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Framing in Leadership Communication: Strategies, Breakdowns and Outcomes

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Framing in Leadership Communication: Strategies, Breakdowns and Outcomes

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Communication
College of Arts and Sciences
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Dedication

To my wife with love. To my one-year old baby boy *Dhia* who, during my thesis writing,

incessantly unplugged my lap top computer when batteries were critically low! To my

very newly born baby boy *Mehdi*. To my parents with gratitude. To my best and

exceptional friend *H'mida Chammam* with all the respect that he deserves.

Preface

Having earned the Maple Scholarship, sponsored by the Japanese ministry of education, I travelled to Japan in 1999 for my first extended experience of living abroad. During that period, I could not help but be struck by the effectiveness of the Japanese workers that I came across. I immediately correlated that with their leadership style that was totally new to me, coming from Tunisia. I then started to observe closely and I noticed recurrent patterns of leadership behaviors in very different settings ranging from huge corporations and manufactures to small cafés and restaurants. However, I was not sure that such a style would be appropriate to the case of my country and neither to the American case. I started to be very interested in what makes a good leadership, particularly from the behavioral standpoint. Later in my life, I worked as a technical-English teacher and Bridge coordinator on a multinational oil production platform at Sea. During the four years that I spent in that job position, I made very close observations of leadership styles that people from different cultures manifested. I then started reading about leadership with an increasing curiosity. My personal conclusion was that my countrymen who worked on that platform were on the whole very smart, well educated, and knowledgeable about their work, open-minded and easy going. What was the problem then? To me, it was clearly a disastrous problem of leadership skills. Finally, when I earned my Fulbright scholarship and joined the University of South Florida for a MA in Communication, I immediately decided to specialize in Organizational Communication and devote my academic works to Leadership studies in particular. This thesis is the beginning; there will be more…

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examined framing practices used by leaders who participated in the *Capacity Day 2007* event, which is organized by the World Bank Institute, as part of its Leadership Development Program. The study examined strategic uses of framing as a meaning-making tool. The framing strategies identified in this study were accomplished through the strategic use of language. Furthermore, the study recognized the implied negotiations of frames made by the skilled 'framers' and found that situations are continuously 'reframable'. Unsuccessful framing attempts were correlated with the contradictions between what was said and what was eventually understood. The positive outcomes that followed from successful strategic framing were easily observable. The study also recognized instances of what I describe as manipulative framing and uses different examples to draw a distinction between ethical and unethical manipulation in framing.

Introduction

A brief history of leadership

Leadership is one of the most researched concepts in the social sciences. Thinkers, philosophers and researchers from different disciplines since the Aristotelian era have tried to understand what makes an effective leadership. Many types of leaders have been identified: The laissez-faire leader (Lewin, Liippit, & White, 1939), the bureaucratic leader (Weber, 1905), the charismatic leader (Weber, 1905), the autocratic leader (Lewin, Liippit, & White, 1939), the democratic leader (Lewin, Liippit, & White, 1939), the people-Oriented Leader (Fiedler, 1967), the task oriented leader (Fiedler, 1967), the servant leader (Greenleaf, 1977), the transaction leader (Burns, 1978), the transformation leader (Burns, 1978), the environment leader (Carmazzi, 2005) and the situational leader (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2008).

The variability of perspectives on "what makes an effective leader?" may be due to a number of factors, including: a) the differences of leadership settings (religious, political, educational, lucrative, volunteer, occasional, leisurely and the like); b) the specific local culture in which leadership is exercised, and c) the time in history in which leadership took place. This variability may also be due to the fact that leadership has been studied from different disciplinary points of views, where scholars from different fields have emphasized the aspects of leadership that best align with their scholarly perspective. Communication scholars in particular have made significant contributions to the

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understanding of the behavioral aspects of leadership (Fairhurst, 2007; Hackman & Johnson, 2004; Mai & Akerson, 2003; Eisenberg, 2001; Eisenberg, Goodall & Trethewey, 2007).

Framing: A Behavioral Leadership Skill

Framing is one of the most commonly identified behavioral skills of leadership. Framing refers to the strategic construction of the meaning of a specific event or situation. More precisely, framing in the field of Communication is examined with reference to its linguistic and paralinguistic elements that both define and align with leadership goals. Therefore, framing analysis in social sciences has become a recurrent practice (Chong & Druckmen, 2007; Furhurst and Sarr, 1996; Goffman, 1974; Mai & Akerson, 2003; Minsky, 1975; Snow & Benford 1989). Some previous studies examined the effects of the frames but did not compare them to alternative ways of framing around the same issues (e.g. Beckwith, 2001). Others have analyzed frames in a rather theoretical way and did not attempt to consider the frames' actual effects in real life situations (e.g. Appelrouth, 1999).

Framing in the Current Study: Capacity Day and the WBI

The current study will examine frames in a context that makes it possible to compare alternative framing strategies. Contrary to other studies (such as De Vreese, 2004; Foyle, D. C, 2004) that have looked at the framing dynamics in specific leader-follower situations, this study compares different frames that have been made by different leaders attending this conference. Analyzing, comparing, and contrasting the various frames and the framing strategies, and explaining the dichotomy between what is said and what is

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revealed helps us to deepen our understanding of the leadership perspectives from which these frames were generated. A related aim is to examine conflicts - which were for the most part tacit - that arose due to the discrepancies in the frames. Therefore, this study will consider the following questions: What linguistic factors can cause framing to be skillfully and strategically aligned with the leader's goals? How can unsuccessful framing result in communication breakdowns? What possible outcomes can emanate from both skillful and unsuccessful framing?

Study Setting

To address these questions, I selected a setting where it was possible to observe a number of different frames made by different leaders over a same topic, at the same time, and in front of the same audience. The setting is an annual daylong event named *Capacity Day*, which is organized by the World Bank Institute as part of their Leadership Development Program. The year 2007 *Capacity Day* invited a number of world leaders to discuss the following leadership issues: vision, accountability and effectiveness. The Capacity Day was divided into the following four main sessions: Challenges for New Leadership Teams in Fragile States, Strategies for Institutionalizing Leadership Development in Middle Income Countries, Leadership Development through Accountability and Results, and Toward an Agenda for More Effective Leadership Development. During each of the first three sessions there was a keynote speech delivered respectively by the president of the Republic of Liberia, the Executive and Associate Dean of the School of Public Policy and Management at Tsinghua University

in China, and the Minister of Education and Scientific Research in Madagascar. The fourth session was totally devoted to the discussions.

The Liberian President's speech was delivered through a live video link that the audience watched on a big screen. The other two keynote speeches were delivered on a podium were the speaker faces the audience. To the left of the keynote speaker there permanently was a number of panelists who discussed leadership issues with the speakers based on the points they evoked in their respective speeches. The audience was given a considerable chance to make comments and ask questions. The Journalist, Martyn Lewis, facilitated the discussions orchestrated the Capacity Day's activities.

Therefore, the remainder of this study will be organized as follows: Section one will explore the treatment of the framing concept in the scholarly literature, i.e., defining framing in the context of leadership communication; explaining how framing is a meaning-making tool; discussing the importance of framing in contemporary organizations; and examining the process of framing analysis. Section two will present the method used to answer this study's questions. Finally, section three will empirically address the research questions through the following three sub parts: a) framing around vision, b) framing around accountability, c) framing around effectiveness, and finally d) the framing strategy as a linguistic weapon.

Section One: Review of the Literature

Defining Framing in the Context of Leadership Communication

Framing, in organizational leadership, is the strategic process of interpreting situations that leaders undertake with the aim of urging the followers to move in a specific direction in responding to day-to-day events. When the term *framing* was introduced by Goffman (1974), it referred not only to the frames that are consciously or strategically built to achieve a specific communicative aim but more broadly to the innate property of all social processes. He referred to frame as "the word I use to refer to such of these basic elements as I am able to identify" (Goffman, 1974, p. 11). Framing analysis is the phrase that he coined to refer to "the examination of the organization of experience" (p. 11). Beginning with Goffman, framing started to be seen in the literature as an organization of experience and not merely as a description of experience; i.e. framing is not a simple talk about events but instead shapes our perception of events.

Fairhurst and Sarr (1996) recognized framing as a leadership capability and emphasized it as an ultimate goal in leadership development. They also recognized that framing is achieved through the strategic and selective use of language. Framing is especially important in complex and confusing situations, where chaos can lead to anarchy and may drive the organization to a direction that opposes the dominant organizational goals. Fairhurst and Sarr (1996) defined the framing process in terms of

communication of goals that the leader shapes based on his/her own view of reality.

Consequently, according to them, framing has to be: a) vision based: "leaders must frame the vision in order to make organizational members make sense of the vision and see its relevance to their responsibilities" (p. 78), b) contextually appropriate: "skilled framers make maximum use of high-impact opportunities; they act on their instincts and seize the moment." (p. 152), c) credible: " what people use to evaluate your believability comes from the competence you display in what you frame: the subjects about which you communicate and your expertise with respect to them (p. 171); and d) using linguistic tools: "[metaphors] can help us to think more concretely about concepts, processes, people, and objects at work" (p. 103).

