that he knowingly withheld facts to get a “better deal” for the institution and constituency. Leader C viewed Leader E as making a “right judgment”, charting his omission at the center, with ends slightly more transparent.

Two participants, Leader B-Female, and Leader C-Male, initiated a second charting of the scenarios of Leader A-Female and Leader B-Female respectively, based on their interpretation and distinction of leader dilemma from leader task and leader dilemma from leader action, respectively. Figure 34 illustrates this charting. Participants were not asked to conduct a second charting; however, their individual interpretations led them to do so.

*Figure 34. Leader charting of dilemma task and action.*

Leader B-Female, during her analysis of Leader A-Female’s accreditation dilemma, viewed the task of accreditation as one that has both “positive and negative aspects”; she added that because it is an enormous undertaking requiring balance, Leader B charted the accreditation task as falling at the center of the diagram. Leader C-Male, during his analysis of the dilemma of Leader B-Female, viewed the action of Leader B, that is, her decision to separate from the institution and work with a “dictator”, as a moral action. It was with this reasoning that Leader C-Male charted the action of Leader B-Female as one of truth/reality and transparency.
A summary of the perceptions of the communication pattern of Leader B reveals that two Leaders (A, C) viewed Leader B communication in a split format. Sentiments serving to explain Leader A and Leader C perceptions, respectively, are evidenced by such statements as, “She didn’t lie, so there was no deception going on” and “Because she was less transparent, I would put her more toward the ends” from Leader A; and “Her communication was neither truthful nor deceptive” and “Her ends were slightly more to the right” from Leader C.

Leaders A, B, and E, viewed the communication pattern of Leader C as clearly toward the truth/reality and transparent end of the gauge; Leader A questioned whether in fact monies were indeed drained from other programs to fulfill the mission of the medical school addition, a question bearing on her charting decision; Leader B questioned whether illusion was used in the communication of Leader C as a whole, bearing on her charting decision also. Leader E viewed Leader C’s communication as wholly in truth/reality and in transparent ends.

Lastly, a summary of the communication of Leader E, two participants, Leaders A and B, viewed Leader E as having communicated in omission/withholding of facts, thereby charting him at midpoint; while Leader C viewed Leader E’s communication and ends as split, with communication slightly toward illusion, and ends significantly less than transparent.

Summary

The case studies serve as an instrument by which to gain insight into each leader’s perspective on the dilemmas they were presented, and as well, for a reader sense of the variables each leader viewed salient in weighing the dilemmas. The presentation of the scenarios was not intended for use as a catalyst for leader criticism of peer leadership; more importantly, it was my intent to draw upon how the leaders approached, weighed and resolved dilemmas involving the manipulation of language. Whether indeed there was an endorsement of the cynical
manipulation argued as required for successful packaging and marketing of a message within leadership, or whether there was trepidation in the acceptance of this form of manipulation as a professional rhetorical tool among leaders of higher education, were the questions driving this exploration. Thus, a global panoramic of the perspectives offered follows in the chapter addressing findings; additionally, the later discussion presented in Chapter VI more deeply examines the implications of the research questions and participant responses.
CHAPTER V. FINDINGS

Each of the research questions is examined in this chapter, along with a summary of participant responses.

Question I

How do college presidents and senior academic executives approach, analyze, and resolve ethical dilemmas posed by the employment of spin, defined as the deliberate shading of information to evoke a desired reaction?

Leader Approach to Ethical Dilemmas

Participant approach to each of the ethical dilemmas denotes the preliminary steps each took prior to undergoing a thorough analysis of the dilemmas. Here, particular focus was drawn to the lens through which participants began engagement with the scenarios they were presented as evidenced in participant transcriptions. Thus, upon dissection of leader transcripts, I was able to locate patterns of observation and discussion, exhibited in five conceptual areas: empathy, focus on players/relationships, focus on issues, focus on rationale, and focus on strategy toward solution. It is important to note that these areas are not singularly contained; each is representative of an overlapping lens by which leaders approach ethical dilemmas, and are best viewed as kaleidoscopic in nature. Each of the concepts is therefore defined, followed by a summary of participant responses that serve to demonstrate the characteristics of the given area.

Empathy is illustrated in participant language signifying shared sentiment, understanding, and prior knowledge and experience with the situation and conflict reflected in the dilemma analyzed. Focus on players/relationships is revealed in participant language indicative of a search for the people involved in the conflict presented in the dilemmas. Language identified in this area displayed close attention to how the players behaved toward one another, contributing
to the conflict at hand. *Focus on issues* denotes participant concern with the problems, conflicts, or matters in dispute. Participants here lent close attention to what the matter was to be solved. *Focus on rationale* reflects participants’ active search for understanding of the thinking behind the players involved in the conflict. Lastly, *focus on strategy toward solution* evidences participant language centered on leader leverage of thought and action directed toward a gainful resolution.

**Empathy**

Each of the participants made a minimum of two empathic statements within the context of the interviews. Examples of empathic statements made by each of the leaders are presented, labeled by the leader who spoke the words.

- *I think this is because I listen to them and make an effort to link the issue at hand, in this case, accreditation, to their reality.* (Leader A)
- *On the issue of accreditation, my staff might view it as more hurdles, more people coming in here and telling us what we have to do...* (Leader A)
- *I would have approached this the same way as this person did.* (Leader B on Leader A)
- *This is such a dilemma; I have been here too.* (Leader B on Leader E)
- *I understand this leader’s point of view.* (Leader C on Leader D)
- *I have been through this many times; it is hard and valuable work.* (Leader C on Leader A)
- *No one wants to communicate on the right [indicating the Gauge of Language Negotiation]—this gets you into trouble and is deceptive.* (Leader E)
- *I think this is similar to the dilemma I presented; it is an issue of selective emphasis, emphasis of some things and de-emphasis of other things.* (Leader E on Leader B)

In each of the statements, participants exhibit understanding and ability to relate to the conflicts and dilemmas of their peers. Statements of empathy leveraged leader ability to see the conflict
from an alternative point of view, and therefore relate the conflict to past experiences, as well as solutions the leaders themselves had employed prior, relative to the conflict at hand.

**Focus on players/relationships**

In analysis and dissection of the dilemmas, participant language signified active search for understanding of the people involved, the relationships, and the bearing of the relationships on the scenario conflict. Examples of statements evidencing focus on players and relationships made by each of the leaders are presented, labeled by the leader who spoke the words.

- Obviously the person this leader worked with was a dictator, and this is a negative term. *(Leader A on Leader B)*
- This implies an inauthentic human being. *(Leader A on Leader D)*
- I thought here that the Chancellor was being very forthright...really that he or she was speaking from the heart about the mission of the medical school. *(Leader B on Leader C)*
- I thought it was his way of doing things. You know, I warned my daughter about salesmen...those people who can sell you anything. *(Leader B on Leader D)*
- Yet believing in it [accreditation] and getting people to do it are two different things. *(Leader C on Leader A)*
- A leader has to be focused and consistent in his/her communications. *(Leader E)*
- If I were to interview someone who talked negatively about a former dean...I would doubt his/her professionalism. *(Leader E)*

Each of the participants made many observations about the players and relationships involved in the dilemmas; without players and professional relationships and interactions, the dilemmas and issues would be nonexistent.

**Focus on issues**

Analysis of participant dilemmas revealed language evidencing leader search for understanding of the issues surfacing from general discussion, as well as the dilemma conflicts.
Examples of language focusing on issues made by each of the leaders are presented, labeled by the leader who spoke the words.

- Coloring suggests spinning. (Leader A)
- Trust means we are climbing this mountain together. (Leader A)
- Spin and language are the same things, are they not? (Leader B)
- We came out of a meeting and we were talking about advising students. We were talking about whether or not we encourage too much handholding. (Leader B)
- Whenever we talk about language, we talk about spin. (Leader C)
- If we used ‘interpretation’ as part of the definition [of spin], we would take away the negative connotation…(Leader C)
- Leaders cannot simply leave their jobs when they don’t agree with the mission (Leader E on Leader A)
- I see it [omitting facts of a negative professional experience when talking with a potential employer] more as professional/social convention. (Leader E on Leader B)

In the statements captured, participants are engaging in thinking and reflection aloud of a particular issue, relative to the dilemmas they have analyzed. In the above examples, Leader A is commenting on the issues of coloring versus spinning, and trust. Leader B is considering whether or not spin and language are the same things, as well as the issue of student independence. Leader C is reflecting on the issues of language, spin, and connotation of the word spin; and Leader E reflects on professional commitment to organizational missions and social conventions. Each of the leaders has presented concepts and issues for consideration as they work through the dilemmas. This was a necessary component of thorough participation in, and analysis of, the scenarios illustrating depth of engagement. Each set of transcriptions assigned to leaders exhibited language that evidenced deciphering and reflection on issues presented.
Focus on rationale

Focus on rationale denotes participants’ active search for understanding of the thinking behind the players involved in the conflicts with which they were presented. Examples of language signifying focus on rationale made by each of the leaders are provided, labeled by the leader who spoke the words.

- *I think it is interesting that in all of these [examples] no one lied, but all told part of the truth.* (Leader A)
- *All [of the leaders] felt that if they told the whole truth, bad things would happen.* (Leader A)
- *I think she was questioning herself...in the end it became clear.* (Leader B on Leader A)
- *...Because she believed in it she could sell it.* (Leader B on Leader A)
- *I think in her perception, she believes in it, [accreditation] viewing it as an opportunity.* (Leader C on Leader A)
- *...He says he spoke harshly, intimidating them, as a way of protecting, to get an effect, to back them off.* (Leader C on Leader D)
- *All language is not instrumental.* (Leader E on Leader D)
- *Our use of it [language] is not always as intentional as he is saying.* (Leader E on Leader D)

The statements captured represent participant meta-analysis of the thinking behind the leaders involved in each of the dilemmas. Participants here have commented on the rationales employed by their peers in their “working through” of the ethical dilemmas. In the examples provided, Leader A is reflecting on the thinking of all of the participants, observing that ironically, all of the leaders felt a certain risk in telling the truth. In the second set of examples, Leader B comments on her perception of Leader A’s thinking relative to the topic of accreditation; Leader B carefully considers the rationale of Leader B. Leader C is considering the thinking of Leader A and Leader D, analyzing the rationale of Leader A’s commitment to the mission of
accreditation, as well as Leader D’s defense of his staff. Lastly, Leader E considers the thinking of Leader D relative to the function of language, arguing that all language is not instrumental; next he furthers his stance, considering broader functions of language use.

*Focus on strategy toward solution*

Portions of participant dialogue reflecting focus on strategy toward solution revealed participant language centered on leader observation of peer leverage of thought and action directed toward a gainful resolution of the dilemmas. Examples of language signifying focus on strategy toward solution made by each of the leaders are presented, labeled by the leader who spoke the words.

