

Living the Experience of Whistleblowing: An Analysis of Organizational
Whistleblowing through Creative Nonfiction

By

Chase L. Clow

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved July 2015 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee

Amira de la Garza, Chair
Eric Margolis
Helen Quan

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

August 2015

ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, organizational whistleblowing is guided by the methods for writing Creative Nonfiction. That is to say, a true story is told in a compelling and creative, easy to read manner, so that a broader audience, both academic and non-academic alike, can understand the stories told. For this project, analytic concepts such as antecedents, organizational culture, resistance and dissidence, social support, and ethics are embedded in the narrative text. In this piece, the author tells the story of a whistleblowing process, from beginning to end. Using the techniques advised by Gutkind (2012) questions and directions for research and analytic insight are integrated with the actual scenes of the whistleblowing account. The consequences of whistleblowing are explored, including loss of status, social isolation, and a variety of negative ramifications. In order to increase confidentiality in the dissertation, pseudonyms and adapted names and locations have been used to focus on the nature of the whistleblowing experience rather than the specific story. The author ends the dissertation with reflection on whistleblowing through the insight gathered from his firsthand account, suggesting advice for future whistleblowers and directions for future organizational research on whistleblowing.

DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my grandmother, Rolinell Lee, who helped support me through the entire process. This document could not have been completed without her support.

I would also like to dedicate and acknowledge all of the help and support Dr. Amira de la Garza gave me throughout the entire dissertation process as well. Her support, friendship, guidance, and knowledge were invaluable while writing this dissertation. Without her, I would not have a dissertation at all. I would also like to thank her for working with me on this topic which could cause some to feel anxious. Her courageousness is greatly admired.

I would also like to thank Drs. Eric Margolis and Helen Quan for offering to be on my committee. Without them, there would be no dissertation either.

I would also like to acknowledge the social support Lisa Braverman and Aaron Sanchez provided me during my whole whistleblowing experience. I was a nervous wreck during the whole process, and they really gave me the support I needed to help keep myself sane. Their friendship and support were invaluable.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER	
1 THE DEVIL MAKES WORK FOR IDLE HANDS.....	1
2 DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE.....	9
3 BRAINSTORMING.....	17
4 SKYRIM.....	25
5 AND I AM...A WHISTLEBLOWER.....	31
6 AN INTRODUCTION TO THE MATRIX.....	35
7 SOMETHING NEFARIOUS.....	41
8 AND AGAIN, IN THE MATRIX.....	49
9 BETRAYAL OR RESISTANCE?.....	57
10 THE NEXT LEVEL.....	63
11 THE MANIACAL VALE OF ETHICS & SOCIAL SUPPORT.....	83
12 A LITTLE TOO EASY.....	103
13 THE GOOD STORY.....	109
14 THE STUDIO INTERVIEW.....	117
15 GETTING CAUGHT.....	138
16 THE AFTERMATH.....	149
17 REFLECTIONS & INSIGHTS.....	159
BIBLOGRPAHY.....	173

Chapter 1

The devil makes work for idle hands

What was going on today?

I was sitting at my computer reading the news and checking up on social media—nothing different from the way I usually spent my time when I was done working. I’m a bit of an investigation junkie and I like to see what’s going on in the world, so in addition to the typical Facebook postings, e-mail correspondence, and some Google searches to help with my classwork, I always checked in on the news. What was going on with the issues affecting my friends out of state?

This particular night in March, there wasn’t much of interest. Yeah, same old stuff--a slow news cycle (just some news about the upcoming 2012 election), my friends reporting the usual things from the world of twenty-somethings --going out with friends, finding new partners, getting drunk, etc. I was not only bored, I had finished most of my work and had nothing to do. This combination of usually inspires me to find something a little more interesting. In the past, I’ve discovered new books, music, events—all sorts of things that I wouldn’t typically have looked for if I hadn’t been bored. Pleasant surprises. This night would be a little different.

“Hey,” I thought to myself, “what about that new GAF grant we got at work?”

I decided to do something I’d been meaning to do for a while; read the grant we’d just received. I’d been working for the Research Institute (the RI, we usually called it, for short) at a Large Southwestern University (LSWU) for three years. I was working on my Ph.D., and I worked as a Research Associate with the RI. We’d just received a multi-million dollar grant from GAF (Government Agency Funders). It was the most exciting

thing that had happened in our RI, and you could feel the buzz in the air at school.

Getting this grant made us important, guaranteed that our center was “on the radar,” as they say.

The funders were a branch of government researchers who develop very cutting edge technology. They helped create such things as the internet, GPS, and cell phone technology, among other equally impressive things we now take for granted. Being the information geek that I am, it was very exciting to be a part of an organization working for GAF. But what we were studying was also really interesting to me. Not only was there prestige, but our research promised to be ground-breaking. The research we had proposed would allow us to investigate how the narratives we use actually **worked in the brain**. Narratives were always something that interested me, as narratives are basically stories, and humans are story-tellers. How we tell a story, a narrative, can greatly influence its persuasive message.

I have a master’s degree in psychology, and to me, this was way cool! I’ve always been fascinated with how the brain works and the mechanisms behind particular thought processes. For example, what part of the brain was working when one told a “funny” story, as opposed to a “sad” story? The work I was hired to do was actually going to let me study the things that I found to be fun and exciting. I’d always been intrigued by the stories and reports on scientific studies of the brain, but to be part of a team that was actually doing that research was especially exciting to me. My studies of narratives and communication up to this point had all been theoretical; this was getting really scientific, and I was sure to learn new things. I was exceptionally happy to be a

part of the organization at this moment in time—and it didn't hurt that the grant and my work with the RI was going to be able to fund me through the end of my graduate studies.

* * *

The Research Institute is described on its webpage as an initiative of the LSWU. In a very short time, through its work on terrorism and counter-terrorism, it was regarded as a leading think tank in the field and had already received several grants from the government. Getting these grants was not something very common in my field, and in a very short time, the leaders of the RI were propelled as sort of research “rock stars.” In addition to the fact that this was federally funded research, it was also important that we had found a way to actually *do something* after the horrendous events of September 11, 2001. Rather than just engage in seminar discussions about how the government and military could handle the communication challenges it faced, the RI had managed to be heard, to be engaged in the discourse. For me, as a graduate student, it was more than exciting to know that I was in the middle of all of this. This would certainly get me published, would probably get me a great job, and kept me busy on a schedule of projects that I knew would have an audience. What more could I ask for? Right?

At the time, I was currently working on a grant we'd received from another military funder. My job was to read texts from religious extremists, code them according to their content, and then run them through a database. I was quite proud of my work. We were a doing groundbreaking research in our field of communication, coding the words in the texts we studied so they could be analyzed numerically, in a quantitative manner. By using numbers, the text could be analyzed statistically in ways that words alone were difficult to analyze. This was something that had not been done in this exact

capacity before. We weren't just counting the number of times people said things; we were able to ask questions about what they said and then try to predict how that might affect future behavior. For example, we might predict that a particular speech might stir up tension or result in certain organizational or cultural behaviors.

Because of my work with the RI, I had read thousands of pieces of texts. While working for them, I had become somewhat of an expert on the topic and was proud of it. And moreso, the overall purpose of our grant was to actually help *stop* destructive use of narratives. There were many levels to the enthusiasm and power we were enjoying. And we were so busy that we had very little time to wonder what to do next—or to consider how our work might be perceived by others.

* * *

When our large GAF grant was received, the RI arranged for a major public announcement where they “unveiled” what the GAF grant was all about. The language of the award was complex and added to the mystique of the important work that had just been recognized by the multi-million dollar grant. In some ways, by publicly unveiling the award, I suppose it enabled us to keep certain aspects veiled. Plus, as Birchall (2011) notes, when a group is viewed as being transparent, they are assumed to be “good.” After all, if they are telling the public about a project, it must be a project aimed at helping out society; for the betterment of society.

The public announcements shared basic information about the funding as well as the overall project.

It probably sounded a bit complicated, but we were all told it was just a fancy way of saying we were going to explore cognition of narratives.

The brain is inherently a fascinating thing to study, and whenever our description was shared with the public, you could actually see people get excited about the science that was being done—by many of us who had never done much more than work with words!

What the researchers on the project were essentially going to “see,” was work similar to already existing cognitive research that explored how the brain is activated when people were presented with persuasive messages. I even helped write part of the proposal for the grant. My job was to conduct a literature review on narrative persuasion and something called narrative transportation. Basically, I was the one charged with finding out how researchers currently study how individuals get “transported” into a narrative. That was a fancy way to say that it was my job to find the research that had been done on how people get “sucked into,” or enthralled by a narrative—so much so that they block out external influences. This was interesting to me, and to everyone around us who had ever had the experience of reading a book until they completely blocked out everything around them. Even though that wasn’t exactly what we meant, this similarity to a common experience to many people—especially in universities, where avid readers abound—allowed for people to become positively aligned with our research. The research, of course, wanted to know more than just what parts of the brain were affected when such absorption or “transportation” occurred; we were also interested in finding out how these powerful narratives influenced thoughts and opinions. For example, after reading *Siddhartha*, a novel by Hermann Hess, one may be so influenced by its Buddhist teachings that one may decide to become a Buddhist in real life. We wanted to find out how exactly this happened.

I discovered that not much has been done in this arena, and when it was, it was almost always done from an interpretive standpoint, meaning that it was largely speculation, or people's theoretically informed opinions. Basically, there was no hard data to back up claims that a story really changed thoughts and actions, just theories. Our funded research was going to change all that.

The first aim of this GAF grant was to actually show how the brain was affected when presented with persuasive narratives (i.e., stories that were meant to sway one in a particular direction). More specifically, if we were able to identify what was happening in the brain when persuasive narratives were processed, then we could work towards our bigger goal: to eventually try and understand how individuals get persuaded to do things that could be considered harmful, so that eventually we can try and stop them before it is too late.

That sounded good, didn't it?

I have to admit, I thought it sounded like very cool research! This all built up my sense of myself as honored to have been asked to help with the research for the proposal.

* * *

An important caveat—those at the unveiling of the grant award, as well as I, had never actually read the proposal in full. Yes, that's right. Although I had helped do some of the background research to contribute to the proposal, I wasn't involved in the crafting of the overall proposal. And I hadn't read it. That was something I should have done a long time before, considering I helped work on it, but as a grad student my name was not on the proposal and technically, it was not "my" work. So there was no reason to read it. But I was curious.

* * *

Moved by my curiosity on that ordinary college night, I logged onto the RI server and, for the first time, read the final proposal. Propelled by a new interest, I paid attention to what had previously been random curiosity about how my literature review had been used. And with nothing else to keep my mind occupied that night, I began to pay attention to my curiosity about how the research in the grant was actually going to be done.

Staying busy helps one to conform, as LeCompte (1978) noted in her study of classrooms. In other words, when one is busy, one is following the rules and “going with the flow.” Staying busy keeps one from questioning things. Perhaps since I wasn’t busy that night, I was in the right state of mind to critically analyze the document.

I found the proposal and began reading.

Reading the RI materials was itself a bit of a “high,” in that the levels of security because of our association with GAF, reinforced to all of us how important our work was. In a sense, we’d become a little more like secret agents by working on a government grant than our fellow students and faculty in the other offices in our building. In some ways, I couldn’t help but believe this mini-narrative in our own identities, perhaps from watching too many James Bond movies or Mission Impossible episodes and remakes, sort of made us vulnerable.

I downloaded it, got up to grab a drink and some food from my kitchen, and I sat down to start reading. I was no longer bored.

* * *

At first everything seemed normal; the proposal was just simply explaining how they would use sophisticated machines—fMRI's, EEG's—to see which parts of the brain “lit up” when specific narratives were presented to individuals. There was really nothing that novel or interesting at all; I was already familiar with all of this, as during the public unveiling of the grant the leaders of the group discussed how these technologies would be used. Plus, I've had an MRI and EEG before, so I knew how those technologies worked. I started to think that continuing to read this hundred-page document might just be a waste of time. I mean I'm getting nothing new from this, I thought to myself. Nevertheless, my desire to be occupied compelled me to keep reading.

Who knew that my impulse to stay busy could be such a friend to discovery? I was soon very glad that I had continued reading.

Chapter 2

Down the Rabbit Hole

Sometimes a cliché says it all: little did I know that what I was reading was about to change my life for years to come. As I read the proposal, what I would come to recognize as the most controversial and least-discussed aspect of the research slowly revealed itself. It began with a statement in the proposal explaining the purposes of the research.

I thought to myself, “Did I read that right?”

Did they just say we want to alter how the brain operates? Thoughts started to race in my head. What did this mean? Were they trying to literally disrupt brain functioning here? I mean, what was going on? This was never discussed in any of meetings I was part of for the grant. This was never discussed at the public unveiling.

I continued to read on.

On a later page, they describe exactly how they would use Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) to affect the way people processed narratives.

Once again, I was floored by what I’d just read.

Did I just read that they are going to be using some sort of big magnet to induce—or disrupt—brain processing?!?

I had never heard of TMS, or Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation, before, but it was something I immediately looked up. I was initially struck by the everyday nature of the information I found. The Mayo Clinic defines it with respect to its use in the treatment of depression:

Transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) is a procedure that uses magnetic fields to stimulate nerve cells in the brain to improve symptoms of depression.

Transcranial magnetic stimulation may be tried when other depression treatments haven't worked.

With TMS, a large electromagnetic coil is placed against your scalp near your forehead. The electromagnet used in TMS creates electric currents that stimulate nerve cells in the region of your brain involved in mood control and depression.¹

In fact, TMS was basically the use of a magnet that ‘turns off’ portions of your brain. I watched YouTube clips of individuals having a large magnet strapped to their brain, causing them to be unable to speak. They simply started speaking gibberish. I was a bit dumbstruck.

This big magnet, this TMS, was serious. It seriously could affect brain processing. This was like sci-fi. Come on, this couldn't be real! This wasn't what I thought we were claiming to do. I wasn't comfortable with this.

I went back to the proposal. I re-read the section again. I was numb.

I reached the conclusion that the document was saying that TMS would be used to turn on or off parts of the brain.

The RI research would be using this tool to turn off parts of the brain.

I couldn't believe what I was reading. This seemed so obviously like dangerous territory. It seemed like mind control to me.

¹ Mayo Clinic Staff. (2015). *Tests and procedures: Transcranial magnetic stimulation*. Retrieved from <http://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/transcranial-magnetic-stimulation/basics/definition/prc-20020555>.

Why would they want to do this? I was left shocked and continued to read on. Only now, in a sense, I began to feel as if I should look over my shoulder to see if anyone else had read this.

The proposal revealed that they'd ultimately like to be able to increase or decrease how people respond to what they hear, and ultimately how they act.

At this point, I must have had a blank look on my face. I sat there, staring at the computer screen, asking myself, "What the hell?" What the hell was going on here? Was the RI, the organization for which I'd worked for so long, that I was *so proud of*, really trying to develop methods for systematic and intentional efforts to disrupt brain functioning?

I could feel my body tense, my fist clenching, jaws tighten. I was becoming angry.

Who did my coworkers and supervisors think they were? Why were they playing God? They had obviously justified it through use of the rhetoric that spoke of the possible benefits, but how could they think that disrupting brain functioning was okay in any capacity? What about free-will? What about an individual's right to think what they want? The applications this research, if it were successful, had frightening negative potential, and no one knew.

Had I helped make this happen? I was actually fuming at this point now. What had I gotten myself into? What kind of organization was I working for? From an evening of bored browsing of social networks, I felt I had been thrust into a science fiction story.

* * *

My organization appeared to be trying to turn off portions of the brain to make messages more persuasive. In other words, if there was a part of the brain that could strengthen an individual's resistance to a message, why not turn it off? I could not believe I was thinking this, but it appeared that the organization was trying to brainwash individuals. I mean, the definition of brainwashing is to take away free will, right?²

If the RI planned to disrupt brain functioning, didn't that also mean they would be disrupting free will? If so, were they really planning to engage in brain washing?

I actually started to question my sanity at this point. How could I have gone through such a complete turnaround in my perspective in such a short time? My thoughts started reeling: Perhaps I was looking too much into this. Maybe I was reading this document wrong. The RI was good, right? They would never do unethical research like this...right? There was just no way, no way! I told myself.

I was shocked and didn't know what to do but continue to read on.

I couldn't believe it, but what I had been reading actually got worse.

I threw my hands up. THAT'S IT! I'VE READ ENOUGH. The research was intending to turn off parts of the brain and effectively "brainwash" individuals. They were basically writing out a strategy of brainwashing in this document. I couldn't believe it. I just couldn't believe what I was reading.

² According to Merriam-Webster (2015) brainwashing is "a forcible indoctrination to induce someone to give up basic political, social, or religious beliefs and attitudes and to accept contrasting regimented ideas (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/brainwashing>).

I shook my head. I was disgusted. My stomach hurt. This was too much to take in at once. I didn't know what to do. Was my organization really this evil? Did they really think turning off people's brains was a good idea? How could I have been a part of this without knowing?

I didn't know what to do next. I was floored. This was all news to me, and it was CRAZY! This was absolutely CRAZY!

But a rational part of my brain kicked in. It told me to read the document again. Maybe I was missing something. So I read it again, and again, and again, and again. Nothing changed, and I kept getting increasingly alarmed. The RI was literally trying to turn off parts of the brain. They were literally trying to brainwash individuals. I couldn't believe it. No matter how hard I try to return to my previous state of confidence and pride in the work I was doing, the team of researchers with whom I had collaborated, I could not do it.

I was crushed.

I sat in my chair and asked myself, "What should I do?" I once again asked myself, "Am going crazy? Am I really reading this document right?"

* * *

I realized I needed a second opinion, so I knocked on my roommate's door. My roommate normally stays in his room in his downtime, as he is a very busy individual, teaching four classes, going to school full-time, and maintaining a relationship with his girlfriend. He liked to rest and play video games and watch TV in his room as a way to cool down. He answered, and visibly shaken, I spoke.

“Sam³! Something crazy is happening. I really need you to read something. I think I’m losing my mind. I think the RI is trying to brainwash people.”⁴

Sam responded, “Calm down. What are you talking about now? What’s going on?”

I said, “You have to read this. It is absolutely crazy. Please look it over and let me know if you come to the same conclusion I came to. This is really important; please look this over.”

Sam said, “Okay, okay, whatever man, I’ll look it over. Give me a second.” I said thanks, and brought him to my room. The document was already visible on my desktop.

“Sam, this is pretty long, but it is absolutely crazy. Please read it. It’s nuts!”

Sam sat at my desk and read the document. I waited anxiously. I thought to myself, “Is he going to come to the same conclusion as me? Is he going to think this research is crazy? Did I just read it wrong? Will he have a different opinion?” Thoughts continuously moved through my mind. I was still in shock about what I had just read, but I was very curious about what Sam would think after reading the proposal.

³ Names changed throughout

⁴ Throughout the dissertation, as is the convention in Creative Nonfiction, scenes are created and often include creatively re-enacted conversations presented in dialogue form. These conversations are not assumed to be literal and function under the generic conventions of creative writing, and as such, differ from those in standard methodologies in qualitative research. In many instances, as would be expected, all events and conversations are not included. For reasons of confidentiality such omissions are often vital, but the standards for Creative Nonfiction require that whatever is written reflect the truth, even if details have been camouflaged.

After what seemed like hours, Sam finished reading the proposal, and I immediately began to pressure him with questions.

