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Getting at the Moral Leadership of Education Deans

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Keywords

Education Deans, Moral Leadership, Vignettes as Interview Prompts

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Getting at the Moral Leadership of Education Deans

by
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Vignettes were used to prompt four education deans to think aloud about ways in which they would resolve problems with embedded moral issues. Thematic coding was used to analyze the interview texts that had been tape recorded and transcribed. There was general support for the two moral themes of holding to broad social ideals and negotiating for mutually acceptable outcomes, but individual expressions of specific strategies and actions differed. The results of this study support a multi-dimensional approach to the study of the leadership of deans that simultaneously examines the moral, social, intellectual and emotional aspects of problem solving. The results also suggest a possible shift in the way to advertise and interview for education deans. The advertisement should ask prospective candidates to discuss their list of accomplishments in relation to personal leadership characteristics. The interview should include an administrative colloquium on the order of the pedagogical colloquium suggested by Shulman (1993).

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Introduction

We continue to hear that it is the best of times and the worst of times for identifying and keeping education deans to lead schools and colleges of education. On the one hand, some schools and colleges continue to reopen searches for deans who can meet their needs (Anderson, 1999). On the other hand, there is a revolving door where deans typically only have 4.5 years tenure in a position as dean (Robbins & Schmitt, 1994). Acknowledging this dilemma of finding and keeping individuals well suited for these leadership contexts, we decided to study deans who have "survived" the deanship. We thought that if we could identify prevalent characteristics in the deans interviewed, we could use our findings to make suggestions to schools and colleges of education on ways to design interviews that look for these attributes. This study focuses specifically on identifying characteristics of the moral dimension of leadership to aid this process.

Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

The conceptual framework for this study emerged from two previous studies of twelve education deans (Wepner, D'Onofrio, & Willis, [in press](#)). In the first study, six education deans disclosed dimensions of moral concern in their discussion of the competing needs of faculty, their

institutions, and constituencies. This preliminary evidence of a moral component in decision making was subsequently studied using a replication sample of six more deans who were interviewed along with the original six deans. In the second study, both groups of deans responded to a set of interview questions designed to explore features of their professional and personal backgrounds that might provide insight into the sources and the content of their moral concerns.

Three of us served as coders and participated in the content analysis of the interview text. We employed axial coding, a process of developing main categories and their subcategories (Pandit, [1996](#)), and selective coding, a process of systematically relating interview responses to core themes (Strauss & Corbin, [1990](#)). On the basis of consensual analysis, 11 themes could be supported: (1) tolerates perplexity, contradiction, and ambiguity; (2) transcends polarities and sees reality as complex and contradictory; (3) recognizes that they and others function differently in different roles, and respond differently to different requirements and demands; (4) synthesizes views and ways of behaving; (5) expresses feelings vividly and convincingly; (6) acknowledges inner conflict in terms of needs and duties; (7) copes with conflict rather than ignores it or projects it; (8) tolerates self and others in terms of individual differences and the complexity of people and circumstances; (9) cherishes personal ties with others; (10) holds to broad social ideals; and (11) sees relationships with others as an opportunity to negotiate different perspectives with mutually acceptable outcomes.

These themes were inferred from similarities and shared attributes in the statements of the deans as opposed to being theoretically imposed. A conceptual framework was then developed based on these 11 themes that were categorized within four dimensions: intellectual (Themes 1-3), emotional (Themes 4-6), social (Themes 7-9), and moral (Themes 10-11).

As these themes surfaced during the process of content analysis, it became increasingly apparent that the thematic outcomes of the interviews resembled the theoretical arguments of a model of ego development proposed by Loevinger ([1976](#)). Loevinger's model states that ego development progresses from lower to higher levels of moral awareness. At the lower levels, individuals behave in self-protective ways seeking to avoid both blame and shame, whereas at higher levels, awareness of personal accountability for one's decisions and behavior begins to emerge.

Loevinger's view of moral accountability argues that moral development depends on a synthesis of cognitive, social, and emotional competence dimensions. Loevinger ([1976](#)) and Kohlberg ([1969](#)) concur on the importance of a connection between cognitive and moral development. Both would argue that cognitive milestones such as perspective taking are the basis of empathy and ultimately moral and ethical responses. In addition, Loevinger integrates ideas from theories of psychosocial development in which milestones are reached during childhood that indicate a capacity for guilt and remorse.

Loevinger's view that accountability marks a high level of moral development is grounded then in the synthesis of cognitive and psycho-social abilities. The cognitive competence to take the perspective of others, to recognize the complexity of people and problems, and to decontextualize problems so that principled decision-making can occur is coupled with the

affective capacity to take responsibility for one's actions, acknowledge personal shortcomings, and understand that one's decisions have consequences for others.

The moral dimension of the dean's leadership is not well represented in the literature. Much literature about education deans focuses on biographical, structural, and contextual factors that influence their effectiveness (Anderson & King, [1987](#); Blumberg, [1988](#); Bowen, [1995](#); Clifford & Guthrie, [1988](#); Dejnozka, [1978](#); Denmark, [1983](#); Gardner, [1992](#); Geiger, [1989](#); Gmelch, [1999](#); Heald, [1982](#); Howey & Zimpher, [1990](#); Huffman-Joley, [1992](#); Judge, [1982](#); Kapel & Dejnozka, [1979](#); Martin, [1993](#); Riggs & Huffman, [1989](#); Thiessen & Howey, [1998](#); Wisniewski, [1977](#)). Other studies do investigate the psychological traits and individual characteristics of leaders. Such studies situate leadership in a social setting and focus on the interpersonal characteristics of leaders (Baker, [1992](#)), and the ability of such leaders to focus and motivate followers, to match goals with organizational culture and context, and to build a sense of community (Kersten, [1991](#); Schein, [1985](#)). Studies of negotiating skill, communication ability, clarity of goals and values, and even stress tolerance have attempted to provide a better understanding of the social competence of leaders who carry out successful transactions with a followership (Birnbaum, [1992](#); Schein, [1985](#); Willmer, [1993](#)).