- *His ego stands out more than the issue. He wants to be Big Brother.* (Leader A on Leader D)
- *In terms of the conflict, she was not open about it.* (Leader A on Leader B)
- *I chose to look at things positively and to think about what we can get out of it.* (Leader B)
- *This was the population that should be served, even though there was opposition to his direction in the mission.* (Leader B on Leader C)
- *I think this leader made a right judgment. He didn’t need to tell the media it wouldn’t work.* (Leader C on Leader E)
- *He spoke harshly, intimidating them, as a way of protecting, to get an effect, to back them off.* (Leader C on Leader D)
- *This is the political part of our jobs.* (Leader E on Leader B)
- *He could have compromised the success of the entire program! At stake was loss of the entire program.* (Leader E on Leader C)

In the statements captured, participants have made observations of their own, in the case of Leader B-Female) and their peers’ strategies toward solutions.
The section following will examine findings relative to participants’ analysis of ethical dilemmas.

*Leader Analysis of Ethical Dilemmas*

Extraction of leader analyses of ethical dilemmas explored how leaders took their own thinking apart relative to both the problem scenarios they themselves provided, along with the dilemmas they were presented. How leaders asked questions, the types of questions asked, as well as the issues most *salient* for each of the leaders in their analysis toward resolution, were variables considered in the category of *analysis*.

Review and coding of the transcriptions allow interpretation of five areas of participant engagement relative to analysis of dilemmas: *dilemma/conflict identification, identification of moral pull, salience, weighing, and resolution* of the dilemma scenarios. Each of the participants followed a pattern of analysis including five areas of engagement: *dilemma/conflict identification, identification of moral pull, salience, weighing, and resolution* of the dilemma scenarios. It is important to note that these areas *are not* singularly contained; each is representative of an overlapping lens by which leaders analyze ethical dilemmas, and are best viewed as kaleidoscopic in nature. Each of these areas is defined and later presented by participant example.

*Identification of the dilemma* and *conflict* identifies the readerly activity and engagement of participants in locating the central tension, or source of conflict, within each of the scenarios. Participants consistently searched and located a source of conflict, and with identification, were able to assign the type of problem it was to an area of reference, a reference for which participants either located prior knowledge and/or experience or did not. Participants additionally stated empathy for the given leader and situation or refrained from statement, as
explored in the section on leader approach to ethical dilemmas. However, it is of significance to note that because of the experience of the purposive sample and the peer group studied, most were able to readily identify with the type of conflict each leader had undergone and had as a result put forth as an example. Because participants had determined the nature of the conflicts prior to the first interview sessions, participant language as transcribed does not reflect elaborations on a search for conflict; yet absent this identification of conflict, participants would not have capability to move forward with an analysis of the scenarios.

Identification of the moral pull is illustrated in statements signifying recognition of a moral conflict either experienced by either the participant him/herself, or recognition of the experience revealed in the statement of peers. By determining the moral pull of the scenario, leaders could assign meaning and relevance to the experiences of the participants. This engagement on the part of the participants is integral to the next stage, which is salience.

*Salience* represents participant identification of that portion of the dilemma, or the area of moral pull most relevant to the reader [the participant engaged in reading the scenario]. Here, the participant referenced his/her moral compass and was then able to center on that which was most poignant based on a personal judgment, or moral compass.

As leaders were able to identify salient variables within the scenario, they were then able to move forward with weighing their personal judgment of the situation presented and finally their resolution of perspective. Weighing denotes assigning value to salience, and leveraging that value forward toward a stance. The participant has essentially selected his fruit from the market, evaluated it, made a decision, and put it on the scale. Statements illustrating this concept display reasoning toward conviction and stance.
The participants, having made the above examples of near final value judgments, were then prepared to take a stance of commitment. Thus, the resolution represents the final step in solving the dilemma. The participants decided a position on the issue and were able to present arguments that demonstrated their thinking in favor of the decided position.

On review of the statements, both separately and within the context of the interviews, the reader is able to recognize a cycle of discovery, conflict, decision-making, and resolution in the language of the participants. The language reveals the process of resolving ethical dilemmas.

*Dilemma/conflict identification*

Participants were sent the dilemmas in advance of the interviews, and had read them prior. Yet upon initial discussions and meetings, participants took the opportunity to engage in briefing themselves on the contents of the scenarios. Therefore, participant engagement in the readerly activity of locating the central tension, or source of conflict within each of the scenarios illustrates search for understanding of the dilemma and or conflict. Participants consistently searched and located a source of conflict, and with identification, were able to assign the type of problem it was to an area of reference, for which participants either located prior knowledge or did not. Statements made by participants falling under this area of identification are listed:

- *He seems to ignore that reality.* (Leader A on Leader C)
- *Just look at how strongly he uses language.* (Leader B on Leader D)
- *His means are not clear.* (Leader C on Leader D)
- *The media want a sound bite.* (Leader E)

The statements captured reveal instances in which participants read for interpretation and understanding of the problem fueling the conflict within the context of the scenario. In the first statement, Leader A-Female notes Leader-C’s lack of acknowledgement and explanation as to
whether indeed monies were taken from the other university programs for the addition of the medical school, a variable important to her assessment of the level of spin utilized by this leader. In the second statement, Leader B-Female is assessing the level of stridence in the language of Leader D-Male, a variable that serves to fuel the conflict in the dilemma presented by Leader D-Male. As well, the third statement capturing Leader C-Male’s perceptions of Leader D-Male’s dilemma, draws attention to the language use of Leader D-Male. Because the means, or language, employed by Leader D-Male is not wholly transparent, the conflict is further fueled. Lastly, from Leader E-Male’s perception of his own dilemma, readers can identify Leader E-Male’s acknowledgement of a conflict, the media versus the leader, in this case himself. In the example presented, the media represents an entity seeking to serve its own interests in securing a scintillating story for its readers. Each of the participants made statements for the purpose of identifying the central conflict in order to proceed with further engagement in the problems.

Identification of moral pull

Moral pull signifies the participants’ search for the ‘meat’ of the ethical dilemma itself. Participants illustrated search for meaning related to what constituted the ethics of the situation, and further, whether any ethics were present in the problem at all. Participant language evidences a “push/pull” in content and in tone, in attempt to work through the ethics of the dilemma.

In each of these statements, the reader can detect the participants’ self-negotiation of the challenge, or pull, of the dilemma with which each is grappling. In statement one, within the context of the interview and discussion, Leader A-Female is making attempts to determine how in fact Leader B-Female was challenged in the dilemma Leader B presented. Leader B herself was conflicted regarding how much of the truth to reveal to a potential employer; and Leader A
is reading for this pull. In the second example statement, Leader B-Female is reading for how Leader D-Male himself was conflicted in terms of how he used language in the dilemma Leader D-Male presented, a state of conflict in itself. Leader D admits that every utterance is spun to a degree; Leader B is attempting to determine the degree to which Leader D-Male used both illusion and deception. The third example reflects Leader C-Male’s attempt to determine the morality inherent in the decision and action of Leader B-Female. Her decision to leave an institution during which she worked with a “dictator”, in Leader C-Male’s perception, was a moral action—an action he is assessing within the context of his statement. In the last observation presented by Leader E-Male, Leader E is assessing the levels of negotiation professionals undergo when rationalizing policies leaders may find disagreeable within their professional work. The pull in this case is layered in self-persuasion. Leader E is pointing out the difficulty, and perhaps unlikely tendency in leaders to make “black and white” decisions.

During the context of the interview, Leader E-Male asserts that leaders cannot simply leave their positions upon disagreement with policy.

Thus, the statements captured reveal participant “tugging” at the situational variables presented in the dilemmas that ultimately lead the participant readers of the dilemmas to a determination of salience, weighing, and resolution of the ethical dilemmas.

**Salience**

Salience denotes that which is most apparent, or relevant to the beholder, or to the reader of the conflict scenario. Statements revealing salience capture participants’ highlighted viewpoints relative to the dilemmas. Readers of participant language are able to siphon out two or more salient, or prominent issues from each statement; and further, readers are able to determine one or another of the variables most important to the leader who spoke the words.
Table 1 summarizes the salient perspective from each of the statements provided. Examples of statements revealing salience are presented:

Table 1

Examples of Salience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Salient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In my mind, not sharing does not equal deception. (Leader A)</td>
<td>Not Sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He has to follow his conscience and walk that middle line until the point where he can say, “I do agree with this; or, I don’t agree with this; or, I am willing to do this if you promise to do that later...It is part of the bargaining process. (Leader B on Leader E)</td>
<td>Personal Conviction, Conscience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The focus should not be on what is good for this university, but what is good for the state. (Leader C)</td>
<td>Greater Good for the State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language is living. Language is alive. No one says anything without having a desired impact. (Leader D)</td>
<td>Selfish Interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is about personal conviction. We have the power to make this decision. (Leader E)</td>
<td>Personal Conviction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Weighing

Assigning value to salience and leveraging that value forward toward a stance is weighing. Statements illustrating this concept display participant engagement and evaluation leading toward conviction. As examples:

- She didn’t lie, so there was no deception going on. (Leader A on Leader B)
- I think it is a balance...we need to do this so let’s find the positive things we can get out of this. (Leader B)
- We clearly use language as a means to achieve ends. I don’t find any moral problem with using illusion for transparent ends. (Leader C)
- I am not sure there is any truth. (Leader D)
- In real time, when you are communicating and dealing with the media, politicians, and aggressive reporters, our responses tend to vacillate. (Leader E)

The statements captured reveal participant thinking in terms of value judgments. Participants have made a determination of the factors most important to them from the situation presented.
Participants were then able to make concrete statements of personal stance. Within the first statement, Leader A-Female has determined as salient, not lying. Leader B has leveraged this determination into a stance, her determination that no deception has therefore taken place. In the second statement, Leader B-Female has determined as salient, balance; she has proceeded to leverage the value of balance toward a position on locating the positives of a situation to be derived from the situation. In the third example and statement, Leader C has determined as salient, transparent ends. He leverages the value of transparent ends to assume a stance—that of using illusion as a tactic for transparent ends. To him, illusion is a useful and worthwhile strategy to achieving a desirable mission. In the fourth example, Leader D-Male has determined as salient the fact, in his perception, that there is no real truth. He therefore asserts his view as a stance. Lastly, Leader E-Male has determined as salient the variable of real-time communication. He leverages this value toward a stance—in this case his observation that vacillations between reality and illusion and transparency and deception are the reality of actual communication.

Resolution

Resolution was the final step in solving the problem. The participants were able to decide a position on the issue and present arguments for their thinking in favor of a decided position. Statements illustrative of resolutions are presented:

- I see her at the center of truth and reality and the means. (Leader A on Leader B)
- This guy is a salesman. (Leader B on Leader D)
- This is part illusion. (Leader C on Leader B)
- I see it more as [an issue of ]professional/social convention. (Leader E on Leader B)
- I don’t see any spin here at all. (Leader E on Leader C)
The statements captured are more definitive in tone and are fixed on a stance relative to the dilemma analyzed. The section following presents findings on participant resolution of ethical dilemmas.