Framing in Contemporary Organizations

According to psychologist Frederic Bartlett (cited in Brewer, 2000, p.79), human beings perceive the world through *schemata,* or unconscious mental structures, that represent generic knowledge about the world. It is through schemata that previous information influences a person's creation and integration of new information (Brewer, 2000). Similarly, Minsky (1975) found that information is represented in the human mind as frames comprising slots that accept a certain range of values. If the world did not provide a specific value for a particular slot, then it could be filled by a 'default value'. Parallel to Brewer's views, Goffman (1974) distinguished between two frames: the 'natural', which refers to our purely physical experiences and the 'social, which refers to our mental experiences. Social frames are however "not simply the product of the brain

or the mind, but they result from the way from which cognitive processes deal with interaction with other human beings" (Trevino, 2003, p. 203).

The type of framing explored in this study is not the 'natural', but rather the 'social' framing that is part of the agenda-setting in contemporary organizations, which face an unprecedented turbulent environment. By invoking a particular frame in the way described by Fairhurst and Sarr (1996), leaders may effectively guide the collective perception of organizational employees. Framing considered this way is strives to "organize experiences and guide action (Snow, Burke, Steven, Worden and Robert, 1986).

Framing is a strategy to achieve the broader goal of meaning-making within contemporary organizations. Yet, the aim behind the meaning-making has not to be understood as solely referring to disambiguation or clarity. Paradoxically, ambiguity can be a strategy of a broader meaning-making especially in unpredictable work environments; i.e., not making explicit sense of a specific situation within an organization can be considered to be a strategic way of driving the organization towards a more generic meaning-making that is open to different scenarios and interpretations. Eisenberg (1984) identified 'indirectness', 'vagueness' and 'un-clarity' as the three main constituents of strategic ambiguity in organizational communication. He provided examples illustrating what ambiguity can communicate, such as the promotion of a unified diversity, where individuals are able to "maintain individual interpretations, while at the same time believing that they [as community members] are in agreement" (p. 8).

Eisenberg (1984) stressed the political necessity of such a strategic ambiguity and argued that often times, clarity in setting organizational goals can be ineffective.

Framing: A Meaning-making Tool

In organizational communication, meaning-making can be achieved by framing as well as by defining membership and through activity sharing (Mai and Akerson, 2003). In this regard, meaning making refers to the ability to acquire a certain understanding or capture a meaning out of a particular situation. Meaning-making within organizations is situational and fluid. Part of the strategic use of communication by leaders within organizations is the articulation and 'manipulation' of the situational meaning-making that aligns with the organizational goals and other circumstantial considerations. Almost all key works in the framing research acknowledged or implicitly assumed that leadership has to involve some strategic meaning-making and framing is a distinguishable strategy of meaning-making.

Mai and Akerson (2003) stressed the importance of encouraging colleagues and employees to acquire a sense of meaningfulness in their corresponding work roles. They found that such meaningfulness can reinforce the intrinsic motivation of employees and energize them. Although Mai and Akerson (2003) considered that framing and defining membership are two different goals that can be achieved through 'meaning-making', I consider the defining of membership as part of the framing process. In other words, the process through which a leader helps employees feel that they belong to the workplace community is understood here to be part of the framing process or agenda. The importance of meaning-making in leadership was very well articulated by Mai and

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Akerson (2003) who consider that "leaders who help people recognize the value and meaning of their work are able to tighten the alignment between personal and organizational goals and enjoy higher levels of commitment, perseverance, and dedication as well" (p. 36).

The Process of Framing Analysis

During the last 10 years, the identification of framing as a strategic element of communication has gained popularity among researchers from different fields. In their review of the literature of framing, Chong and Druckman (2007) found that frames have been extensively and intensively collected and identified. Many definitions have been suggested by different scholars, especially in media studies such as Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). Tuchman (1978) says that the role of the framing process is to "organize everyday reality", by providing "meaning to an unfolding strip of events" (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987, p. 143) and promoting "particular definitions and interpretations of political issues" (Shah et al., 2002, p. 343). Chong and Druckman (2007) have found that there is a tendency in the literature to take at least four major steps in framing analysis.

The first step is to detect a problem, incident, or a situation around which there is framing. In communication, frames can only be recognized in relation to a particular subject, incident, or to a political event or personality (Entman, 2004, pp. 23–24). Frame analyses are also time sensitive; they are performed differently across time, even if they are about one and the same issue. The current study will satisfy this step by both

discussing framing around particular issues (namely vision, accountability, and effectiveness in leadership) and specifying a time (*Capacity Day* 2007).

The second major step in framing analysis depends on whether the research is aimed at understanding how framing affects public opinion. If this is the case, the researcher would need to study one particular attitude. For instance, one may want to focus on general attitudes toward welfare reforms or, otherwise, on attributions of reasons why people are on welfare (Chong and Druckman, 2007). Different frames may underlie each of these attitudes: the frame defining attitudes toward welfare reform may include considerations of economic costs, humanitarianism, and individualism (Feldman & Zaller, 1992). Causal attributions relevant to welfare might employ an episodic frame, such as an individual's work ethic, or a thematic frame, such as the economic opportunities available in society (Iyengar, 1991). A thorough discussion of attitudes as part of the framing outcomes can be found throughout the analysis section.

Third, an initial set of frames for an issue is identified inductively to create a coding scheme. Chong and Druckman (2007) suggested that prior work in the academic and popular literatures serves as a good starting point. They considered that the book *Framing the Social Security Debate* (Arnold et al., 1998) was an obvious source for gathering contemporary social security frames. Gamson and Modigliani (1987, 1989) suggested going further, by exploring the frames produced by various elite actors and organizations on both sides of the issue in court opinions and briefs, editorial writings, and the publications of interest groups or social movements. This provides the set of "culturally available frames" in elite discourse (Gamson & Modigliani 1987, p. 144). Chong and

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Druckman (2007) suggested that these elite sources can be complemented by asking samples of individuals to record the considerations that come to mind on a given issue, using open-ended questions.

The fourth step in frame analysis is to select sources for content analysis, upon identifying an initial set of frames. Chong and Druckman (2007) found that scholars typically analyze mass media sources, including major newspapers, magazines, web sites, and television broadcasts. The selection of specific news outlets is dependent upon the researcher's intents. For instance, some researchers may choose to capture general trends in coverage whereas others would opt for comparing specific types of coverage across media. Identification of articles or stories that typically serve as the unit of analysis is done through key word searches on electronic databases and the like. Pertinent examples include Tankard (2001) and in Dimitrova *et al*. (2005). Finally, coders would analyze a sample to identify the presence or absence of one of the predefined frames in the data.

Section Two: Method

Background

The purpose of this paper is to explore the concept of framing as used by participants of the annual *Capacity Day* (2007 session), which is part of the Leadership Development Program (LDP) administered by the World Bank Institute (WBI) through its Capacity Development Resource Center (CDRC). The LDP is intended to provide tailored assistance to decision-makers at both the national and sub-national levels in the countries affiliated with the World Bank. Typical interventions of this program take place in post-conflict situations, new governments or states, and major reform initiatives, such as decision-making decentralization. The program is further described by the WBI as a research environment that sizes up existing leadership development efforts in different countries.

The Capacity Day 2007 was a daylong event organized to discuss three different leadership development challenges; namely *vision*, *effectiveness*, and *accountability*, examined in three separate sessions. A case representing a typical challenge for leadership was presented in each session. After the keynote speeches, a panel of distinguished discussants presented their perspectives and comments about the subject matter and about the speakers' points of view. Each session concluded with commentary from leading academics in the field of leadership.

Materials: Hypertext and Video Materials

The primary source of data in this study is video material available on the WBI's website, on the Capacity Development Resource Center webpage. It is entitled "View Capacity Day 2007 on B- Span". The video is the official recording of the year 2007 Capacity Day's activities. The activities are keynote speeches; discussions and commentaries made by the distinguished guests, panelists, and invited audience. Its total length is 335 minutes, divided into the following four thematic sessions: (1): Challenges for New Leadership Teams in Fragile States; (2): Strategies for Institutionalizing Leadership Development in Middle Income Countries; (3): Leadership Development through Accountability and Results and (4): Toward an Agenda for More Effective Leadership Development.

Secondary data was also collected from the WBI's website, under the *Capacity Day 2007* section and are comprised of documents categorized as "Background papers". These materials are divided into two types of documents: a) documents on leadership development activities at the World Bank; and b) publications related to leadership development. Three of these documents were used in this paper: 1) *Background notes on leadership;* 2) *Capacity Day 2007: Leadership Development Concept Note,* and 3) *A Leadership Approach to Achieving Change in the Public Sector: The Case of Madagascar.*

Participants

The table below comprises the list of the Capacity Day 2007's participants as identified by the WBI. The participants are arranged by their first names' alphabetical order as they were presented in the WBI website. Throughout the Capacity Day and on the WBI website, participants were identified only in terms of their leadership positions. The table does not include audience members who also engaged in the activities of the event. Typically, the audience members were invited by the WBI to participate in the Capacity Day, assuming that they have leadership responsibilities and or past experiences with leadership development. They are of different nationalities, ages, genders, and educational backgrounds. Some of them were World Bank personnel; others were CEOs, former ministers, graduate students and university professors.