“Sam, am I crazy, or does this document say they are trying to turn on and off different parts of the brain to disrupt the way people process narratives?”

Sam said, “No, you’re not crazy. This seems like some pretty out-there stuff. It sounds like they really are trying to turn on and off parts of the brain.”

I responded, “This is absolutely nuts. Nobody knows about this. What is going on? Are they trying to brainwash people?”

Sam responded, “I don’t know about all of that, but something fishy is definitely going on. It seems like the RI is working on some shady stuff.”

Sam’s response lets me know that I was not crazy. I had not misread the document! They really were planning to try to turn on and off parts of the brain. They really *were* planning to disrupt brain functioning. I felt validated. I knew I needed to look into this further. I couldn’t just stand by and allow this type of research to go on without finding out more facts. I needed to talk to the RI and see what they would say. Why had it never been disclosed? Surely, they would have a reason.

At this point, I was at a loss for words. Thoughts continued to race through my head, thoughts that would not stop. These were the thoughts that had already begun the disruption of what had been a really peaceful and satisfying life as a student.

What was going on here? What was the RI trying to do? Why was this part of the project not mentioned to the public? Why were they trying to disrupt brain functioning? Did they know this was wrong? Did they know this was unethical? Did

they know this was a perversion of scientific research? Did they know this was brainwashing? Did they even care?

I started to feel guilty too. I helped write part of this proposal. I inadvertently helped write a proposal that was trying to turn on and off parts of the brain. My reeling thoughts included self-incriminating reflection.

I was a part of this evil research. I've been working for this center for years. Have they always wanted to do this? Do they have any morals? Do I have any morals? I couldn't stand for brainwashing. I couldn't work for somebody that was trying to take away free will by turning on and off parts of the brain.

CHAPTER 3

Brainstorming

I decided immediately that I would bring this up at the next office meeting of the RI. I wanted to see what they had to say about this research. It was the only thing I could do right now. I needed more information. I noticed that I have begun to refer to them as “them,” and no longer think of them as “we.”

I decided I needed to clear my mind. I tried to do what I normally do when I need to forget things. When I’m bored, I get more involved. When I’m wanting to escape, I watch mindless television.

It didn’t work this time.

All I could do was think about what I’d just read. I couldn’t get it out of my mind. It was consuming me. I decided I needed to go to bed. I laid there for what seemed like hours, waiting to fall asleep. All I could think of was transcranial magnetic stimulation. Was the RI really going to be using TMS to brainwash people? What had I gotten myself into? I was anxious, restless, and dazed. I really needed to go to sleep. I decided to take one of those over the counter sleeping aids to help me fall asleep. After about an hour, it worked.

* * *

I woke up, and the first thing I thought about was the GAF grant and the RI. The same thoughts kept racing around in my head. I couldn’t get them out.

I wanted answers and I wanted them now! But the meeting wasn’t for a few more days.

What was I going to do? I NEEDED to know what was going on. There was a sense of

urgency, along with a weird feeling that I needed to be careful, affecting me constantly. Was this going to be the way I lived now?

I decided to forego breakfast for the time being and get back on my computer, to visit the RI server and see if I could uncover any more information on this GAF grant. The RI was meticulous with notes and they'd put everything up on the server for everybody working on the project to read. Maybe there was something on there that could answer some of my questions.

"It's probably a long shot," I told myself, but my fingers were crossed.

I logged on and went through the myriad of folders in the GAF grant section.⁵ I found a bunch of useless information, such as order forms, employee applications, letters between the RI and others, etc. So far these files were doing nothing for me. It seemed that everything I could find was admin related. But then I stumbled upon a folder called "Notes." This folder should be interesting.

I knew the RI always had somebody keep detailed notes during meetings. It was kind of ironic these notes so readily available. Perhaps this was a mark of a confidence the authors of the proposal had in themselves that didn't consider that any of the RI team might question what they were doing. But yet apparently they recognized the need for secrecy.

⁵ The subject of my dissertation is the analysis of my experience of whistleblowing, and I provide this story to establish the way I was processing my experience, and not as evidence of data. Citations and names are not provided to maintain confidentiality while I provide my account of the experience. The analysis in this dissertation does not deal with any of this information presented.

We all knew the leaders of the RI had meetings that did not involve employees like me. These special meetings were required only for the professors and post-docs. I never had a reason to look at these meeting notes before, as I assumed they were just meetings about administrative things or brainstorming sessions. But now I was compelled to find out what they had been talking about regarding this grant. I knew I needed to find more information!

The first few sets of meeting note documents were as expected. They were simply talking about how to divide up labor and how to start the grant. So far nothing interesting. They just talked about how the neuropsychologists on the grant would work on one portion of the grant while the communication professors would work on another.

This was not helping quench my thirst for more information about the grant, I told myself, but I continued on. I reached the meeting notes for a meeting shortly after the RI had received the grant. These notes apparently were apparently what I needed to read. I couldn't believe it.

The meeting notes were broken down into three main sections: 1) the pre-meeting, 2) research, and 3) publicity. The pre-meeting and publicity notes were of no interest to me; they just included more administrative plans. But the "research" section held more information about the grant. At the time I didn't know it, but what I was about to read was going to further change my attitude about the RI and who I had been working for the past 3 years.

The notes were further divided into sections, and there was a subsection called "Visioning Possibilities." In this section, I was able to read how the RI had begun planning how to respond if people (like me?) ever found out about the grant's actual

proposed projects. Further, I was able to see that they'd even worked in teams to brainstorm what people might think.

I was absolutely flabbergasted. This document had confirmed my worst fears; the RI knew this was problematic research, and they were ready to try and cover it up. I told myself that they were aware of their "evil" nature. It was absolutely unbelievable! I went through the section line by line and became more and more enraged.

The fact that they'd brainstormed suggested they had realized some might see problems with the research they were about to embark on. They'd considered issues that could be raised by colleagues, faculty members, the press, the IRB (better known as the institution review board, a committee in every university that deems a research project ethical or not), activists (people who they dismissed as "tin foil hat people," which is a term often used by critics discussing 'conspiracy theorists'), university administrators, and the state government. Judging by the meeting notes it appeared that they anticipated a lot of pushback from a wide range of individuals.

They also considered the arguments these individuals would make. They considered the commonly held belief by many, that GAF is very secretive and thought by some to be "evil." This seemed like a valid concern. It made sense to me that the RI would be worried about this. In their brainstorming they countered each concern with ways they'd respond to any issues raised.

Other considerations I read about made my stomach turn. It turned to concerns about the actual project at hand. They talk about how people will see the actual project as evil. They considered that people would view it as mind control or for the creation of some sort of brain ray gun. Well, these concerns were certainly valid, as that was exactly

what I thought upon reading the proposal. It seemed that they were actually trying to turn off parts of the brain and control the mind. A little background on the ray gun is needed. The ray gun was an inside joke amongst that RI staff, as they always joked that the government wished they could create a weapon to implant an idea into somebody's brain from afar. The leaders always joked that if they could create such a weapon the government would be extremely happy as they could just make people believe whatever was implanted in their mind. I thought to myself, "they aren't really creating a ray gun per se, but they are trying to create a situation where certain parts of the brain are turned off in order for the brain to accept an idea. It's not a great leap to see this as a start of a ray gun. Who knows what types of technology they could create if the grant succeeded. Could TMS be used from afar to turn off parts of people's brains? If so, couldn't they then present a message and make the person believe it? Isn't that essentially a ray gun?"

The brainstorming then seemed to move toward how the project would be viewed. They wrote that the project could be seen as culturally insensitive, that people could say it would cause ethnic/religious conflict, or that it was racist. I started to think back to previous meetings where stuff like this was discussed with other projects. Apparently at conferences RI members had been accused of these things before, because of topics in their papers. This type of concern was nothing new apparently. Several prominent scholars have even written about their concerns about the militarization of academia and how it was corrupting research and was culturally insensitive. Henry Giroux is probably the most prominent of these scholars. He writes in his 2008 article, "The Militarization of US Higher Education after 9/11," that since the "war on terrorism" has started, the US Government has been using academics to suit its needs. The government has a history of

not being kind to other countries it is at “war” with. Giroux thinks that the military is involved with academia and this is minimizing dissent and criticism of the government and its war on terror (which some elsewhere have even called a war on Islam). Giroux even goes as far as to say that democracy is being threatened when academics work with the military, as only the military narrative is being discussed and not those of critics. Gusterson (2009) also has written about how the field of anthropology has been militarized, and is now being used as a tool of US hegemony (in other words, US supremacy over other countries). Anthropologists have publicly espoused efforts to remain neutral when studying other cultures, but with the influx of government dollars into the field, this neutrality was subject to serious questioning by even those who actively supported the field. These concerns brought about by Giroux and Gusterson were nothing new to me. I personally had been accused of cultural insensitivity by some of my classmates. They thought that my work with the RI was “evil” and unethical. I always scoffed them off. Still the militarization of academia was something to think about. The RI seemed to be aware of this. It didn’t surprise me that they were discussing this in the meeting. This didn’t really concern me, as I never thought I was doing anything wrong when I was working for the RI.

What did concern me though was what they discussed next: that the project would create legal liability and was a corruption of science and scientific ethos. I wasn’t at the meeting, so I can’t be sure, but doesn’t this mean that they thought this project was potentially illegal? If so, doesn’t this mean they knew it was wrong? If they knew it was wrong, why were they doing it? Then they appeared to have discussed that the project might be considered a perversion of science. I personally had no problem thinking this

project was a perversion of science. They're trying to control people's brains, after all. It appeared that they were prepared for others to make this claim as well. Once again, this suggested to me that they knew that this project was potentially evil. But, I thought to myself, maybe if they realize this, they will try their best to minimize harm.

Unfortunately, I didn't ever see anything indicating a discussion of how to minimize harm, or a concern with it. In fact, I saw the exact opposite! They had discussed how the project had clinical benefits in psychotherapy, PTSD, and depression. I didn't know how they got to that claim, but it seemed like a stretch to me. They were not studying any of those things in the project. Not one of them! All I could think was that they realized there could be serious concerns with this project, but I told myself that they obviously didn't care.

I moved from the doubts I'd had upon reading the proposal to seriously doubting everything about the people I had been working for these past 3 years. I'd gone from thinking of the RI as "we" to "them." I had drinks with them, went to parties with them, bowled with them, and had been to their houses. I thought these were good people. What was going on? My world was shattering in front of me. Where these people really bad people? If they were going to lie to the public about their research, had they also been lying to me these past three years? Had my work with the RI really been about something else? Was I not just studying radical texts? Was the research going to be used for something else? Were my classmates, right? Was my work with the RI unethical and immoral?

I didn't know who to trust. I didn't know what to believe anymore. I had to call everything into question now. I couldn't trust these people. I couldn't trust the director

of the RI, who also happened to be my advisor at the time, mentor, and boss. Everything I'd been doing for the past three years could have been unethical and immoral as well. Where did the lies start and end? Had they been misrepresenting their research to student workers like myself? Had they been trying to influence my thoughts by framing the research in a certain light? I thought I was doing good! I truly thought what I was doing was good for the world. But was that just a narrative fed to me by senior staff at the RI? Oh my god, what had I gotten myself into? Oh my god, what had I done? Oh my god! My world was falling apart and I didn't know what to do about it. This was all so fucking unbelievable! Who were these people I thought I knew for the past three years? What type of work had I really been doing? I felt ashamed. I felt like I'd been duped.

WHAT WAS GOING ON HERE?

All I knew now was that I felt a strong and urgent need to discuss my concerns with the RI at the next meeting. I needed to ask about the project and see what they would say. It was all I could do at this point. It was just a waiting game now. It was going to be a long next few days.

Chapter 4

Skyrim

I was sweating bullets. Tomorrow was the day that I planned to ask the members of the RI to explain what I'd just read about the GAF project. There was no escaping it. It was definitely happening—I was on the agenda for the meeting. I sent in my topic to the project manager so that we could address the GAF grant during the meeting. This was the routine way of handling everyday topics, ironically part of the RI's system to encourage open communication. The meeting had been scheduled, and as I'd requested, the GAF grant was going to be discussed. I couldn't back out now. I had to move forward no matter how nervous I felt. It had to be done.

My nerves were on edge and I really didn't know how to handle it. I chained smoked cigarettes and had a beer, but nothing worked. I was very nervous. I had a feeling that these people are going to try and cover this up during the meeting. Everything I saw in the document that contained the meeting notes made me very suspicious of anything they would say to me. It was obvious that they strategically planned a distortion of what they were doing. Why would they suddenly be honest with me? I didn't think I could trust them. I just wanted this to all go away.

I contemplated quitting my job at the meeting.

I prepared a letter I planned to read to the RI. It outlined all of my exact concerns. I told myself that I was going to read it to them, and then quit my job. Melodramatic, yes. Additionally, the document I wrote was long, but it said everything I wanted to express. I'm was too nervous to trust myself to speak. What if they interrupted me? What would I do then? All I knew is that I couldn't be involved with this research anymore.

I'm not really even sure what they could say that would convince me otherwise. I sat at my computer with my statement in front of me, and I continued to work on it, writing exactly what I wanted to say to them. I typed these words, and throughout the text, I changed the font, adding bold type and italicizing important parts so that I knew not to forget how I wished to read them. I tried to keep the tone conversational, but I outlined and quoted the grant section by section to make my case.

It was several pages long, and writing all of that out made me feel empowered. I avoided thinking too critically about what I had just done, focusing instead on the scenario as I envisioned it in simplified terms. I had spelled out my concerns and very pointedly asked them how the research was ethical. I felt satisfied and proud, if only because expressing everything in writing had bolstered my sense that I had an actual argument. This wasn't just me "feeling" strange, or suspicious. To this day, I still stand by that document I wrote and what it says. I planned to pass out copies at the meeting, read it, listen to their responses, and then quit. I had it all scripted in my mind. Tomorrow, the day of the meeting, would be the last day of my job at the RI.

I went to bed with a smile on my face. I was still nervous, but I felt good about the letter. How would they respond? My anxiety had turned to curiosity. I genuinely wanted to see the looks on their faces once I read the letter. I wanted to see how they would discuss the cover-up document too. I didn't even consider the plausibility that I could actually direct that meeting to go as I planned. But at a subconscious level, I was a bit more nervous.

I had troubling sleeping at night and had a series of bad dreams that frightened me so much I sweat through my sheets. I woke up, startled by my fitful sleep, and I began to have completely different thoughts about the letter.

What was I doing?! I couldn't trust what they'd say if I bring up all the unethical research they plan on conducting. After all, they plan to cover it up. What was I thinking? This letter was a mistake. Plus, did I really want to quit my job so quickly? Was that smart? I mean, I needed the money to survive. I needed to work for them at least until the end of the semester. This plan wasn't going to work. I couldn't do this. I threw away the print outs of my letter and decided I'm just going to "play dumb" and ask "dumb" questions about the grant at the meeting. I'll offer bait and see if they bite. I'll see what they say and then move on from there. That seemed like the wisest decision to make at this point in time.

To be honest, I was also scared of pointedly calling the RI unethical. These were powerful people—professors and administrators directly involved in my program of study for my graduate study. They could hurt me. They could try and kick me out of school. Yes, *what was I thinking?* The Director of our entire school was going to be at the meeting, and the head of the RI itself was my dissertation advisor and mentor! My desire to do something had gotten the best of me, and I just hadn't thought it out. These people could seriously mess up my life.

Maybe it wasn't in my best intentions to be so straightforward.

* * *

I made it through the night and the first thing I did once woke up was head to my porch and chain smoke Marlboro Lights, drinking my morning coffee. I was so nervous.

What was going to happen at this meeting? What were they going to say? What were they going to think of me? It was almost too much to take. From a position of such complete (and probably deluded) confidence and conviction about what I needed and wanted to say, I was now a mess. Couldn't I just back out?

I convinced myself to stay strong and attend the meeting.

The ride to school on my motorcycle helped a little. At least I had to focus on something besides my thoughts. I rode my motorcycle to my usual parking spot at the university, made sure I had everything with me, that the bike was secured, and started my walk to our building. It was a walk I'd taken on so many countless occasions, but this morning every step felt new.

I got to school early, so I still had thirty minutes before the meeting would start. I wasn't sure if that was a good thing or a bad thing. Time kept ticking and with each second, my nerves were getting more frazzled. The walk to our offices was about fifteen minutes. As soon as I approached the university building, I see Jack, another member of the RI. Jack was one of my best friends at the RI. We always talked before the meetings and smoked cigarettes. We even tried quitting smoking cigarettes together once, but that didn't work out too well. Jack and I had hung out and had even partied together. He was a good person. He had no idea what I planned on doing at the meeting, and I didn't intend to tell him.

Jack was also a part of the GAF grant. I didn't know his full involvement, but his name was listed on the proposal as an expert. I assumed he was used as a consultant of sorts to translate texts when needed. I never asked him, though. I thought Jack was ethical, but I couldn't be sure. Maybe he knew what the RI planned on doing, or maybe he

didn't. He could have been in the dark too. Maybe he didn't read the document either. There were just too many variables, so I engaged Jack normally. But things were obviously becoming far from normal. Just having the information I'd discovered had changed the way I looked at everything.

Jack and I stood outside the building, in a shaded area frequented by smokers taking breaks. We knew the routine. Each of us took out a cigarette, and I light mine, and he lights his. In between drags, we talked about current events and the latest video game I was trying to beat. I'd just started playing this really cool role-playing game that had just come out. I was playing it religiously. It was called *Skyrim*, and involved creating a character, increasing his abilities and saving the world. It was truly engrossing.

"I've already put in about 100 hours into the game and have a really 'badass' character," I told him.

"Yeah?" He asked me about it, and I told him he should get the game as soon as possible.

"But be prepared to say goodbye to your social life," I added, "because the game will take away all of your free time." He laughed. I told him it was worth it. The game was just so engrossing.

I also bragged about my computer setup. I have a very powerful computer and could play games on three monitors. So instead of playing a game at the usual 1080p, I could play at three times that resolution. Jack seemed impressed and I told him that he has to see it sometime.

Looking back, that conversation makes me sad because it was one of the last times I spoke with Jack. What I was about to do that day was going to change our relationship. Whistleblowing was changing my life, and I hadn't even done anything yet.

We smoked two cigarettes and then went to the second floor to attend the weekly RI meeting.

CHAPTER 5

And I am...a Whistleblower

I didn't know it at the time, but the stage was already being set for me to be a whistleblower. In the academic study of whistleblowers some researchers have focused their attention on the antecedents to whistleblowing. In other words, they look at the predictors of whistleblowing. One area researchers study in regard to this is personality. A common way to study personality is to look at the Five-Factor model of personality, which includes five dimensions: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. This model was popularized by John Digman in 1990. Bjorkelo, Einarsen and Mattheisen (2010), in their study of personality and its relationship with whistleblowing, explain the 5 factors well. Neuroticism is the predisposition to feel anxiety, depression, and other distressing emotions, Extraversion is related being social and optimistic, Openness to experience is the ability to have broad interests and having an active imagination, Agreeableness is related to interactions with others, in terms cooperation, and Conscientiousness is related to being responsible, and achievement oriented.

Bjorkelo et al. (2010) found that whistleblowers tend to be extraverted and have low agreeableness. Extraverts are talkative and seek out the company of others and are therefore thought to seek out others to help remedy an unethical situation. Individuals that are low on agreeableness don't mind "rocking the boat" and therefore blowing the whistle on an organization.