However, these studies of the psychological traits of leaders do not look at academic deans, let alone education deans, but rather at top-level leaders in academic settings or leaders outside of academic settings. Similar to other academic deans, education deans are positioned in the middle of administrative hierarchies in colleges and universities. Education deans must mediate between administration and faculty (Dill, [1980](#); Gould, [1983](#); Kerr, [1998](#); McCarty & Reyes, [1987](#); McGannon, [1987](#); Morris, [1981](#); Salmen, [1971](#); Zimpher, [1995](#)). They arrange and organize personnel and material resources to accomplish objectives that have immediate importance. They help faculty move in directions that correspond to the overall mission of the institution (Morsink, [1987](#)).

Education deans work daily with those most removed from the top-level administrators to help them support and understand top-level decisions. At the same time, they need to inform top-level administrators when objectives are not being accomplished, or objectives need to be changed. As middle managers, deans have to draw upon skills and strategies in order to cope with the dissonance that may arise from having to satisfy both administration and faculty (Zimpher, [1995](#)). Deans frequently are entangled in a web of competing agendas that require negotiation, courage, and risk taking (Gardner, [1992](#); Munitz, [1995](#)). As deans compete with other institutional areas for financial resources, they also must convince their faculty of the legitimacy of formal constraints in the face of requests that are seen by faculty as necessary for doing one's job. Deans may have to convince faculty to accept cuts in their travel budget, to assume additional responsibilities on an accreditation committee, or to engage in dialogue about the looming possibility of post-tenure review. Thus, the studies of the psychological traits and individual characteristics of leaders may or may not apply to education deans.

The studies mentioned above also focus primarily on the social dimension of leadership, and do not discuss other dimensions (intellectual, emotional, and moral) of the deanship that affect decision-making. This study broadens the scope of research on the leadership of education deans, specifically moral decision-making, by looking for evidence of the two themes of holding to

broad social ideals and negotiating for mutually acceptable outcomes. It also attempts to make suggestions about ways the information can be used to identify deans who subscribe to school or college expectations. Specifically, the results of this study are used to suggest how vignettes can be used as the basis for an administrative colloquium that candidates for a deanship would be asked to conduct.

Qualitative strategies were selected to allow for the examination of the personal constructions of deans as they identify the moral content of administrative dilemmas or frame solutions from an ethical point of view. Solutions that balance principles with the consequences of decisions, and weigh the needs of individuals as well as the needs of institutions, require reflection. Qualitative methods are able to describe reflection and personal constructions of meaning. In addition, education deans could be expected to approach moral dilemmas from the perspective of their actual experiences as individuals with unique points of view. Therefore, it was important to use research strategies that describe the unique perspectives of individual deans.

Methodology

The methodology as described in this report represents an evolution of our thinking as researchers. We attempted to simulate the moral elements of problem solving as realistically as possible. Deans do not solve problems in a vacuum. Once we decided that the use of vignettes containing moral dilemmas was feasible, we were still uncertain whether individual interviews would capture the social processes typical of the interpersonal context where deans weigh their options. Consequently, we combined individual interviews with one group interview. We hoped the group interview would simulate to some extent the social context in which moral dilemmas could be processed.

Participants

We interviewed deans who had served at least one to two years beyond the norm of four or five years when deans presumably revolve out of positions. We presumed that a six to seven-year period would be a reasonable amount of time for deans to learn how to balance their skills and strategies with their moral perspectives. Furthermore, we believe that the length of time in the position of dean provides sufficient experience in such a context to be able to exercise their moral leadership with confidence and in a way that is compatible with the institutional context.

Participants included three education deans who responded to individual interviews, as well as a fourth dean who participated in a deliberative interview with three faculty and three students. The four education deans, two white males and two white females, have served in the deanship a minimum of six years and a maximum of sixteen years. They have served as deans at comprehensive, public institutions from the eastern part of the United States, specifically Connecticut, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Virginia. These four education deans were selected because of their reputations as effective administrators and their visibility in leadership roles nationally and regionally. We based our recommendations for selection on three factors: our own firsthand knowledge of the education deans' performance; recommendations from the education deans we had previously interviewed; and knowledge of the education deans' research and committee work from publications and association work. Each of us submitted one or two names

of education deans who met these three criteria. We worked together to identify those who had served a minimum of six years, represented a geographical location different from the others, and helped with the gender balance.

The three faculty and three students came from the same institution as one of the male deans, thus forming the dean/faculty/student cohort for the group interview. Two faculty members, one white female and one white male, taught graduate students in the school administration program. The third faculty member, a white female, taught undergraduate students in the elementary education program. One female student was matriculated in the school administration master's degree program. The other two female students were seniors in the undergraduate education program. The dean of this institution determined the composition of the group. He sent a letter of invitation to selected faculty who would be available during the day and time that we would visit. The dean described these faculty members as the leaders of the school for their respective programs. The faculty in turn invited students who had strong records of academic performance, and who would be available for the same time slot. Even though the faculty and students had some type of previous relationship with this dean, their responses were not considered in the transcription. They simply served as a stimulus for the dean's responses to the vignettes. While we believe that the dean probably would reveal the same thoughts about the issues presented in the vignettes, we recognize the possibility that the dean's patterns of responses could have differed with a different group of faculty and students.

Vignettes

We used vignettes to prompt deans to think aloud about ways in which they would frame, think about, and resolve problems with moral issues. This think-aloud protocol with vignettes offered the opportunity to have direct evidence of their reasoning strategies as they grappled with four different situations. This approach was intended to elicit responses that were less canned and more spontaneous than answers to the type of interview questions used in our previous research with deans. It was hoped that this type of dynamic processing of a complex issue would disclose the moral perspectives of the deans on each issue and how these moral perspectives were related to the strategies that they proposed to bring about some type of resolution.