Leader Resolution of Ethical Dilemmas

Relative to leader resolution of ethical dilemmas, all of the participants endorsed and were not averse to the omission of facts for professional gain. As well, each of the leaders made a distinction between omission of facts and lying. Participants each expressed their own employment of fact omission, as well as endorsed fact omission when employed by their peers.

Statements illustrative of fact omission are presented:

- In my mind, not sharing does not equal deception. (Leader A)
- While I omitted negatives, I did not lie. (Leader B)
- I don’t find any moral problem with using illusion for transparent ends. (Leader C)
- I believe that every utterance is spun to a degree. (Leader D)
- The majority of people do not operate on a right to left continuum; most vacillate in between the two. (Leader E)

All of the leaders in the above sampling of language, particularly relative to the resolution of ethical dilemmas, revealed tolerance for the omission of facts for strategic and professional gain. Additionally, the resolution of ethical dilemmas revealed communication beyond the tension and pulling evident in prior interview statements. The statements captured reveal a dynamic in the process that is beyond conflict, crisis, or turning point; the communication has moved forward toward assertions of finality, toward a determination of that which is relevant and resonant to the individual leader, and that which solves the dilemma. Participants’ language revealed “confidence in reason” (Paul & Elder 2007) indicative of consonance, as opposed to dissonance.
Summary

In response to the research question, leaders demonstrated a five-area approach to ethical dilemmas, consisting of participant identification of empathy, focus on players and relationships, focus on issues, focus on rationale, and focus on strategy toward solution. These areas were not self-contained, but variegated in patterns; therefore statements captured from participants were transferable into one or more areas. Leaders also demonstrated a five-area analysis of ethical dilemmas, consisting of participant identification of dilemma/conflict identification, identification of moral pull, salience, weighing, and resolution of the dilemmas. Participants actively dissected their own thinking relative to the dilemmas with which each was engaged, as represented by these five areas. Lastly, participants engaged in resolution of ethical dilemmas, a stage in the process in which leaders generated definitive stances and assertions relative to the solving of the dilemma presented.

Question II

Does the approach, analysis, and resolution of ethical dilemmas posed by the employment of spin, differ by gender?

Leader Approach to Ethical Dilemmas

Participant approach to each of the ethical dilemmas or leader preliminary steps taken prior to undergoing a thorough analysis of the dilemmas, including empathy, focus on players/relationships, focus on issues, focus on rationale, and focus on strategy toward solution, revealed differences by participant and by context of the dilemma, as irrespective of gender. All participants employed each area of approach, as revealed in dialogue and transcriptions. Within the context of this study, participant language evidenced engagement in all five areas.
Leader Analysis of Ethical Dilemmas

Examination of leader analysis of ethical dilemmas explored how each dissected his or her own thinking relative to both the problem scenarios they themselves provided, along with the dilemmas with which they were presented. The types of questions asked, as well the issues most salient for each of the leaders in their analysis toward resolution, were variables considered in the category of analysis. Each of the participants employed a pattern of analysis consisting of five areas of engagement: dilemma/conflict identification, identification of moral pull, salience, weighing, and resolution of the dilemma scenarios. All participants engaged in the five areas of dilemma analysis. Gender was not a significant factor in participant analysis of ethical dilemmas.

Leader Resolution of Ethical Dilemmas

Transcriptions of leader interviews revealed consistency in the resolution of the ethical dilemmas each provided. In each of the participant statements was evidence of deontological and consequentialist measures for how the dilemmas should be resolved. Leaders were concerned first and foremost with obligation to stakeholders. Secondly, leaders were concerned with who was impacted relative to a pending decision, as well as how constituencies were impacted, the measure of the gain to be yielded from the pending decision, in itself a consequentialist imperative. Language indicative of this thinking is exemplified by leader:

- We are going to change the world. We are going to make a difference and transform the organization. (Leader A)
- I have learned over the years how important it is to look at the bigger picture [when weighing learning and advising outcomes for students]. (Leader B)
- I stressed the need for medical care in the rural areas and in small towns. (Leader C)
As a Christian, I have a moral compass that does not allow me to use language for any means. Now it has compromised my career, because there were places [relative to language use] I was not willing to go.

Absent a gender assignment to each statement, it is difficult, if not impossible, to discern whether a male or female spoke the comments. All leaders show intention and concern for the impact of statements and actions on other.

Gauge of Language Negotiation

Although there was no research question designated to address the gauge of language negotiation, leader interpretation and engagement in the meaning and interpretations of the diagram were catalysts for the interview contexts. Participants were asked during the interviews their perceptions of the meaning and interpretations of the gauge. Reactions were strident and varied across the leader participants.

Leader A expressed her dislike of the diagram, specifically the words false and deceptive; yet when asked whether she agreed leaders used illusion, falsity, and deception to achieve ends, she agreed. She further spoke to problems with the diagram, illustrating that the use of the words means and ends look utilitarian. She concluded that these words imply “that it is OK to do wrong for the right reasons.” Leader A-Female further consulted with her colleagues for their interpretation, sharing it with the president of her institution. Though she did not offer their feedback, she further asserted that the tactics implied by the diagram were foreign to anything she herself might employ. When asked whether academia is the culture in which she works was a variable in her conceptualization, she replied, “we are selling knowledge.” Her conclusion was based in her view that the tactics implied by the diagram are themselves antithetical to the nature and function of higher education. When asked whether in fact the diagram was useful, particularly in light of the fact that she was able to chart each of the dilemmas. She replied that
the “left side” of the diagram was useful; there is lots of richness in how we use language. She argued however that the opposite of truth was not necessarily lying. That the issue is one of how much we are willing to tell—and how much we can tell. This was for her an issue of freedom. She added further, “There are times when I simply do not have the freedom to share the rest.”

Leader B-Female, when asked whether she had any visceral reactions to the diagram, stated that the diagram implies that we might attempt to “falsify what we are trying to justify.” She used the War in Iraq as an example. She also asserted that this was not something in which she would engage. Leader B-Female also asserted that spin could be used to make a good situation sound better. However she asserted that in professional situations, she presents the facts, including the positives and negatives of those facts, and argues the positives. She considered whether in fact this was spin, but did not answer the question definitively. When asked what she believed the diagram implies, Leader B-Female re-asserted her point of view, “In any given situation, [the diagram implies] how to graph, where we believe one is in the process of using spin to achieve their goals.” She added that she really likes graphs; yet she doesn’t think of trying to chart herself. She concluded that she considers herself a moral person.

Leader C-Male found that the diagram could be useful in measuring degrees of professional communication. Leader C-Male did not express the strident, visceral reactions expressed by Leaders A and B-Female. He proceeded to utilize the diagram relative to each of the dilemmas presented. Leader C-Male observed that all language is instrumental; he asserted that we attach a negative connotation to the term spin. He further defined spin as “how to best present information to serve our interests.” He went further to suggest incorporating the word interpretation within the definition, to diffuse this negative connotation and association. He asked whether or not I as the researcher had considered this. We discussed the importance of
maintaining use of the word within the context of the study for the purposes of evoking a response to the full meanings and associations of the word. Leader C-Male, when asked what the diagram implies, re-asserted his view that “we clearly use language as a means to achieve ends.” Leader C did not find any moral problem with using illusion to achieve ends, however was unsure as to how truth might be used to deceive. He asserted that partial truth could be used to deceive—yet because a statement is partially true, it does not reveal all a decision-make needs to know to make a full judgment. Leader C-Male agreed that the diagram could be useful in measuring degrees of professional communication.

Leader E-Male, when asked whether he in fact had any visceral reactions to the diagram, shared that the diagram does not capture the vacillated responses generated by those communicating in real time. He specifically gave an example of dealing with the media, expressing awareness of the motives of a media hungry for a story that will sell newspapers and generate ratings. Leader E-Male further observed that any type of linear model does not capture the full and complex dynamics of responses, particularly to those involving media. He argued, “The T/R [truth and reality] on the right does not coincide with the complex world in which the media operate.

Leader E-Male agreed that leaders at times communicate in illusion and create realities to suit their purposes, also calling on the example of the Bush administration, one that has “spun itself into problems.” He observed that leaders do this; however in the long run, it does not play well. When asked what the diagram itself implies, Leader E-Male replied that the diagram implies that language is rigid. The absoluteness of the diagram does not account for the fluidity of language. The intent of language, in Leader E’s view, is multi-dimensional. Leader E-Male added however that the diagram helps to “get a handle” on tendency, a direction of language in
professional settings. Relative to each of these situations, or dilemmas, Leader E was able to get a sense of the polarity and direction of the communication. In his view, each of the participants excluding the Chancellor, Leader C-Male, the leaders vacillated in their communication. Leader E perceived the visual to draw our attention to the levels of language use in professional settings. He found the interview questions and the diagram to be of potential aid to leaders to go deeper into how leaders communicate as well as the thinking behind it.

Summary

The participants in this study consisted of five college and university presidents and senior executives, including two females and three males. Participants included two current university presidents, one former president and current chancellor, and two vice presidents. Each participant has held his or her post for a minimum of five years. Following the initial interview, one participant, Leader D, chose to withdraw from the study. Partial inclusion of statements made by Leader D, prior to his withdrawal from the study, were included in the chapters devoted to ethical dilemmas and findings.

I compiled five interview questions for the purposes of this study. Interview questions were mailed to each of the participants in advance of the interviews, both by electronic and post office mailings. Upon interviewee agreement to participate, I scheduled telephone and live meetings at the convenience of those participating.

Interview discussions were transcribed immediately following all interviews. Participants were provided an opportunity to determine the accuracy of all communications. Transcriptions were subsequently reviewed and coded for response categories.

Research questions centered on two areas of inquiry. The first question explored how college presidents and senior academic executives approach, analyze, and resolve ethical
dilemmas posed by the employment of spin, defined as the deliberate shading of information to evoke a desired reaction. Participant responses revealed consistency in the approach to ethical dilemmas and were not specific to gender. Five areas of consideration comprised participant approach to ethical dilemmas; these were designated as empathy, focus on players/relationships, focus on issues, focus on rationale, and focus on strategy toward solution. Because each of the participants demonstrated employment of the five areas of approach to ethical dilemmas, no evidence supported arguments in favor of a gendered approach to ethical dilemmas.

An evaluation of leader analysis of ethical dilemmas revealed five areas of dilemma analysis: dilemma/conflict identification, identification of moral pull, salience, weighing, and resolution of the dilemma scenarios. Each of the participants revealed consistency across gender lines in the analysis and processing of ethical dilemmas. Participants employed reading, questioning, clarification, and search for inconsistencies in their analysis of their own dilemmas, as well as those of their peers.