As I mentioned previously, I have a master's degree in psychology and was forced to take the five-factor personality test during my studies. I scored low on

agreeableness and low on extraversion. So while I am a fairly introverted person and therefore less likely to blow the whistle on an organization, my low agreeableness makes me a perfect candidate to report unethical acts. Looking back this makes perfect sense. When I first uncovered the GAF research, my first thought wasn't "How is this going to affect the organization?" it was "I need to find out more and do something about this terrible research." My willingness to go against my organization, to question their motives (i.e., my low agreeableness with keeping the organization running smoothly) was setting me up to be a whistleblower.

Also, Chiu (2002) examined the role of individual ethical judgment and its relationship to whistleblowing. It was hypothesized that when individuals judge whistleblowing as an ethical act they would be more likely to blow the whistle than individuals who do not judge whistleblowing to be an ethical act. This hypothesis was strongly supported and suggests that persons who view whistleblowing in a positive light will be more likely to report an unethical act than their counterparts. When looking at my life, I have a positive view of whistleblowing. I think it is very important to report unethical acts. I consider myself very ethical and expect others to act in a similar way. Therefore, my predisposition also increased the likelihood that I would become a whistleblower. Had I viewed whistleblowers as traitors to their organizations, I would most likely not have questioned the RI's research and reported it to the public.

Chiu (2003) also studied the role of locus of control on whistleblowing intention. Locus of control is associated with an individual's belief in one's own ability in a specific situation. Individuals with an internal locus of control believe that their efficacy is a result of their personal qualities, while individuals with an external locus of control

believe that external forces (e.g., organizations or other people) influence their own personal abilities to perform particular actions. Chui (2003) found that individuals with an external locus of control were more likely to engage in whistleblowing than individuals with an internal locus of control. This is likely due to the notion that individuals with an internal locus of control believe that their personal actions can remedy a perceived wrongdoing, while individuals with an external locus of control believe that outside forces ultimately determine if an unethical act should be corrected or not. I know that, personally, I have an external locus of control. I think that outside forces often dictate my future. I think a lot of things are out of my control. Given this personality trait, and Chui's research on people with such a disposition, this was another factor that probably contributed to becoming the whistleblower I became. I knew that outside forces had to be brought in, because I personally feel that external forces help remedy situations.

Next, Miceli and Near (1984) investigated the relationship between organizational position and whistleblowing. These researchers hypothesized that "organization members who are less heavily dependent on their employers, because they have high levels of pay and education (e.g., professionals) will be more likely to blow the whistle than will others" (p. 690). This is due to the fact that these professionals likely expect fewer risks when challenging an organization's authority in the case of wrongdoing, as they are able to find employment in other areas due to their status. Others with lower status, and less outside opportunities, are believed to be less likely to blow the whistle, as the act has a greater possibility of causing the employee harm. Once again, this study describes me well. I was not heavily dependent on my employer. I knew I could easily

get a job elsewhere. If I lost my job at the RI due to whistleblowing, I didn't really care, as I knew my training in other areas would land me a job. Also, given that I already had a master's degree and was working on my PhD, my status was higher than others. This allowed me the freedom to express my outrage at the RI because my status would allow me to find other opportunities.

So finding out about this unethical research at the RI, combined with my own personal attributes, was setting me up to become a whistleblower. My unique characteristics, in conjunction with almost randomly uncovering this unethical research and cover-up, led me on the path to become a whistleblower. The stage was set, but all the pieces weren't in place just yet. Much more needed had to happen before I was to become the ex-employee who blew the whistle on the RI.

Chapter 6

An Introduction to the Matrix

The RI was located on the second floor, not far from the area where Jack and I had just been smoking. In no time, we were in the meeting room, and I looked at the table and chairs as I get to the door. The flickering fluorescent lights gave everything in the old office space we'd inherited from a former department a kind of cheap glow. I was aware that I was acting as if it was just an ordinary day, but I felt self-conscious and vigilant with every move I made.

I entered the room and headed directly to my usual spot; the back right corner. I like to sit in that position whenever I'm in a meeting because it lets me see the whole room and I can talk with authority. I felt it was a powerful location. Now, more than ever, I really needed power. While waiting for the meeting to begin, I talked to myself.

I needed to remain strong and get to the bottom of the GAF grant. I also needed to not act too suspicious, as I wanted to hear what the leaders would say about the project without feeling defensive.

I told myself that I must stay calm. I must! I didn't know if I could do it though. Still, I was going to try my hardest.

Feeling nervous before a RI meeting was really not something I was used to. Our meetings were actually somewhat informal. We always had an agenda of items we would cover, but the discussion was hardly governed by *Robert's Rules of Order*, and more often than not, we would go off topic, joking frequently. We all got along. The meetings were scheduled to last an hour or so, but it wasn't unusual for them to go overtime. It always seemed like we had so much to talk about. We'd get involved in side

conversations, or a topic would stir up more interest than had been expected. To be honest, the meetings could be a lot of fun, and beyond that, I think I enjoyed some of the authority I was granted. The RI leaders let me talk about whatever I wanted and took me seriously. I had begun to feel valued as somewhat of an equal, and not just some “dumb grad student.” They took my thoughts and opinions seriously. I could feel the impending end of what had been for me a really comfortable, supportive, and promising organizational environment.

* * *

It is probably important to say a little about the structure and climate of the RI now, too. As a research center, it’s a strange sort of organization, really, in terms of organizational structure. It’s not top-down, where the leader has all of the control and makes all of the decisions, but it’s also not completely horizontal either, as not all of the members have the same sort of authority as each other. For example, the leaders, who were faculty, researchers and post-docs, had more authority to make decisions with the director having the last word. Technically, it could have been considered a little autocratic, however, the director took opinions into consideration from everybody, including undergraduate interns. This contributed to a high level of trust in the everyday environment. Ideas flowed freely amongst the group, and this was something I liked. As a PhD student, I didn’t have the authority of say, a post-doc, but I still had respect from the RI leaders. They had used my suggestions about coding documents in the past and even changed procedures based upon my experience. There was respect in the organization.

The RI was also kind of a matrix type organization; meaning that I had multiple “bosses.” One week I might report to a post-doc, and the other I might report directly to the director. I didn’t just have one boss, as you would see in a truly top-down organization. Plus, the different “bosses” I had, asked for different things. A post-doc, for example, might ask me to code some text he just translated, while the director may ask me to do a literature review on a new topic. I never had strict tasks that I needed to complete each and every week. Things changed rapidly, and I liked that. I personally don’t like doing the same thing time and time again. That type of work really bores me.

The RI was a good fit for me, and I liked that I didn’t know what new and exciting thing I would be doing the next week. The loose structure had been a comfortable fit, one in which I was able to work well. Organizational structure is actually rather important when studying whistleblowers. King (1999) looked at how a variety of different organization structures influenced acts of whistleblowing. King wanted to see if there were specific ways that different structures would actually affect what a whistleblower did. He compared centralized, matrix, horizontal, divisional and hybrid organizational structures.

Centralized organizational structures are typically characterized by a bureaucratic, top-down organizational model. Matrix organizations, on the other hand, operate with two or more sectors having equal authority. For example, the technology division in an organization might have equal power in making organizational decisions as the marketing department or other sectors. Organizations with horizontal structures allow for messages to flow across the organization at the same hierarchical level. In other words, employees do not have to “go up the chain of command” to get a message to a superior, but can

rather interact with any employee at any level. Divisional organizations are organized according to particular products, services, or regions. Hybrid organizations, as the name suggests, combine two or more of the organizational structures mentioned above.

In his 1999 study, King hypothesized that whistleblowers within a centralized organization would be less likely to use internal disclosure channels, due to the fact that immediate supervisors may not bring up the issue to their supervisor, essentially “sweeping the wrongdoing under the rug.” Additionally, King posited that individuals in matrix organizations might be more likely to engage in whistleblowing to an external organization because there might not be a clear and proper channel for disclosure (since matrix organizations appear to give different departments equal authority). Likewise, in horizontal organizations, King hypothesized that employees would similarly blow the whistle to an external organization, because there are no clear channels for whom one should talk to; every employee is on equal footing.

King’s (1999) work further suggested that organizations with a divisional structure would result in more internal whistleblowing, since these organizations have departmental autonomy, decision making that is decentralized, and distinct channels for the reporting of unethical acts. Lastly, he posited that employees in hybrid organizations would be more likely to blow the whistle internally, since mixed organizations might tend to afford open channels of communication.

In sum, King’s research suggests that the way in which an organization structures its processes may actually influence who winds up hearing from a whistleblower, or what he called the “recipient” of the whistleblowing. In other words, the nature of an external

entity that has the potential to right a wrong may actually be associated with the way an organization is structured.

As I mentioned above, the RI was an unusual organization, and I would classify it as having a matrix type structure. I had multiple “bosses” and reported to different people for different tasks. As King’s (1999) work explains, in this type of an organizational setting, whistleblowers are more likely to go to external sources when blowing the whistle. As will be seen, this is exactly what I did. I did not know who to talk to, so I went to an external source. At the time, I attributed my uncertainty to my anxieties and fears. Certainly, they were probably related, but King’s work provides some insight into why I might have made the decisions I did, why I perceived my options in the way I did.

* * *

Everybody had finally entered the room and the RI director sat at the head of the table, asking everybody how the past week had been. We all went around and explained what we did during the week.

Matt, a graduate student, said, “I coded 300 documents this week.”

Jack said, “I finished that literature review I’ve been working on this past month.”

This was all typical and did not result in any unusual discussion. People were comfortable and things were going according to our usual way of doing business.

Then the director, Professor Erkens, began to talk about what he had done during the week. What he mentioned was especially interesting to me, because it directly related

to the GAF project in a way that was much more significant to me than it would have been if I had not read the proposal.

Chapter 7

Something Nefarious

Erkens said that the president of our university asked for a personal meeting with him, specifically to discuss the GAF project. According to Erkens, the president had apparently been interested in determining if the project could be used for intelligence work. When Erkens mentioned this, my hair stood on end. This was precisely one of the thoughts that had run through my mind, and which I'd even gone so far as putting into writing in the letter I'd originally intended to read to the group. The timing was uncanny.

Erkens told us that his response to the president was that he didn't think that it could, but that he found the questions to be a bit strange. According to Erkens, the president was "happy" to hear that the grant couldn't be used this way. At this point, I was having trouble keeping my attention on the group's communication. My thoughts were starting to pick up speed. Was Erkens lying to us? Couldn't the grant's research very definitely be used in intelligence work? I mean, for example, couldn't someone use TMS to turn off parts of the brain that affect, let's say, one's will power, the withholding of information or lying, based on one's personal beliefs and narratives? And if so, then couldn't such an individual then be asked questions, basically forcing them to provide answers against their will? Couldn't you use TMS to make suggestions to them as well? I didn't know why Erkens was claiming that he didn't see this. He's a smart guy, a *really* smart guy, and he *had* to have seen this. Had he lied to the president, or was he lying to the group?

I couldn't trust anything he said at this point, knowing what I'd read in the meeting notes document. At the meeting, I was extremely concerned and simply didn't

believe what Erkens told us. Further, if the president wanted to know if it could be used for intelligence work, then the government certainly must have been thinking about this as well. It appeared to me that my concerns about the possibilities of this grant could become a reality, despite what the leader of the RI was saying. Plus, our president was not a naïve individual. My lack of confidence in Erkens, was affecting my thinking as I began to wonder if the interaction with the president had even been represented to us in good faith. Had they perhaps discussed the uses for intelligence, despite what Erkens was saying? How could we even know? This all concerned me a great deal.

I was even more concerned about the project than before, despite the fact that I wouldn't have thought that possible after my fitful, sleepless night. Now we were being asked about the intelligence possibilities of the grant. This GAF grant was serious! My concerns about its use outside of academia seemed to be valid. I asked myself again, "what have I gotten myself into?"

I had to push this aside because now Erkens was starting the actual meeting. My topic was the first thing to discuss. What he'd just told us actually set me up so that my questions would seem to flow relevantly.

"Okay, so now on to the actual agenda," Erkens began. "Number one: GAF research grant discussion from Chase. Chase what did you want to talk about?"

I nervously and very quickly said, "I was curious about the GAF grant, and it sounded really interesting, so I was reading the proposal and I'm not a neuropsychologist, so it sounded really confusing. I was wondering if you could explain it to us a bit more, because it talks about...what...transcranial magnetic stimulation and MRIs...I don't

know. Can you just explain what is going on, because it seems kind of, I don't know...kind of confusing and weird. You know what I mean?"

I was playing coy at this point in time because I wanted to hear exactly what they would say. I didn't accuse them of anything, and gave them the benefit of the doubt. I truly wanted to hear how they would explain the project. I felt like I couldn't be direct with my concerns because I didn't want to make them defensive. If I played "dumb," I thought I could get real answers from them.

Erkens jokingly replied, "Well, it's GAF." The entire room laughed. He continued on, "The basic project is we're taking three theories of narrative, vertical integration—you know, you have master narratives⁶ and personal narratives, and we'll study when they line up—narrative validity, you know..." He continued to respond, providing explanations for concepts that we obviously already knew, "... that narratives are valid when they are coherent. And the third one is narrative transportation, which is a theory from psychology that says when you are transported into a narrative, it more or less, curtails your cognitive processing, err...your rational processing."

I responded, "Right, basically when you are 'into' the story." I played along, playing the student role.

Erkens said, "Right, you're into the story and you're able to identify with characters in the story, you have consistent beliefs. So we are taking those three theories and devising, um, experimental manipulations based on those."

"We're going to measure their, uh, brain response," Erkens summed it up.

⁶ Also known as cultural narratives

I continued to probe, “So what is happening?”

Mark, Erkens’ right hand man, jumped in at this point and said, “Well, first the amygdala fires, and then something with a long word that I can’t pronounce fires.” The whole room erupted with laughter, as we all realized a lot of this neuropsychology was way out of our field of knowledge. Or perhaps Mark was trying to divert the discussion. But the science was interesting, and talking about it is fun to people who love knowledge.

Erkens continued, “So, uh, we should be able to see what brain responses there are in response to these manipulations. So basically we’re going to have this matrix of the theories, the brain responses, and persuasive responses. So, we’ll be able to see if, in fact, those things line up.”

Erkens stopped talking, and there was a pause.

And there was a gap, too, I thought to myself. I read about all of this in the proposal, I needed to learn specifically about the phase that involved TMS, transcranial magnetic stimulation. I very hesitantly asked about it, aware that he had left it out.

“Well, um, I was, um interested in this because it sounds like you’ll be turning on and off parts of the brain. What’s that about?”

The mood in the room suddenly shifted. Erkens and his right hand man had shocked looks on their faces. I could tell they didn’t like that I was asking this question. Erkens stopped being so casual with his conversation and became very serious.

His response began summarily, “Well, first of all, that phase is optional, and we suspect it won’t happen as proposed.”

I was immediately suspicious of this and didn’t believe him. He previously said that they were awarded full funding, and full funding to me seems to imply that they

received money for all three phases. I stayed calm, though, as I wanted to hear what they had to say. I knew I needed to tread lightly here. Erkens continued, suddenly adopting a somewhat submissive voice.

“The program officer says that once the first two phases of the project are done they are going to kind of take a look what results from what projects go together, and stuff like that, and maybe shift the priorities around or something like that.” The precision in his words had disappeared. “But, if it goes through, um, it’s proposed that some of those brain regions are on the surface of the brain and you can disrupt areas on the surface of the brain with magnetic fields.” Everybody in the room looked a bit shocked at this news. You could hear people whispering in the background. They, too, were wondering what “disrupting certain parts of the brain” really meant.

I tried to lighten the mood and said, “Yeah, it sounds like crazy sci-fi stuff.”

Erkens said, “I’ve seen...like, if you look at transcranial magnetic stimulation on YouTube, you’ll find....”

I interrupted him and said, “I briefly looked at this because I had no idea about it before or what it was called.”

“Yeah, so it’s...uh...well, I’ve seen that they have some guy talk, and this device, is put right here (he points to a part of his head), which is where language is, uh, uh, processed...” Erkens continued, “They’ll have them read a paragraph, and switch on this device, and they go all ‘wauhauahuu,’ and speak unintelligently. Then they switch the device off, and he goes back to speaking normally.”

I hesitantly said, “Well, that’s, uh, kind of weird.” I let off a nervous laugh at this point. “It’s kind of freaky.” The conversation was delicate. I knew we were treading on thin ice, but I wanted him to say as much as possible.

Another member of the group jumped in and said, “Well, can’t this be used...”

Erkens was very quick to shut this down and seemed visibly concerned about the direction of this conversation. I did not say anything. The group was now engaged in the discussion.

You could visibly see the leader’s face change once again. He clearly did not like where this conversation was going. I was watching how the facts of the grant immediately took members of the team down the same logical path I had found myself on when I read the proposal.

Erkens dismissed proceeding to talk about the research as if the topic was not even on the table, “So the purpose of the project from a research point of view is to provide conclusive evidence that these regions are involved.”

The whole room was dead silent again. This was unusual because the group was normally lively and having small conversations on the side. I knew it was risky, but encouraged by what I’ve witnessed, I decided to push further. I said, “This sounds kind of scary to be honest. I’m going to keep it real here. It sounds kind of scary, right?”

Erkens responded, repeating what he’d said to us earlier. “Well we don’t know if that part of the grant will actually proceed.”

“Okay,” I feigned acceptance, though I still wanted to see what else might be discussed without prompting. Unfortunately, he did not say much. I wanted to pull out

quotations from the proposal at this point in time, but decided against it. To be honest, I was scared and just wanted to see where the conversation would go.

There was then awkward silence for about five seconds. Nobody knew what to say.

The trusty right hand man, Mark, ended the silence by attempting an explanation seemingly designed to skillfully acknowledge, then ultimately, diffuse the concern.

“Well, this project sounds like there is some sort of nefarious weapon being developed,” Mark added, somewhat informally.

I repeated, “It sounds kind of scary, you know?”

Mark responded, “Yes, and particularly where we’re going to put a device on your head and stimulate something...it sounds kind of weird. But in the end if we identify a given outcome, we’re only sure if that is correct if we do the opposite; which is to turn off those parts of the brain.”

Mark wasn’t telling the whole truth. They were not just trying to prove the negative case. They were actually trying to change thought. I was not satisfied with his response, but I was very nervous at this point and did not question him further.

Erkens must have known that this conversation was not going in a direction he liked and immediately cut Mark off.

I told myself that he was just trying to preemptively stop the conversation before it turned to a discussion of the ethics. He continued, “Well, it’s a big electromagnet, so I don’t think they’ll be handing these to the national guard people and telling them to creep up on the U.S. and say ‘hold still while I disrupt your narrative processing.’” The whole room laughed. I see his strategy now. He was trying to turn this into a joke to make the

project seem less harmful than it really was. He was conveniently forgetting to tell the group that the proposal outlines a plan to replicate TMS without actual magnetic stimulation.

Erkens then said something that absolutely shocked me. He looked at me and said, “Well, for the same reasons you had negative reactions to this part of the project, we are not going to talk about it with anyone.”

I interrupted him. “Well it sounds like it could be used for bad, right?...if in the wrong hands.”

The director said, “I don’t see how, but,” and then he is immediately cut off by Cathy, a graduate student, who said, “If they can make it so that it’s not so heavy and make it have longer lasting effects, couldn’t they just say, ‘well walk through this machine,’ and now your brain is disrupted.” It reassured me to see that others seemed to be concerned with this part of the project as well.