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Table 1.

Capacity Day 2007 participants identified by leadership positions

Name	Leadership position
John Adair	Fellow of the Windsor Leadership Trust
James Adams	Vice President, East Asia and the Pacific, World Bank
Emelia Arthur	British Council Development Partner, InterAction, Ghana
Dorothy Hamachi Berry	Vice President, Human Resources and Administration, International Finance Corporation
Général Lamine Cisse,	Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in the Central African Republic
Juan Jose Daboub	Managing Director, World Bank
Ambassador Abdoulaye Diop	Malian Ambassador to the United States
Jennifer L. Dorn	President and CEO of the National Academy of Public Administration
Alan Gogbashian	Co-Founder, Center for Leadership Development, Yerevan, Armenia
Manuel Hinds	Former Minister of Finance (El Salvador) and Whitney H. Shepardson Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations

H.E. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf	President of Republic of Liberia
Daniel Kaufmann	Director, Global Program, World Bank Institute
Martyn Lewis	CBE, Journalist and Broadcaster
Rakesh Nangia	Acting Vice President, World Bank Institute
Dr. Annie Mckee,	Cochair and Managing Director, Teleos Leadership Institute
Mr. Brian McQuinn	Conflict Prevention Adviser, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, United Nations Development Program
Dr. Henry Mintzberg	Cleghorn Professor of Management Studies
Joy Phumahi	Vice President & Head of Network for Human Development, World Bank
H.E. Haja Nirina Razafinjatovo	Minister of National Education and Scientific Research, Madagascar
Güven Sak	Managing Director of the Turkish Economic Policy Studies Foundation (TEPAV)
Dr. Peter Senge	Senior Lecturer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Graham Teskey	Head of Governance and Social Development, DfID, UK
Vinod Thomas	Director General, Independent Evaluation Group, World Bank

Dr. Dean Williams	Chief Advisor to the President of Madagascar
Dr. Howard Wolpe	Director of the Africa Program at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
Dr. Lan Xue	Executive Associate Dean of School of Public Policy and Management, Tsinghua University, China

Aims

The major aim of this research is to explore and analyze the framing practices made by the Capacity Day 2007 participants and, where possible, study their immediate communicative outcomes. Analyzing, comparing, and contrasting the various frames and the framing strategies, and explaining the dichotomy between what is said and what is revealed help us to deepen our understanding of the leadership views from which these frames emanate. A related aim is to examine conflicts - which were, for the most part, tacit - that arose from divergent frames.

Critical Discourse Analysis

I will analyze the collected data using a version of the framework for Critical Discourse Analysis described by Fairclough (1995). The video material that I am analyzing will mostly be treated as a spoken text (in Fairclough's terms), while the rest of the data will constitute the texts of the "background documents" described above. In order to explore both the overt and the covert frames and framing strategies used by the Capacity Day participants in the spoken and written texts used in this paper, the analysis

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will comprise descriptive accounts of the framing practices both as they are perceived by

me (as an observer) and as they are meaningful to the participants speeches.

Section Three: Analysis and Discussion

The three main themes of the Capacity Day 2007 were *vision*, *accountability* and *effectiveness*. The analysis of the frames and the framing strategies that this research undertakes will be made around these three constructs. Therefore, this section will be divided into the following sub-sections: a) framing around vision; b) framing around accountability; c) framing around effectiveness; and finally the subsection- d) the framing strategy as a linguistic weapon- will discuss manipulative instances of framing practices with reference to what I wish to call ethical and unethical framing.

Framing around Vision

Vision as the leader's product

Mr. Martyn Lewis, a journalist and broadcaster who was also a Chairman of Telaris and Youth Net and Trustee of the Windsor Leadership Trust, presented the acting vice president of the World Bank Institute by saying "[…] he manages WBI's day to day operations, he insures delivery of a quality work program, provides strategic vision and promotes stronger team work among WBI's leadership team." The use of the verb '*provide'* attributed to the direct object *vision* first suggests that the vision is seen as a product rather than a process. It also suggests that it is a leader's product delivered to the followers (perhaps in its final shape) who have no other alternative but to use it. This might suggest that the World Bank Institute's preferred type of organizational communication is hierarchical and downward, where employees have limited voice in decision-making.

For H.E. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the President of Republic of Liberia, who joined the conference to provide a keynote address via video link, leadership comes as an opportunity for renewal and reform. For her, "change and transformation in this respect means a fundamental break from the past; formulating a vision based upon new concepts and new structures." Here again, *a fundamental break from the past* suggests that the vision is not only the leader's vision, but also very far from the predecessors' visions and experiences . At the same time, she described a leadership that "strives to inspire, motivate, guide and lead people toward a common vision and the common national privilege." The contradiction made here is that vision was described to be already common but that people needed someone to guide them toward a common vision. The need for such guidance suggests that there is a divergence of visions and that it is the leader's task to get people to converge into a common one. Consequently, this guidance toward a common vision reveals the leader's dominance in the vision setting. Similarly, if the vision is already of the people (or common), why does the leader need to motivate them towards it? Johnson-Sirleaf also explicitly recognized the importance of framing a leader's vision, describing it as "the ability to articulate that vision, obtain popular buy-in, and lead your constituencies in pursuit of that vision".

Similarly, Dr. Lan Xue**,** Executive Associate Dean of School of Public Policy and Management at Tsinghua University in China, referred to vision as the government's own product. It is the government that is in charge of 'fabricating' a vision and others would only need to use that product:

"The key challenge for the Chinese government is to really translate the vision into reality. How to foster a new generation of leaders? The second is how to change the mindset of people in the entire system? How to help these people to change I mean to have the mindset?"

This also suggests that Dr. Xue views the government vision as completely different from the people's vision, and that the government's task is to change people's mindset rather than trying to understand or incorporate the views of the people.

Clearly, this way of describing the vision, particularly the use of the expression 'translating' attributed to vision parallels that of the journalist Martin Luis. It does not only suggest that vision is a product, but also that there is a high confidence that its transfer from person to person is feasible. Both ways of referring to vision are metaphorical in the use of *provide* and *transfer* and seem to reflect the transmission model of communication. In the field of Communication, there is a widely held belief that the transmission model is too simplistic a depiction of the nature of human communication, which is tremendously more complex than a mere *send-message-receive* operation (Craig and Muller, 2007). But does that mean that Dr. Xue or Mr. Martyn Lewis cannot achieve their goals by framing the vision as such? If such a metaphorical framing of vision is so presented, regardless of the implied misconception(s) about communication, we cannot affirm that it does not resonate with the intended audiences of the Chinese people or how the vice president of the WBI frames visions for the World Bank. Neither can we confirm that it does not achieve its goals.

Paradoxically, in his opening speech, the Managing Director of the World Bank seemed to refer to leaders as subordinates to the inclusive 'we' that is probably referring to himself and the other participants of the Capacity Day: "so how can we promote the culture of leadership; how can we help to create an environment that we allow leaders to develop and flourish?" This triggers another inquiry as to whether leadership development at the WBI is referring to the enhancement of the quality of leadership pertaining to individuals (leaders themselves) or to organizations (factors of better leadership practices). Here, there is a concern on whether the WBI's Leadership Development Program views vision as a product to be 'supplied' to the leaders they think they are training or as a process that leaders and followers work out in their own contexts.

The Democracy of Visions

Dr. Annie McKee, a cochairman and managing director at Teleos Leadership Institute, was able to articulate the framing issue around vision. She was the only participant in the Capacity Day who drew others' attention to the fact that a leader's vision can be totally insignificant to his or her followers when they perceive it to be imposed: "people change when they engage with ideas and apply them in their own context." Dr. McKee emphasized the idea that people make things happen only when they identify with them and they identify with things only when they engage in the decision-making. Empowerment of followers was a key strategy that Dr. McKee thought was essential to ensure that a vision is put on the right track to become a reality. She also made comments that align with Fairhurst and Sarr (1996) by stressing the precise use of language in achieving a strategic framing that gets people to move into a particular

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direction. Dr. McKee further explained the framing by considering it to be a way to "capture the mind and the heart". In this sense, vision framing emerges as a mixture of art and science; where a leader needs to craft and disseminate ideas that stimulate thoughts and emotions of the different stakeholders in the workplace.

In compliance with Dr. McKee's view, the World Bank's *Background Notes on Leadership* (*Background Papers* section) considers vision to be one of the three basic blocks of leadership (WBI Leadership Development Program, 2007). Furthermore, the document clearly stated that vision is not the leader's vision, but a shared vision. The leader's duty, however, is to orchestrate the employees' efforts in such a way that they all contribute to a certain goal, a good leader has to have "the capacity to develop and mobilize stakeholders around a shared vision" (WBI Leadership Development Program, 2007, p. 5).

There remains an important concern with regard to vision sharing: At what level can a vision be shared? Is it when it is still in our minds or when it is articulated? It is hard to believe that hundreds or thousands of employees within an organization share exactly the same views, regardless of their position, age, and gender. Views, in this regard, can be said to be common when they have already been articulated. Hence, a vision seems to be born somewhere and then it becomes shared when it is framed to be so. However, the way vision was framed by this study's participants seems to make a total reconstruction of reality. In other words, vision was consistently and persistently described to be unreservedly common, when in fact it is almost impossible for a vision to be common at least in its early stages, when it is still a matter of mere thoughts in people's minds. When

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goals are articulated and are framed as "common", they then become common by the simple attribution of the term "common".