Additionally explored was how college presidents resolved ethical dilemmas. No evidence supported a gendered resolution of ethical dilemmas. All participants demonstrated consistency in the application of both deontological and consequentialist philosophies in their resolution of the problems presented. The utilitarian philosophy was exhibited in the resolution of conflicts of four leaders, as revealed in the interviews, both related to the dilemmas, as well as those conflicts external to the dilemmas shared by participants. Participants consistently sought to gain a ‘win’ for all parties involved in the conflict, endorsing the omission of facts to make greater good, or strides for a given majority.

The second research question examined whether the approach, analysis, and resolution of ethical dilemmas posed by the employment of spin, differed by gender. The discussion
parameters of this study and the topics of focus revealed no difference in gender approach, analysis, and resolution of ethical dilemmas. Leaders employed similar communication patterns, displayed a high tolerance for fact omission, yet reacted viscerally to the suggestion that they themselves might use language for cynical and deceptive ends. Each of the participants however agreed that this is a form of communication practiced by leaders. One participant openly endorsed the use of illusion for transparent ends. The majority of participants did not endorse the use of language to create illusion, even toward transparent ends; though all participants endorsed use of fact omission for transparent ends. Participants did not endorse use of falsity toward cynically deceptive ends.
CHAPTER VI. DISCUSSION

In this chapter an interpretation of literature relative to the findings will be presented. A review of the study, along with an analysis of the constitution, deconstruction, and salience of ethical dilemmas is explored. A global discussion of the salience and weighing of moral challenges in professional communication, leadership and values within higher education, philosophic orientation, as well as the implications of spin and negotiation of language for leadership will form the conclusion of the study.

Review of the Study

Themes consistently reflected throughout the literature reveal a dominant culture of spin, an acceptance of its instrumentation as one of the unwritten checks and balances of our political system within the United States. Spin is also a vital navigational tool for political strategy, for selling stories in media, and also for the implementation of professional communication strategy. An adage and recent book title among many that serves to illustrate this point is It’s Not What You Say, it’s What People Hear (Luntz, 2007). In the culture of American politics, the spin-master assumes an elusive, heroic personality, evidenced by privileged, sought-after political consultants who demonstrate mastery of the craft of manipulation. A central question emerging from the present research study considers to what extent, in an age of “performativity” (Lyotard, 1984, cited in Henkel, 1997, p. 135), particularly evidenced in higher education, have the language and ideologies of the field been influenced by American ruling classes? Borrowing Brookfield’s (2001) use of the “often quoted sentence from Marx and Engel’s (1970) The German Ideology: ‘The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force…the class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time
over the means of mental production” (Brookfield, 2001, p. 14). The present study sought to examine the communication strategies of leaders of academic institutions, considering how each approached, analyzed, and resolved ethical dilemmas involving negotiation of language and spin, and whether in fact leader approaches differed by gender. The contributions of the participating leaders reveal that in a culture of higher education, leaders, because their commitment is to serve the students and community constituency, the best interests of their constituencies drove the leaders’ decisions. Yet in accomplishing their missions, the findings support the assertion that regardless of gender, leaders within higher education are subject to the pressures of the university enterprise, and therefore apply Orwellian “business speak” of the marketplace to successfully achieve their performance goals (Arvast, 2005, p. 82).

The work of Gilligan and Kohlberg encourage ongoing conversations about how men and women approach and weigh ethical dilemmas. Additionally, the work of both researchers raise endless speculations of what each gender finds salient, though it was not possible, within the context of this study, to apply with rigidity a male tendency toward a mathematical/logical approach to ethical decision-making, or a female relationships-oriented approach to ethical resolutions of dilemmas. Perhaps, in what has been prescribed a culture of spin, there is a fusion of mathematical/logical and relationships oriented approaches, particularly within the culture of higher education, where the goal, though influenced by an ideology of performativity, is the business of educating students, in and of itself a collectivist, utilitarian goal. Leader B-Female, when asked whether the unique culture of academia impacts, or lessens the level of deception and spin employed by the leader, replied, “We are selling knowledge. Would we invite you in to get a worthless degree?” Yet as the workplace becomes increasingly competitive and dynamic—the literature reminding us that the American workplace is one of the most hostile-competitive in
the world, people act out in aggressiveness to achieve and sustain competitive advantage, adopting an ‘any means necessary approach to navigating their careers—perhaps blurring, or “de-emphasizing”, gender-behavioral/communication lines (Loo, 2003, p. 169). The culture of higher education is thus subject to the very same behavioral tactics, representing a microcosm of its mirrored external environment. The premise of this study was, as this phenomenon of the pressure-cooker that is the American workplace continues to boil, the professional instrumentation of communication performed by men and women continue to blend, much like the indistinguishable behaviors of the pigs and humans (as central characters) at the conclusion of Orwell’s *Animal Farm* tale. The leader participants were disturbed by the notion of reliance upon cynical manipulation of language for strategic gain; yet participants were not averse to fact omission, within limits established by the moral compass of the leader him or herself.

Because the focus of the study explored ethical dilemmas, it becomes necessary to understand the characteristics of ethical dilemmas. This leads to the question of how we are certain of what constitutes an ethical dilemma as we read them for understanding? How are ethical dilemmas read? Deciphered? Dissected? How are these scenarios weighed? What are the implications of the rationalizing and justifications that ultimately bind this resolution? Though there are still many more questions than answers, an engagement of these questions, when assigned to literature will guide the search for answers.

**Discussion of the Research Findings**

As a result of the findings, a discussion for further consideration is presented. Findings reflecting the significance of charting the ethical dilemmas, individual and peer perceptions of the ethical dilemmas, and leader approach, analysis, and resolution of dilemmas is explored. Additionally, connections between the implications of the *Gauge of Language Negotiation,*
suggestions for its modification and use, as well as its bearing on professional communication will also be examined. Finally, conclusions and recommendations for further research are provided.

*Charting the Ethical Dilemmas*

Callahan (1988) shapes parameters of the moral dilemma as hinging on the preservation or protection of one value, or set of values, which precludes the sacrifice of some other value or set of values. As well, the resolution of dilemmas may include not deciding on a set of values, in other words, deciding *in favor of* a competing set of values by default. Callahan defines ethics as a formal field of philosophical inquiry and “the philosophical study of morality” (p. 7). Paul and Elder (2006) cite the purpose of ethics as acting “so as to help rather than harm other persons or sentient beings” (p. 17). The authors provide cautionary warning to readers to not confuse ethical issues with those that are in fact pseudo-ethical in nature. In every society, individuals are mistakenly ethically condemned for acts that instead raise questions of religion, social convention, and legality. As an example, societal enforcement of what are in fact racist laws, might exemplify confusion of *ethics* with *law*. To illustrate this point, voting laws of the Jim Crow south stand as a paradigm example, as well as present-day laws prohibiting felons [who have served their prison sentences] from voting. The laws themselves stem from racist ideologies, yet are guised as lawful, and therefore upright. Paradigm examples listed as unethical within themselves include such acts as “slavery, genocide, torture, sexism, racism, murder, assault, rape, fraud, deceit, intimidation” (Paul & Elder, 2006, p. 14), among others. The authors add further, “If we are ever to reach a point in human development where skilled ethical reasoning is the norm, each of us must cultivate in ourselves the ability to determine whether any belief system, practice, rule, or law is ethical” (Paul & Elder, 2006, p. 14). An
ethical dilemma, therefore, is a problem, or conflict in which two or more competing value systems, inherent in a solution, test the moral compass of the agent, forcing a value-laden choice aligned with the morals, or lack thereof, of the agent.

Spin, in the context of this study, was introduced to leader participants as an ethical dilemma, with the assumption that spin, in and of itself, is a loaded word replete with negative connotation. The connotation carries with it notions of trickery, manipulation, and deceit, in that by definition, spin requires deliberate shading and coloring of facts through use of propaganda methodologies. The word holds these connotations simply because, based on the definition of an ethical dilemma provided by Callahan (1988), individual and leader choice in how words will be employed as instruments, or means to achieving desired ends, hinges on the preservation or protection of one value, or set of values, perhaps inherent in a leader’s stance and personal moral compass, which precludes the sacrifice of some value or set of values, evidenced in the coloring, the deception, or the lie. Additionally and according to Callahan, the resolution of dilemmas may include not deciding on a set of values, perhaps evidenced in omission of information for the purposes of coloring perception, or, in other words, deciding in favor of a competing set of values through lack of communication. Leader participants took part in reading, reviewing, and charting the dilemmas of themselves and their peers using the Gauge of Language Negotiation. Participants, through their communication of tactical strategies of language use, as well as through the charting of ethical dilemmas, endorsed values of language use. Inherent in the choices provided along the grids of the gauge were competing values. Participants were able to distinguish within the gauge a polarity, diametrically crossed between truth, reality, and transparency on the left, and illusion, falsity, and deception on the right. Leader A noted the irony of all of the dilemmas with which participants were presented, her observation that all of
the leaders felt that if they told the truth, in their respective professional settings and scenarios, “Bad things would happen”. Within paradigm examples of “concepts depicting unethical behavior or motivation”, presented by Paul and Elder (2006), the list reads as follows, categorized as *Refusing to Tell the Truth due to Self-Interest:* dishonest, deceitful, lying, untruthful, insincere, hypocritical, disingenuous, false, disloyal (p. 22). When viewed within the context of the options provided along the *Gauge of Language Negotiation*, the argument stands that for a leader to make a selection to move the grids even slightly past *truth, reality, and transparency*, the choice in itself presents an ethical dilemma in the use of spin and manipulation of language. For the professional, as Callahan illustrates, it is an unrealistic, perhaps naïve expectation that a leader communicate in complete transparency. Indeed there are a separate and distinct set of rules in professional life in which it is assumed that the players must possess the knowledge and skill of language maneuvering, much like the chess player who relies on intellectual agility and prowess to outwit his opponent; the rules of navigating professional life afford players a maneuverability pass, from which it is expected that the player will attempt to outwit the opponent, for a desired goal, by any means necessary, as determined by the leader. This explains why, though leaders considered the notion of cynical manipulation of language for the leader’s desired ends an affront to their personal morality, they were able to nonetheless chart the dilemmas, theirs and those of their peers, according to the gauge, despite the tactics the gauge implied in its application and use. Though each of the participants espoused opposing rules, observing that communicating in illusion and falsity for the purposes of deceit was not a form of communication in which they would engage, the participants’ toleration for fact omission, as well as illusion and the admission that “the political part of our jobs” results in tempering our points of view and rationalizing agreement on issues we might otherwise oppose, reveals a
separate and distinct set of ethics for professional life, contrasted with those of our personal
lives. An important finding surfaced in all of the leaders’ admission that use of language to
deliberately subjugate their constituencies was not evidenced in the context of this study. The
leaders were most certainly very deliberative, contemplative individuals who understood the
political parts of their jobs, but who were also well aware of their personal moral limitations in
terms of language use; the leaders were also well aware of their ethical responsibilities to the
stakeholders they serve. It is therefore significant that each of the leader participants were able
to use the gauge to chart the dilemmas; and as well, the leaders were willing to admit times when
they questioned their personal belief in the professional mission or challenge at hand, colored
information to get followers to act, and further admitted that they themselves had been
disingenuous in their use of language for certain professional ends. As presented in the results,
the ends were most often beneficial to a larger college and university constituency. This is a
reality of professional dynamics and of language use.