Erkens immediately jumped in and said, “Well, that’s not true, the effects aren’t long lasting...Well please don’t spread this around.” He then quickly moved on to the next topic of the meeting and the discussion stopped. I did not have time to ask any follow-up questions.

Chapter 8

And Again, in the Matrix

Erkens just told us, told *me*, to not spread this information around. He wanted me to keep it a secret. Why? If what the project was doing was completely harmless, why couldn't I tell anybody about it? This further solidified in my mind that the RI was trying to hide this portion of the project. I was now convinced that they really wanted to cover this up.

I was saddened that he told me to not tell others outside of the RI about this project. It confirmed in my mind that he knew others would question the ethics and morals of this research just like I—and members of the RI team—immediately did after reading the proposal. I decided I could not trust him anymore. He just told me to keep quiet. This is a public university for god's sake; research should be transparent! I couldn't believe that he told me to stay quiet.

I left the meeting disgusted. My fears had come true. I couldn't trust them anymore. These people really were trying to cover up this research. They specifically said to not tell anybody about it. They were scared that others would find it unethical too. I didn't even stop to smoke a cigarette when I walked out the doors of the building. I just wanted to go home, and I headed back to the parking structure to get my bike.

When I was riding my motorcycle back home, I could not shake the feelings of shock and anger. Did Erkens really just tell me to not talk about this research with others outside of the RI?

My distress was distracting. I began to second-guess myself and try to find options. What options did I have? I imagined myself having read my letter to the RI. At

least then I would have said it all. I wanted to put all of this in their face. I wanted to point out direct quotes that showed what they really wanted to do. But, I also realized that not doing that had been smart. They probably would have just lied about it and then tried to shut me up. I doubted that I would have even been able to get through much of it before I would have been interrupted—with those insidious jokes.

It was smart to keep that information to myself. What would he have done if I had read the direct quotes? If I wanted to stop this research, I could use my notes then. If I was going to reveal this unethical research to individuals outside of the group, I would need that information. Someone needed to see what the RI was doing, without RI sanitization and cover up.

I got home and no matter what I was doing, I seemed to think about what to do next. I realized something had to be done. This research needed to be reported to somebody, but who? I didn't know what to do at this point. I could have gone to higher administrators with information about this, but could they be trusted? After all, the grant proposal had to go through the appropriate channels within the university before it could be sent to GAF. Did others overlook the ethical concerns because they saw the money value associated with the grant? Or did they simply not care? I didn't even know who to talk to about this. There wasn't a whistleblowing department that I was aware of. Who could I even trust? The president of the university was aware of this project. Could anybody at LSWU be trusted? What should I do? Who should I go to? Something needed to be done. I needed to take this to somebody. I couldn't stand for this research. But who should I talk to?

Some researchers have studied when whistleblowers choose to go to an internal source versus an external source. In other words, they examine under what circumstances an individual will try to report the wrongdoing within their organization, or if they'll report the wrongdoing to an external source (like the media). Dworkin and Baucus (1998) found that people who go to external sources, typically have less tenure with the organization and possess greater evidence of wrongdoing than individuals who report the wrong doing internally. Again, the research seems to support that in my situation, I would find myself going to an external source to report the wrongdoing of the RI. Dworkin and Baucus found that individuals who had worked less than four and one half years with an organization were more likely to turn to an external source when whistleblowing.

I had only worked for the RI for three years, so I was certainly a candidate for avoiding people within my organization. Further, I had strong evidence of unethical research and a cover up, which once again falls in line with these researchers' findings. While it hadn't actually (yet) become major wrong-doing, the ethical breach harbored on it. I began to consider what I could share with someone. I had the actual proposal, meeting notes outlining a cover up, and a conversation where Erkens lied about TMS and told me not to talk about the research outside of the group. Well, he actually told us all not to talk about it, but in many ways, I was already feeling disconnected from the group. I felt the silencing at a deeply personal level. Because I had three forms of damning evidence that I could use in my whistleblowing, according to research, I'd be more likely to go to an external source.

The culture of an organization also influences whistleblowing. In 2001, Kaptein found that creating a culture of encouragement toward reporting wrongdoing would increase whistleblowing and therefore help uncover unethical acts. Ever since I was an undergraduate at the University of Oklahoma, research ethics have been hammered into me. I know what is right and wrong, when it comes to research. Every research methods course I'd taken, and every discussion about published research had taught me how research should be conducted. I knew it is important to report unethical research whenever possible. I had these values instilled in me for many years now. Before we could engage in any research, we had to file reports with the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and our professors had to be certified as having taken the proper training to avoid violations of ethics with human subjects.

I knew that unethical research must be reported, so therefore, I knew it was important to report this research to somebody. But to whom?

Like Kaptein, Berry (2004) examined organizational culture and its influence on whistleblowing. This researcher first started out by identifying seven dimensions of organizational culture, then he explored how they might be related to the incidence of whistleblowing. The seven dimensions were: vigilance, engagement, credibility, accountability, empowerment, courage, and options and their association with whistleblowing. As I go through each of the dimensions and Berry's research findings, I am able to see my experience is not unusual, and my behaviors not unexpected.

Vigilance is associated with a "mindful watchfulness for threats to organizational integrity (Berry, 2004, p.3). The more vigilant an organization's culture is, the more likely whistleblowing will occur. I had taken many courses on remaining vigilant when it

comes to unethical research (e.g., realizing when a researcher has perverted scientific ethos and is doing immoral research, such as experimenting on children without parental consent) and was keenly aware when certain acts were unethical. So my time in academia taught me to be very vigilant.

Engagement is associated with organizational and individual factors that foster a sense of involvement with an organization. The more engaged an employee is with an organization, the more likely they will report wrongdoing. I was very involved with the RI; it was practically my entire life. I worked at the RI 20 hours a week and my dissertation advisor and mentor was the director of the organization. We socialized together, ate together, celebrated life events together. I was very engaged in the culture of the RI, and therefore more likely to report wrongdoing, according to Berry.

If an organization's culture is committed to integrity, whistleblowing may be more likely to occur, as wrongdoing may negatively influence a company's integrity. Credibility is associated with an employee's perception of their organizations commitment and dedication to integrity. Because of my experience, I do not see this aspect of organizational culture reflected in my behavior. I did not perceive my organization, the RI, to be dedicated to integrity. After all, they were trying to hide critical aspects of their project from everybody outside of the organization. However, my larger field of work, academic research, was very committed to integrity. Integrity is a key component of research, in general, and it something that academics take seriously and instill in their protégés and students. So while I did not perceive that the RI was particularly interested in integrity, I knew my overarching field of academic research was. Therefore, based on the research, I was likely to blow the whistle on the RI.

Accountability is associated with the organization taking responsibility for wrongdoing and attempting to remedy the situation. If an organization's culture is not associated with high accountability, whistleblowing may be ineffective, and therefore less likely to occur. Once again, I know that academic research, in general, is very interested in accountability. I believed that other researchers and academics would be concerned with unethical research and would attempt to remedy the situation, as that had been instilled in me early in my career. This further promoted the notion that I would engage in whistleblowing.

Next, empowerment involves an employee's beliefs about their power to make change in an organization. If employees believe that they are empowered, they may be more likely to report wrongdoing. Courage in an organization is associated with managers seriously investigating employee concerns and attempting to remedy any potential wrongdoing. The more courage an organization's culture fosters, the more likely an individual will come forward when an unethical act is observed. While I certainly didn't feel empowered by the RI leaders at the moment I was considering what to do with the information I had, I had felt revered and as if I influenced things prior to my discovery. Additionally, as I prepared to blow the whistle, I felt that others at LSWU would be helpful in reporting the wrongdoing that I found. Part of me actually believed that if I brought this to the right person in my academic department, something would be done to try and stop this horrible research. I knew that some professors would have the courage to seriously investigate the wrongdoing I uncovered. I knew that some professors in the department were courageous. I just had to find the right ones.

My ideals were at stake. While Berry's research focused on the culture of the organization, my experience was teaching me that these cultural values find their manifestation in unique ways in the person doing the whistleblowing. It is the relationship I had with these values, my corresponding beliefs and my personal and professional identities that was compelling me to act. Not acting was a threat to how I saw the world. I don't think I could have said that then, but in retrospect, it could explain the intensity of anxiety that I experienced.

Ultimately, Berry's final dimension is clearly related to the actual act of whistleblowing. Organizational Options are the avenues that individuals can take when attempting to report an unethical act. If employees perceive that there are available and feasible options for relaying this information to the appropriate channels, then whistleblowing may be more likely to occur. Reflecting on this part of Berry's (2004) findings, I did not really know what my organizational options were. I did not know who to talk to at the university. I felt a lot more like King (1999) said one felt in an organization structured as a matrix. Perhaps the structure had been so loosely articulated that when it came to a problematic situation such as this, there wasn't a clear route to follow.

I just knew that I could, and would, talk to other professors in the department and get help from them. I was insisting on the possibility. I knew there was an avenue, but I wasn't quite sure what it was. I simply knew that there had to be someone I could talk to at LSWU. In this respect, although I might have been destined to talk to an external source (particularly if internal whistleblowing was not seen as successful, as mentioned in Barnett, Cochran and Taylor, 1993), I was reflecting a sort of grasping, to hold on to

the organization I was about to report. There had to be someone who could confirm that in some way I still belonged here.

Even the prospect of whistleblowing had already made my organizational membership, my profession, my career...questionable.

I finally decided who I would talk to. I decided to go to one of my professors with the information I had uncovered. I had taken courses with her before and had become friends with her. I knew she could be trusted. Plus, given my experience with her during classwork, I knew she was a very ethical individual. She would read the documents and take my concerns seriously. She was my next step.

I emailed my professor and set up an appointment with her. I did not specifically say what I wanted to talk about, but I said it was important. She responded and a meeting was set for later in the week. All I could do now was wait. I was anxious to hear her response and figure out what to do next. It was going to be a difficult next few days waiting for our meeting. But at least I had somebody to talk to.

I was on my path to blowing the whistle on the RI. It had begun.

Chapter 9

Betrayal or Resistance?

Some whistleblowing researchers might call what I was about to do betrayal, while others might refer to it as organizational resistance or dissidence (Bjoreklo & Madsen, 2013; Martin & Rifkin, 2004; Near & Miceli, 1985; Perrucci, Anderson, Schendel & Trachtman, 1980; Perry, 1998). Essentially, I was resisting organizational authority by speaking to somebody outside of the organization about this GAF research. I was resisting the organization's wishes to keep the research "in-house." In particular, in 2013, two researchers, Bjoreklo and Madsen wrote that their research had led them to find that "whistleblowing can be seen as a form of worker resistance that challenges, and has the potential to change, organizational misconduct and abuse" (p. 30). I was actually resisting their power to keep me quiet.

Whistleblowing is also seen as dissidence (Near & Miceli, 1985), since the person doing the whistleblowing is rebelling against organizational authority (and the definition of dissidence is going against official policy or authority). I was becoming a dissident because I purposefully decided that I was going to go against the wishes of the RI and talk about this research with somebody outside of the group. We had specifically been told in the meeting that we should not talk about the grant. The organization was trying to influence me through the use of social control (Percucci et al., 1980), telling me to be quiet. I became dissident by going against this control; I was resisting the power and authority they thought they had over me. Interestingly, all of this, in my particular situation, fell within the realm of what a lot of organizational communication literature

would probably call informal communication.⁷⁸ Secrecy and silence were not formal requirements of my job. What was amazing to me was how powerful my awareness of the significance of something, in this case, that was informally required. I don't think I had ever really seen research on this. I had no way of framing the intense emotions that I was feeling, and most of all the sense that I was betraying my coworkers. Resistance sounds kind of sexy, in an activist sort of way, while saying I was a dissident romanticizes it. But saying I was betraying people got to the core of the nature of a human being I am. I don't betray people. It was the betrayal that was affecting me at the level of my personal identity. That was what was eating at me as I prepared to go speak to the professor I'd decided I would trust with my story.

It was the night before talking with my professor about the GAF project, and I told myself that I had to prepare. I wasn't nervous about speaking to her, but despite that, I was really very anxious. I decided I needed to put all of the documents on an USB flash drive and that I would show her. I wanted her to see the documents, but I was certain that it wasn't safe to email this to her. All university email is public, and if somebody got wind of me talking to an outsider about this "secret" RI project, I could be in trouble. It was odd considering someone within the same university as an "outsider." And in

⁷ Informal communication recognizes "that a variety of needs, including social ones, underlie communication in organizations and that, as a result, the actual communication relationships in an organization may be less rational than formal systems. Informal structures function to facilitate communication, maintain cohesiveness in the organizations a whole, and maintain a sense of personal integrity or autonomy" (Johnson, Donohue, Atkin, & Johnson, 1994, p. 112).

⁸ "The essence of...informal communication systems is their lack of pre-specification" (Kraut, Fish, Root, & Chalfonte, 1990, p. 5).

retrospect, I guess I should have thought about what this could do to her if the RI found out. After all, the leaders of the center were her colleagues, and one was even the director of her department.

I put the proposal, the meeting notes outlining the cover up, and select quotations that I found disturbing on my flash drive and put them in my backpack. This was a big step. “Tomorrow I am going to betray the RI,” I told myself. I was going to defy their instructions to keep the project’s purpose only within the RI. I was going to tell an outsider about it. This was my first step in blowing the whistle on the RI.

* * *

I drove to school and walked into the building. It was the same building that housed the RI. I had sweaty palms and butterflies in my stomach. I was very curious what my professor was going to think about these documents. Was she going to be as concerned as me? What would she say? Would she have any suggestions for moving forward?

I knocked on her door, which was open, and she looked up from her desk and said, “Come on in.” I greeted her as I walked in, and got right to business.

“Hi, thanks for meeting with me. I think we need to close your door for this. What I’m about to tell you is secret.” She looked at me, and agreed, nodding and motioning for me to close the door. After assuring it was shut, I took a seat in one of the chairs in front of her desk and began talking.

“Well, you’re probably wondering why I wanted to meet with you, right?” She nodded her head. “Well, you know that big GAF grant the RI got? Something is very

wrong about it. I think it is extremely unethical. It is worrying me a lot. I didn't know what else to do than to talk to somebody about what was going on."

She had a quizzical look on her face that also expressed what I take to be concern.

"Okay...what do you mean? I know they haven't really said much about the project to the faculty, but what's going on?"

I responded, "Well, you might think I'm crazy, but I think they are literally trying to brainwash people."

She said nothing, but sat back a little further in her chair, but looked at me, clearly waiting for me to continue. I continue. I began to describe what I knew about the project.

"This is wild," she says, "It feels like I'm hearing something from a sci-fi novel." She paused a while, seeming to consider what she should say, and continued, "Everything has been so secretive about the project. Like I said, the RI hasn't told us much about the project at all—and keep saying they'll tell more in the fall semester. But if what you are showing me is true, this is a bit worrisome."

I nodded, and responded, "Well, it gets worse." I told her about what I knew regarding the RI's efforts to hide the worrisome aspects of the project.

"I'm seriously worried about the ethical ramifications of this project," I said to her.

She seemed more concerned now and sat quietly, thoughtfully.

She looked at me, saying, "Have you told anybody else about this?—my God, we sound like we're in a spy movie."

I smiled and nodded, answering, “I just told my roommates. I had them read the proposal, just to make sure I was reading it right. They came to the same conclusion as me. They think what the RI is doing is wrong. I mean, it’s crazy!”

“Look at this here. I want you to see it.” I opened some additional files on my iPad and she leans forward to look at the screen. “I compiled a list of quotes directly from the proposal that are frightening, to say the least.” She read the quotations about using TMS to disrupt brain functioning, the passages where they talk about using the findings and the plans for the research.

Her eyes were opened wide, and she sat back in her chair, and took a deep breath before speaking. “Well, all this certainly sounds pretty incredible, but I need to think about this a little more.”

I said, “Yes, that’s perfectly fine. I don’t know what to do, but I think something needs to be done. Please think about it and let me know if you are as concerned as me. I think this is very serious, and I think something should be done to try and stop it. I came to you because I know you’d take my concerns seriously.”

She said she would, and agreed to meet with me again the next day.

“Great. I’m very curious as to what you think.” I thanked her for meeting, and stood up, saying, “I guess I’ll see you tomorrow.” She nodded, with a somewhat incredulous look on her face, I turned to leave.

* * *

I walked down the hallway deep in thought.

“Okay, I’ve done it. I’ve told somebody about this. This is a good first step.”

I felt good about myself. I felt that I have done the right thing. I didn't care that I have betrayed the RI. I thought what they are doing was very wrong, and somebody outside of the group needed to know about it. I drove home happy that the ball was at least moving forward a little bit. I was very anxious for the meeting with my professor again the next day. I headed home and tried not to think about the project at all. All I could do was wait 24 hours and then I'd know more.

Chapter 10

The Next Level

The next day comes and I arrived at my professor's office at our agreed time. I wasted no time with pleasantries.

"Well, what do you think?"

She said, "Chase this is some serious stuff. You were right to be concerned. The research you described seems quite problematic ethically."

I said, "I know, right? It's nuts!" She nodded in agreement. I said, "Do you agree that something needs to be done about this? I mean people need to know about what's going on here."

"I agree. People do need to know about this," she said, gazing pensively at her bookcase as she spoke, seeming to be thinking out loud, "No wonder they were secretive about the project...it makes sense now that they never talked much about the GAF grant...they were obviously concerned other faculty in the department would question their research."

"Yes," I responded, "Well, what should we do about it?" I was feeling a sense of urgency, and I hated putting her on the spot, but my nerves got the best of me. If I didn't do something right away, I didn't know what else I would be able to do. "I think something definitely needs to be done as soon as possible, so that this can potentially be stopped before it's too late. The most problematic parts of the research won't start for a few years. If we do something about it now, we can maybe stop it."

She looked at me and nodded. “Yes, I think you’re right. Part of me wishes I could just print copies of the proposal and put it in faculty mailboxes in the department. I wish they knew what is going on in their own department.”

I thought to myself, that this was a good idea, but it’s not enough, besides I didn’t think she was serious. I said, “Yes, we could do that, but I think maybe the public needs to know about this as well. If only the faculty members know about it, what really can be done? The RI already has a strategy to cover up the project if news of it reaches the rest of the department. Do you think maybe I should talk to the press?”

She said, “Well, that’s a big step. Who are you thinking? School press? State press? Nationwide?”

“Well, I want as many people to know about this research as possible, so I want to go as big as possible. I really think the more people that know about it, the greater chance we have of getting this stopped.” I considered that I had no idea how to proceed with this and mention it to her.

“Well, I know a few people out in California who routinely work with the media. I’ll run it by them and see if they have any suggestions on how to proceed with such a case,” she said to me, adding, “Can you think of any news outlets you can contact?”

I responded, “Great! That would be really helpful. I think I’ll send some anonymous emails out to *Cutting Edge*⁹ magazine and see if they’d be interested in the story. The RI has mentioned multiple times that they are scared of *Cutting Edge* learning

⁹ Name changed

about their research, as *Cutting Edge* has been critical of this type of research in the past. I think *Cutting Edge* would be really interested in knowing about this research.”

We agreed to meet again in a few days and share what we found. I was excited, but also a little nervous. She was right, this was a really big step. I was preparing to talk to the press about the GAF research. I was taking this to the next level. This was quickly becoming a big deal. I couldn't help but think to myself, “I'm actively going to try and be a whistleblower now.” My professor was offering me instrumental social support, as she was there to help me through the situation, but at the same time was providing me with tangible aid (Langford, Bowsher, Maloney, & Lillis, 1997). So it wasn't just emotional support that she was giving me, she was also *helping* me work through my decisions. It was helpful to have an advisor.