The four vignettes represent actual experiences that we had observed with other deans. [Vignette 1](#) is about a faculty member who is using his students' work as his course requirement to produce publications for himself. [Vignette 2](#) is about a new department's response to pressure to diversify the faculty during a search. [Vignette 3](#) is about the response of faculty to a university-wide pledge to purchase computers for them to use for instruction. [Vignette 4](#) is about a department chair's reallocation of grant funds originally given to a faculty member for a different purpose. Each vignette provides background information to explain the current dilemma that the dean must solve. [Figure 1](#) presents the vignettes distributed to each participant.

Figure 1 The Four Vignettes

Vignette 1

A dean discovers that her long time colleague and friend has been using his graduate students to get published. He assigns to students one major research project as the only requirement for the course. He provides them with four major topics that they can research; topics that happen to be his areas of interest and previous publication. He works with them through the semester, helping them to formulate their questions, collect the data, and draw conclusions. Students invariably get As for their projects with the understanding that they are waiving their right to publish their work. Students understand that he will seek publication outlets for their work with his name as the only author. This professor has been engaged in this practice for 5 years.

Faculty often wonder how this professor could be so prolific with his lackadaisical work style. Faculty used to say things in passing to the dean about this situation. The dean did not have any concrete evidence about this professor's behavior until one of his students decided to report it. The student began to get hostile toward the professor when she discovered that the professor was not allowing her to frame any of her own questions. She did not like feeling entrapped and exploited.

When the dean asked the professor about this situation, he blew up at her, berating her for her lip service to supporting a faculty research's agenda without supplying any funds or release time to do research. With the dean's 10-year review around the corner and the professor's powerful union influence in the college and the university, the dean worries about her next steps.

Vignette 2

A new dean knows that one of his charges is to diversify the faculty, particularly for the upcoming NCATE accreditation. This university happens to be located in an area that boasts of its multicultural flavor. However, the university has maintained its classical ivory tower image for the last century with its predominately male Caucasian homogeneity. The dean lets one of the college's youngest departments know that it must hire faculty from different backgrounds, lest it wants to forfeit its faculty lines. The faculty is angry with this ultimatum but do not want to lose the lines to another department.

The search committee embarks on a campaign to find nonwhite faculty. The committee gets so carried away with its mission that it does not even consider Caucasian candidates who happen to have the strongest credentials. Only those candidates who fit into the nonwhite category are interviewed. The committee ultimately is successful in finding a candidate for the position. However, one of the Caucasian male applicants discovers what the committee did and reports it to the local newspaper. When the dean is called in by the Provost to offer an explanation, he is not sure what to do.

Vignette 3

With a university wide pledge to purchase a computer for every faculty member, each dean is responsible for ensuring that it comes to fruition for every faculty member, either in the form of a desktop or a laptop. Obviously delighted by this windfall, one of the more veteran deans does everything in her power to get her faculty to be first in line for computer acquisitions. Within six months, every one of her faculty members has a computer.

A year later, this dean discovers that 20 percent of her faculty—her former department mates—have taken their laptops home to family members (spouses, children, and even grandchildren) for their use. The faculty members themselves, content to continue with their computer illiteracy, are not using them at all. These same faculty are veteran professors who are approaching retirement within the next five years. It turns out that she is the only dean who cannot communicate to all her faculty through email, and who cannot get her faculty to use computers in their teaching. Whenever she asks a faculty member about computer usage, she hears lame excuses about something not working. The university-wide edict that computers must remain in their offices is fraught with faculty members' complaints about campus safety. She knows that if she were in their position, she probably would do the same thing because of the very low salaries given to the education faculty. It is the one perk that they have received in their many years of service to the university. She truly is torn between pushing for technology usage and respecting her colleagues' positions.

Vignette 4

A senior faculty member obtains a large grant from a private corporation to create off-campus internships for students in educational technology. Six students would be paid salaries as part of a cooperative education experience in technology positions in the corporate sector.

The agreement between the university and the private corporation is a letter of understanding. The letter does not provide the level of detail typically found in traditional grants. The particulars regarding where students will be placed has not been described in detail.

After one year, outcome measures show that the funded experiences were beneficial to students, the university, and the corporation. The faculty member's department chair, newly hired as an administrator, learns about the success of the funded project. At approximately the same time, the department chair finds that there will be a budget shortfall the following year and personnel support of technology will be limited. He believes he needs to find funds to support the science lab and its associated programs. The department chair decides to budget the money needed to support the Science Education Lab by creating compensated assistantships for education students from grant funds.

When the chair informs the faculty member that he has decided to reallocate funds, the faculty member informs the chair that discussions must first take place with the funding corporation before funds can be allocated for purposes other than the support of off-campus internships. When the senior faculty member schedules a meeting with corporation representatives, the department chair does not show up. The faculty member then goes to the dean to explain the situation.

The faculty member explains that he would be supportive of this use of funds because students would still be compensated for their work. However, under the new plan, a larger number of students would be paid lower wages, and the vocational advantages of off-campus internships would be lost. The faculty member, who actually obtained the grant, is also concerned that the department chair has acted arbitrarily.

The Two Interview Protocols

There were two different protocols. One protocol was developed for the individual interviews. A second protocol was developed for the group interview. The group interview was designed to observe a process of sharing moral perspectives through group deliberation. This was important to us because we believe that leadership involves mutual influence of leaders to followers, and a group interview would allow us to observe and describe this process. Comparisons of the findings of individual and group interviews were not part of the research plan. Each interview took approximately ninety minutes. All deans returned informed consent forms, indicating their willingness to participate. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. Three of the authors served as coders in each phase of the research. Those who coded transcripts met as a group for coding sessions. The consensus method was used to decide how to classify text into thematic categories.