Because the current study focused on the ethics of linguistic negotiation of the workplace,
it is necessary to decipher how the ethical dilemmas were read. The paradigm examples offered
by Paul and Elder (2006) most relevant to the present study are primarily deceit and fraud in the
instrumentation of language as a means, and the transparency and/or deception of ends.

The Reading of Ethical Dilemmas

The dilemmas as dictated and included in the study have shifted from raw dialogue form,
to what French professor of sociology and lexicology Roland Barthes (1970) classifies as
writerly, to readerly texts. The writerly text is one in which the reader is active in a creative
process; and a readerly text is one in which the reader is restricted to just reading. This
distinction aided Barthes in identifying what it was he sought in literature: openness for
interpretation. In this study, the researcher’s methods of conversations, note taking, transcription, captioning, and transference illustrate the crafting of a text from the writerly to that which was readerly. Elevated from their raw, dialogic form, the dilemmas become snapshot stories depicting moral conflicts, in which two or more sets of values compete with one another. To borrow from and to apply codes for reading literature moves forward the task of analyzing ethical dilemmas. When each is viewed as a small story, or vignette, defined by Merriam Webster as a short, descriptive, literary sketch, readers are more equipped to read the dilemma for certain elements. Barthes prescribes five codes for literary analysis and deconstruction: hermeneutic, semic, symbolic, proaretic, and cultural. The hermeneutic code constitutes the enigmas, mysteries and questions that arouse tension in the reader and move the story forward. It is in this portion of the story that the obstacles for suspense are infused. The semic, or semantic code, is a signifier marking the development of theme through lexia, or language, thereby allowing symbolic interpretation. The symbolic code identifies details of the story to be interpreted on a figurative level. Proaretic codes constitute the actions and behaviors that make up the plot; while cultural codes reference types of knowledge that offer scientific or moral authority. Figures 35 and 36 demonstrate application of the Barthesian codes, where the dilemmas of Leader D and Leader E are extracted and their lexia labeled according to the codes.
“I use spin every minute of every day. Every word that comes out of my mouth is spin. Now as an ethical person I try not to use language toward deceptive ends; however, I believe that every utterance is spun to a degree. Language is living. Language is alive. No one says anything without having a desired impact. All we say has spin; however we should make efforts to not be deceitful in our communication.” (Cultural, Semic)

Leader D, current president of an institution, was approached and confronted by the FBI about an infraction on the part of some individuals at the university. (Proaretic) He admits using language harshly to “fend them off” and to protect his staff. (Proaretic, Cultural) “I let them know that I am not going to be pushed around and nor am I easily intimidated.” (Semic)

Arguing this was not an ethical dilemma, he believed he had a responsibility to his staff and communicated to the FBI his lack of intimidation. (Cultural)

Using a bi-focal lens, the reader can take apart this dilemma upon exercising a particularly close reading. A sample deconstruction of this ethical vignette, modeled after the Roland Barthes’ (1970) textual analysis within his book entitled, SZ, is provided:

1) Dilemma-Leader D is labeled hermeneutic because the reader, particularly on the first reading, will question whom or what will be the subject of focus, why the piece is referred to as a dilemma, and as well, who Leader D is. The reader must continue reading to learn that Leader D symbolizes the leader of an academic institution.

2) The first paragraph of the dilemma in its entirety is labeled both cultural and semic. The cultural code applies because of the moral challenges raised in the philosophy of language use the leader expresses. The leader’s moral compass causes tension for the reader; as the reader becomes uncertain as to how much of the leader’s words to trust. The reader continues further for understanding, and possible resolution of this tension. The semic code is applied here because the passage consists largely of the leader’s lexia.
3) The opening sentence of the second paragraph reflects action in the vignette, driving the sketch further; hence it is labeled as proaretic.

4) The second sentence of paragraph two reveals the action of ‘fending off’ members of the FBI, and the leader’s expression of his use of language to do so.

5) The semic code is applied to the third sentence of the second paragraph; as the leader expresses to the FBI his lack of intimidation.

6) Lastly, the leader’s expression of belief in his responsibility to protect his staff further reveals a moral compass, imperative, and perspective to the reader.

When the codes are analyzed and applied to the dilemma, and additionally, when applied consistently to all of the dilemmas, readers begin to witness a pattern unfold. Because the content of the vignettes is ethical in nature, the cultural, semic, and proaretic codes are those most frequently appearing throughout each reading.

Figure 36. Second Barthesian analysis of codes.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dilemma-Leader E (Hermeneutic, Symbolic)</th>
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<td>Leader E is current president of an academic institution in the Midwest. The state gubernatorial executive branch proposed a budgetary item about which there was much media buzz. (Proaretic, Hermeneutic) While the proposed budget was not advantageous to higher education, it was considered by this president to be a step in the right direction, (increased funding from the state, but a required cap on tuition increases). (Cultural) The response from the president and members of his constituency was that they were ‘grateful’ but not ‘satisfied’. An aggressive media, hungry for a sound bite, would consistently ask whether academic leaders were ‘on board’ or ‘not on board’. (Semic, Cultural, Proaretic) In negotiating a response to the media, Leader E commented, “I would agree with the direction [of the proposal], but I would hold my endorsement until I understood the details. It was a bit disingenuous; but the numbers did not work. So on the top of my head I knew there were more state dollars and a larger percentage, yet the proposal took away a large revenue source. I knew it was not going to work. Yet you cannot disagree with a public official [in context of media dealings]... I had to keep an open dialogue.” (Cultural, Semic, Hermeneutic) Leader E further added, “It was an ethical situation in that I was not exactly certain how, but I knew it would not work. Yet I had to express agreement and withhold what I knew to get more out of the deal.” (Cultural, Symbolic, Semic)</td>
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Another sample deconstruction of this ethical vignette, modeled after the Roland Barthes’ (1970) textual analysis in his book *SZ*, is provided:

1) Dilemma-Leader E is labeled hermeneutic because the reader, particularly on the first reading, will question whom or what will be the subject of focus, why the piece is referred to as a dilemma, and as well, who Leader E is.

2) The first paragraph of the dilemma in its entirety is labeled proaretic, hermeneutic, cultural, and semic. The proaretic code is signified in the proposal of the budgetary item, a proposal that caused media anticipation of higher education leaders’ opinions and responses. Tension builds in the reader from attempt to understand the particulars behind the gubernatorial budgetary item. The cultural code applies and is signified by the ethical conflict the budgetary item imposes. Increased funding from the state is juxtaposed with a required tuition cap, placing the leader in a conundrum.

3) The second paragraph reflects cultural, semic, and hermeneutic signifiers. The leader’s admission of his disingenuousness marks his communication to the media as one requiring a choice between honesty and directness and pretense of agreement with the proposed item. Thus, the leader’s choice of language, or lexia, signifies the semic code. The further lack of details of the budgetary item increases reader tension and mystery, marking the hermeneutic code. Lastly, the leader’s self-imperative to withhold his knowledge that the proposed item would not work reflects the cultural code; his choice to withhold his knowledge marks the semic code.

Analysis of the codes aids readers in distinguishing core components involved in the act of reading for understanding and the making of meaning, prior knowledge, and reference. Using the Barthesian codes as a guide and backdrop to leader approach, analysis, and resolution of
ethical dilemmas, the codes offer a template from which to measure the components for which readers read, analyzed, and resolved the ethical dilemmas. Leader approach to ethical dilemmas centered on readerly activity and search for empathy, players and relationships, issues, rationale, and strategies toward solution. Participant language revealed through transcripts and dialogue confirmed a formulaic approach to problem-based scenarios. The participants’ search for understanding, as well as their engagement in an active search for these five component areas paralleled that of Barthes, though the searches did not mirror his analysis directly. Elements of the Barthesian codes exist within strategies participants employed for making meaning of the scenarios. Empathy surfaced from reader engagement with the players involved in the conflict, their experiences, and the themes emerging from these experiences, thereby containing elements of the semic, proaretic, and cultural codes. Focus on players and relationships consisted of elements of the hermeneutic, semic, and symbolic. New players and relationships have elements of mystery, enigma, theme, and symbolism upon introduction. The central issues of the dilemma contained each of the elements as well, with the addition of the cultural and proaretic codes signifying moral authority and action. The issue of spin and language use exemplified both these codes. Rationales displayed within the dilemmas might contain all of the Barthesian elements, as exemplified in the philosophic orientation of participant and Leader D-Male. Peer leaders found his stances enigmatic, containing significant moral implications, implications for action, symbolism of character, and revealing of foreboding, ominous leadership themes. Lastly, the area of strategy for solutions carried with it the potential for application of all of the codes as well, depending on the reader. Leader E-Male’s dilemma involving the gubernatorial budgetary item was enigmatic in terms of the intricate details of the item; the item was based in the theme of equitable distribution of funds; the item required action on the part of the leaders; and lastly,
the item evoked moral questions in the leader’s communication of his true stances on the issue. The Barthesian codes allow fluidity in employment, aiding the readerly action and engagement of making meaning.

Quite similarly, participant analysis of ethical dilemmas consisted of many of the same Barthesian elements, indicative of readerly activity and engagement. However, the analysis portion of participant engagement weighed more heavily on the side of ethics, focusing on the salience, and weight of the morals assigned to the conflicts. Participants sought to identify dilemma and conflict, moral pull, salience, weighing, and resolution of ethical dilemmas. Locating the central source of conflict is itself a readerly act of identifying that which is proaretic, or action oriented. Reader search for identification of moral pull, is aligned with the cultural code of moral authority. Salience and weighing contain elements of the cultural code as well, though each of these readerly activities calls upon the variables most important to the leader, based on the individual leader’s moral compass. Resolution of moral dilemmas summoned participant readerly engagement of the all of the Barthesian codes for the purpose of problem solving; thus, readers must engage in making meaning from enigma, assigning meaning through theme, creating association through use of symbolism, determining action through proaretics, and summoning moral action based on personal moral authority and moral compass.