I rushed home and drafted an email to *Cutting Edge* that day. I decided to write the editor of a military section of the publication, as I felt he would be the most interested in the story. He wrote about GAF before, and I believed he would be my best bet. He might find this research troubling as well. The letter was incredibly long, and I tried to disclose as much information as I thought they would need to make a decision. I didn't know what was the best way to proceed; there wasn't any guide for whistleblowers. How did I know what I should do, what to say, or how to do it?

I chose the pseudonym QM, short for Question Mark. I gave two conditions at the end of the email that were very important to me. I wanted to remain anonymous, because I feared retribution if it came out that I was leaking this information to the public. I didn't want to be harmed. Truthfully, I was scared. I wanted to minimize any risk. Also, I wanted the article published after July 1st, 2012, because I planned on

quitting my job at the RI before July 1, 2012, and I didn't want to be around when the article was published. I made the decision that night that it was necessary that I quit the RI. I couldn't work for such an unethical organization. The decision seemed natural. I almost made it on a whim. It's all that could be done. I could no longer be a part of such terrible work. It was too much for me. The decision was easy to make honestly.

I set up an anonymous email address through Yahoo! by using the program Tor and sent the letter to the editor of *Cutting Edge*. According to their website, Tor is a “network of virtual tunnels that allows people and groups to improve their privacy and security on the Internet. It also enables software developers to create new communication tools with built-in privacy features. Tor provides the foundation for a range of applications that allow organizations and individuals to share information over public networks without compromising their privacy” (Tor, 2015). Essentially, Tor is a computer program that one can use to mask one's IP (internet protocol) address and therefore conceal their identity. For example, when I set up my anonymous email address through Yahoo!, Yahoo! thought that I was a person in Germany, because I had a German IP address. Basically, Tor allows you to pretend to be somebody else. If anybody was to trace my emails, they would run into a dead end because my IP address was obfuscated. I was sitting in the U.S., but for anybody who may or may not be spying on my email, they would think I was in Germany. Tor is very easy to use, as all you have to do is download a program and then run it.

I got up from the computer and went to the kitchen to look for something to eat. So much had been happening that I hadn't bothered to eat much that day. I grabbed some

leftover pizza and put it in the microwave for a couple of minutes and brought it back to my computer. I needed to relax. Maybe I'd watch a movie.

To my surprise, I'd already gotten a response from *Cutting Edge*. It had been sent literally only ten minutes after I'd sent my email. This was incredible. The message read:

Both conditions are fine. Anonymity is fine. Would love to see the docs. Pardon brevity, in midst of garage sale. Thanks for thinking of us.

What a funny message. It accentuated the everyday human nature of this whole thing, despite the sci-fi, spy flick nature of the research and what I was doing. "...in midst of garage sale?" I smiled to myself, and took very little time to think much before I immediately responded.

You'd think this was something that I did all the time. I thought to myself, "This is all happening so fast. I didn't think it would happen like this." I was excited and a little scared, too. I was really going through with this. I had just sent an editor a whistleblowing message. I was excited that he wanted to learn more about this and that he responded to me so quickly. This all happened in a day! I couldn't believe it! I was happy that this was really happening. I was on a mission and nothing could stop me. I just knew this was the right thing to do. It's hard to explain, but I was almost on auto-pilot here. I was just going with it, and it was all happening so fast.

The editor responds back to me the next day:

This looks like a story that really needs to be told and I'm still okay with the conditions. I ask however that you don't share it with anyone else so that we can nail the story down.

It would be good if we can talk in person, though I will never

divulge your name to anyone other than my direct editor. I recommend that when we do speak, you call me from a phone that cannot be traced back to you. While it's *highly* unlikely anyone would try to trace the leak source (it's an open contract), being safe is smart.

You can reach me anytime at XXX XXX XXXX

This email worried me a bit. He wanted to speak over the phone. I did not anticipate this, and this was going to make me vulnerable. I thought to myself, can I trust this guy? I mean, he is a respected journalist, so he wouldn't reveal his source, right? I question participating in this phone call. It made me very cautious. I pondered this for a few hours. I took a nap and slept on it. Naps usually help to clear my mind. When I woke up, I decided that if this is what needs to be done, then "so be it." I'm going to have to trust this man. If I want this story out there, I had to trust somebody. I also understood his situation. He wanted to verify my identity to make sure I was not lying about anything. He was just doing what any journalist would do. Still, I was very, very nervous. This is another big step. I'm still on auto-pilot at this point. I responded to the editor:

Thanks for reading the documents and getting the story out there.

Talking on the phone is fine with me. Obviously, I'm a little nervous about it, but if you can assure my anonymity, it should be okay. I think I can find a payphone somewhere across town. If you have a better method, please let me know.

Once you're done closely reading over the document, please let me know, and we can talk on the phone.

The editor responded:

There's really no need to be nervous, though I totally understand that.

I'll give the docs one more read in the a.m. and if you'd like to set a general time to talk let me know.

Thanks for sending this to us.

I wrote back:

I'm free to talk in the afternoon. After you're done reading everything over again, let me know a good time to reach you. Thanks

* * *

At this point I started to become even more nervous. I decided that I needed to talk to somebody. Everything was happening in a matter of days. It was almost too much to comprehend. I really needed to unburden myself with a trusted individual.

I knocked on my roommate Sam's door and asked to talk.

"Sam, things are getting a little crazy here. I need to talk."

"Okay." Sam is a good confidant. He genuinely cares about me and I trusted him immensely.

"You know how I was writing *Cutting Edge*? Well, they got back to me very quickly and now want to talk on the phone about the project. I'm really, really nervous about that."

Sam responded, "Wow...okay. What do they want to talk about?"

I said, "I don't know. I guess they just want to verify some things. I don't know. He said he could ensure my anonymity, but who knows?"

Sam answered back, "Well, that seems pretty normal. Journalists have to vet their sources, right? I think this is a normal process."

I said, "He also said to use a phone that can't be traced back to me. Where am I going to do that? Do they even have pay phones anymore?"

Sam quickly said, “Yeah, there’s that payphone at that Seven Eleven down the street. It’s kind of hidden too. It would be a good spot.”

I responded, “Yeah, that’s smart. I can do that. What do I get, a prepaid phone card or something?”

Sam smartly responded, “No, use quarters. Phone cards can be traced back to you. You’ve got to be smart about this if you don’t want to get caught. This is serious now. You’re actually talking to a journalist now.”

I said, “I know, I leaked the documents, he read them and he says the story needs to get out to the public. It’s all happening so fast. I don’t know, I haven’t really thought about it, but am I doing the right thing here?”

Sam said, “I really don’t know. This is very serious now. I don’t know if I’d be doing what you’re doing, but if you think it’s the right thing to do....”

I said, “What do you mean, you don’t know if you’d do what I’m doing?”

Sam responded, “I mean the research is bad. That’s for sure. But is it really that serious? Is it worth the risk?”

I thought to myself and answer back, “Yes, this research is terrible. You read it! They are trying to disrupt brain functioning. It’s terrible! I can’t stand for brainwashing. Plus, they are trying to cover it up, and after I asked questions, we were told me not to talk about the research with anybody outside of the RI. It’s what I have to do. I feel ethically obligated to do this.”

Sam responded, “Well man, if that’s what you think, then you’re doing the right thing. But just think about what you’re doing. You’re leaking documents, talking to the press. This is getting real now. You’re becoming a whistleblower.”

Exactly what that phrase, “You’re becoming a whistleblower,” meant hadn’t really hit me yet. Sure, I knew what it meant. I was leaking sensitive documents to the press and talking with journalists. I was literally blowing the whistle on the RI. But I wasn’t internalizing it, wasn’t allowing the risky nature of what I was doing to affect me. I was in a sort of denial, I guess. Maybe it was necessary for me to be able to act. I didn’t take Sam’s advice. I didn’t think about what I was doing. I was still in “go mode.” I didn’t care about the consequences. I just wanted to get the story out there. When high risk takers, somebody who I was at this moment in time, take risks, they don’t think about the consequences as much as low risk takers (Seal & Agostinelli, 1994). This was certainly what was happening to me.

I responded to Sam, “Yeah, I guess you’re right. So even though it’s risky, I mean, from an ethical standpoint, you think I should talk to him?”

“Yeah,” Sam said to me, “I mean you have to, right? I’ll drive you there and sit in the car while you talk to him.” Sam was a real friend. And having enough friends is important when blowing the whistle, as that social support is needed during the sometimes difficult process and aftermath (Davis, 1989).

I said, “Thanks man. I’m really nervous about this. Having you there would help calm my nerves.”

After waking up the next day, having my morning coffee and cigarette, I went to Quik Trip and got some donuts. I read the daily news in the morning and then went to check my email, and the editor responded to me about the phone call. He wrote: “Would this afternoon around 3 or so work for you?” I responded, “Thanks. 3pm works well for me. I’ll talk to you then.”

It was about 11am and 3pm wasn't that far off. I immediately went to the bank and got \$20 in quarters. I grew increasingly nervous. The autopilot turned off, and I was back to the familiar inner chatter with which I was so familiar. I didn't know if I could go through this. I was so anxious at that moment in time. What was he going to say? What was he going to talk about? I didn't know if I could do this. I was so scared.

I went to Sam, who is in his room enjoying some downtime, and told him the editor wants to talk at 3pm. "Sam, can you take me to the Seven Eleven at 3? *Cutting Edge* wants to talk then."

"Today? Three o'clock?" Sam thought a bit, and quickly said he could.

"I'm really nervous man. I don't know if I can do this. I'm so, so nervous," I said to him, "You know I'm an anxious person anyway, but this is really, really making me nervous."

Sam tried to soothe me, "Nah man, you can do this. You have to. It's all going to be okay. Plus, I'll be in the car next to you. It's all going to be fine."

I responded, "I don't know man. This is all happening so fast. I just don't know. But I'm going to do it. I have to, right?"

He went, "Well, if you want this story out there, you do. Don't worry so much. It'll be fine."

Sam's words do little to calm me down. I was still extremely nervous. I really did not know if I could go through this. It was becoming too much for me. I try to remember what I learned somewhere about breathing to calm down. I breathed in through my mouth and out my nose, which felt awkward. It helped a little, but not much. Maybe it's the other way around. But I was too frazzled to try. I was just going to have

to go into this scared and anxious. There was nothing I could do about it. I had to just deal with my nerves.

I checked my cell phone for the time constantly, and eventually, 2:45 pm came around.

“Sam,” I said, “it’s time to go.” He grabbed his keys and a drink from the fridge. I collected my quarters, got my sunglasses, and locked the door to our house. We entered his car, and unfortunately the air conditioner wasn’t working that day. It was hot outside and my nerves were making me feel even hotter than it really was. Of all times, I wished his air conditioner was working this day, but luckily the drive wasn’t too long. Still, sweating more than normal made me feel even more uncomfortable than I already felt.

If we were really spies, this would have been a sort of farce, really. The Seven Eleven was just down the street, and Sam had barely started the car before we were already parking outside it. We had a quick conversation about how nervous I was, but there really wasn’t a lot of time to say much. The drive was less than 5 minutes long. I got out of the car and paced around, trying to find the payphone. I found it; it was one of those old-school pay-phones that is gray and rectangular in shape. It was under some trees, which was nice during this hot day. Same was right, it was secluded. Nobody on the street would be able to see me at all. It was placed in a corner that was stationed away from the pumps and the road.

As I prepared to make the call, I looked at the payphone more closely and read a sticker placed prominently on the phone: “This phone is being monitored by the government.”

“Great, even more to worry about,” I muttered. I pushed that idea aside, though and look at my cell phone. Incredibly, I still had a couple of minutes to go before three o’clock. I started to pace around again. I was sweating profusely and I was as anxious as I had ever been in my life, and three o’clock couldn’t have come quickly enough. I rushed up to the phone, clutching the piece of paper with the phone number on it in my sweaty hand, and reached in my pocket with the other to make sure the quarters were still there. I picked up the headset and place it between my ear and my shoulder, put in \$10 worth of quarters (40 in total) and dialed the numbers. It had been a while since I used a pay-phone, so I wasn’t entirely sure that I did everything correctly, but luckily the phone started to ring.

It was only a few rings, but it felt like an eternity before he finally picked up.

“This is Tim,” he answered.

I responded, “Hi, this is the guy you were talking to about that unethical GAF research at that Large Southwestern University.”

“Great. How are you doing?”

“Well to be honest, I’m a little nervous right now. I mean I’m very vulnerable at the moment.”

“I know...that’s understandable. But it’s fine. This is normal. Don’t worry. Can I ask your name?” What?

I was taken aback. I thought I was going to remain anonymous. I didn’t want to give this man my name, but I already came this far and decided to trust him. During this whole thing I seem to vacillate between struggling to act and acting suddenly. I hesitantly responded, “Yes, my name is Chase.”

“Hi Chase,” Tim said, “First off, thanks for contacting us. I know this must be hard for you, but I just want to ask you a few questions before we get this story out there. I think it is important to get this story out there, but I need to get some background info first.”

I said, “Okay. Thanks for reading this stuff. I really think it is dangerous, and I’m glad you want to write a story about it. What do you want to know?”

He responded, “Well first off, how did you get this information? What are you, a graduate student or something?”

I answered, “Yes, I’m a PhD student and have been working for the RI, the group in charge of this research, for the past 3 years. I found the information in one of the archival folders we all have access to.”

He said, “Okay, is this info just out in the open for anybody to read?”

I said, “Yes, the server is open to all RI employees. It’s not very hidden. Anybody can read it.”

He responded, “Okay, I think I know your concerns, but tell me again why you are so worried about this research.”

I started to talk, and my words just started flowing.

“Well, like I said in my email to you, I’m concerned about the later stages of the project,” I began, “I’m concerned about the part where they are going to use transcranial magnetic stimulation to turn on and off parts of the brain. It almost sounds like brainwashing to me. I mean they could take away free will. If they succeed as planned, they would work to replicate the magnetic stimulation without actually using the magnets.”

For as nervous and hesitant as I'd been, I was having no trouble expressing myself. I continued, "It all seems wildly unethical to me. Plus, they are trying to cover it all up. They don't want anybody outside of the RI knowing about this research at all. They even told me to not talk about it with anybody. Once they said that, I knew that something serious was going on. I want this story to get out to the public, so that it can potentially be stopped. I just can't stand for this unethical research and brainwashing." I pause, and it gives Tim a chance to respond.

"Yeah, that does sound a bit scary and sci-fi, to say the least. I think the public should know about this," he said.

"I agree 100%. This transcranial magnetic stimulation to turn on and off parts of the brain and then trying to replicate it without the magnets is scary stuff," I replied.

"Indeed it is. I have some more questions. What exactly made you look into this research?"

I answered, "Well, I helped to write the literature review that was used for the proposal, and one night I decided to actually read the proposal in full. I hadn't done that before, but I thought it was something that should be done. I was shocked by what I read. I then dug further and found more documents detailing a cover-up. I was really concerned and knew that the public had to know about this. I told a trusted professor outside of the RI about the research and she supported my desire to make this research public.

He said, "Okay, tell me a little about the leader. What do you think about him?"

I thought this question was a bit odd. Why was he asking me about Erkens? I couldn't think of a reason, but decided to answer him anyway. Maybe this is just some background research. "Well, honestly he's a nice guy. I mean he keeps his cards close to his chest, but I've never had a problem with him. He's fun and smart. I've worked under him for three years. He was a good boss. I thought the research he was doing was good for society until I read about this GAF research."

Tim responded, "Okay, so you never had any problems with him or anything like that?"

Once again, I wonder why Tim is asking me this. Why did he care about this so much? I said, "No, no problems whatsoever." It doesn't even cross my mind at the time that he could have been attempting to see if I was retaliating or seeking revenge for something.

He then changed subjects, "Tell me a little bit about your research. You said you're a PhD student. What do you study?"

I am once again confused by this line of questioning. Why was he asking me this? What does this have to do with the grant? I answered, "Well, I like to study organizational surveillance; basically how organizations monitor their employees, be it through email monitoring or performance reviews. I'm particularly interested in seeing how organizational surveillance, or monitoring, negatively affects employees. I mean, there have to be some negative consequences to being monitored all day. Some research even says that being constantly monitored negatively affects performance because people are more worried about being watched than doing their job. I plan to create a theory of this for my dissertation and explore this in greater detail."

He responded, “Wow, that sounds pretty interesting. I’d like to read about that once you complete it. That seems right up my alley.”

“Okay, I’m sure that can be arranged,” I said to him. What a strange conversation, I thought to myself.

He said, “Okay, on to the next steps. You know I have to verify everything first. I’m sure I can find the grant on some government servers because this is public knowledge. I’ll get on that right away. But I also need to verify that you are who you say you are.”

I responded, “Okay, how do you want to go about doing that?”

He said, “Well, we have this easy strategy we use when doing these types of things. I’m going to post an ad saying I’m selling a green mountain bike. I want you to respond to it from your university email, saying you’re interested in buying the bike. That way I can know you really are a student and nobody will think anything about the email. It will all seem normal.”

I responded, “Okay, that sounds fair. I can do that.” I was getting a little alarmed at this point, but realized this made sense. He did have to vet me after all. Still, I didn’t like the idea of him having my full name (which was my email address at LSWU). On the other hand, my name and identification was all public record and just looking for information on the university site, he could find me.

He said, “What email address should I be looking for?”

I said, “Chase.Clow@lswu.edu. My name is Chase Clow.”

He said, “Well great. That’s all I have for you. I’ll put up that ad and wait for your response. We’ll move on from there. Thanks again for thinking of us about this. I really think this story needs to get out there. Thanks for talking to me.”

I responded, “Well, thanks for talking to me, too. I’m glad you think the story is important and needs to get out there.” I muttered a few more things that are beginning to sound repetitive to me, about how important this whole thing was, then say, “Talk to you soon.”

“Talk to you soon,” he replied back, and hung up. If my reaction was any indication about what I’d really wanted to do, it was very telling. I felt immediately at ease. That wasn’t so bad, I told myself. Not bad at all! He had some weird questions to ask me, but that went smoothly. Plus, I was surprised at how short the conversation was. But, I felt good about it. He said he thought the story should get out there. This was really going to happen. This research was going to be exposed to the public! I was excited. It was all becoming real now.

I walked back to the car where Sam had been patiently waiting. Good old Sam. He immediately asked, “Well, how did it go?”

My nerves had turned into excitement now, and I said, “I think it went pretty well! He asked me some strange questions, but he says he wants to write a story about it. It’s going to happen.”

Sam said, “What do you mean he asked you some strange questions?”

I answered, “Well he asked me about the leader of the RI and what I thought about him, and then he asked me about my research interests. I don’t know how any of that is relevant. I don’t know why he asked me that.”

Sam smartly responded, “No, that makes perfect sense that he would ask you that. He was looking to make sure you didn’t have a vendetta against your boss.” Sam was way ahead of me. “He just wanted to make sure you were sincere about your ethical concerns. He wouldn’t want to write a story because somebody was just trying to get their boss in trouble. That seems perfectly normal. Plus, he probably asked you about your research interests because he wanted to make sure you were who you said you were. He wanted you to answer so that he knew you were really a student at LSWU. I think what he did was typical journalist stuff.”