Perhaps such a contradiction between where the vision is created and how it is framed is most evident in the document entitled *A Leadership Approach to Achieving Change in the Public Sector: The Case of Madagascar*, (Heidenhof, Teggemann, & Sjetnan, 2007). In two adjacent sentences on page 5, the writers referred to the vision in contradictory ways. In the first sentence it was "the president's rapid change vision" that did not match "the old government machinery" and in the next sentence it was a mismatch "between the state we inherited and the objectives we set for ourselves." Clearly, the use of the inclusive personal pronoun 'we' plays a significant role in the framing process, because all Malagasy people would see themselves implicated in it. On the other hand "the rapid change vision", when it is the president's own vision, suggests that he is a special leader pushing his people forward and that possibly without him they would not be able to achieve that rapid pace. This triggers the issue of identification in the context of organizational communication. Identification refers here to the fact that employees feel that they had voice in the formulation of the work rules and regulations. Cheney (1983) found that there is a strong correlation between organizational identification and employees outcomes. He concluded that employee identification with their organization leads to a number of benefits such as commitment to organizational goals and achievements, the quality of performance and the job satisfaction.

Clarity of Vision

Perhaps what is more significant than the source of the vision or who has the power to articulate it on behalf of the group is how it is identified in the Capacity Day 2007. Does it refer to the future? Does it take the present and past into consideration? How different is a vision from a set of goals? How clear a shared vision ought to be? Is the clarity of vision an aim in leadership or is ambiguity also a strategy to get a vision worked out? Above all, in what way does the leader need to frame a vision? The document entitled *Capacity Day 2007: Leadership development concept note: Draft.* (2007, Feb. 27) introduced the term *vision* as "the capacity to engage diverse constituencies in crafting a shared vision of the future, and to inspire, motivate, and mobilize efforts to achieve it" (p. 2), but this does not state what a vision is. It rather theorizes how a vision is achieved. Johnson-Sirleaf, the Liberian president, was however, able to articulate her vision in terms of four goals: "enhancing national security, revitalizing the economy, rebuilding infrastructure and delivering basic services [and] strengthening governance and the rule of law."

The Liberian president's vision is clearly referring to the future, taking into consideration the present. For example "enhancing national security" implies that already there is some security that has been achieved, compared to the insecurity of the past, and that there is more work to do with regard to security. However the term 'national' can be perceived in this context to be referring to the government, to the people, or to both. If it can be understood as referring mainly to the government's security, then people might or might not be interested in such security, depending on their loyalty to that particular

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administration. Hence, the expression 'people's security' might resonate more with the Liberian people no matter what their political inclinations are, for the simple reason that we can hardly imagine a person opposing their own security. Therefore, the use of the term *enhance* (as opposed to *achieve* or *accomplish, for example*) is successful at least in Fairhurst's (1996) terms, due to the meaning encapsulated in it, which was selected over other meanings. By the same token, the selection of the term 'national' is less viable than the term 'people' in terms of "empirical credibility" that D'Anjou (1996) and Neidhardt and Rucht (1993) found to play a major role in the acceptance of a frame.

Perhaps the setting of Capacity Day itself imposes a certain unique jargon on people that they might not use elsewhere. This is where framing emerges as changing and contextual. For example, the Liberian president hinted at the concept of framing in a 'politically correct' way, by stating that a leader has to have "the ability to articulate that vision, obtain popular buy-in, and lead your constituencies in pursuit of that vision." I understand the term "articulate" in this context to refer to a skilled and strategic articulation rather than to a mere articulation. "Obtaining popular buy-in," in particular, suggests that a vision has to be framed or articulated in such a way that it gains popularity. Therefore, according to the Liberian president, it is not enough to have a vision. Rather, a vision needs to be carefully framed.

Interestingly, although the concept of vision was a key concept in the 2007 Capacity Day, it was not been clearly defined by any of the participants. The term was used by the Capacity Day participants and in the background documents without any evidence that either the participants or the texts were referring to the same thing. But, the term itself is

problematic. Vision, as it is understood as a leadership element, is a metaphorical concept referring to whatever each participant thinks it can mean in their contexts. This is shown in table 2, which summarizes how vision was framed:

Table 2.

Use of the term *vision* in the WBI's Capacity Day 2007

A vision can be	Source: Person (from video online) /document (online)
Provided	- "[The manager of the WBI] provides strategic vision" (Martin Luis, journalist).
Formulated	- "formulating a vision based on new concepts" (President of Liberia).
Articulated	- "the ability to articulate that vision" (President of Liberia).
Positive	- "being visibly committed to a positive vision" (President of Liberia).
Translated	- "translate the vision into reality" (Dr. Lan Xue, Executive Associate Dean of School of Public Policy and Management, China).
	- "to ensure effective translation of that vision" (*Background notes on leadership*).
	- "engage diverse constituencies in crafting a shared vision of the future" (*Capacity Day 2007: Leadership development concept note: Draft*).
Shared	- "the capacity to develop and mobilize stakeholders around a shared vision" (*Background notes on leadership*).

Implemented	- "they also rely on the capacities of the systems around them to implement their vision (*Background notes on leadership*).
	-"in spite of his determination to reverse the country's downward trajectory and implement his vision of rapid development vision (*A leadership approach to achieving change in the public sector: The case of Madagascar*).
Reached	- "identify realities to be addressed to reach the vision" (*Background notes on leadership*).
Achieved	- "mobilize others to achieve the vision/change (*Background notes on leadership*).
Developed, Coherent, and Development - oriented	- "They also have the ability to develop a coherent, development-oriented vision (*A leadership approach to achieving change in the public sector: The case of Madagascar*).
Common	"The LAMP has helped to create a common vision (*A leadership approach to achieving change in the public sector: The case of Madagascar*).
	- "lead people toward a common vision" (President of Liberia).

No matter how different (or vague) the uses of the term *vision* are, there is an agreement among the participants that vision is at least metaphorically a substance (hence

the use of the verbs: move, provide, transfer, formulate, articulate, modify, produce, etc.).

It can also be positive (or by extension, negative); and it is paradoxically common on the one hand and unidirectional (essentially vertical) on the other hand. Although it might seem unacceptable that such a key concept was not clearly defined, such ambiguity can be a strategy to allow a multitude of interpretations to what vision can mean. Had the concept been given a precise and unambiguous meaning, it may fit in some contexts but not in others. Consequently, some participants might feel marginalized. Hence, the framing of vision can be assumed to be subjected to strategic ambiguity (Eisenberg, 1984), to allow for more harmony among the different parties.

Vision and Gender

In the field of Communication it is now almost a cliché to say that gender is socially constructed. Therefore, asking whether women can be better or worse than men in leadership implies such a misconception of gender and of the social construction of reality. After the Liberian President's speech, audience members immediately asked her about the role of gender in leadership. The same question was paraphrased on the page entitled *Session 1: Challenges for New Leadership Teams in Fragile States* under the section *view capacity day 2007 on B-Span* (http://info.worldbank.org/etools/BSPAN/PresentationView.asp?PID =20 31 & EID =940), as follows: "Audience members also asked Johnson-Sirleaf whether women make better leaders". The question itself is also problematic not only because it takes for granted that differences exist due to gender, but also because it presupposes that one

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gender is better than the other. By extension, the question takes for granted that vision differs across genders and presupposes that one gender can create a superior vision.

The Liberian President's answer amounted to a reframing of the question. She first said "let me put it this way [big smile] because I'm always faced with this question" and after a short silence she said "I'm a technocrat. I am a professional… who happens to be a woman and that's it". With this very short re-framing, the President was able to tell the audience that she identifies herself mainly as a technocrat, not as a woman. This suggests that she wants others to see her mainly as a technocrat, and that being a woman is not her primary identity. It was a persuasive way to harness the audience's reason through language, by urging them to see her in the way that she wants them to.

Yet, the Liberian president's framing did not stop there. She added that being a woman was a bonus to her as a leader, because she assumes that as a woman "bring[s] a special sensitivity to the task… the sensitivity that comes from being a mother [smile] in my case a grandmother to be able to be very concerned about the human factor particularly of children and women in the society". With this latter statement she foregrounded her womanhood and motherhood as a strategy to capture emotions and gain sympathy, whereas in the former statement she foregrounded her professionalism and technocracy and backgrounded her womanhood. Within one minute, she was able to create two opposing identities that managed to coexist.

The president's framing strategy parallels Goffman's (1958) metaphorical expression "theatrical performance", in the ability to present herself as a technocrat, not as a woman, and then immediately to present herself as a woman and mother, not as a president. This

skilled and strategic shift from one identity to another is part of the framing strategy of politicians and particularly of presidential candidates, who frame their images in different, and sometimes opposing, ways over time and before different audiences in an attempt to gain a maximum of popularity among different groups of people.

Framing around Accountability

The second major theme of the Capacity Day was accountability. Accountability was addressed by the speech of the Minister of Education in Madagascar, the subsequent panel discussion and the audience question and answer session.