The individual interviews permitted deans to speak as individuals at length and in detail as they shared their reactions to the problems embedded in each vignette. The group interview was designed to gather information about a dean's responses to the vignettes in the social context of faculty/dean/student interaction. The responses of that dean were later analyzed using thematic coding, with the understanding that the dean's responses were mediated by the group process of deliberating along with the faculty and students.

Individual Interviews. The three individual interviews took place at each of the education deans' institutions in their offices. Three of us conducted these interviews. We each interviewed one education dean individually. We asked the education deans to read and respond to each vignette one at a time. We used four questions to prompt deans' responses: "How would you solve this problem?" "What principles did you use to arrive at solutions?" "In what ways do you find yourself accountable for a satisfactory solution?" "What do you anticipate will happen as a consequence of your decision?"

The Group Interview. The group interview took place with one education dean, three faculty members, and three students. The interview took place in the dean's conference room on a weekday afternoon. During the interview, one of us facilitated the discussion. A second author took written notes while a third author served as an observer who from time to time provided the facilitator with focus questions for the group. The facilitator distributed to each participant a packet of four vignettes. A small tape recorder was placed in the middle of the conference table.

The facilitator asked each participant to read the first vignette only. Once participants signaled that they had completed reading, the facilitator asked the group to begin discussion by asking the question, "How would you solve this problem?" Initially, participants were asked to identify themselves to help the authors recognize their voices on tape. The facilitator made sure that each participant had an opportunity to participate in the discussion. As soon as there was a natural break in the discussion, the facilitator asked the group to move to the next vignette. This procedure was used with each vignette.

We used thematic coding to analyze the interview texts. The moral content embodied in thematic codes was drawn from our theoretical model. In this way theoretically important principles could

be imposed on the interview texts, thereby capturing the moral content of the interviews according to criteria that had been stated in advance and consistently applied across all interviews.

The Self as Researcher

Our story as researchers is well illustrated by the following example. Our research design evolved because we needed to confront an important methodological problem. The questions used in the first phase asked deans to reflect on their own issues that they confronted. Deans were not asked to help other deans resolve issues. In this next phase of the research, we designed vignettes so that deans would reflect and then advise another dean in an attempt to prevent a moral problem from unraveling. This change was motivated in part by a colleague who was subsequently invited to become the fourth researcher on the team. Four personal perspectives on the research shaped an emerging design. The enthusiasm and analytic skills of one researcher were balanced by the need for a rationalized process on the part of a second researcher. The critical judgments of yet another researcher were offset by the grounded and pragmatic views of a fourth colleague. We brought a mix of dispositions that influenced the creation of the vignettes as well as the analysis of interview texts. A dialogic process governed decisions about all aspects of the study.

Quality Control

Consistency of rater judgments was an important concern. We used the method of consensual validation in order to reach agreement on how to classify interview text. Disagreements were resolved through discussion and overcome only when all members of the coding team were satisfied that a contentious item of text could be logically classified. Theoretical validity was also very important. The origins of this study were biographical interviews in which 12 deans were asked about values, strategies and biographical experiences that influenced their leadership as deans. From these early interviews a psychological model was crafted which included moral dimensions of leadership. This study, which focuses on the moral dimension of deans and their leadership, was essentially a first attempt to validate a theoretical model. In each stage of the research we have been able to demonstrate that the data provide support for early theoretical assumptions. Evidence of support for our theory also lends to the data internal coherence and integration.

Findings

We used the interview transcriptions of the four vignettes to find evidence of deans' statements to support the moral theme of broad social ideals and the moral theme of negotiating for mutually acceptable outcomes. With broad social ideals, we identified major issues that deans typically confront, i.e., respecting intellectual property, academic integrity, a commitment to diversity, valuing professional integrity, and honoring commitments to agreements. With negotiating for mutually acceptable outcomes, we found evidence of strategies that they used to enact their ideals. We then looked for similarities and differences in ideals and strategies across deans.

Moral Theme of Broad Social Ideals

Vignette 1: Faculty Research. All four deans believed that the faculty member had compromised the values of the academy, and they had to do something about it. Their statements were consistent with a broad social ideal of respecting intellectual property. They stated that the faculty member's threat about the ten-year review of the dean in the vignette would not interfere with their mission at hand.

Dean Appel expressed her dismay about the "unethical behavior on the part of the professor." She valued working toward protecting the students, the faculty, and ultimately the academy. Dean Borak wanted to help the faculty member do what is morally right through organizational learning. He felt compelled to point to *the moral path*. Dean Carter said that the principle here was "academic integrity." She believed that this type of allegation by a student always has to be taken seriously, and that she and her colleagues are held accountable for this type of behavior. Dean Eagen believed that this situation was about the exploitation of students (See [Figure 2](#) for verbatim comments of each dean for each vignette).

Figure 2. Deans' Comments to Support the The Moral Themes of Broad Social Ideals.