I was really impressed by Sam at this moment in time. That all made a lot of sense. The editor was just vetting me. Those questions weren’t random. He was just making sure I was a reliable source.

I responded to Sam, “Ah, that makes sense. I think you’re right...smart! He also wanted to know my real name, and I have to email him from my LSWU email address to verify that I’m really a student at LSWU. He’s going to put up a dummy ad and I’m going to respond to it from my LSWU email.”

Sam once again intelligently said, “Yeah, that sounds about right. He’s just doing his background checks. That all sounds normal.” Where did he learn all this?

We drove home and I immediately went to my room and laid down. I felt really good about the phone conversation. I thought I answered his questions correctly, he said he thought the story should get out there, and everything seems to be moving forward. Once again, I couldn’t believe this was happening so fast. I’d just spoken with my professor a few days ago, and already I was talking with a respected journalist. This was

crazy! I really had no idea it could all happen so quickly. This story must be really important. I was really glad *Cutting Edge* was so eager to write something about it.

* * *

I waited a few hours before going online to look for Tim's ad. I found it after searching for a bit. It was exactly as he said it would be. He said he was selling a green mountain bike. I opened up my LSWU email and responded to him and said I'm interested in the bike. I also wrote Tim from my anonymous Yahoo! email address and let him know I responded to him. He wrote back about an hour later saying that he got my message and that he'll contact me again once the story is close to being ready for publication. I was ecstatic. This was really going to happen! Yes!

I emailed my professor and told her that we had to meet, and she said she'd be in her office the next day. I was excited to tell her about everything that had happened since the last time we spoke. I showed up to her office, extremely excited to tell her the good news. She was there, working at her desk, and I walked in, closed her door and blurted it all out.

"Well, you're not going to believe this, but I wrote *Cutting Edge* and they literally responded to me like ten minutes after I wrote the email. They want to write a story about the GAF grant. I even talked to the editor over the phone. I think he was just vetting me, but he said the story needs to get out there. I think this is really going to happen, and it's going to happen soon!"

She responded, "Wow! That's great news. I spoke to my contacts in California and haven't heard back from them yet. It's great that *Cutting Edge* is so interested. Tell

me exactly what happened.” I told her the whole story and she seemed to be just as excited as me.

I told her all about it, and then I said, “I’m also going to quit the RI before the story comes out.”

This startled her a bit, but like a good faculty advisor, she asked me some questions to make sure I’d thought about what I was planning to do. We didn’t discuss what I would do with my dissertation. Erkens was my advisor. I guess I wasn’t really thinking much about it just then, either.

I left her office and could only think about what has just happened. I was very happy. I couldn’t believe it was really going to happen. I couldn’t wait until the story came out. But that’s all I could do at this point in time. I just had to wait until the editor got back to me with information about the story. I was so excited. I couldn’t wait. This was real now!

Chapter 11

The Maniacal Vale of Ethics & Social Support

I sat in my bed listening to one of my favorite albums of all time. I loved this album. Esoteric's "The Maniacal Vale" had been one of my favorites since the first time I heard it. The emotional vocals, the magnificent guitar solos, and the slow drums all mix together so well to create a masterpiece. The album was from the genre called funeral doom, which is a subset of metal, based on very slow, forbidding tracks that drag on and hit you like a wave against the ocean. It's brooding, depressing, magical and absolutely consuming. The tracks are long; some are over twenty minutes. It fit my mood perfectly.

I was depressed, I didn't know what to do. I was confused, and I didn't know how to handle it. What had I uncovered? What had I just done? What had I gotten myself into? Uncovering this unethical research and cover-up from the RI was consuming me in a way that felt just like the music on Esoteric's album. I laid in my bed there and let it all hit me—the music, my thoughts, my uncertain future...everything. I kept returning to the fact that I didn't know what to do.

The first track on the album, "Circle," starts out extremely slow, reaches a crescendo, has an amazing solo, and then leaves with you feeling of an utter state of doom and despair. This was me, I was in an utter state of doom and despair. It was finally hitting me that I've blown the whistle on the RI.

I had already spoken to my professor about this research and my conversations with her helped me decide that the best thing to do next was to bring the research to the light; to make this research public. I truly believed it was the right thing to do, but I didn't know if I actually want to do it now. It was too hard; it was not what I signed up

for. Maybe I could tell the *Cutting Edge* editor not to run the article anymore? It was putting me out on a limb I didn't know I really wanted to go out on. But I had to do it, right? This was my moral obligation, right? This was what needed to be done, right? I just didn't know. I was so lost. I just wanted to cry.

I continued to listen the ominous music. Music has always helped me in these situations. And I'm not the only one. Research by Suresh, Oliveria, and Suresh (2015) found that music helps to relieve pain by reducing anxiety. It helps me think. It helps me come to decisions. I nodded in and out of consciousness. I woke up every so often with a jolt of anxiety. This is what I had to do, but I just didn't know. I just didn't know! I went to sleep with the music blaring in my ears. I needed a little euphoria, and if it helped cut out my anguish, all the better.

In addition to trying to make my painful experience more tolerable, the music provided a soundtrack for what I'm now calling an application of an ethical framework to my whistleblowing experience. I viewed the world from a moral ethical perspective. I was examining my situation and realizing that I didn't want to really do the whistleblowing, but despite this, it was something that needed to be done. My ethical standpoint had more power to make me act than my personal preferences. Prior to this experience, I would not have known that I was especially driven by my moral ethical standpoint. Wow.

Individuals who use a moral ethical standpoint consider their acts to be mandatory, based on their own personal beliefs (Bouville, 2008). Even if a whistleblower loses his job, hurts her coworkers, or damages the organization, the person *must* report the unethical or immoral act. In Bouville's work, he sums up this ethical

framework nicely, when he calls it the “dreadful obligation.” I was indeed experiencing my whistleblowing as a dreadful obligation. I didn’t want to do it, but at that point in time, while listening to that music, I knew it was something that needed to be done. I didn’t argue with myself about this. It was clear.

It’s extremely hard when you have a “dreadful obligation;” it feels like you have a weight on your back. You just want to crawl into a ball and sleep forever. You don’t want to do anything. You just want it to go away. But the thing is, it won’t. You need to act. And I think I realized this at that particular point in time. I’d been acting, driven by my ethics, and now, I was resolving my anxiety by the authoritative power held by my very belief system. Amazing.

I’m not a religious person, but I guess that upon reflection, I have very strong ethics. I remember always wanted to do the right thing my whole life. I remember one time during my master’s program in Charlotte, NC, I found a new iPod on the ground and went through all of the folders and found out who the owner was and contacted them and gave them back the iPod. Most people I think would have kept the iPod, but I went the extra mile and tried to find out who the owner was and returned the item. Additionally, at work in Chicago, I brought up ethics when we were doing a study that had questionable research methods that made a product seem more beneficial than it really was. We changed the procedures to make sure were where doing the right thing and getting the correct results, not just the ones the clients wanted to find.

Interestingly, these ethics are especially strong for me now when it comes to research. Research for me represents something that is special; something that is pure. It should be unadulterated and untainted. It’s all about finding knowledge and going about

it in an ethical manner. If research is corrupted, it goes against all that I believe science is; the honest pursuit of knowledge. So, when I uncovered unethical research, I had no options. I had the dreadful obligation of reporting it to the public. I accepted that it needed to be done, but it wasn't going to be easy. In a way, aside from the lack of religious ideation around my beliefs, I guess I'm the kind of person who might be a good test subject for using TMS. Funny coincidence, but in a very unnerving way.

I woke up from my nap, and Esoteric's album had stopped playing. My thoughts had stopped playing in my head too. As I was coming to recognize, perhaps I was not as purely introverted as I previously had told myself. Maybe there was an extrovert lurking inside of me—one who actually fits with the research on “Who is most likely to be a whistleblower?” Like any extrovert would do, I decided I needed to talk to trusted friends and loved ones about this predicament I found myself in.

I called my good friend Gerry, and decided to go to his house to have a few drinks and discuss what was going on. He knew about my situation, but not in great detail. I had been keeping this to myself because I didn't know what to do. I'm a person that usually keeps things in, but I couldn't do it this time. I really, really needed help. I don't like to ask for help. I'm stubborn like that, but I was completely at a loss at this point. I had become depressed and didn't know what to do. I kept having this feeling that I just wanted to break down and cry. Talking to somebody would help out. Whether or not I am “really” an extrovert, I don't know, but a little help from my friends couldn't hurt.

Social support has long been thought to help out during stressful situations. For example, in their organizational research on social support, Cohen and Wills (1985)

developed what is called a buffering hypothesis. They posited that having social support is beneficial because it protects a person from some of the stressful elements of his or her job. In other words, social support works like a buffer, a cushion, reducing the stress. Social support provides resources to individuals, helping them to cope with particularly stressful situations, just like the one I found myself in. Additionally, according to their research, this social support should help in increasing wellbeing as well. I was very stressed out. I could use a boost in wellbeing, a reduction in my stress level.

After my leaking of documents to *Cutting Edge* that spring, the article that was to follow in the summer was going to come out any week. It had all happened so quickly when I was doing it that I hadn't really taken the time to think fully about the ramifications. Now that it had become a waiting game until the article came out, it all began to hit me. I was beginning to understand just how serious all of this was. I actually leaked documents to the press. This could seriously affect my life and the RI. This was a big deal—not a game, a really big deal.

Social support is thought to help out in four ways, according to Flannery (1990). First, it provides emotional support. Sharing one's feelings appears to be cathartic and helps to maintain good health. Second, social support helps with information. When individuals provide stories about their ordeal, it is quite possible that friends can help provide useful ideas for how to resolve the problem, along with reassuring them about decisions made. This helps relieve the stress associated with the traumatic or stressful event. Third, social support provides social companionship. This helps individuals feel less alone, helpless, and vulnerable. (We humans appear to need each other a lot, even those of us who think we're loners.) Finally, Flannery tells us, social support can provide

instrumental support, as friends and trusted loved ones can provide tangible goods, like money, or political favors to help someone facing a stressful life experience. Studies done by some researchers who have studied traumatic and stressful life events have supported theories and hypotheses like these in real life events.

Coker, Smith, Thompson, McKeown, Bethea, and Davis (2002) found that social support helps protect against the negative effects on one's mental health from being in a relationship in which partner violence is experienced. In the workplace, Galek, Flannelly, Greene, and Kudler (2011) found that social support is related to lower burnout and stress at one's job. Similar results for burnout were also found in research by Russell, Altmaier and Van Velzen (1987). However, it should be noted that the results in all studies do not indicate strong effects. The researchers Viswesvaran, Sanchez, and Fisher (1999) did what is called a meta-analysis, meaning that they analyzed the studies done by others to look for further patterns, and to explore the nature of the research done by various researchers. Their thorough meta-analysis on the research in the area of social support and work stress only found weak support for the role of social support in helping to reduce work stress. So, evidence is mixed when it comes to social support and its influence on stressful situations, but nevertheless, it is something that needs to be looked at more closely. As will be seen, social support was a somewhat mixed blessing for me.

* * *

I drove my motorcycle to Gerry's apartment. I knocked on his door. He lived in a fairly big apartment complex that was well maintained. There were multiple pools, dog parks, and perfectly manicured lawns. He didn't come to the door. I knocked again and lit a cigarette. I'd been smoking like crazy since this discovery. Admittedly, I was

already a heavy smoker, but it had become a bit outrageous. I was smoking over a pack a day! I'm about halfway through my Marlboro Light when Gerry finally comes to the door. I smiled, and he opened the door. I walked in as I greeted him.

“Hey.”

“Hi,” he said, walking to the kitchen counter where I see a bottle of rum and a large plastic bottle of Pepsi. “Here, have a drink.”

Gerry immediately offered me a shot of Bacardi. I took the shot; I needed it. I needed to calm my nerves. The shot burned, but I chase is with the Pepsi, Gerry's favorite soda. We immediately had another shot. I felt a bit better now, but I was still shaken up. We walked over to sit on his couch, which faces the television in his small living room area. The TV wasn't on, but he adjusts the volume on the top 40 music that had been playing in the background, and we began to discuss the day's events. I asked him about his day and he asks me about mine. Then we get to what the visit was really about; the unethical RI research and what to do next.

“So Chase, let's talk about the RI stuff,” Gerry said. Gerry prides himself in being to-the-point. Usually it's reassuring, but I sensed a bit of an edge this time. Was he nervous?

I responded, “Yeah, I really don't know what to think about this. I'm at a complete loss, Gerry.” I told him I'd spoken with our professor and I'd decided that the research needed to be made public. I told him I'd decided to contact the press. I went on.

“I wrote *Cutting Edge* and they said they are going to write a story about the GAF research. Nothing has happened yet, the editor is still researching and writing the

article, but it's what we've decided is the best thing to do. Especially since the RI is trying to cover this up."

Gerry responded, "Have you talked to anybody else about this? I mean what you are saying is serious. It has some serious consequences."

"I spoke to my roommates about it and to my girlfriend, Linda."

"What do they have to say about all of this?"

"They haven't really said much. They are just as shocked as me. They just told me to do what I think is right. The problem is I don't know what is right here. I've been thinking about it a lot and it seems like the right thing to do, but there are just so many variables in place, you know?" Gerry was watching me closely.

He said, "There are a lot more variables than you are even thinking about right now, Chase. I don't know if this is the right thing to do. You could seriously hurt the academic department."

Whoa! I was not expecting this. I'm sure I looked surprised and say, "What do you mean? How can this hurt the academic department? This is a RI thing."

Gerry quickly replied, "Chase, are you serious? The RI is part of the academic department. Professors work for the RI. Students work in the RI. What they do reflects on the department. Imagine what will happen once this research becomes public. You're going to embarrass these professors and students. They may lose their jobs. This means that other students might lose advisors or their work with these professors may be tainted. I mean, if you were them, what would you think if you suddenly exposed their trusted professors? What about future students? Who is going to want to come to this school if

they are found to have conducted such unethical research? Have you thought about any of this? I mean this is serious, Chase. Real serious!”

I thought to myself at this point. No, no I hadn't thought about this, at least not from the slippery slope perspective that Gerry had just presented to me. I had just thought about how my disclosure would affect the RI. I didn't think about how it would affect others in the department. I thought about my friends in the department. These were people I'd spent the past three years interacting with, forming strong bonds. These people were really close to me. These friends and colleagues worked with these RI professors. After all, some of the professors in the RI were the most powerful and distinguished professors in the department. The RI even had the current director of the department in it! If I expose this unethical research to the public, what was going to happen to them?

In all actuality, I didn't really care what happened to them. They were actively trying to cover-up very unethical research and should be punished appropriately, but what about their students? Their students had nothing to do with this. They had absolutely nothing to do with this. What had I gotten myself into? I became more anxious and worried. Gerry's response had thrown me for a loop.

I responded, “Gerry, I hadn't thought about that shit at all. Do you really think it would affect the department that much? Are you sure?”

Gerry replied, “Yes! Yes, I'm sure. What you are proposing affects all of the department. You're affecting me. If the RI tarnished the department that means it also tarnishes my degree. After all, it would mean I got my degree from a department that

was performing unethical research.” His expressed self-interest restored my inner ethical equilibrium. I was glad that I hadn’t had more rum.

I responded, “Gerry, it’s terrible research though. I can’t just let it go unchallenged. They are literally trying to brainwash people and are actively trying to cover it up. This affects more than just the academic department at LSWU!”

“Is it really that bad, Chase? What are you really going to be stopping? Are you sure it’s that bad? Maybe it’s not as bad as you think it is. Is this really worth it?” Gerry had not seen the documents firsthand and didn’t know the whole story. I had only showed the documents to my trusted professor, roommates, and the *Cutting Edge* editor.

I have to admit, Gerry was making me a little mad at this point in time. Was he questioning my judgment? Had he already talked to someone about this? I told him what they were doing, why was he so adamant about not revealing this research? It seems that Viswesvaran (et al., 1999) and his colleagues might be right; maybe social support really doesn’t help ease stress associated with work. Damn him.

I fired back, “Yes! Yes, it is that bad! They are trying to brainwash people, Gerry! It is really serious. They are going to be using transcranial magnetic stimulation to turn on and off parts of the brain! They are literally trying to take away free-will! It is terrible!”

Gerry replied, “Well, just make sure you know all of the consequences before you go about doing what you want to do. I’m just trying to help you see the big picture. Calm down, I’m on your side.” I was really disappointed, actually disgusted with Gerry at this point. He really didn’t seem to care about the research at all. It was all about how

his degree might be perceived, all based on that giant slippery slope scenario he had painted to me. No. No, I wasn't buying it.

I tried to calm down and said, "What do you expect me to do? I have to do this. If you saw the documents and the cover-up you'd feel the same way."

Gerry replied, "Well, Chase, just make sure you are going about this the right way. You have to consider all the angles."

I responded, "What do you suggest then?"

He said, "You know, I really don't know, but just try to hurt the least amount of people possible. There could be a lot of collateral damage here. Remember that!" he said sternly.

I found myself reassuring him, confused by the effect this was having on my friend. (I mean, would he continue being my friend after this?)

"I know, I know, you're right. This is more complicated than I initially thought. I know you're just trying to help me. This is hard. I don't know what to do. Thanks for helping though. Talking about all of this does help. Sincerely, thanks." I wanted to change topics, try to go back to being just ordinary friends talking. "Let's talk about something else. I can't think about this anymore. You've given me a lot to think about. Let's have another shot. I think I need it!"

What Gerry and I were doing during this somewhat heated conversation was dealing with something researchers call relational ethics. Relational ethics "focus on the role of the relational context of the experience of relationships in influencing moral choices" (MacDonald, 2007, p. 123). Individuals gain ethical stances by talking with others, reflecting on what has been said, and then settling in on a set of principles that one

considers ethical and unethical (Ray, 2006). Unbeknownst to me at the time, we were using communication to come up with an ethical framework to reveal the unethical RI research to the public. He let me know that my actions would affect others, not just the researchers involved with the GAF project. Upon thinking more about our conversation, I realized he had made some relevant points. It didn't change my decision, but I decided that I needed to only implicate the RI when coming forward. This was not the fault of the academic department at LSWU, this was the RI's doing. Only they should be punished. But was that possible?

I got back home from Gerry's place and turned to my reliable friend—my music. I turned on Esoteric's album again. I kept coming back to that album. It fit my mood so well. I still didn't know what to do. Gerry brought up some good points, but it didn't change that I needed to do this. I needed to get this research out to the public in hopes that it gets shut down. It needed to be done! I knew this, but I was not 100% confident. Funny how being ethically driven doesn't necessarily give one confidence, even if it forced me to do things. Thoughts raced through my head. There were just so many questions; so many possibilities. This was all too much. I decided to call it a night and go to bed early. I'll deal with this tomorrow. I just couldn't handle this anymore right now! I was back where I'd been before; I felt like crying and I was extremely anxious. This was all too much! I was exhausted, fortunately, and the rum might have helped a bit, too. I fell right asleep.

Despite the drinking the night before, I woke the next morning actually feeling a bit refreshed and calm. But I immediately began thinking about the RI. I couldn't get these thoughts out of my head. It was consuming me. I repeated the same thoughts again

and again. I knew I needed to do this. I knew I needed to reveal this research to the public. It had to be stopped. I thought about it while I'm brushing my teeth, washing my face, eating my breakfast, drinking my coffee, smoking my morning cigarette. I just kept thinking about it.