When Accountability is a Threat

The Minister of Education in Madagascar delivered a speech about the importance of accountability in leadership. He immediately started the speech by announcing that he would tell a story about accountability, where his president was exemplar. Aside from mentioning that the president was a small businessman and grew into one of the biggest businessmen in the country, and describing his ways of talking to officials, he did not narrate the story that he promised he would narrate. Rather, he spent the whole speech telling the audience how great his president was and particularly how much he appreciates accountability and results. The whole speech was clearly descriptive rather then narrative in that the audience can hardly fragment the speech into sequences of events. Paradoxically, he mentioned a short anecdote, where a former president of the World Bank was described as an exemplary actor. The result was that the Minister spent eighteen minutes to frame his president's appreciation of accountability and two minutes to frame the former World Bank's appreciation of accountability. Interestingly, despite

the Minister's efforts to praise his president, the other panelists and especially the audience seemed to clearly dislike the leadership style of the president of Madagascar. They described their dislike in many ways, ranging from attempts to help (made by other panelists) by reframing what the Minister said to aggressive attacks against the dictatorship image that emerged about the president from the Minister's speech that (made by audience members).

The Minister emphasized that his president was one who appreciates results, but the way he described him seemed to reflect a leadership built on mistrust and impulsivity:

> [the president] is appointing ministers and is saying ok I need you to perform, I need you to be accountable, I need to get results. no corruption whatsoever... but I need this country to transform from what it is today… if you don't deliver of course very quickly you are out as a minister and we've had quite a few number of former ministers that have been kicked out of the office

Immediately upon hearing this and similar statements, I felt the threat of such an understanding of accountability, and so did the audience who severely criticized the impulsivity of the described president. Clearly there was an obvious inconsistency apparent to all of the panelists, the audience, and to me. However, the Minister was unaware of it. He proudly praised his president by showing how serious he was, however, the resulting perception was an image of dictatorship.

Based on the Minister's description of the way his president framed accountability to his ministers and people, a few assumptions can be possible: first this president was

described by the minister to be a man of zero-tolerance to unaccountability. One problem with such a leader, who puts the blame on his ministers, when he does not see the results he wanted, is the consequence of impulsive actions. What if results were not achieved due to other factors that are not under the control of this or that minister in particular? This attitude of firing stakeholders, without trying to understand first, puts them under constant threat. Consequently, they would be constantly thinking of ways to protect themselves, rather than taking chances to improve their work. Hence, the impulsive attitude of the leader is itself partly responsible for the unaccountability.

Second, does the decision to fire a minister, whose administration did not bring the results, solve the problem? What if the next minister does not bring the results the president requested? What if the next ten ministers do not bring those results? When is a president supposed to understand that results are not solely under the responsibility of the minister? It is perhaps understandable to fire a minister who was corrupt or guilty, but to fire him / her for the reason of not achieving results is detrimental to his /her motivation and determination to serve the government. Therefore, the impulsivity, reflected in the firing ministers, does not only reflect a dictatorship, but also puts the blame on people and neglects the importance of understanding the causes of unaccountability. There seems to be a complete ignorance of the importance of a 'no blame culture' in such a style of leadership.

Finally, the Minister of Education in Madagascar did not mention any attempt from his president to understand the causes behind the failures to 'deliver results'. But, unless we learn from our failures, we cannot improve. If each minister is fired before he / she is

given an opportunity to analyze and understand the causes of failures, how can a government improve? Not knowing those previous mistakes, we cannot make sure we are not going to make them again and again. Furthermore, why do the assessments of ministers' accountability take place when it is too late? Is it not others' responsibility to check on the ministry's achievements throughout the year? Responsibility, as described by this minister, does not seem to be shared. Rather, every time someone will receive the blame; no matter how well he or she has worked and tried to improve. The check and balance strategy of power sharing is completely missing in this leadership style.

Interestingly, the Minister's story about a former World Bank's president was, contrary to his long speech about his country's president, concise and full of meaning. Mr. Wolfenshon, a former World Bank president, paid a visit to Madagascar. All government officials were preparing themselves for a big event, with ceremonies, dinners, and the like. Surprisingly, upon his arrival to the country, Mr. Wolfenshon went directly to a rural area and visited a primary school to inspect the literacy level of third-grade students. He noticed an unsatisfactory literacy level for that school and conveyed his comments, positive and negative, to the school officials and the Minister of Education.

This short story illustrated Mr. Wolfenshon's understanding of accountability and results but at the same time revealed his respect to the efforts made by the stakeholders. While the Minister was describing his president, all along his speech, he made aggressive facial expressions that he used to say how tough or how serious his president was about advancing the country. However, when he mentioned Mr. Wolfenshon, he seemed

noticeably calmer, mirroring the courteous attitudes of Mr. Wolfenshon, when speaking to the students, such as "would you read this book for me please." A courteous expression such as *please* or anything similar was not reported by this minister to be said by his president. This is again an instance where verbal and non verbal behaviors are significant in leadership communication. Courtesy towards stakeholders can only enhance their motivation and self respect, whereas humiliation such as the way the president was reported by the minister to have spoken to a high official can only bring more tensions, disrespect and hidden resistance: "I'll give you a week to get your city clean otherwise we'll take care of you!" [audience laughs].

Accountability: A Matter of Quality

Schedler (1999) conceptualized accountability by considering that "A is accountable to B when A is obliged to inform B about A's (past or future) actions and decisions, to justify them, and to suffer punishment in the case of eventual misconduct" (p. 13-28). The term "justify" above, which refers to actions and decisions is particularly process rather than results-focused, because it addresses the *how* rather than the *what*. Consequently, in accountability, the person A does not only need to prove that they achieved certain results, but also how they achieved them. The need to justify actions and decisions in leadership means that results matter, only if they were achieved in the way B perceives them to be acceptable; i.e., candidly, fairly and humanely.

The Capacity Day's definition of accountability aligns with Schedler's (1999) by operationalizing the qualitative aspect of the concept. Under the document entitled *Capacity Day 2007: Leadership Development Concept Note: Draft*, the term was defined

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as: "commitment to the public good and to championing relationships that increase transparency, voice and participation and inspire mutual trust among institutions, communities and society" (p. 2.) Terms, such as *commitment*, *good*, *championing*, *transparency*, *inspire* and *trust*, are qualitative and hard to measure. Accountability, in this context, is dissatisfied with the raw quantitative results of figures, percentages, graphs, curves and the like. Rather, it seeks to understand the embedded 'intangible' data, which can reveal other layers of meaning.

Yet the Minister of Education in Madagascar's speech revealed a significant inclination towards a result-focused accountability. Describing the accountability of his president, the minister referred to him as: "a self made businessman delivering yogurt on bicycles but twenty, twenty five years ago and right now he owns the largest dairy company". However, he did not tell the audience *how* his president's business grew so large. Ignoring such a question is at least a violation to the transparency aspect of accountability, according to the WBI's definition above.

But perhaps the president's inclination toward the result-focused accountability is reflected mostly in this sentence: "one thing that is required to everyone that is appointed a minister… to deliver results that's all he [the president] doesn't ask anything else, but results". Clearly this president is asking for bigger figures and charts, neglecting other considerations including his own responsibility of providing a suitable atmosphere where the results that he is asking for can be achieved. Similarly, the president was reported to have said to a highly ranked official in a city in Madagascar: "oh your city is dirty… I'll give you a week to get your city clean otherwise we'll take care of you". This impulsive

decision of the time (one week) reflects a leadership that is totally (and may be unrealistically) result-focused at the expense of the process through which a task is accomplished.   In other words, the official might be able to fix the apparent problem in one week, but can create more problems, such as forcing people to work more without getting paid or spending the money on cleaning at the expense of providing other vital services to the community. The president was presented to the public as one not willing to listen and discuss inherent aspects of problems, hence missing the qualitative part of accountability.

The Minister did not only reveal his president's inclination toward a result-oriented accountability', but also revealed the inclination of the World Bank toward this same type of accountability . Here, accountability can become a real issue, because there is a contradiction between the World Bank's definition to accountability (which was explained above to be openly process-oriented) and its excessive focus on numerical standardized indexes as the only means of assessment. The Minister said: "A year after that, you look at the indicators… especially the World Bank… they like indicators [hand gesture meaning very much]… amazing…so you look at indicators… oh your indicators did not improve, why?" Here again, the discrepancy between the described process-oriented accountability and the tools (indicators) used to assess the accountability is apparent.

But, why can quantitative indicators represent a threat? The shortest and most obvious answer to this question is that they can be faked. It is counterintuitive to believe that numerical indexes can adequately assess qualitative matters such as perception,

satisfaction and comprehension. The real problem is not in the numerical indexes themselves, but in the way we use them. Do we totally rely on them? Do we use them as an approximation? Do we question their accuracy every time other factors change? Most importantly, do we consider them as absolute and non-negotiable facts?