**Salience and Weighing of Ethical Dilemmas**

An additional and integral part of reading ethical dilemmas is *salience*. Merriam Webster defines salience as that which is *pronounced*, or *highlighted*. Carol Gilligan’s (1982) empirical studies of moral orientation identified a moral perspective of care. Partial motivation for her empirical studies was the prior treatment of Kohlberg and Piaget studies of moral development wherein women were not acknowledged. Yet the care and justice
orientations are not polar opposites, nor are they independent of each other. Salience can be likened to the analogy Gilligan employs of reader attempts to decipher ambiguous drawings that capture two images and fusing them into one, the most familiar being the young and old woman. On initial viewing, the reader sees the image in only one way. Upon discovery of the two images, it is impossible to view the two simultaneously. Also, Gilligan explains that after one has seen the image two ways, one way often continues to be more compelling. Arguing that the analogy applies to the ways in which people adopt moral perspectives, Gilligan in a later work observes, “although people are aware of both perspectives, they tend to adopt one or the other in defining and resolving moral conflict” (Gilligan, 1987). Gilligan found Kohlberg’s selection of an all-male sample as the “basis for generalizations that are applied to both males and females is logically inconsistent” (Gilligan, 1987). Gilligan’s arguments were the catalyst for dissection of a gendered meta-analysis of spin in the present study. In each of the dilemmas provided by participants, five areas of interest became prominent, moral/ethical conflict, identification of moral pull, salience, weighing, and resolution. Kohlberg, Freud, and Piaget offer justice as the primary yardstick from which moral decisions are made. However, findings limited to this study revealed an orientation toward justice and care across gender lines. Whether ensuring a medical school served the underserved, achieving the ‘best deal’ in navigating parameters of a proposed budget, striving to meet the demands of accreditation, protecting staff from FBI confrontation, or refusing to denigrate a past institution and employer, all examples provided by the participant leaders exhibited a perception-based concern for both justice and caring; the tactics however, proved slightly blurred on all accounts, weighed against a paradigm standard of deceit, shifting into greyer areas slightly less transparent in use of language as means.
Gauge of Language Negotiation

Discussions with participants revealed tolerance for half-truths and omissions across gender lines, as well as endorsements of leaders’ use of both omissions and illusions for the purposes of gaining a greater good. In terms of spin and negotiation of language, the coloring of information for the purposes of the motivation and selling of concepts was considered “the political part of our jobs”, as spoken by Leader E-Male, a professional reality requiring internal ‘tempering’ of position, and self-negotiation. As a tactical strategy, each of the leaders employed spin and omission to “look at ourselves”, “to be more transformational”, “to get a better deal”, “to protect staff”, and “to ensure service to the underserved.” The ends here appear transparent, supporting ideal missions of higher education; the ends appear as those with which few would disagree—as many served to benefit from the spin and omissions employed by the participant leaders.

Though the majority of the leaders spoke to flaws inherent in the Gauge of Language Negotiation, as evidenced in results, participants were able to apply the gauge to the dilemmas; therefore the dilemmas were chartable in the context of this study. All participants, with the exception of Leader C-Male, reacted strongly to the absoluteness and rigidity the diagram implies. Leader C-Male proceeded to use the gauge without such strong reactions; nor did Leader C present flaws within the diagram. It is worthy of note as well that Leader A-Female objected to the terms means and ends, more in terms of the notion that means and ends imply a utilitarian perspective of language use. Both Leader A and B-Female, as well as Leader E-Male admitted that there were “places they were unwilling to go” in terms of language use—these places were in the areas of lying and blatant language misuse. Leader E-Male went on to explain that because he was unwilling to communicate at the far end of the scale of deceit and
illusion/falsity, his career had been compromised, in the context of ascending a “fast track” of professional success. Two leader participants, Leaders A-Female and Leader E-Male, had definitive problems with the absoluteness, and the utilitarian implications of the gauge. Leader A-Female instead thought the use of layered circles representing gradations of truth would be a more accurate reflection of levels of truth. Leader E-Male pointed out that language use vacillates between truth and reality and illusion falsity in real time communication. Leaders B-Female and C-Male were able to use the diagram without such strident reaction. Therefore, modifications to the diagram are indeed split evenly, based on leader interpretation and suggestion. The gauge might be more accurately a representation of language use when separately applied to communication, task, and action, and as well, if the gauges reflect the motions, gradations, and vacillations of real-time communication. The polarities are not necessarily changed, only the fluidity of the applications.

Additional Conclusions

Supporting themes surfaced from the research based on discussions with each of the participants. Presented here is each of these themes, in hierarchical order of significance to participants.

Professional and Ordinary Morality

Callahan’s (1988) compilation of works examining ethical issues in professional life features a defense of what is coined a ‘parallel view’ of special professional morality offered by Joseph Ellin (1982), in which he argues that professions themselves may be considered sources of special moral obligations conflicting with the obligations of ordinary morality (Ellin, 1982, p. 130). Ellin defines ordinary morality as that which governs us in our non-special life encounters. A ‘special’ context supporting a separate and special professional morality denotes a distinct set
of values, and further, flexibility unique to a profession. For example, a “do unto others” philosophy is applied generally to relationships of all kinds. However, the attorney who finds himself defending the otherwise indefensible, or the therapist who treats a patient involved in the amoral, separates out, and perhaps engages in, rationalization and justification for the demands specific to his or her profession. Ellin’s defense is a possible explanation for what Wolff (2007) observes as our shock and admiration of high-level and exacting cynical manipulation in action.

We admire the college/university president who expertly employs spin, or withholds information with the intellectual sophistication of the master strategist; however, we balk at the notion of utterances spoken for selfish interests. Yet the professions, particularly those at the helm, require this moral distinction. As stated by Leader E-Male, the political part of our jobs requires such a distinction. Yet Fisher and Koch (2004) observe, “Many frown on overt profit and revenue-oriented behavior by college presidents. Edmund Burke’s eighteenth-century lament that, ‘The age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators has succeeded’” (p. 3).

In ordinary living, differences in lying and deception are of little significance. In our professional lives, however, there is a difference. There are contrasting differences in ordinary life and home environments and professional environments, expectations, assumptions. The husband who has an affair but who withholds this information from his wife will not likely be subject to his wife’s elaborate consideration of the differences in distinguishing the lie or the deceit in which he engaged; she will consider both equally wrong; and the consequences will be direly experienced by both parties. In professional environments, as Ellin (1982) illustrates, there are differences in the lie and the deceit. The assumption in professional environments is that the bluff will be employed. If each of the leaders had communicated forthrightly to their peers and constituencies, the consequences would have been professionally dire. Therefore,
there is no expectation of complete transparency and forthrightness in professional life. Again, the bluff is expected. In professions such as law, medicine, and ministry, there are different sets of rules for the bluff. Lawyers are expected to outwit and to out-maneuver their opponents; yet the expectation is that all cards are on the table with regard to evidence. Lawyers employ use of spin when crafting arguments for jurors, to evoke a desired response. In medicine, a fiduciary relationship exists between patient and doctor, therefore spin might surface in how the doctor communicates a serious diagnosis, perhaps emphasizing the seriousness to encourage the patient to act; as well, the doctor might soften his or her communication of the seriousness of a diagnosis to avoid traumatizing the patient. The direction of the spin therefore depends on the level of depth of the doctor/patient relationship and the level of care needed to deliver the bad news. However in ministry, interestingly, the spin might present itself in the pastor, minister, or leader’s interpretation of the scripture, and subsequent relaying of this scripture to members of a congregation. Therefore different professions certainly employ the bluff, however its manifestation varies with the demands of the profession. The participants in the present study revealed through their experiences and example scenarios that leaders must withhold information to achieve a desired, strategic gain for their individual professional welfare, and for the welfare of their constituencies. Leader A-Female further observed, “It is a matter of how much we’re willing to tell, and how much we can tell. Some things are confidential.”

The College Presidency and the Institutional Mission

Fisher and Koch (2004) observe that the concept of the entrepreneurial college president is a relatively new phenomenon. Citing Peck (1983), the researchers find that academic entrepreneurs shine most when there is complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty. This is when the entrepreneurial instinct surfaces. Significant to these developing characteristics of the college
president are the ideologies to which the academic mission and goals become subject, in light of the changing competitive environment and landscape in which the academic leader must perform. Organization development specialists would argue that healthy organizations change with the external environment; in an ideal organizational culture, the organization and environment coexist, each responding to stimuli in sync, without conflict with the external environment. Perhaps what is witnessed as a new form of leadership within the college presidency is simply a natural response to external environmental stimuli and change.

Relative to the institutional mission, Faulkner (1958) advises, ”The board and the faculty should deliberate in the formulation of the educational objectives of the institution” and further, “the institutional aims must express the social and economic needs of the constituency and clientele” (p. 427). Entrepreneurial academic leaders may consult the higher order recommendations of Faulkner, and arguably have a responsibility to do so in ways that meet the demands of a post-modern world. This includes and reflects a postmodern world in which there are expectations of the “game”, as well as layered and multiple meanings of language. Results from the present study yielded from one of the participant leaders questions she applies to resolve professional conflicts and decisions. Leader B-Female, explaining how she grapples with higher education complexities reveals thinking aligned with Faulkner’s institutional objectives. She considers who is impacted by the decisions made, how, and to what end; further, she considers whether leadership decisions at her institution are aligned with the organizational mission. This leader admits employing spin frequently to achieve goals and views herself a moral person. Her orientation, as evidenced in her rubric of evaluative questions guiding her decision-making, centers clearly on both justice and caring.
Philosophic Orientations

Each of the participants, in their resolution of ethical dilemmas, revealed in their philosophies evidence of philosophical orientations: the utilitarian, nihilist, deontological, teleological, and consequentialist perspectives. The utilitarian philosophy is concerned with that which serves the greatest good for the greatest number. The nihilist views traditional rules as unfounded and questions the existence of truth. The deontological perspective is primarily concerned with personal duty and moral uprightness; while the teleological perspective elevates that which is exemplary and supreme in morality. The consequentialist views the value of a decision as inherent in its resulting action. Examples from the present study reveal Leader A-Female’s attempt to gain buy-in from her staff to achieve the mission of accreditation, typifying more of a professional imperative, though her view of the challenge as an opportunity for the organization to look inward and to be more transformational, is of the consequentialist perspective. Leader B-Female’s decision to not denigrate a former employer is also reflective of a consequentialist viewpoint. The decision weighed heavily on the value of her individual professional welfare, as well as the reputation of the institution she left. She admitted that this decision was also aligned with her personal morals, exemplifying a deontological perspective. The utilitarian philosophical stance, wherein one acts to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number, was illustrated clearly by the viewpoint of Leader C-Male. His motives were transparent; he sought to ensure that the addition of the medical school to the university he served would indeed serve the underprivileged, or those most in need. His viewpoint transfers also into the consequentialist perspective, wherein the value of an action is derived solely from the consequence of the action. The viewpoint of Leader C-Male also reflects the teleological and deontological perspectives of moral duty and obligation. The mission to serve the underserved
represents the highest example of moral obligation, the result, service to the community, inherits value from its inception. Leader D-Male’s perspective echoes that of the nihilist, as his perspective evidences an extreme form of skepticism that denies all existence. Leader D-Male agrees with the perspective of Thomas Hardy in his view that “there is no truth.” Though Leader D acted deontologically, teleologically, and consequentially in his attempt to protect his staff from the FBI, his viewpoint and perspective of language negotiation fits that of the nihilist. Lastly, Leader E-Male’s withholding of his knowledge to “get the best deal” for his constituency was parallel to the deontological, consequentialist, and utilitarian perspectives. This “best deal” reflects the philosophy of the deontologist in that it is one rooted in concern for duty. Leader E-Male views his achievement of what is best for students as his obligation, and therefore strives to fulfill it. The philosophy of the consequentialist applies in that the value of the action, achieving the best for students, is derived from the consequence itself. This perspective is closely aligned with the utilitarian viewpoint, and is illustrated in Leader E-Male’s efforts to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number, the students whom he serves.