	Vignette 1 Broad Social Ideals	Vignette 2 Broad Social Ideals	Vignette 3 Broad Social Ideals	Vignette 4 Broad Social Ideals
Dean Appel	<p>"I would simply start out by indicating that this is behavior that is not appropriate to the academy and certainly not something that I would be able to support in my school."</p> <p>"I hold myself accountable for making sure that a process is followed to address the situation."</p>	<p>"I think the principles that guide me in this is the need especially in education to recognize the extraordinary responsibility we in this institution have to reflect in our faculty the society for whom we are preparing educators."</p>	<p>Responses did not reflect this theme</p>	<p>"We have made a commitment to the granting agency just as they have made a commitment to us."</p> <p>"Look at the letter versus the spirit of the agreement first."</p>
Dean Borak	<p>"The students are being exploited to a certain degree by</p>	<p>"Hiring-diversifying the faculty is sufficiently important;</p>	<p>Responses did not reflect this</p>	<p>"I don't think you take the money and say oops we're going to use it</p>

	<p>the professor."</p> <p>"I think that the dean has to do what is morally right and not worry about that kind of politics. They cannot start worrying about the question of power, security morality. I think the only way the dean can be respected is to point out things that are wrong...."</p>	<p>going overboard is justifiable in this situation. Leave it be."</p> <p>"Since the original objective was diversification, going overboard here doesn't hurt so much."</p>	<p>theme</p>	<p>somewhere else."</p> <p>"Now you betrayed the confidence of the place-you sort of took the legs out of the faculty member who was involved-you know it's stupid."</p>
<p>Dean Carter</p>	<p>"It seems to be a very egregious infraction of our professional ethics."</p>	<p>"It is essential to expose students to a variety of models and a variety of perspectives and that's a serious deficiency in a program not to have that diversity represented on the faculty.</p> <p>"We do not need to give explanations to the press or explanations to the candidates that were hired in defining the position. Diversity is one of the qualifications and we were looking very hard."</p> <p>"It's important to have a variety of models and a variety of perspectives and that it's a serious</p>	<p>Responses did not reflect this theme</p>	<p>"It has been a very punishing experience for the faculty member. I think if someone's gone to the effort of seeking funding, obtaining a grant, running a project and then gets it pulled out from under him, he would be unlikely to turn around and seek more funding. You've provided a real disincentive to this faculty member and any others who have seen what has happened."</p> <p>"The faculty member might be disappointed that his or her priority is now a lower order priority than the science lab and I am sorry about that, but if that really were the case someone's going to have to learn to accept that, but this should never happen that</p>

		deficiency in a program not to have that diversity represented on the faculty."		someone that had an ongoing project would find funds pulled and diverted to a different purpose at this stage of the game without consent."
Dean Eagen	"The first thing that hit me here was students being exploited."	"We'll listen to the social equity people, but we have to get the best person."	Responses did not reflect this theme	"I just get uncomfortable when people change horses in the middle of a stream, and I think you have to be consistent. A contract is a contract."

Vignette 2: Hiring for Diversity. Three of the four deans expressed commitment to diversifying the faculty as a value of great importance; one dean was not as committed.

Dean Appel valued the importance of reflecting society in the faculty and diversifying the student body. Again, she expressed the need to accept responsibility for communication and to make sure that a process is followed. Dean Borak also supported the ideal of diversifying the faculty, and he would stand firm with his decision. Dean Carter believed in the sufficiency of diversity as a value. She explained that diversity is essential for preparing educators by exposing students to a variety of models. Dean Eagen did not subscribe to the ideal of diversity. He is aware of the issue, but not strongly committed to it.

Vignette 3: The Purloined Laptops. There wasn't evidence of the deans responding to a broad social ideal of professional integrity. The deans focused more on strategies for helping faculty to use the technology appropriately. Any comments by the deans referred mostly to the theme of negotiating for mutually acceptable outcomes.

Vignette 4: Breach of Contract. All four deans responded to the broad social ideal of honoring a commitment to an agreement. One dean also showed evidence of conflict between honoring an agreement and taking advantage of an opportunity for the department as a whole.

Dean Appel said that while she would like to do good things in both areas, she wouldn't do it without examining specific agreements within the grant and other commitments made. Dean Borak valued respect for the contractual relationship and respect for details that uphold the integrity of contracts. He valued maintaining good faith and relationships. Dean Carter believed that one needs to be mindful of one's obligations. She spoke about upholding the faculty member's ownership of the project. She also argued that goals and priorities can change. Dean Eagen emphasized the importance of respecting contractual obligations and likewise the importance of developing administrative subordinates' abilities to work in a trustworthy way with faculty.

Moral Theme of Negotiating for Mutually Acceptable Outcomes

Vignette 1: Faculty Research. All four deans looked for ways to negotiate for mutually acceptable outcomes through discussion, but the form of interaction with faculty differed. Whereas three deans used direct contact with faculty, one used a faculty governing body. Even among those who used direct contact with faculty, there were different types of interactions used.

Dean Appel explained that she would work with and negotiate with the faculty directly to get the faculty to do what is right without fear of reprisal. Dean Borak would confront the wrongdoer with sanctions. Dean Carter would review the material, allow both the student and faculty to be heard, and use university guidelines, faculty-developed procedures, and professional association position statements on ethics to determine how to handle the situation. She valued the use of a policy framework, professional standards and the expression of feelings for the collegial maintenance of group values. Dean Eagen validated the importance of perceptions, confidentiality, and the need to protect faculty from permanent damage. He would turn to colleagues as part of the problem solving process and give the faculty member ample opportunity to present his point of view. He would strive to be objective by getting the information and possibly work with the faculty member individually, exploring the ethics of the problem and developing remedial strategies. (See [Figure 3](#) for verbatim comments of each dean for each vignette.)

Figure 3. Deans' Comments to Support the Moral Theme of Negotiating for Mutually Satisfactory Outcomes.

	Vignette 1 Negotiating for Mutually Satisfactory Outcomes	Vignette 2 Negotiating for Mutually Satisfactory Outcomes	Vignette 3 Negotiating for Mutually Satisfactory Outcomes	Vignette 4 Negotiating for Mutually Satisfactory Outcomes
Dean Appel	"I would attempt to state my position, use persuasion, provide assistance for the professor in how he might be able to turn this situation around and really create a much better learning situation for his students and for himself, ending up really, with the same outcome for	"...First you got to take the heat with this. This was a failure. Then I think the next steps are to go back and see what can be done to first salvage the situation." "I think another part of it is to discuss how we can create an environment that encourages faculty	"I am not troubled by that kind of conflict. I expect conflict if we are going to have growth. What I am troubled by is when the conflict isn't responded to in some ways that provide information for people in which to make better informed decisions, and I think that's	"I think a lot of the mistakes that are made in administration is because people don't have respect for the people who work for them and if you do, if you treat them with respect then you can disagree, and it will be okay."