The Minister partly answered the question as to how indicators cannot be the only *right* way to assess problems. When Mr. Wolfenshon, the president of the World Bank, commented that the literacy level of the 3rd grade school was not acceptable, the Minister was surprised by the assessment and wondered why there was no significant improvement despite the efforts they had made. After all, they had built new classrooms and improved the curriculum, but achieved no results. Then he distinguished between the 'technical solutions' (quantitative) and 'adaptive solutions' (qualitative). He mentioned that most problems that occur to ministers are mainly adaptive, which I would paraphrase as qualitative. This implies that solutions to such problems need to be assessed in terms of 'how' they were achieved and what implications those achievements can have. It is not uncommon to see one organization using the exactly same technical procedure that other similar organizations are using, but achieving none of the results the others could achieve. Often times, they would try to use another procedure, and then a third one, but none of them worked as well as it did in the other organizations. It is at this point that an organization starts asking serious questions of *how* and *why*.

Although questions such as why and how are very complex and deep as they require feedback from different parties and a comprehensive analysis, the Minister jumped to the conclusion that: "adaptive problems are the people" and on a second occasion he repeated

that "the people are the problem". Clearly, this Minister is facing a miscommunication with people he deals with professionally. People, for him, are hindering development, because they do not understand his perspective. Teachers also, for him, do not 'want' to be convinced that the curriculum needs to be changed. He seemed not be questioning himself at all in the whole communication process. He supposed that, because he told things to others, so others are supposed to receive his message in its entirety and use it the way he thought they should. He clearly expressed his frustration (verbally as well as non-verbally) of the fact that people are resisting ideas that he wanted to impose on them. Channels of communications seem to be blocked at different levels. But the main problem, it seems, is the fact that the Minister wants to dictate his ideas, whereas others are asking for empowerment and to have a voice.

The result of such a mismatch between a leader (the Minister), who wants to impose a downward type of communication, and the followers who need empowerment and a voice through a bottom up communication, is widespread resistance to change. That is what the Minister was trying to describe: the country is suffering from a resistance to move forward. Thus, the problem is unequivocally communicative in nature. With such an over simplistic transmission view of human communication, the Minister is assuming that he did his part of communication and that 'people' are unwilling to respond. He is putting the blame on others who do not want to understand. Besides, how can he expect accountability from those people who have no voice in decision-making?

One person from the audience commented on his speech, saying that he was frightened by the image of the president rendered through the Minister's description. He

also said that while the minister had tried to convince the audience of one thing, the

audience had understood the speech otherwise. This showed a dramatic discrepancy

between what the Minister was trying to accomplish and how the audience interpreted his

message. The Minister's view of accountability to be simply 'results' that others need to

'deliver' clearly reflects his quantitative view, which contradicts with the qualitative

nature of accountability as discussed in this section. The mismatch was due to a framing

issue: he forced a qualitative process into a quantitative frame.

The Sensitivity of Accountability

The first panelist who was invited to speak after the Minister was Dr. Dean Williams,

a chief advisor to the president of Madagascar, who has been working with the president

for four years on the leadership strategies for rapid development and transformation of

the nation. Interestingly, Dr. Williams, who professionally belongs to the same group of

the Minister (Malagasy president's cabinet), also seemed to be displeased with the way

the Minister framed accountability, and particularly with the president's image that

emerged from the speech. He skillfully reframed several comments that were made by the

Minister to minimize the audience's shock. As soon as he started speaking, he said: "well

there is a lot happening in Madagascar and by virtue of leadership being exercised on

many levels it's not being done exclusively by the president." Notice the use of the

negative form (it is not), which comes to negate something that has just been

communicated. This was an attempt to convey the idea that the Malagasy president's type

of leadership is based on the principle of distributed intelligence, contrary to the

hierarchical model of leadership reflected in the Minister's speech, where one person is leading and others are following.

Once the 'distributed intelligence' frame was established, Dr. Williams added that accountability is every person's responsibility and by virtue the president himself is accountable for his people. Such an idea was completely missing in the Minister's speech, who considered that only ministers are accountable for the president's vision. Dr. Williams, who is a faculty member of Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government where he teaches public leadership, seemed to be aware of the risks that can result from the Minister's framing of accountability. He then started to reshuffle the Minister's ideas in explicit ways, such as saying: "when he [the minister] is taking about people being the problem, he is meaning that the problem resides in the values and the habits and the priorities of people". Then, he further clarified that the problem is, in fact not a problem, but a difficulty or a challenge and that the challenge is shared. Ultimately, he admitted that the government has to understand different parameters, including people's mindsets.

The next strategy that Dr. Williams used to illustrate his last idea is a little story that he told the audience suggesting that it is difficult to access people's perceptions. Recently, the development agency decided to build a well in the center of the village to help women have easy access to water after having noticed that they used to travel two to four hours a day down the mountain and over the river stream to collect the water. No sooner was the well built than it was destroyed. Initially no one could understand who would dare destroy such a facility. Investigations revealed that women themselves

destroyed the well, because they wanted to keep spending that much time everyday out of their homes. For these women, the time they spend away from their husbands was part of their habits. Therefore, they destroyed the well to keep the freedom to be away from home for several hours and chat among themselves. This story was a very powerful strategy in the reframing process discussed by Dr. Williams. The journalist of the conference, Mr. Martyn Lewis said that the story was extraordinary and that "it would stay with [him] for a long… long time".

The story itself, the way it was narrated, and the way it was connected to the idea it illustrated, was very effective in the reframing process. More importantly, Dr. Williams was able to negate the Minister's bold assertion that 'people are the problem', and reframes the same idea (that people are the problem) in such a way that the audience now thinks that people are hard to predict and so the difficulty is in fact understanding how people think about their needs. Consequently, less blame would be put on the Malagasy government, which according to Dr. Williams, is striving to help people who are themselves opposing their own benefits.

Another way to identify the gaps between the framing style of the Minister and of Dr. Williams is to pay particular attention to the use of personal pronouns in both speeches. The predominance of the inclusive personal pronouns 'you' and 'we' in Dr. Williams talk was obvious, particularly in contrast to the Minister's use of the third personal pronoun 'he' to refer to his president. More important, Dr. Williams' use of 'you' is a persuasive strategy that engages the listener to think of the difficulty of the context he is describing. It is used in rhetorical questions that implicate the audience in the issues. The use of 'we'

was of particular importance, because whenever it is a matter of decision-making, there is 'we' who have something at stake. Perhaps because Dr. Williams is not a Malagasy, but serving as a chief advisor to the Malagasy president, he avoided the use of 'we' not to create unnecessary tensions of nationalism; i.e., Malagasy people can reject his use of 'we' considering him to be an intruder. He contented himself with the use of 'we' when he refers to the leadership team and not when referring to the whole country, simply because he did not feel entitled to be included in this latter 'we'.

The Minister, however, used the third personal pronoun 'he' referring to his president forty-one times compared to 'we' for two times and 'I' for three times. Clearly the use of personal pronouns reflected the individualistic leadership style that he was describing. On the contrary, the two times that Dr. Williams referred to the president were to mention that the president was orchestrating the efforts rather than making decisions. Interestingly, upon finishing his speech, the Minister was asked by the journalist: "how did you start to win the hearts and minds? He replied: "are you talking about the president or about myself?" The journalist then said "both of you together, presuming you are a team". The minister was confused by the question. Since he spent all his speech talking about his president, not about himself, when he was addressed to by the journalist as 'you', he was surprised. He probably was expecting only questions about his president, not about himself or both of them together.

Framing around Effectiveness

Leadership Effectiveness through Classroom Learning

One of the tensions that arose from the discussions about leadership effectiveness was around the question of whether or not it is appropriate (or even possible) to formally teach leadership. There was a debate between Dr. Lan Xue (the Executive Associate Dean at the School of Public Policy and Management in Tsinghua University, China) and most of the other discussants over the idea that classroom learning can help to develop leaders. Dr. Xue was supporting his view with figures and statistics about the leadership learning opportunities that were part of the agenda made by the Chinese government to ensure successive generations of good leaders. However, before Dr. Xue started his speech, the journalist presented him by saying: "I think everyone all around the world knows that China is probably the greatest country for future development at the moment and is seen as being the country with the most potential for expansion." The journalist's introduction was an attempt to influence the audience by stating the assumption that the Chinese approach is an example that the rest of the world should follow, given the concrete developmental results that it achieved.

However, the panelists rejected the model presented by Dr. Xue, without responding to the statistical evidence that he presented to illustrate the success of the Chinese government's type of leadership. Real tension emerged when Dr. Xue stated that leadership training became a tradition in the Chinese government in response to the war needs: "[…] in 1920's the Chinese government's party was leading to really… to lead the people to war against the Warlords and later the … and Japanese war in the second world

war and then in the civil war". In this instance, the mere evoking of the term 'war' was not a good framing strategy, at least from Fairhurst and Sarr's (1996) point of view on how framing should be crafted, in particular, how the careful selection of expressions is important. Regardless of what kind of leadership style Dr. Xue adheres to, the fact that he stated that leadership came from the need to wage war, there is much chance that negative thoughts, such as battle, hostility and conflicts, would be associated with such a leadership style. Moreover, Dr. Xue stressed that there is "some legacy there", which can suggest that the leadership he is describing is still influenced by the mentality of war.