_Ethics of Communication, Critique, Justice, and Caring_

How shall we govern ourselves? (Starratt, 1991)

The drawing of MC Escher’s Hands is a visual and artistic reminder to leaders of the critical importance observing professional leadership objectively and critically—if we were to draw our interpretation of our leadership, capturing the complexity and problems of our personal and professional lives, our activities and engagement within organizations, what would we draw?
Within the Escher drawing, a right hand is busy sketching a shift cuff upon drawing paper, though its work is incomplete. Further to the right however, the right hand has already drawn a left hand, each with such extreme detail, that both hands have come to life, depending upon the interpretation of the viewer. The drawing has a captivating relationship to Starratt’s (1991) ethic of critique, justice, and care. To dissect each component of Starratt’s ethics, we must first apply the ethic of critique to leadership. Within the ethic of critique, we should ask, “Who benefits by these arrangements? Which group dominates this social arrangement? Who defines the way things are structured here? Who defines what is valued and disvalued in this situation?” (p. 189).

All are central questions to begin authentic dialogue addressing the empowerment of the people within a healthy, thriving, culture of higher education. Leader B-Female engaged this line of question in considering her college’s policy on student advising, she observed,

We were talking about whether or not we encourage too much hand holding…my questions [typically center on] the mission. Is this aligned with our mission? I think it is always…what I attempt to do in midst of tough decisions, is to consider what is the right thing to do? What is the moral thing to do? What is the mission of the institution? What fits my own personal goals? Outside of here [the institution] I think about what is right. Here, I talk with lots of leaders, with stakeholders, and challenge them on ok—this is how you feel about this, but is that right in the context of our mission? Is that right in the context of our students we are serving? To the employers we encourage our graduates to consider? I have learned over the years how important it is to look at the bigger picture. Even though you may be tired of doing things a certain way… you have to think about all of these things. (Personal Conversation, Leader B, April 17, 2007)

Leader B-Female’s questions evidence each of Starratt’s ethics. She actively questions for the right and moral things to do to best serve the needs of the students. Her questions additionally reveal active critique not only of her leadership, but also of the mission of the organization.

We might add an additional question of critique, by posing a query as to leader worldview relative to leadership. In a critique of a biased worldview in mainstream media, Paul and Elder (2003) refer to as a dominant, and in this case, American worldview of itself, wherein we are fed
media aligned with our beliefs about ourselves as a nation, biased toward the positive. As an example, we as Americans and patriotic citizens believe we are *liberators, protectors of freedom, freedom fighters, dependable allies*, and more of the same. For the purposes of producing slant, media references might follow: “unfavored players on the world stage as [as pictured within a cultural perspective] We plan…they plot. We are clever…they are sneaky. We form strategies…they conspire” (Paul & Elder, 2003, p. 16). The authors add, “Critiques of a society within a society are typically hard to come by” (p. 17). As well, individual and subjective critiques of leadership are difficult to come by. This critique comes often by way of the constituencies the leader serves. Lack of healthy and rigorous critique of leadership results in the absence of authentic growth and dynamism critique generates.

Starratt further advises,” we govern ourselves by observing justice” (p. 191). He further makes an important distinction between *is* and *ought*, a distinction to be applied to leadership, reminding readers, that relative to schools, “no organizational arrangements in schools ‘have to be’ that way; they are all open to rearrangement in the interest of greater fairness to their members” (p. 194). The work of Ellin (1982) argues a dissenting view when applied to professional life. The participant leaders have each ironically endorsed the “bluff”, or the withholding of information to achieve a greater good, or to maintain professional standing. Leader B-Female’s observation that all of the leaders in the cases they provided felt that “bad things would happen” if they told the truth, was a view clearly illustrated and supported by the decisions and actions of the remaining participants. Though Starratt argues that these arrangements do not have to be this way, the participants within this study, through a separate ethic of communication, have exhibited that the professional codes for language use simply are this way. To be open and “readable” does not always serve the best interests of the leader.
Starratt’s ethic of care instills in authentic leaders the notion that “caring requires fidelity to persons, a willingness to acknowledge their right to be who they are, openness to encountering them in their authentic individuality, a loyalty to relationship” (p. 195). Reminiscent of Beck (1994), who discerns caring about and caring for…the leaders have a responsibility to, and an ongoing relationship with, their constituencies. The leaders, by their tactics and actions, each demonstrated their concern for the best interests of the institutions and the constituencies they serve.

Implications for Research and Practice

The literature related to leadership and power consistently references concepts of professionalism and language use, elevating terms such as, transparency, deception, truth telling, the creation of new realities and illusion. The literature led the terms through consistency of reference, and guided the incorporation of the terms within the tool tested by way of the leader participants, the Gauge of Language Negotiation. As well, the literature consistently referenced the indispensability of leader power to choose how they used language as an instrument, as well as their reflection of why they used it. Thus, the Gauge of Language Negotiation was created to test the terms listed with a visual diagram, in attempt to contrast these polarities in professional communication as a hypothetical conceptual model. The terms truth, reality, illusion, falsity, transparency, and deception, for the purposes of this study, were literature-guided terms. These are salient terms that are prevalent throughout the literature and used across fields, business, politics, law, health care, and education, to weigh how leaders use language. Though these terms are strident, and perhaps rigid, the leader participants in this study were able to apply them with practicality in discussions of the demands of leadership communication, ethics, and decision-making.
A discussion of the transferability of the findings is also necessary. Construct-related evidence of validity measures the nature of the psychological construct or characteristic being measured by the instrument, considering how well it explains differences in the behavior of individuals on certain tasks. Therefore, a critical question becomes how other leaders, perhaps also leaders of other fields, view the Gauge of Language Negotiation, as well as what they view as salient in their resolution of ethical dilemmas. A corporate executive, when asked how he or she views spin as an ethical issue, and whether or not he or she employs spin, or the bluff in professional settings, might likely have a very different set of criteria for weighing the issue. Other types of professional dilemmas, with different stakes at the helm, are likely to view the model in a new light.

The research presented herein does not attempt to create a definitive conceptual model of language use, but to test these polarities, hopefully through continued refinements to the proposed gauge. It is my hope that a more refined model that best captures the polarities relative to language use, decision-making, professional communication, and ethics is further researched and developed. Spin is successful because it is subtle. It carries fine gradations and varied tones in coloring not always apparent to the naked ear. Language is often and at once functioning as means and ends, as well as means or ends. The intent of the research presented was to give leaders pause to think about how they encourage followership and make decisions using language, and based on a personal moral code. As well, it is my hope that the Gauge of Language Negotiation inspires conversation regarding one’s own thinking relative to ability to read through ideologies, what ideas constituencies are asked to espouse, and as well, what ideas we as leaders ask others to espouse. My goal is for the gauge to be revisited and refined, so that we may more closely examine how we use language as an instrument, particularly in our
leadership, and to what ends. The polarities are real; as the impacts of our use of language are real—and just as knowledge is power, language is power. Leader E-Male assessed that the usefulness of the gauge in his estimation, was that it allowed leaders opportunity to think more deeply about how they use language to achieve their missions and goals. In the context of this study, five leader participants have given voice to their individual approach, analysis, and resolution of ethical dilemmas involving use of language. In this way, introduction of the gauge has been a further catalyst for discussions of language and professional ethics. How we use language to communicate and why, specifically in professional settings, are central questions for further consideration. I would advocate more research and study on the gauge, and its application across professions and fields.

Conclusion

“The depth of our integrity is all that we have.” Oprah Winfrey

What is a Rumpelstiltskin Style of Leadership? The participants have shown their leadership priorities in each of their dilemma resolutions—the constituencies they serve. The question then becomes one of what the leader values, and to what ends he or she uses language and manipulation. Spin, manipulation of language for a desired result, can be used for selfish interest, for the good of all, for protection of a constituency or population of followers. Inherent in the question of a definition of a Rumpelstiltskin Style of Leadership is the ends; manipulation for ends that serve to benefit sentient creatures might be deemed worthwhile; however manipulation of language for political maneuvering that serves narrow interests should indeed raise more questions for those subject to the maneuvering. The characters of Rumpelstiltskin employed use of lies, omissions, manipulations, and coloring, all for selfish interest. The miller lied to the king; the miller’s daughter who eventually became queen pretended ignorance of
Rumpelstiltskin’s name; the king manipulated the miller’s lie to his advantage; and lastly the queen, armed with the little man’s name, deceives him by pretending ignorance. Relative to the present study, several questions pertinent to leadership developed from conversations with each of the leader participants: How far are we willing to go (relative to our communication)? To what ends are we willing to employ language? Who are we as leaders? What is our personal moral compass? What is the organizational culture in which we currently work? What is the organizational culture of the organizations in which we strive to work? Is there alignment between the organizations in which we work and our personal moral compass? What is the language expected in the culture in which we work? What is demanded of us ethically? The work of Sternberg (1999) encourages us to examine our thinking styles relative to their alignment in our professional and personal lives. His work examines individual thinking styles, such as the legislative, executive, and judicial. Legislators create the rules; executive thinkers implement the rules, while the judicial thinkers critique the rules. His research advocates knowledge of who we are, as well as the kinds of thinkers we are, thereby affording us more power over ourselves and our personal and professional choices. The leaders within this study each have clear knowledge of who they are as leaders, as well as to what ends they were willing to employ language in their professional lives. Returning to our children’s story Rumpelstiltskin, in the end, the beautiful miller’s daughter was able to call the main character and namesake’s bluff; and Rumpelstiltskin tore himself in two. Yet the leaders studied in this context remain in tact through knowledge and understanding of their personal moral compasses and codes. To be further explored are the implications of this knowledge of self through personal voice and purpose, thinking style, professional communication, moral compass, professional trajectory and the boundless limitation
in career paths and choices. In the context of this study, full knowledge of self, personal conviction, as well as full command of self-leadership has clearly evidenced as the *gold*. 
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June 25, 2007

TO:        Karen Denise Smith
           Education Administration

FROM:      Richard Rowlands
           HSRB Administrator

RE:        Human Subjects Review Board Project No.: H07D154GE7

TITLE:     *Spinning Straw into Gold: Dynamics of a Rumpelstiltskin Style of Leadership*

REVIEW DATE: February 7, 2007

APPROVAL EXPIRES: January 9, 2008

RESEARCH CATEGORY: Expedited #7

The BGSU Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) has completed its review of your project involving research with human subjects.

Your project has been **approved as submitted**. You may begin subject recruitment and data collection immediately. The approved version of the consent document(s) is attached.