	<p>himself with respect to number of publications...."</p>	<p>to do the right thing while they pay attention to the need to do the right thing for everybody, and that includes people who are not members of underrepresented groups."</p>	<p>what you have in this situation."</p> <p>"Before I would go off half-cocked in any direction, I would need to know the institution's expectations, and why they exist. This is not about whether this is home or work but whether they are being used for instructional purposes. I would in fact not make it an issue about home or work. The next step becomes how you can assist faculty in making the transition to this use."</p>	<p>"I would probably deal with it by bringing everybody into the same room at the same time and have a conversation about several things.</p> <p>"...I would begin, and do this fairly often, by talking about what's happened here and what do we need to do to resolve this situation."</p>
<p>Dean Borak</p>	<p>"You're talking about some disciplinary action. At this point, it would be a good idea to speak to the person and follow it up with something in writing. Otherwise, things get lost in the shuffle."</p>	<p>"They did find somebody who was obviously successful. To me, you stand behind what you did."</p>	<p>"What's not mentioned in here at all is there any kind of training being done here? Is this sort of like here's a computer. Good luck. The only way you can do this effectively is by training. You can't do it just by taking it home."</p> <p>"You have to do both things. This is how you use it. This is what it's good for. If you can't give them a good</p>	<p>"I think I'd have a meeting real fast with all the people involved, including the corporation, to find out whether or not there would be an alternative to this. "</p>

			rationale why they should use it, they are not going to use it."	
Dean Carter	<p>"...You fall back on the kinds of policies and ethical position statements that APA guidelines have as well as explicit policies about integrity and scholarship in the faculty handbook."</p> <p>"...I think there is a certain sense of respect; a sense of using faculty-developed procedures to address an issue of great concern to those of us in the academy and feeling like those procedures have been employed."</p>	<p>"We hire someone that is qualified for this position that will not only bring the credentials needed in the specialization area but also will bring the diverse perspectives that we need in the unit and that NCATE requires us to have. So we have benefited from the search."</p> <p>"We would not have the elimination of strong candidates because of the diversity issue."</p>	<p>"Access to hardware, and making it easy and user friendly ought to go hand in hand in having faculty members learn new skills and a...commitment that they're going to do something to use it."</p> <p>"I perceive the challenge as creating conditions where faculty have to use their laptops to a greater extent and would be encouraged and rewarded for using their laptops to a great extent."</p>	<p>"Everyone should have participated in the deliberation, and everyone should know why the decision was made and how the money is being used."</p> <p>"It's kind of important to get consent. This would come with a lot of deliberate conversation about emerging priorities and sources for the resources. It would mean discussing ways to generate new funding sources, and if none of these were to any avail, then it would say we have to stop doing it, and find ways to reallocate."</p>
Dean Eagen	<p>"I will put it in writing and give that person a copy. No one else would have a copy. Then, when this kind of thing dissipates or</p>	<p>"If I had a sense that this was happening in the search process, I think I probably would have had a quiet talk with the department</p>	<p>"I don't go around with a clipboard to find out if they're following the rules and regulations. I work on a total trust factor. I've always</p>	<p>"The dean should definitely talk to the department chair and find out why he or she acted this way and then work with</p>

	<p>changes, all of a sudden I can't seem to find that thing in my miscellaneous file."</p> <p>"If I had trouble with Mr. Jones the previous year, I would talk to him at the beginning of the year on what I call job targets."</p>	<p>chair and the search chair and say, Wait a minute, you're really going overboard.' The objective here is to get the best candidate you can. "</p> <p>"The dean can intercede, and at least have input, but not dictate to the search committee or the department chair."</p>	<p>had a very high trust factor."</p> <p>"I know our laptops went to high-end users in the department, and I let the department decide who was getting them. You go with the people who want to swim and you go to the swimming pool to do the swimming."</p>	<p>that person on his or her leadership style because that is not the way things function."</p>
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Vignette 2: Hiring for Diveristy. Three of the four deans looked at ways to rectify what they believed to be a leadership problem. Two deans focused on improving the faculty search process, including resources beyond the School to help move toward mutually satisfactory outcomes. One dean focused on working directly with the faculty to shepherd them through the process. The fourth dean, who did not see a leadership problem, said that he simply needed to weather the storm, and to move on.

Dean Appel would have acknowledged that mistakes had been made, tried to correct them, and changed the procedures for the future. Dean Borak would stand firm in support of the faculty committee's decision because they were successful in finding the type of candidate that they thought the dean wanted. Dean Carter valued consistency with adherence to published criteria and the provision of support for every hire. She would be candid with the provost and stand behind her decision by using NCATE to lend weight to articulating a decision. She stated that the leadership should work closely with affirmative action officers to work sufficiently closely with the search committee so that they wouldn't have the elimination of strong candidates because of the diversity issue. Dean Eagen said that this situation might have been avoided by the leadership of the search process.

Vignette 3: The Purloined Laptops. All four deans focused on identifying ways to foster faculty buy-in to the idea of using technology for instruction. They proposed varied strategies, based on their interpretation of faculty expectations and needs.