Overall, Dr. Xue's framing not only failed to appeal to the Capacity Day audience, but also provoked the panelists' sarcastic (though politically correct) responses, partly due to the war evocation and partly, because the presented leadership style was based on soldiering, where followers only obey the rules and do not attempt to provide the least feedback even when they feel and think they their opinions matter. Obviously, soldiering does not resonate with the Capacity Day participants who attended the event to discuss leadership that "goes beyond training individuals" as stated in the document that sets the objective of the meeting entitled *Capacity Day 2007: Leadership Development Concept Note*. The same document also claims that the Capacity day approach to leadership hinges on "systems for sharing knowledge and information" (p. 1), which is in clear contradiction with the soldering type of leadership.

But, the panelists did not give any significance to the culture as a substantial part of the leadership style in question. Dr. Xue was simply describing a style that was, according to him, successful in the Chinese context. Who can prove that to be not true?

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The panelists rejected Dr. Xue's views of leadership, but did not account for the idea that such a view can be applicable and also appropriate in such cultural and historical contexts. They only opposed his views that might seem shocking to other persons coming from other cultures, such as this claim that Dr. Xue made, which reflects the hierarchical type of leadership: "China is so huge [and there are] so many of the new ideas… so how do you really make sure that they can be diffused throughout the country?" Diffusing ideas is a phrase that clearly illustrates the discrepancy of views between the leadership style that Dr. Xue presented and that of the rest of the panelists who come from other countries.

Such a cultural discrepancy in leadership views perfectly matches the case study mentioned in Eisenberg *et al.* (2007). In this study, a Japanese man, who won both world championship and a silver medal in the sport of Judo, moved to Florida and was able to successfully establish his own Judo school. However, very soon his school's attendance dropped off dramatically due to the unwillingness of students to tolerate his discipline. The moral of the story is that the leadership type that the Japanese man wanted to implement was not suitable to the cultural context in the Florida, although the style was effective in Japan.

Returning to the discussion about whether classrooms can make effective leaders, Dr. Williams offered an interesting anecdote to illustrate the idea that leadership teaching can be even dangerous, as it may make people think they have the leadership skills when in fact they are exercising tyranny or the like:

We had a coup attempt four, five months ago and this General captured

the airport and the president plane with me in it… we were about to land

and he was potentially gonna shoot that down … now I interviewed this

General two weeks ago we sat down he is in jail I'm interested as a

researcher why did you do this? why would you humm and you know and

he is thinking that he is exercising leadership he said yeah this is

leadership I was gonna try to show you guys that you got it all wrong.

Why did you think that? Well he said and… humm this is difficult for me

to say …he said I went on a six-month course on leadership at Harvard

University in 2004 [audience laughter]. So the question what are we

teaching these people? I donn'know. We better start thinking seriously and

I'm glad the World Bank is doing that.

Through the use of this anecdote, Dr. William was able to provide a striking example

on how leadership teaching can be destructive. The anecdote clearly appealed to the

audience due to a number of factors: a) it was a real life story, b) it was narrated very

concisely, and most important c) it involved a striking irony (i.e. the General legitimizing

his coup attempt, which caused deaths of civilians, by a recent leadership course that he

took at Harvard University).

What is Leadership Effectiveness?

The Capacity Day framed leadership effectiveness in the *Capacity Day 2007:*

Leadership Development Concept Note as "the ability to diagnose and prioritize

problems, and to identify and implement viable solutions" (p. 2). However, it did not

clarify who is in charge of such a huge task that requires an unlimited number of skills and an extraordinarily massive knowledge that we can hardly think of to be found in just one person. Hence, this framing of effectiveness implies that leadership is a collective task, where each individual has some input to make. Implementing viable solutions, in particular, is almost impossible to achieve, without having different perspectives and expertise on the very complex issues that a leadership is facing.

The story of "*The Well*" was revisited during the discussions of the Capacity Day as a real-life example that urged the participants to look at effectiveness in a very tangible way. The story was about those Malagasy women who themselves destroyed the well that it was built by the development agency to help them have easy access to water. The question raised by one of the audience was what would good leadership do in such a case? None of the panelists was able to answer this question. It first seemed to be an easy question to answer, but thinking about being effective in responding to the well destruction is very relative to the person's understanding of what effectiveness is.

There are at least three immediate options here: the first option is to rebuild the well anytime it is destroyed. The second is to not build the well anymore. And the third is to discuss the issue with the women who destroyed it and react based on that. None of these options is fully advantageous. If the government decides to continually rebuild the well, there are financial problems emanating from wasting money on a development project that was to be done once. If the government decides not to build the well anymore, other groups of people (not the women) may want the well. The problem cannot be solved fully by pleasing the women and depriving others. The problem of the third option is what

happens if these women would not be convinced that the well should not be destroyed? With this option, we will be trapped again into the problems emanating from either the first or the second option. And so effectiveness here becomes very relative, not only to the context itself, but to the way a leader views effectiveness.

Interestingly, Dr. McKee drew the audience attention into another aspect of the well issue. She said that a substantial part of the problem is *why* did these women want to leave their husbands and homes for a number of hours everyday? With this question, effectiveness was brought to a more sophisticated level. Effectiveness, in this regard, does not only reside in solving problems, but in understanding where they are coming from. By asking such a question, the government might discover more serious social or family problems. Furthermore, these women might have destroyed the well purposefully as a way to draw the attention of the government.

Therefore, the way effectiveness was framed in the *Concept Note* did not seem to address this complexity of leadership effectiveness, because it only presented it as the ability of problem solving. Is effectiveness only a matter of problem solving? And is it the leader's responsibility to do so, in order to be effective? Karina Constantino-David, the Chair of the Civil Service Commission in the Philippines, who talked about leadership in general, did not see effectiveness as limited to problem solving. She thinks that it is more important that leaders do not just invest their time doing good things while they are there; it is more important to cultivate a culture of service and expertise in the people who are in the bureaucracy, because it is these people who will continue the work. In this way, leadership effectiveness resides in the ability to orchestrate efforts in such a

way that results are achieved by the group, not by the leader. Such an understanding of effectiveness allows the system to keep running, especially for the time that comes after the leader leaves their position.

One person from the audience made the comment (though in a different context) that a leader can be known to be good only when he or she leaves the position. But, how can a leader achieve that level of sophistication to see themselves "leading from behind"? How can one leave off the "heroic role" and become an undistinguishable member of the group? This mission is rather difficult, due to the heavy legacy of our understanding to leadership that we inherited from the old panoptic leadership views, compared to the period of time where democracy has become institutionalized. The difficulty is also due to the psychological aspect of the issue; i.e., leaders need to make the effort to leave off the order-giving attitudes and start seeing themselves as coordinators more than as rulers. This effort is what Bennis and Nanus (2007) called the deployment of self. It is the process of managing one's self before starting to manage others. Bennis and Nanus pointed that without the management of self, leaders may do more harm than good.

The Framing Strategy: A Linguistic Weapon

The Irish playwright Oscar Wilde once said: **"the truth is rarely pure and never simple"**. But, regardless of this philosophical complexity, there are instances where we can easily detect people's purposeful partial truth telling. Telling part of the truth is one type of such manipulation. Stating a true part of a story may (or may not) make only part of the story truth, but never the whole truth of that story. In this Capacity Day, a number

of half-truth telling instances- which are also instances of framing strategies- were noticed.

The *coup* attempt story that Dr. Williams mentioned is unmistakably an instance of half-truth framing. When he mentioned the General attempted to shoot the president's plane down after the General had captured the airport, he did not mention that the General had attempted to run as a candidate in the presidential election. Neither did he mention that the General had been refused candidacy, which was the main motive of the *coup* attempt (New York Times; November 19, 2006). Now, regardless of the fact that such violence is unjustifiable, its motivations are at least explicable. In a news item obtained from Reuters, the New York Times mentioned that the General had issued leaflets, in which he announced an interim government led by a military board, saying that: "the army is taking power so that the country does not slide into civil war." (New York Times, November 19, 2006). This part of the truth adds to the story a political aspect and therefore reframes it as a political conflict that ended up with violence.

Furthermore, Dr. Williams mentioned this story as an illustration of how leadership classroom learning can be 'dangerous'. He presented the General as the "guy" who said "I wanted to show you guys that you got it all wrong", in an attempt to put his *coup* attempt in a silly and childish frame. Also, he presented a direct relationship between the question "why did you do that?" and the answer: "I took a six-month course on leadership at Harvard University". This response, as it was presented, seemed silly, especially to the participants of the Capacity day, who were discussing leadership in terms of a life-long learning journey. But most important, by ridiculing the General's

attitudes, Dr. Williams provoked the audience's hilarity, which makes it more intimidating for an audience member to make comments that may legitimize the *coup* attempt. In fact, the General's response to Dr. Williams question may have been de-contextualized. He might have mentioned the leadership course he took, in response to another question, not as an answer to the question: "why did you attempt a *coup*?"

A cynical interpretation of why Dr. Williams framed the whole situation as such may be that he wanted to keep his job as a senior advisor of a country's president. By emphasizing that leadership cannot be learned, Dr. Williams implied that the president cannot suddenly become an independent leader, and decide to dismiss him. Within that frame, Dr. Williams's position can be understood to be permanent and not just limited to a temporary training stint. Most importantly, he used his status as Harvard faculty as a proof that the president is willing to learn, to improve the country, and to listen to others, contrary to the General who opted for violence and unwillingness to communicate. Dr. Williams emphasized that the government's task is very difficult and that they all are trying their best to move the country forward, with an open door policy.