I needed to talk to my girlfriend, Linda. I texted her, and we decided to hang out later that night. I decided to take my car over to her house because it is very hot outside.

I drove to Linda's apartment and turn into her complex. I was immediately confronted by the first, outrageously large, speed bump, and it was not the only one. I think there were fourteen of them I had to drive over before reaching her building. I couldn't help but think those speed bumps were just like my life right now. I told myself I had to go over these really large bumps to get to the end goal. I finally find her parking spot, park, and head upstairs to her apartment.

Linda opened the door, expecting me. I gave her a hug and we had some casual conversation. I kind of break down and start talking about the RI research. I was feeling desperate, not having realized the extent to which Gerry's critical skepticism had affected me.

"Linda, Gerry says he doesn't even know if I should be revealing this research to the public. He thinks I could be hurting the entire department, not just the RI. He kind of pissed me off, but he's right, the consequences could be more serious than I thought beforehand."

"What do you mean?" Linda responded curiously. I'd made the right decision. Linda knew Gerry. She was familiar with the context. She could help me.

“Oh, he just thinks if the RI gets exposed as being corrupt then that will hurt the academic department, and then that will also hurt students,” I began, thinking to myself that he was concerned it would hurt *him*. I continued, “If the department is seen as being a harbinger of unethical research that might taint the school’s reputation, and therefore hurt the reputation of degrees. Plus, some students might lose advisors. I mean, he’s right, but I don’t think it will happen like that. I think I can keep it RI only. I’m not going to implicate the department. Or at least I’m going to try not to.” I wanted to say that I didn’t really care at that point, but I truly didn’t know if that was true. I was just so tired.

Linda responded, “I see. That makes sense. He’s just trying to help.”

I said, “I know, he’s a good friend. I trust what he says, but I just think he might be being paranoid. I don’t know though.”

Linda said, “This must be hard, I know. I don’t know what I’d do in your situation.”

“I have to do something though! I just have to!” I responded firmly.

She said, “Personally, I don’t know if I could do it. I mean, you’re risking your future here.”

I replied, “What do you mean? I think I can keep this anonymous and nobody will know it’s me.”

Linda responded, “Chase, come on, they’ll know it’s you. You are going to quit the RI, you specifically brought up your concerns with the project in that meeting.

Really, who else could it be?”

I replied, “Yeah, that’s true, but they won’t be able to prove it. I used anonymous emails and hid my IP address. I don’t think they’d look at the server to see who downloaded documents either. And even if they do, I can just say I was looking at documents for my job. Plus, I don’t think the editor of *Cutting Edge* is going to reveal my identity. He’s a trusted journalist. It would go against his ethics.”

“I don’t know Chase, they still might be able to tell it’s you,” Linda replied.

I said, “I don’t care. I’m willing to take that risk. This research needs to be stopped!”

She responded, “But this could affect your future, don’t you realize that? If they find out it’s you, it can ruin your career. They can try and blackball you from academia. They can even try to blackball you from non-academic jobs as well. I mean, you need references when you apply for a job. Can’t they just tell potential employers that you acted against the interest of the group and revealed research to the public despite the fact that you were told not to?”

I replied, “Yeah, but this is bad research. Won’t they know that?”

She responded, “How could they possible know that? It’s going to make you seem like an untrustworthy employee. Every company has their confidential secrets that need to be kept away from the public. If you’re doing research for a company, they don’t want that proprietary research released to the public. They’ll lose money. If you are labeled as somebody that leaks information to the public, why would they want to hire you? You’ll be tainted.”

I must admit, I hadn’t thought about this before. I figured I could just remain anonymous and nothing would happen to me. But the director of the RI, my boss,

Erkens, would probably know that it was me. I didn't know if he could prove it, but who knows? At this point I got more anxious. Linda was making me see how this could really affect my future. She wasn't arguing from a point of self-interest. She cared about me, and her questions were about how it could affect *me*. But my convictions were strong. I let out a sigh.

“I guess you're right, but I still think I need to do this. This is terrible research. I need to do this, despite the consequences. It's the right thing to do. I don't believe in brainwashing and taking away free will. It's just not something I can stand for. If I don't do this, I don't know if I can look myself in the mirror. I have a chance to try and stop this disgusting research; if I don't do anything, what does that say about me as a man?”

She said, “I understand. This must be really hard for you. But I'm here for you.”

I said, “I know; thank you. I need help right now. I just need to talk this out, you know? This is helping. Just talking about it is helping me out.”

Linda and I changed subjects and go out to buy some food. The rest of the night was as normal as it could be, and I didn't talk about the RI, *Cutting Edge*, or whistleblowing anymore. I went home with more to think about though. The speed bumps were still in the parking lot. Now I have to worry about *my* future, too? **THERE IS JUST SO MUCH TO CONSIDER! AHHHHHHH!**

When looking back at the conversation with Linda, it seems somewhat clear that two ethical frameworks were being employed here: ethical egoism and practical virtue ethics. Ethical egoism involves one's self-interests (Cavico, 2003). When one takes this ethical standpoint, one determines how an action directly affects one's personal goals. As Cavico (2003) notes, most individuals try to maximize their own 'good.' Linda was

helping me think about my own good. She helped me realize that my actions could affect my future; they could affect future jobs for the foreseeable future. The fact that I wanted to remain anonymous and used technology to help me do that further solidifies the notion that I was, at least partially, employing an ethical egoism framework when considering to blow the whistle on the RI. I wanted to remain anonymous so that it wouldn't hurt my future. I was being selfish in this regard. It's hard to admit, but I wanted to be a whistleblower while trying to minimize the negative consequences for myself. I wasn't being completely selfless when I considered blowing the whistle. If I had been, I would have revealed my identity immediately, increasing my credibility, and therefore making the story more believable in the eyes of the public. After all, putting a face to a story makes it more believable. I was potentially hurting the whistleblowing by remaining anonymous. The truth was, though, I was scared. Even if I hadn't talked about it that way before, I didn't want to ruin my future. I thought I could get the story out there without revealing my identity, and I was going to try my hardest to do that.

But at the same time, I revealed to Linda, and to myself, that I needed to do this whistleblowing despite the consequences. I knew the research was wrong and something needed to be done to stop it. I was employing what researchers like to call Practical Virtue Ethics. In other words, I had the "disposition to act in accordance with relevant and authoritative principles and rules" (Bolsin, Faunce & Oakly, 2005, p. 614). I studied ethics in great detail when I was earning my master's degree, and I knew that the RI research was a perversion of research ethics and should be reported accordingly. Motive and emotion are important in practical virtue ethics, due to an individual's feeling about what a "virtuous" individual would have done in a particular situation. I realized that a

virtuous person would blow the whistle in this situation, because it was the right thing to do. It needed to be done. My beliefs on what a virtuous individual would do in this situation directly influenced my decision to come forward. I knew what a “good” person would do. I wanted to be a “good” person, and decided that bringing this research to light and trying to get it stopped was what a “good, virtuous” person would do. It was what my own principles, rules, and beliefs told me to do. I hadn’t thought about it this way at the time, but in fact, I had been using the Practical Virtue Ethics framework.

Most research on whistleblowing appears to focus solely on studying a whistleblower from one ethical framework. If my experience is any indication, this is perhaps not the most appropriate course to take. I used multiple frameworks when considering my whistleblowing, not just one. I used Practical Virtue Ethics when determining what a virtuous individual would do in the same situation. I used morality ethics when I came to determine that I had a “dreadful obligation” to uncover unethical research and present it to the public. I used ethical egoism by considering how my actions would influence my future. And finally, I used relational ethics by talking to my friends and determining that I should try to hurt the least amount of people possible (e.g., implicate the RI only and not the academic department at LSWU). If a researcher was to study my case from just one perspective, they would miss out on so many other important questions I asked myself. Whistleblowing is complicated, just like people. It’s not helpful to reduce it to one dimension. Research needs to focus on the complexity of the experience, and explore the multiple frameworks individuals use when considering the ethics of their actions.

From the perspective of social support, I was learning some other things. It would appear that talking to my friends was a ‘mixed bag.’ It felt good to talk to somebody about my situation, as keeping it all bottled in was making my life miserable, but at the same time, talking to my friends brought about more concerns and anxiety. They brought up ramifications of the whistleblowing that I hadn’t even thought of. I didn’t think the whistleblowing would affect anybody outside of the RI. I didn’t think the whistleblowing would affect my future. By talking to these individuals, these new concerns came out, which only served to increase my anxiety. At this stage at least, social support seemed to be causing more harm than good. But perhaps that was a good thing.

My friends brought up legitimate concerns that I should be aware of. If I never talked to them, I may have never considered them. Further, despite the concerns that my friends brought up, I knew whistleblowing was the right thing to do. They did help to solidify my ethical stance on the issue. They pressured me to defend my actions despite the negative consequences. Without that pressure, who knows what may have happened? Maybe I would have told *Cutting Edge* to stop writing the story. Maybe I would have tried to end the whistleblowing right then and there. So, talking to them may also have been a good thing. Conversations that didn’t necessarily appear supportive on the surface, at a deeper level (requiring my reflection and integration of the information), may have actually reduced the level of uncertainty I had been experiencing.

As will be seen in the final chapters of this book, social support continued to play a major role in the whistleblowing experience, when I was forced to deal with the negative consequences of my disclosure. Without the support of my friends and loved ones, I might not have been able to handle all of the undesirable consequences that befell

me during this time period. So at this point, social support appeared to have had minimal benefits, but in the future, it would prove itself to be very beneficial.

Chapter 12

A Little Too Easy

Now it was just a waiting game. I emailed the editor at *Cutting Edge* to confirm that the story was still on and he said it was taking some time to do some background research, but that the story was still set to run in the coming weeks. On that end, everything seemed set to go. Now it was time to tie up some loose ends I've been meaning to do since I uncovered this GAF research.

First, I needed to quit the RI. I made that decision weeks ago, and it still stood. I couldn't work for such an unethical organization, and truthfully, I didn't want to be around when the *Cutting Edge* article was released. I didn't want to face what would surely be negative consequences.

In a study conducted on nurses who blew the whistle, McDonald and Ahern (2000) found that whistleblowers often face many negative consequences once they come forward. The researchers found that employees are demoted, reprimanded, referred to psychiatrists, receive threats, are rejected by peers, are pressured to resign, and are often treated as traitors. Similar outcomes were described by Delk (2013) as well. Further, Rothschild (2008) noted that superiors at work often try to take away a worker's dignity after s/he engages in whistleblowing. While whistleblowers often feel dignified after they expose wrongdoing, the organization often tries its hardest to assault that worker's dignity with retaliatory measures, such as demotions and reprisals, and marking the employee lower on performance reviewers. It's often a systematic process that attempts to strip the employee of his/her previous status and self-worth. While I was pretty confident that I would be able to remain anonymous with *Cutting Edge*, bringing up those

questions about the GAF grant and quitting my job at the RI would certainly look suspicious. I wanted to avoid all negative consequences, if at all possible. I didn't want my dignity taken away, I didn't want to be seen as a traitor. I just wanted to get out of the organization as quickly as possible.

Why not start at the top?

I emailed the director of the RI, Erkens, and set up a meeting to talk to him. He was unfortunately also my dissertation advisor, and I was going to have to "kick him off" my committee as well. My plan was to kill two birds with one stone with this meeting. Of course, I was nervous.

Erkens was a busy man. I didn't think he'd care about not being on my dissertation committee anymore. In fact, I imagined that he'd be relieved. He had been generally unhelpful and disengaged with my project to begin with, so it was probably best to find another director for my dissertation anyway. I was a little more concerned about what he'd think about me leaving the RI. I'd worked there for three years straight and all of a sudden, I was quitting? That would certainly seem odd, especially just weeks after I'd brought up my concerns about the GAF grant. I had a plan though. I'd rely on the power of the dollar as a rationale. I'd just say I needed to make more money over the summer and couldn't work for the RI anymore. I felt pretty certain that he'd understand. It made sense. The RI didn't pay student workers well, and I could make a lot more money teaching. I was confident he would buy that story. I wouldn't have to go into my real reasons at all. I scheduled a meeting and didn't worry too much about it.

The day finally came when it was time to meet Erkens. He had an office in the RI, so I walked in and greeted a couple of others who were already in the office that day.

I was a little anxious going into this meeting, but not terribly so. I only felt a little bit queasy in my stomach; nothing serious at all. I walked into his office, and he greeted me, expecting me.

“Hi Chase. What was it that you wanted to talk about?” No small talk, he obviously wanted to get right to the point.

“Well, it looks like you’re busy, so I’ll make this quick,” I responded.

He said, “No, it’s fine. What’s up?” I eased up a bit, and took a seat in front of his desk.

“Well, I was thinking, I need to make some more money this summer, so I don’t think I can work for the RI anymore. I’m going to go teach and make some more money that way. I know this is all of a sudden, but things have come up and I need to make this extra money this summer,” I started, hesitating a bit, watching him carefully for any sign of response, and continuing, “Hopefully that’s okay with you.”

Erkens did not seem to be worried at all and said, “Chase, that’s fine. I understand. Are you planning on teaching here at LSWU?”

I said, “Yes, it should give me enough money for the summer. Plus, I might teach at a community college.”

He said, “That’s perfectly fine. Thanks for letting me know.”

I replied, “Great! Thanks for understanding.” That was easy. I paused for a minute and then began to tell him about my decision regarding his role as my dissertation director.

“I was also thinking about my dissertation. I think I want to go in a different direction. I think I want to focus in on ethics and look at organizational surveillance,” I

was rushing a bit, (trying to get this over with) but he didn't seem to have any need to respond, so I continued, "Dr. Jones has already agreed to work with me—I talked with him about it—I think he's the best choice to be my dissertation chair, because, as you know, he's an expert on ethics and theory." I was feeling my nerves at this point, and I felt sweat coming from my armpits and forehead. This could make him mad, and I didn't have any idea how he'd respond.

The director replied to my surprise, "Okay, that's fine. I understand. If you want to go in a different direction, I think that's okay. I can still be on your committee if you want, just let me know."

"Okay, I'll let you know," I replied.

Wow, that was *really* easy. He just said okay to *everything*. I didn't want him on my committee, but I'd replied in order to not raise any suspicions. I could simply remove him from my committee online and never add him again. I wouldn't even have to talk to the man again if I didn't want to. I could get him off my committee—no problem. I was feeling very relieved.

"Well, that was it. I just wanted to talk to you about those two things. Thanks again for meeting with me."

He replied, "No problem. Bye."

That went better than planned. I left his office, reflecting on what had just happened. It went so well, and he didn't suspect a thing. He bought everything I had to say, no questions asked. Now I had to move on to step 2: leaving. I wanted to move out of the state and get away from LSWU. I wanted to get away from all of this unethical

research, cover ups, and especially, any potential negative consequences. I just couldn't be in the state anymore. I was scared, and just needed to escape.

I was also disgusted at the department at this time. I couldn't believe LSWU would allow such unethical research to be conducted at my school. What kind of school was this? Our school's director and immediate past director were both active parts of the RI. Both were publicly vocal in presenting themselves as concerned about ethics and advocates for right action. Were they all just arms of the government? I needed to get away as soon as possible. I just couldn't be there anymore. I felt leaving was the best thing to do.

In order to do this, I had to take a leave of absence. I planned on finishing my dissertation, so I didn't want to quit the program, I just wanted an excuse to leave the state and take my mind off of LSWU for a year, while I collected my thoughts after the *Cutting Edge* article came out.

It turned out that getting a leave of absence was very easy. I emailed the appropriate department and said that I needed to take a year off in order to make money. I said my aid was out and I didn't have enough money to pay for tuition, health insurance, and living expenses, and that I needed to get a full time job in order to save up money for the next year. They approved my leave of absence, and just reminded me that I'd need to enroll again in a year in order to remain a student at LSWU. Everything was moving so smoothly. I couldn't believe it. Nobody was questioning anything.

I'd just quit the RI, changed dissertation committee members, and left LSWU with absolutely no resistance at all. Now all I had to do was move.

I decided it was best to move in with my girlfriend in Indiana, and look for jobs in Chicago. I missed my girlfriend, Linda, and being close to her would be a good thing. You see, she had recently left LSWU to finish up her studies at Indiana University. She wasn't able to finish up at LSWU because many of her professors had left the department for jobs at other schools. We had been having a long distance relationship for a while now. It would be nice to finally be in the same place as her. Plus, I've always wanted to live in Chicago. I like big cities and I should be able to make good money there. Further, it was far away from my city (where LSWU was located). Nobody could harm me thousands of miles away once the article comes out. I asked Linda if I could live with her, and she was ecstatic. She thought it was a great idea and was very excited. I decided I was going to move to Indiana that summer, after I finished teaching.

My plan moving forward was simply to avoid LSWU at all costs until it was time to move. I thought I could avoid the academic department, and it was only a few months until I planned on moving to Indiana. Looking back, the plan worked perfectly. I never saw the director of the RI again after our meeting and I was able to avoid contact with the academic department as much as possible. I, of course, emailed my new dissertation chair and let him know my plans, but I didn't have to go into the building and see anybody. All of this was a success! Now, it was just a waiting game. I just had to wait for the *Cutting Edge* article to come out.

Chapter 13

The Good Story

A few weeks passed, and I still had no news from the *Cutting Edge* editor. I emailed him and he said the story was still on. At this point I was getting a little suspicious. It had been about a month since I contacted him. Why hadn't he written the story yet? Was doing background research that hard? I replied to him saying, "Thanks," adding that I was very anxious to get this story out there.

"Don't worry, it's just taking a little longer than usual to get all of the research into place. This is very complicated stuff: we want to make sure it is done right." I was a little relieved to hear this, but still I wanted the story out now. I decided to remain patient though. The later stages of the GAF grant wouldn't be happening for a couple of years, so waiting a few more weeks wasn't a big deal in the grand scheme of things.

Weeks go by and I didn't hear from the editor at all. I emailed him to see what was up. I received no response. Now, I was worried. Had he decided to not run the story at all? What was going on? I heard nothing for two weeks, and emailed him again. Still no response. I'm very disheartened at this point in time. What was going on? The editor seemed so anxious to write a story about this. He personally told me it was a story that the public needed to hear about. What changed? What was happening? After everything went so smoothly, things were starting to fall apart. I felt a sense of despair and gloom. I was demoralized. I needed this story to get out there. I emailed the editor one more time. I heard nothing in return.

I decided to do a little research on the editor. I checked his Twitter feed and learned that he had left *Cutting Edge* and now worked for a tech blog that would be

starting soon. It all made sense now, that's why he wasn't responding to my emails. He didn't even work for *Cutting Edge* anymore! I really wished he would have told me this. But what was I going to do? I still needed to get this story out, but now I was right back at square one. I needed to find another outlet to write a story about this RI research. I couldn't believe it.

I emailed *Rolling Stone*, *Mother Jones*, *The New York Times*, *The LA Times*, and *The Washington Post*. After such quick success with *Cutting Edge*, I figured at least one of these outlets would be willing to write a story on the unethical research. I heard nothing back from any of them. What was going on? I started to freak out. Why weren't they responding to me? *Cutting Edge* was so interested in the story, why weren't these other outlets? What was I doing wrong? I wrote the exact same email to these outlets that I wrote to the editor of *Cutting Edge*. Nothing had changed there at all. Why weren't they responding!?

I emailed more publications, and even local press. I heard nothing in response. What was happening? Everything was falling apart. I even emailed the new editor at *Cutting Edge*, and heard nothing. Why was nobody responding to me? What could I possibly be doing wrong?