Dean Appel valued the use of dialogue to explore areas of agreement and dissent and, over time, use that forum to create a culture that would be responsive to technological change. She would elicit from faculty their concerns, use their concerns and ideas to develop parameters, and then find ways to provide support for technology. Dean Borak valued the encouragement of learning, even if it would be on an informal basis. He believed that faculty need to be prepared for the task at hand. He would provide a rationale for using laptops. Dean Carter believed that faculty should

have shared responsibility for creating a technology-enriched environment, and for creating procedures that shape behavior. She also valued coming up with creative strategies that induced them to be more responsive to explore the challenges of technology. Accountability to the taxpayers creates the inducement in her view. She would create conditions where faculty have to use laptops. She would use established faculty committees to have discussions and create strategies to get faculty to use the machines. Dean Eagen expressed the need to train faculty so that misuses of technology are less likely. He also expressed his concern that faculty be trusted and that the use of technology not be micromanaged. He expressed the belief that it might be unrealistic to expect all faculty to become proficient in the use of technology, and suggested that training would work best with those who were highly motivated.

Vignette 4: Breach of Contract. All four deans believed in a deliberative process for solving this problem, i.e., bringing people together, serving as a facilitator for communication, and creating conditions for consensus and shared responsibility.

Dean Appel valued discussions that are goal-directed and that diffuse feelings of threatened leadership. She would establish a framework for communication at every level, and keep the conversation ongoing until there was a solution. Dean Borak would establish a framework for communication at every level, and he would make sure that obligations were defined in writing. Dean Carter would have discussions to involve all stakeholder groups. She would have deliberative conversations and discussions, involve all stakeholders, and use institutional procedures to determine how the funds are allocated. Dean Eagen would involve all stakeholders in the conversation about redirecting the purpose of the grant. He recommended that the dean in the vignette meet with all the stakeholders to discuss the content of the contract. He also said that he would talk to the department chair about his actions and his leadership style.

Discussion and Implications

There was general support for the conceptual framework's moral dimension of leadership. All four deans made reference to broad social ideals and expressed the importance of negotiating toward mutually satisfactory outcomes.

There was evidence of support for both themes by all four deans for two of the four vignettes. In vignette 3, all four deans made reference to the theme of negotiating toward mutually acceptable outcomes but no reference to a broad social ideal of professional integrity. In vignette 2, three of the four deans supported the broad social ideal of diversifying the faculty; one did not show evidence of this theme.

While the intent of vignette 3 was to portray misuse of technology, the focus of the deans' responses was on the location of the computers (should they be allowed to take them home?). It appears that the vignette didn't provide sufficient information on why the computers were being provided and how the computers were supposed to be used. Because of this ambiguity, deans ended up focusing on strategies that they would have used to help faculty use them for instructional purposes.

Although there was consistency in deans in showing evidence of two themes, their individual expressions of specific strategies and actions differed. Even though Deans Appel and Carter evidenced commitment to the broad social ideal of academic integrity for the vignette on faculty research, they differed in their interpretation of their role as leaders in handling these situations. Dean Appel talked about the importance of the dean articulating her position to faculty. "You have to know what [moral principle] is for yourself, and I think you'd have to let the faculty know what...where you are in that process...." Dean Carter talked about the importance of institutional accountability and really viewed the dean's role as insuring that professionally sanctioned ethical guidelines and institutional policies are followed. "You then fall back on those guidelines and review the specifics through whatever procedural review provisions are in place in the particular institution."

For the theme of negotiating for mutually acceptable outcomes for the vignette about breach of contact, Deans Borak and Eagen believed in a deliberative process but differed in their suggested use of the deliberative process. Dean Borak would look for ways to continue the discussion with all interested parties. "You have to talk to those people and I guess in that kind of discussion with the faculty, the corporation and what have you that maybe you come to some kind of understanding." Dean Eagen, on the other hand, focused on the deans working directly with the department chairperson to avoid future problems of this sort. "I think the dean should definitely talk to the department chair and find out why he/she acted this way and then work with that person on their leadership style because that is not the way things function."

These differences in strategies articulated above could be related to other dimensions of leadership proposed in the conceptual framework. For example, the contrast in Dean Appel's and Dean Carter's handling of the faculty research vignette could reflect differences in their social and emotional responses to the situation. Dean Appel reveals a strong emotional dimension in her desire to articulate her personally held view of the situation and a strong social dimension in her desire to actively engage in the conflict. Dean Carter, on the other hand, seems less emotionally invested and less revealing of social influences in her handling of the conflict.

The different responses of Dean Borak and Dean Eagen could reflect differences in their willingness to engage the intellectual complexities of the situation. For example, Dean Borak seemed to use dialogue as a vehicle for getting at all the elements of the situation simultaneously. Dean Eagen, on the other hand, seemed to focus on only one of the elements contributing to the situation (i.e., the department chair).

In addition to the interplay of the other dimensions, it is possible that the variation in strategies could also be due to differences in their moral justification for decisions: *justice* (decisions that seek a fair and balanced outcome); *duty* (decisions based on rules and principles that have a priori status as guidelines for behavior); *virtue* (decisions based on their inherent goodness); *consequences* (decisions that are judged in accordance with the value of their outcome, positive or negative, for stakeholders); and *well-being* (decisions that seek to optimize safety and happiness) (Shell, [1997](#)).

Although some would argue that the role of the dean has imposed upon it expectations of ethical role taking, in this investigation we have focused on the ethical dimensions of decision making.

Our theoretical perspective has been influenced by a fundamental distinction that resides in moral philosophy. This distinction contrasts the deontological versus the consequentialist view of moral behavior. In the deontological view, the decision making of the dean is guided by ethical principles based on justice, duty, or virtue. In the consequentialist view, the decision making of the dean is based on positive and negative outcomes for stakeholders (consequences) or efforts to optimize safety and happiness (well-being). With either view, there still is a level of accountability that is consistent with Loevinger's understanding of moral development.

An additional way of looking at the moral dimension of leadership is variation in the degree to which respondents evidence more than one value in responding to an issue. In other words, all have may have a sense of duty, but not all may make decisions that are based on seeking justice. And each situation potentially calls for a different set of values. For example, with the breach on contract vignette, there are four possible values: duty --a contract is a contract; consequences--should potential benefit of redirecting funds be considered in making a decision; well-being--to protect the institution from charges of breach of contract; and justice--seeking fair and balanced outcomes for all of the parties. Further research is needed on the aforementioned dimensions of the proposed model and the influence of differences in the moral justification for decisions. The different patterns of moral justifications may be related to differences in how the deans intellectually analyze the situation.