Another significant, yet hegemonic, manipulation of framing happened around the whole approach to the concept of leadership effectiveness. During the discussion about leadership effectiveness all of the Capacity Day participants except Dr. McKee, did not discuss the ineffectiveness of leaders themselves. Participants spent most of their time discussing effectiveness in terms of the visible work that leaders perform. This was a dominant frame, which suggests that the leaders themselves are unquestionable and that leadership effectiveness is an external issue. Here, again, I understood that effectiveness

was implicitly presented as a technical issue that can be solved once the technical solutions are found and implemented.

Dr. McKee completely reframed the situation by diverting the audience attention to themselves. She said "now it's time to talk about you, me … what is it about us that allows us to enact our leadership in our spheres? Whatever this sphere might be with vision, effectively with accountability. […]You know it really does start by looking inside. We've got to turn it back on ourselves." In a way or another, it was an audacious step that Dr. McKee took to shift the audience attention to themselves, knowing that among the audience there are ministers, diplomats and very highly ranked officials of different countries who came to discuss the problems they are facing, not to hear that the problem might, in fact, be them.

Most interestingly, Dr. McKee reframed leadership effectiveness by first using the inclusive 'we', but very soon she shifted into 'you'. At first, she used 'we', probably because she was unsure of the audience reactions. She needed some time to build confidence and then she switched to the 'you'. But, who is the 'you' and who is the 'we' this time? The 'we' is herself and her private institute (Teleos Leadership Institute) and the 'you' is any of the leaders participating in the Capacity Day. It was a very strategic reframing that was formulated over two steps: first, leaders (we) need to look at themselves and see what they can improve in themselves, before starting to help others; and second, leaders (you) need to seek professionals' assistance (we). Ultimately, she started advertising her institute: "so when we are developing those kinds of programs to help people get there, we have that at the center".

Summary, Limitations, and Suggestions for Future Research

This study has illuminated various framing practices that emerged during formal discussions about leadership development. Exposing how the participants framed their views about *vision*, *accountability* and *effectiveness* in leadership made it possible to examine the implicit meanings of their language, actions and stories. Concretely, the analysis of the framing practices has made the following conclusions:

First, this study identified and explained instances of skillful and strategic use of framing as opposed to unskillful and risky framing practices. One of the most pertinent examples of skillful framing was made by Dr. Williams, who was able to completely reframe the image of the president of Madagascar's leadership style; after a framing of the same subject had just been made by the Malagasy Minister of Education. The success of Dr. Williams' framing was related to the use of the inclusive personal pronoun 'we', which mirrored the collective type of leadership he was clearly trying to describe. The story of "the well' as a strategy was also so powerful that it was memorized and re-evoked several times by the audience as a concrete example to use during discussions. On the contrary, the Minister's framing was found unappealing to the audience due to his emphasis on the personal pronouns 'I' and 'he', and to the exaggerated praising of his president. The contradiction between the two framing practices was clearly noticed at least through the audience's dissimilar reactions.

Second, it was possible to discern hidden meanings that emerge from the presented frames and the contradictions between what was stated and what was understood. The description of *vision* was a good example of how it was described by many participants to be shared, but the meta-linguistic analysis revealed that it was- in fact- imposed by the leaders. One pertinent example of such a contradiction was revealed in a document that presented a vision as "the leader's rapid change vision" and then immediately in the next sentence as a "the state we inherited and the objectives we set for ourselves". A second example is the way the journalist presented the director of the WBI by saying "he provides strategic vision", as opposed to the Director's repeated emphasis that *vision* in the WBI is collective. The third example of such contradiction was Dr. Xue's emphasis on the idea of vision sharing on the one hand and his statement that the government had "to change the mindset of people" and "translate the vision into reality". Other participants were however, very careful in their language use and did not make such contradictions.

Third, the setting of this study was unique in making it possible to observe the immediate outcomes of 'unsuccessful' framing. The example of the Minister of Education in Madagascar was very pertinent. His unsuccessful framing was immediately reprimanded due to his paralinguistic accounts and resulted in aggressive responses from the audience. It was interesting to witness how people are able to see through what others say and how serious their responses can be. Similarly, the example of Dr. Xue, who presented the leadership style that was implemented by the Chinese government, failed to appeal to the audience and received severe criticism and sarcastic attitudes, due to the use

of inappropriate terms of 'wars' and 'legacy'. Although, the Chinese leadership style was presented as the most successful in terms of economic achievements, the audience rejected such a model. In order to understand the severity of the outcomes of such an unsuccessful framing, one has to imagine the reactions of Dr. Xue's and the Minister's followers. The question here is would their followers react in the same way the audience reacted? What if they choose not to make immediate reactions, but resist the talks in silence? In this study, it was possible to see people's immediate reactions, but who knows what the outcomes of such unsuccessful framings are in real life situations?

Fourth, the study discussed issues of clarity and ambiguity in the framing process. Both clarity and ambiguity were found to be efficient strategic elements of meaning-making. The efficiency of their use was a matter of degree, because both of them are somehow useful. In its attempt to frame *vision* in the *Concept Note* document, the WBI was strategically ambiguous; to allow for an unlimited number of views to fit in the sense they gave to it. Similarly, none of the participants tried to explore the meaning of *vision* or operationalize it according to their contexts. All of them contented themselves with the metaphorical use of the term. One merit of such a strategy in framing was the prevention of unnecessary disagreements about the meanings of terms and the consideration that every person can see vision in the ways that is suitable to their contexts. Conversely, clarity was identified to be important when we talk about a vision in a specific context. The President of Liberia made it clear that the leader has to be able to "articulate the vision."

Fifth, the study found that frames undergo constant negotiations and are seldom static or 'complete.' Negotiations of frames were also found to reveal implied tensions. Dr. McKee's complete reframing of how defectiveness had to be seen was a good example illustrating how she was concerned about the fact that the participants did not question their own effectiveness. She added a completely new parameter – that of "ourselves" - to the frames that were presented. Before her comments, the participants did not put themselves under any scrutiny, but rather were referring to effectiveness as an external factor. She urged the participants to look in the mirror and critique themselves before starting looking for effectiveness externally. Tension was apparent in her comments through the gradual reframing process and the unwillingness to shock the audience by putting them on the spot. She started saying that it is the "we" that needed to question "ourselves" and then finished her comments by referring to the "you" that needed to reconsider "your" decisions and critique "yourselves." Thus, negotiating frames was a very delicate and risky task that revealed an apparent tension upon trying to 'adjust' others' frames.

Finally, this paper found instances where framing was used as a manipulative tool to obtain the popular buy in. The manipulation was partly made by the half-truth saying. Half-truth telling can be successful to a limited extend, by harnessing the audience to see the part of the story that the teller is willing to say. Dr. William's story of the *coup* attempt was a pertinent example of half-truth telling, which, regardless of its unethical considerations, was successful in his attempts to direct the audience views into one specific direction. Manipulative framing was also noticed in Dr. McKee's last talk. After

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she stressed that leaders need to question themselves, she implied that her school helps leaders achieve those goals; hence she started marketing her institution. However, Dr. McKee's manipulation cannot in this case, be said to be unethical. It was simply a framing that went into the same direction with her personal interests.

One aspect of this study that is both a limitation and an advantage is the fact that it did not examine the reactions of the followers of these leaders *vis-à-vis* the leaders framing practices. In order to better assess the effectiveness or defectiveness of the studied frames, it would be useful to examine them in real life situations; i.e. as they occur within organizations. However, doing so would not allow for a comparison of the different leaders' framing practices over the same issue at the same point in time. Conducting a similar study within a single organization would not be appropriate if the aim is to see how one frame can be more or less efficient as compared to its alternative. Conversely, the setting of this study is ideal to achieve such an aim because it was possible to see different leaders of different backgrounds framing around one and the same topic in one and the same place at one and a same time and in front of one and the same audience.

Nevertheless, a longitudinal study within a same organization that looks at how the same people react differently to same events framed differently by different leaders over time would make very important contributions to the understanding of framing dynamics. Bearing in mind that frames are time sensitive (Entman 2004), there is a need to understand if frames are perceived differently by the same followers (if so they are) due to different framing strategies or because of the time sensitivity of the issue.

The research's future directions for the Capacity Day would be the following: that the discussions be less 'political' in nature and more scholarly and scientific. On the whole, the Capacity Day's participants' attitudes revealed that they were there to teach leadership to others, not to exchange knowledge about leadership. I suspect that given the fact that the panelists and key speakers were political personalities, it might be hard for some of them to put themselves in the position of learners during that event. Here, again, the way the World Bank Institute would frame its invitations to the next Capacity Day participants may make a difference in preparing their guests to be learners and put aside their political positions. I would also suggest that *framing in leadership* be a theme in one of the subsequent Capacity Days. This can make a unique shift into the discussion of Leadership from a behavioral perspective, which would urge the participant-leaders to critique their own leadership practices. Finally, I think that focusing more on the behavioral aspects of leadership would significantly contribute to the development of leadership skills among the participants.

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