You are authorized to use human subjects for 12 months, but only in the manner described in your proposal. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures (including increases in the number of participants), those changes must be approved by the HSRB prior to their implementation. If any anticipated adverse reactions develop during the course of your project, you must temporarily suspend your research and notify the Chair of the HSRB.

Please notify the Board in writing (fax: 372-6916 or e-mail: hsr@bgsu.edu) when you have completed your project. If you have any questions, please contact the Chair of the HSRB or me at 372-7716. Good luck with your research project.

**COMMENTS:**
1. Stamped original consent document(s) is coming to you via campus mail.
2. Because it appears you plan to personalize the letters of introduction, if you provide us with the electronic version of the letter (on BGSU letterhead), we will affix an electronic version of the HSRB approval/expiration date stamp and return it to you.
APPENDIX B: FORMAL LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

[DATE]

[ADDRESSEE]

Dear College/University President,

I am Karen D. Smith, graduate student to Dean Josué Cruz and Doctoral Candidate in the School of Leadership and Policy Studies in the College of Education and Human Development at Bowling Green State University. I am currently working on implementation of my proposed study, entitled, *Spinning Straw into Gold: Dynamics of a Rumpelstiltskin Style of Leadership*, and I would like to invite you to participate in this important study.

Your consideration in participating in what I believe to be an important study is greatly appreciated. As a participant, you will have the opportunity to share your leadership experiences involving the negotiation of language and the resolution of ethical dilemmas. Your stories will inform other current and potential academic leaders. The purpose of my proposed study is to examine gender differences in the approach, analysis, and resolution of ethical dilemmas within professional communication posed by the employment of *spin*, defined as the *deliberate* shading and manipulation of language to achieve a desired reaction from followers (Borger, 1995).

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to do three things. First, I would like you to provide me with the facts of an ethical dilemma during your university presidency that obligated you to employ written and/or oral communication in its resolution. I will collect these dilemmas from each of the four study participants and compile them, without reference to your university, into one document. For the second part of the study, you will receive the document with the four dilemmas either electronically or in the regular mail, along with an instrument, entitled the Gauge of Language Negotiation, on which each dilemma will be charted for its use of spin. Finally, I would like to interview you one time, individually, for approximately one hour. The design of the study calls upon me, as researcher, to interview four college and/or university presidents, two female and two male. I have included the interview and research questions, along with the research instrument, for your advanced review. In advance of the interview, please read through the interview questions and instrumentation and respond to the prompts on pages 1 and 2. At the interview, we will discuss all four dilemmas, as well as the final interview questions.

Included also are two copies of a letter of informed consent, which you may also review as you decide whether to participate. If you decide to participate, please sign both copies, keep one for your records, and return one to me in the postage-paid envelope with the fact description of your dilemma. Please retain your copy of this letter of introduction as well. Upon receipt of the informed consent letter, I will contact you to set the date, time, and place for the interview.
If you wish your identity to be protected due to the sensitivity and nature of the questions discussed, I will assign you a pseudonym (or you may supply one for me). All information discussed in person at the interview or in writing between us will be kept in the strictest of confidence. Information from the interviews, however, including direct quotes, will be included in the written results. But no reference will be made to you or to your university. You will have an opportunity to read through your interview transcripts and my notes so that all information is presented accurately and confidentially. The interviews will be tape-recorded for transcription. Tapes, letters of consent, as well as descriptive field notes will be kept in locked files, accessible only by the researcher, for three years. At that point, they will be destroyed. Your decision whether or not to participate will not interfere with your current or future relations with Bowling Green State University, or me. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time, without prejudice.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair, Human Subjects Review Board, Bowling Green State University: 419-372-7716 or at hrsb@bgsu.edu. You may also contact my co-advisors, Dr. Patrick Pauken at 419-372-2550 (paukenp@bgsu.edu) or Dr. Mark Earley at 419-372-0247 or (earleym@bgsu.edu).

I thank you in advance for your time and for your review of my materials. I look forward to an enriching and informative conversation with you. If you should decide to participate and have additional questions, you may email me at kdsmith@bgsu.edu at a time convenient to you. Questions may also be addressed to my advisors, Dr. Patrick Pauken at (paukenp@bgsu.edu) or Dr. Mark Earley at (earleym@bgsu.edu). I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Karen D. Smith, Doctoral Candidate
Bowling Green State University
444 Education Building
College of Education and Human Development
Bowling Green, Ohio 43403

Patrick D. Pauken, J.D., Ph.D.
Associate Professor and Program Coordinator
Educational Administration and Leadership Studies
Bowling Green State University
505 Education Building
Bowling Green, Ohio 43403

Mark A. Earley, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Educational Foundations and Inquiry
Bowling Green State University
554 Education Building
Bowling Green, Ohio 43403
Principal Investigator (PI): Karen D. Smith, MA, MEd Phone: 419-372-1003

Project Title: Spinning Straw into Gold: Dynamics of a Rumpelstiltskin Style of Leadership

I am inviting you, with no obligation, to collaborate in a study designed to explore your leadership experiences as College and or University president of an academic research institution. As an extension of a paper presented at the Center for the Study of Leadership and Ethics 10th Annual Values and Leadership Conference, I am conducting a gendered meta-analysis of leader negotiation of language, with the intent of extracting leader examples of scenarios requiring leader use of spin, defined as the “deliberate shading of information for a desired result” (Borger, 1995).

If you choose to participate, I would like you to join me in an interview scheduled based on our mutual availability. During this interview, we will discuss a variety of topics related to leadership, ethics, language negotiation and spin, and higher education. I anticipate at least one interview lasting approximately one hour.

Information obtained from this study will be shared with my dissertation committee, as well as the larger community of practitioners and scholars interested in the leadership implications of the study. Your decision whether or not to participate will not interfere with your current or future relations with your department, college/university, Bowling Green State University, or me. You may choose to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, and I may opt to cancel your participation at any time.

Do you have any questions? (Circle one) NO YES

YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY EXPLORING YOUR EXPERIENCES AS A COLLEGE AND/OR UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT BASED ON THE FACT THAT ALL OF YOUR QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ADDRESSED TO YOUR SATISFACTION.

I AGREE DISAGREE (Please circle one) to participate in this study.

Participant’s Signature_______________________________________________

Participant’s Name__________________________________________________
Interview Confirmation Letter

January 29, 2007

Dr. ________________, President
_________________________ University

Dear Dr. ________________,

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in my study, *Spinning Straw into Gold: Dynamics of a Rumpelstiltskin Style of Leadership*. I have enclosed the set of four ethical dilemmas, one provided by you and three provided by the other participants. In addition, I have enclosed another copy of the interview questions, which you received in an earlier mailing. In advance of the interview, please look through the dilemmas.

As we discussed the interview, which should last approximately one hour, will be on ____________, ___, 2007, at ___ (a.m./p.m.) at your office.

I look forward to meeting with you soon. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at kdsmith@bgsu.edu or 419-372-1003.

Sincerely,

Karen D. Smith, Doctoral Candidate
Bowling Green State University
444 Education Building
College of Education and Human Development
Bowling Green, Ohio 43403
APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Spin is defined as the deliberate shading of perception to evoke a desired response. Whether as a tool for facilitating buy-in, or a tool of deception or manipulation, spin is often used in mass media, organizations, and in general social situations to gain a particular and desired response. Often faced with ethical challenges, many leaders are presented with dilemmas that test the leader’s values and/or principles. As an example:

A controversial celebrity offers to pledge one million dollars to Brighton University. Under pressure to raise money for the institution, the president of Brighton must decide whether most salient is: the donor’s right to contribute, or, the reputation of the donor, who reflects values antithetical to those the university seeks to uphold. How should the leader communicate his/her ultimate choice to the public, to whom the leader is ultimately responsible?

Can you recall a professional situation or dilemma requiring your employment of the use of spin? If so, please describe the situation. You may use the space provided to write your response, or you may provide it on a separate page (hard copy or electronic to kdsmitk@bgsu.edu).
Figure 2-Interpretation (in advance of interview)

Where language is the *means* by which the leader communicates, and the desired outcome(s) the *ends* the leader wishes to achieve, please take a moment to review the diagram labeled (Figure 2- *Gauge of Language Negotiation*). In your own words, please provide your observations of the *meaning* and *implications* of the diagram. You may use the space provided for your response.

**Figure 2- Gauge of Language Negotiation**

![Diagram](image)

Truth/Reality  ←——— Means ————> Illusion/Falsity

Transparent  ←——— Ends ————> Deceptive
Charting Your Dilemma-At Interview

How would you [the leader] apply the *Gauge of Language Negotiation* presented as *figure 2* to describe the dilemma you presented? Use the diagram to chart your interpretation of how your scenario falls along the continuum.

**Figure 2- Gauge of Language Negotiation**

![Diagram of Gauge of Language Negotiation]

- Truth/Reality
- Means
- Illusion/Falsity
- Transparent
- Ends
- Deceptive
Charting Additional Dilemmas—At Interview

How would you chart the other dilemmas presented according to the *Gauge of Language Negotiation*?

**Dilemma 1—**

Truth/Reality ——— Means ——— Illusion/Falsity

Transparent ——— Ends ——— Deceptive

**Dilemma 2—**

Truth/Reality ——— Means ——— Illusion/Falsity

Transparent ——— Ends ——— Deceptive

**Dilemma 3—**

Truth/Reality ——— Means ——— Illusion/Falsity

Transparent ——— Ends ——— Deceptive
Final Interview Question

How representative is Figure 2, entitled the *Gauge of Language Negotiation*, to your thinking with regard to dilemmas requiring language negotiation and/or spin?
APPENDIX F: EMAIL SCRIPT

**Spinning Straw into Gold: Dynamics of a Rumpelstiltskin Style of Leadership**

Email Script

Dear Dr. ________________,

I am Karen D. Smith, graduate student to Dean Josué Cruz and Doctoral Candidate in the School of Leadership and Policy Studies in the College of Education and Human Development at Bowling Green State University. I am currently working on implementation of my proposed study, entitled, *Spinning Straw into Gold: Dynamics of a Rumpelstiltskin Style of Leadership*.

The purpose of my proposed study is to examine gender differences in the approach, analysis, and resolution of ethical dilemmas within professional communication posed by the employment of *spin*, defined as the *deliberate* shading and manipulation of language to achieve a desired reaction from followers (Borger, 1995).

In a few days, you will receive, in the mail, a letter of introduction and explanation of the proposed study, inviting you to participate. With that letter, you will also receive an informed consent letter and a request to provide me the facts of an ethical dilemma during your university presidency that obligated you to employ written and/or oral communication in its resolution. At least three other university presidents will be invited to do the same.

Thank you very much for your time and review of these materials. I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Karen D. Smith, Doctoral Candidate
Bowling Green State University
444 Education Building
College of Education and Human Development
Bowling Green, Ohio 43403

Email: kdsmitbhgsu.edu
Phone: 419-372-1003