We recognize that vignettes do impose limitations. They are time consuming to develop and use, and difficult to sample a wide array of problems that occur in every type of institutional environment. To offset this limitation, vignettes need to be sufficiently representative of common issues in recognizable settings and adequately rich with details to elicit a variety of thinking strategies. Another limitation of vignettes is that the problem-solver is asked to respond to a hypothetical situation, and it cannot be clear in advance that a proposed solution can be or would be implemented in a real-life situation. However, these limitations do not detract from the usefulness of vignettes in giving a glimpse of the respondents' approach to problem solving.

The great strength of vignettes is that the problem presented is not posed in the abstract, but rather is given substance and reality. They help in understanding how deans make decisions as they problem solve issues within the context and culture of an institution. Looking at value orientations provides additional indications of the likely fit of a new leader within the institutional culture.

Another limitation of this study is the small number of deans interviewed. There is the possibility that these deans may not be representative of the population of education deans, and it would be useful to explore these same issues with additional deans. However, it is important to note that, while the four deans interviewed were consistent in showing evidence of the proposed model's two moral themes, the specific strategies that they proposed varied considerably. This variability was expected, as deans will have had a variety of experiences in their careers that shape their specific approaches to specific situations. The proposed model is an attempt to look for underlying ways of thinking, feeling and perceiving that shape the leadership qualities of deans. Were we to interview additional deans using these same vignettes, we would expect to find further evidence of variability in their specific suggestions and reactions, but we would also expect to find consistent evidence of some form of moral sensitivity in the deans' responses.

While only four deans were included in this study, a total of 16 deans have now been interviewed over the three studies that comprise this ongoing research effort. Therefore, we are committed to including as varied a sample of successful deans as we can in continuing to develop our model of the leadership of education deans.

The exclusive reliance on the self-reports of deans is an additional limitation of this study. Self-perceptions are clearly not always accurate, and it is certainly possible that the deans in this study exhibit leadership behavior that is not consistent with their responses to the vignettes. In future research, it would be useful to attempt to determine whether faculty and colleagues who work with the deans being studied perceive the deans as the deans perceive themselves. Such research could conceivably lead to a refinement of the model in that deans may differ in the degree to which their perceptions of their leadership coincide with the perceptions of those with whom they work. This could, for example, result in an elaboration of the intellectual dimension of the proposed model.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the results of this study led us to suggest a shift in the way in which we advertise and interview for education deans. The advertisement for the position of dean should ask prospective candidates to discuss their list of accomplishments in relation to personal leadership characteristics. Typically, advertisements for deanships encourage superficial responses that are easy for the candidate to craft and difficult for the search committee to disprove in the interview process. A cursory review of advertised positions reveals language such as "demonstrated ability to work cooperatively and effectively with staff, faculty, and students"; "excellent strategic planning and implementation skills, and superior interpersonal and communication skills"; "commitment to shared decision-making and collegiality"; or "the need to be highly creative and sensitive to the needs of culturally diverse students and faculty." One does not know how individual candidates will frame, think about, and resolve moral issues they confront in their positions. The advertisements need to ask applicants to provide evidence of how they solved specific problems in which competing values and conflicting perspectives played a significant part in their development as administrators.

The results of this study also suggest that it might be useful to include an administrative colloquium on the order of the pedagogical colloquium suggested by Shulman (1993) as part of the interview process. Candidates could be given vignettes that include issues that have arisen or could occur at the institution. They could then be given quiet time to process the vignettes. Alternatively, they could be given the vignettes beforehand. Their responses to the vignettes would hopefully reveal principles that guide them as they go about solving a problem. It is important to pose questions that are not necessarily biased toward experienced deans but rather get at the heart of the way prospective candidates think about issues, think about people, and strategize.

Generally, the process of advertising and interviewing does not disclose moral values and moral reasoning. Even when a prospective dean can demonstrate the desired skills and abilities sought, one still does not know how the prospective dean will handle moral dilemmas. Thus, the entire application process would benefit from a shift in focus away from making claims about one's strengths and more towards the use of vignettes as part of an administrative colloquium that would help reveal how a person thinks about issues confronting deans. The vignettes need to

include conflicting points of view and competing values to see how prospective deans handle moral dilemmas.

We recognize that an administrative colloquium cannot really tell who the person is, but it does provide patterns of thinking (habits of mind) about what is important to a prospective dean, and how that person thinks through problems which is at the heart of this position. Effectiveness in the deanship is combination of the person and the institutional culture. Questions about the state of teacher education and K-12 education, and visions for change are fine but do not help to understand how one handles day-to-day issues that really are the crux of the job.

The findings of this study support our view that the study of the leadership of deans needs to be multi-dimensional. Approaches that focus only on biographical, structural, contextual, or psychological factors fail to account for the complexity of situations in which deans function. Thus far, we have examined only one dimension of our proposed model of leadership. In future studies, we plan to study systematically the social, intellectual, and emotional dimensions. As we do so, we will begin to explore the interactions of these dimensions and whether evidence of all four dimensions will be evident as the situations to which deans are asked to respond become increasingly complex. We will also be interested in exploring the limitations of vignettes as a vehicle for getting at the underlying qualities of a dean's leadership. Specifically, we will be interested in looking for ways to triangulate the information provided by the deans' responses to the vignettes, and we will be considering ways of trying to assess the extent to which a dean's approach to leadership is influenced by his or her current academic environment. Case studies, for example, would be one means of further exploring how the responses of deans to specific leadership situations reflect the dimensions of leadership that we are proposing.

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