I said I would give them the documents, I outlined the cover up, and I even pulled out the unethical parts for them to quickly read. It all seemed like the right thing to do. It worked so well with *Cutting Edge* the first time. What was happening?

At the time I did not know this, but my story must not have interested these publications, because news sources aren't really interested in educating audiences, but are more interested in "good" stories (Salome & Gandel, 2004). "Reporters have little

interest in educating news audiences, although this often happens as a byproduct. Journalists are trained to recognize events that make good stories; evaluate these events based on traditional news values (timeliness, proximity, prominence, consequence, and human interest) and the information they gather from news sources and other information sources; and provide news consumers with the most up-to-date- and interesting morsel of information possible” (Salome & Gandel, 2004, pp. 61-62). Could it be that my story just didn’t fit in with traditional news values? Did it just not have enough selling power? This was quite possibly true. A multi-million dollar GAF grant isn’t really that big of a deal, when you think about it. The government routinely awards \$100 million grants all the time. Perhaps if the grant was bigger I would have heard a response. Or perhaps there was no human interest or it’s wasn’t prominent enough. After all, the later stages weren’t going to happen for a few years. Maybe these journalists I was emailing didn’t care to write about something so far ahead in the future. Perhaps, it simply wasn’t timely enough. Looking back, my story just didn’t fit with “traditional news values.” It makes sense in retrospect. But at the time I was frustrated and demoralized. I wanted the story out there.

As Martin (1999) explains, the commercial media often doesn’t care about certain stories because their first goal is profit. The media’s first goal is to sell messages to readers, so that advertisers have audiences to sell to. Maybe my story just wasn’t interesting enough. Maybe these publications felt there just wasn’t an audience for this GAF research. After all, it sounded like science fiction. Maybe nobody would believe it. Additionally, Martin (1999) says that complex stories pose difficulties to journalists as well. If journalists have to explain complicated theories and stories, they simply avoid

the story altogether. My story was certainly complex. It had difficult to understand neuropsychological theories and discussed cutting edge technology that the average newsreader would know nothing about. Perhaps my story was just too complex; too hard to write. Even the former editor at *Cutting Edge* said it was difficult to do all the background research. It seems fair to assume that some of the publications I contacted just didn't want to deal with my story because it was simply too complicated. Whatever the reason for the lack of responses, it would seem that my story just didn't fit in with traditional news stories. Maybe it wasn't prominent enough, or timely enough, or interesting enough, or profitable enough, or maybe it was just too complex! The GAF story had a lot going against it. I didn't know it at the time, but this is probably why nobody responded to me. I just got lucky that first time with *Cutting Edge*. It was an anomaly; not the norm.

I became extremely sad and disappointed, feeling as if all of my efforts had been for nothing. I wanted to cry and sleep all day. Nothing was working right anymore. I'd been trying so hard. Why was this not working! WHY! I'd moved to Indiana to be with my girlfriend, and I just kept emailing publications. I continued to hear nothing. This couldn't be! I couldn't let this go on. Somebody was going to write something about this, goddamnit! This GAF research was so harmful and unethical. Something needed to be done! I wasn't going to stop until somebody, somewhere makes this research public. I continued to write different publications, and heard nothing.

After months, I finally decided to stop emailing publications. I figured this was going nowhere. It was time to stop. I gave up, telling myself that nothing was going to

happen. I went to all of this trouble and *nothing was going to happen*. I couldn't believe it, but I'd have to face the facts. Nobody was responding to me. Nothing could be done.

I continually thought about the research while I was in Indiana. It was so harmful. Why did nobody care about it? The research haunted me for months. I just couldn't believe nothing could be done to stop it. I just couldn't believe it! People were going to be harmed and I couldn't do anything about it. This was turning into a nightmare. I cried to myself and discussed my concerns with my girlfriend. She consoled me, and told me at least I tried. That's true, I did try. But nothing happened. I had failed. This research would go unchecked and would harm people in the future. Why did none of my efforts work?

Eventually the research escapes me and I moved on with my life. I acquired a good job in Chicago and moved there. I was working as a user experience researcher, researching how people interact with technology. There was no government work, no unethical research; just plain old good private research for big Fortune 500 companies. This was work I could be proud of and was good for society. I worked on diabetes meters and HIV application methods. I was actually helping people. This was work I wanted to do. I was working for good change in the world. The unethical RI research became a distant memory. I thought about it from time to time, but it was no longer my central focus.

* * *

After about six months at my job, I started to think about the GAF research again. I don't know why it started to bother me again. Perhaps it was because my leave of absence would be up in a few months and I had to start thinking about LSWU again. Who

knows? Whatever the reason, the research started to enter my thoughts daily. I thought, “What phase are they on now? Have they succeeded? Are they starting to do the actual research?” I started to become worried. The research was consuming me again. My conviction that something had to be done to stop the research returned. Yes, something needed to be done. I decided to start emailing publications again. But this time I was going to do it differently.

I decided to go smaller. I decided that maybe I need to contact an online publication that specializes in activism. They would probably be more interested in this story than big national publications. I started by contacting the *Citizen Watch Post*. I’d routinely read the *Citizen Watch Post* for years, ironically, because they specialize in government abuse and corruption. After all, their motto is: The Citizen Watch Post is an independent news blog for citizens challenging questionable practices.¹⁰ I wrote the editor, Tom, the same email I wrote all of the other publications; the same email I wrote *Cutting Edge* the first time, except for one thing: I sent the documents as well. I figured Tom would be more likely to believe me if I sent the documents initially. It was a risk, but it also showed I had nothing to hide. The email also included an overview, and I’d pulled out specific, disturbing quotations from the proposal so he could quickly come to understand the problems with this research. To my surprise, Tom wrote back within a day.

He replied to my initial email with interest, saying he’d contact me with further questions after looking into it.

I responded that this was fine and asked that my identity be protected.

¹⁰ paraphrased

Shortly thereafter, I received more email correspondence with a lot of questions and ideas about the possible article.

I started to get excited again. It might actually be happening. The *Citizen Watch Post* seemed just as interested as *Cutting Edge* did initially, but the editor also shared his thoughts and questions openly with me. I didn't want to get overly excited, so I tempered my expectations. I'd already gone through disappointment once. It could happen again. I was not going to get fully excited until an article actually came out, I told myself.

I wrote him back with a little write-up that might help with his article. I wanted to help as much as possible. I wanted to get this story out there, and if I had to write part of the article, then so be it. This story needed to get out there! It needed to happen now!

It seemed like it was really going to happen. I was in regular communication with *The Citizen Watch Post*, and they seemed really interested. I was almost electrified. Energy seemed to be flowing through me. This was really going to happen; the research would finally be made public! Still, I remained a bit cautious, as the article hadn't come out just yet. But, I thought it was really going to happen. Words couldn't describe how happy I was about this. It had been a year of failure, and finally something good was happening. I couldn't wait for the article to come out.

He then wrote me and requested that I be interviewed, informing me that if I were, my voice would be altered.

I thought it was interesting that Tom was suggesting me to do interviews. This was a step I hadn't thought of before. It was very risky, but if they could alter my voice, I could remain anonymous. I thought it over a bit and decided that if it would get the

story out there even further, then I'd be willing to risk an interview. It had to be with the right person though. I was not interested in doing interviews with smaller publications; it had to be with a publication that will do the story justice and give the information out to as many people as possible. I agreed, and we continued to exchange emails to discuss the structure and content of the article he planned to publish.

After working through a series of logistical concerns, Tom sent me a full copy of the article. It was great, it addressed all of the concerns I had wanted to raise and even brought up other research being conducted related to narrative. It was everything I wanted!

I wrote him and let him know my pleasure with the article. He told me he had contacted Erkens, but had no response. The article would run so it would be up for Monday morning.

Now, it was just a waiting game. I was very anxious to see the article on Sunday night. Would it actually happen this time? *Cutting Edge* screwed me once before, would it happen again with *The Citizen Watch Post*? I was so excited though. I felt energy all throughout me. I saw the article, and I thought it was amazing. Was it really going to happen this time? How many people were going to see it? I couldn't wait.

Sunday arrived, and the article was posted. It happened! It actually happened! An article on the unethical RI GAF research finally came out. I was so happy, words can't describe. I've finally done it! I've exposed the RI. I felt so relieved. I finally did my moral duty. I finally did it!

Chapter 14

The Studio Interview

I must have read the article about 15 times. I couldn't believe it. It talked about all of the problematic areas I was concerned about. It connected this research to other problematic research. Direct quotes were used, and they even included the proposal for people to read for themselves. It was perfect. Nobody could call this a conspiracy theory anymore. The actual facts were right in front of the reader. I read the comments on the article, and people were shocked. Commenters thought the research was horrible, unethical, and terrible. They couldn't believe it was being done. The word was finally getting out there. I was so happy. I emailed my friends and told them to read it. I emailed my professor and let her know the article was out there. I emailed everybody! They were all happy for me and excited that somebody finally revealed this research to the public. Now it was time to see if the article would do any good and get the project shut down. Only time would tell.

I wrote Tom and told him thank you so much for posting the article. I said it was everything I had hoped for, that it was amazing. He told me that the article had already received a lot of traction. He said numerous news aggregators¹¹ had picked up on the article and by his estimation, 250,000 people had already read the article. 250,000! I couldn't believe it. A quarter of a million people now knew about this research. I didn't expect that at all. Going to *The Citizen Watch Post* was the right thing to do. They got the story out there and people were reading it. I couldn't be happier!

¹¹ News aggregators are news websites that compile stories from a variety of sources so that readers can easily read articles from many different publications.

Tom wrote me two days later with news that Scribd [the link site used to upload the proposal] had taken it down and replaced the link with a message explaining why it wasn't available. The university had it removed.

I thought to myself. Okay, the RI has seen the article now. They claimed a copyright on the two documents that proved their terrible research was being conducted. They were trying to further cover it up from the public. Without the documents up on the website for the whole world to see and verify for themselves the unethical research that was going on, people might now just think of the research as a conspiracy theory. After all, it sounded like science fiction, right? Now people could dismiss the article. I was upset, but not surprised. This was all the RI could do. They couldn't respond in any other way, because their cover-up was already exposed too. Their strategy was to take down the article and make sure no more people would see it. I responded to Tom, thanking him for the update.

About a week goes by and Tom let me know that several people were interested in doing interviews with me. So far they were just small publications, so I said I was going to wait for someone bigger. Another week went by and Tom let me know that Jake Starr was interested in doing an interview with me. Jake Starr is a nationally recognized journalist who has interviewed politicians and the president, and also exposes unethical and questionable topics. He was perfect. He had a large following and I would love to do an interview with him.

Here's the message exchange I had with Tom:

Hello,

I have spoken to Bob Thompson, Jake Starr's National Marketing Director. He would like you to contact him; he is interested in your story. He said that they can use voice modulation for a possible interview. He can be contacted here: [email address].

Please let me know how that goes.

Thanks again for everything.

I responded:

Awesome...thanks! I'm going to contact him right now.

I was extremely excited at this point. I couldn't believe Jake Starr wanted to interview me and do a story on the RI research. This would get the story out to even more people. Swann makes excellent, professional videos that are posted on YouTube for the whole world to see. They are 'Grade A,' well done. He has a large following and I knew he would do the story justice. Still, it was a big risk. Maybe the voice modulation wouldn't work. Maybe I'd be revealed. I thought it is worth it though. I wanted as many people as possible to know about the research. The more the better. If risking my anonymity was something I had to do, then so be it. I wrote Bob, and in a matter of emails, we had managed to get a confidential skype interview scheduled between Starr and me. He suggested that with Jake Starr's audience, it might even go viral.

I got extremely excited at this point. He actually thought this story might go viral! If that happened, then even more people would see it. This was working out really well! I responded to Bob and we set up the logistics.

Bob replied:

Do you have a phone number you would mind sharing?

I replied back to Bob with my phone number. I knew it was a risk, but I didn't care at this point. I really wanted Jake Starr to do an interview with me. It would be great for the story. Bob set up a time for us to chat. I anxiously awaited Bob's phone call. He said Jake Starr would also be on the call as well.

When looking at the research on whistleblowers talking with the press and doing interviews, there isn't much literature on the topic. Green and Latting (2004) wrote out some guidelines for whistleblowers from a social work perspective that included tips and tricks when deciding to blow the whistle. Its aim is to help social workers deal with the whistleblowing issue. Green and Latting (2004) say that you should go outside of your organization (i.e., the press) only as a last resort. They say that one should be well-prepared for the consequences and that one should be prepared to leave the organization, as most whistleblowers end up leaving the organization voluntarily or involuntarily. Well, I had already left the RI, so I was already set there. I already had a new job, so I wasn't worried about money either. Still, in their article, which is supposed to be a "how-to" of sorts for whistleblowers, they never explain how to actually talk to the press. This is perhaps due to the fact that the article was aimed at social workers and not the general public.

Salomone and Gandel (2004), while not talking about whistleblowers specifically (but rather institutions wanting to gain news coverage), do outline some steps one should take when talking to the press. Salomone and Gandel (2004) wrote the article to help an organization increase its news coverage. These researchers educate journalists for a living and wrote this article as a form of professional development for the reader. They say to treat journalists with the same degree of respect that you would expect from your

own team (e.g., coworkers, friends, etc.). That makes sense to me. Journalists are professionals, and should be treated as such. Next, they mention that journalists have severe time limits, so brevity is important. They say it's important to keep stories short so there is quick turnaround. Additionally, the authors say one should frame one's story in a way that fits traditional news values. This includes explaining how a particular story can be integrated into a larger one. They also mention that you should make yourself available. Journalists need to trust you and be able to talk with you whenever it fits their schedule. They admit that this can be difficult at times, but it is best to try and remain available as much as possible.

With Jake Starr I was willing to do this. I gave him my phone number and said I would be willing to talk to him and his assistant at the agreed time. Salomone and Gandel (2004) also say to explain the basics of the story in an easy-to-understand manner. This makes sense, as complex stories are difficult to comprehend. I would need to explain my story to Jake Starr in layman's terms. I would have to try and keep the technical neuropsychological terms to a minimum. Salomone and Gandel also say to make sure you look for signs of confusion. When the reporter seems confused, I should take the time to clarify what I said. This was all good advice, I thought to myself. Everyone who gives an interview should read this.

Finally, Salomone and Gandel's advice was to guide the interview. They say this is important in order to keep the interview proceeding in a way that assures that all of the key points will be discussed. One can't expect the journalist to be an expert on your topic, so even though I was the *interviewee*, I should remember that I needed to help direct the interviewer. At the time, I was unaware of this, but it is important for

whistleblowers to know that they have to take the lead when it comes to certain topics. Finally, Martin (1999) says that one should be prepared to compromise when working with the media. A story may not go exactly as planned, and it is important to realize that the media will frame stories in ways that best suit their needs. Thus, one must be aware that everything may not go exactly as planned.

It was surprising to me that there is not more information on whistleblowers talking with the media in the academic research. After searching for hours, using many different search terms in Google and Google Scholar (Google's site for academic research), I could only find a handful of articles on how to talk with the media. Given that talking to the media is a major component for external whistleblowers, it seems like a topic worthy of discussion, as so much can go wrong. One's identity could be revealed and stories could be changed in ways that the whistleblower may not have expected. Also, there should be strategies discussed on how to conceal one's identity and talk about specific topics. What should be said? How should it be said? Further, there should be strategies outlined on how to determine if the media source is trustworthy or not. How does one tell if they can trust a journalist or not? How do you pick the right journalist? Additionally, how do you prepare yourself before doing an interview? What strategies should be taken? All in all, this topic is sorely missing from the whistleblowing literature and needs to be talked about in greater detail. Whistleblowers need to know how to talk to the press.

Perhaps the lack of interest in this topic from researchers is the fact that it is too pragmatic, and academic research is typically theoretical in nature. It may be of more interest to researchers if theories about how to talk to the press are discussed. For

example, one could propose a theory on how to direct conversations with interviewers, or how certain interviewing strategies affect the whistleblower. It could be the case that being anonymous has a different effect on the whistleblower than being perfectly transparent. Researchers could come up with theories to help explain this. They could also look at personality to help explain why some may come forward and do an interview and while others may not. The theoretical possibilities are many.

* * *

Well, it was time for my interview with Bob and Jake Starr. Bob called me at the agreed upon time and our conversation began. I picked up my phone and said “Hi.” I did not use my name at this point in time, for I was trying to ensure my anonymity.

Bob said, “Hi, I’m glad to talk to you. How are you doing?”

I replied, “Well, I’m a little nervous, but I’m really glad you all are willing to do an interview with me. Thank you.”

Bob answered, “Certainly. We are really interested in the story and wanted to ask you a few questions before we moved forward. I’m going to conference in Jake, so we can all talk together.” Jake comes into the conversation and exchanges pleasantries with me. It was really happening!

Jake said, “So I read through the materials you gave us, and this is some disturbing research indeed. I really think it needs to get out there. I’d love to do an interview with you about it.”

I replied, “Great! Thanks a lot. I really want to get the story out there. I think it is dangerous research and it needs to be made public. I really appreciate you doing a story on this.”

“Yeah, we are particularly interested in the transcranial magnetic stimulation and narrative aspects of this story,” Jake said, “It seems like they are trying to control the thought of these individuals.”

“Yes, I completely agree,” I responded, “It worries me greatly.”

“It worries us greatly too. This is exactly the type of stuff we want to report on,” Jake commented, adding, “Bob says you live in the Chicago area, is that right?”

“Yes, I live in the West Chicago suburbs.”

“Well, Bob and I were talking, and we think an in-studio interview would actually be better than a Skype phone call. Don’t worry, we’ll conceal your identity still. But, we actually have our studio in downtown Chicago, so if you are willing to do the interview there, we really think it will make the story that much more impactful.” Wow. I had no idea they were in Chicago. I replied quickly.

“Yes, I certainly would be willing to come to downtown Chicago and do an interview with you at your studio. I can take a day off from work and drive down there. It would only take me about 45 minutes.”

“Great!” Jake and Bob replied in unison. Jake then followed up.

“Well, you know I’m a journalist and have to verify all of my sources. First off, can I get your name?”

This is exactly what the *Cutting Edge* editor did, so I knew this was common practice. I decided to give him my name. I said, “Yes, I’m Chase Clow.”

He replied, “And how are you connected with this research?”

I answered, “Well, I worked directly under the leader of the organization and helped write the literature review for the proposal. I no longer work for that organization, but I worked for them for three years.”

He replied, “Okay, how did you come across these documents?”

I said, “Well, I found them in our organization’s files. There were there for anybody to read, so I read them. I was shocked at what I read, to say the least.”

Bob jumped in and said, “Is there anybody else that can verify that these documents are real? I mean, we have to fact-check everything. We need to make sure these are not just some made-up documents.”

I said, “Well, I can send you proof that they were on the server, but I think anybody in the RI should be able to verify the documents. The thing is though, I don’t think any of them would talk to you.”

Jake said, “Well, we need somebody. Can you give us anybody else that has seen these documents?” I considered my response.

“Yes, I did show them to a professor at LSWU. I think she might be willing to talk to you. I’ll email her and you can set up a time to talk. She should be able to verify that the documents are real.”

Bob said, “Okay, that should work. I’ll wait for your email. Once we can verify that everything checks out, we’ll move forward.”

“Great, that sounds good. I’ll email her right after we get off the phone. I really look forward to doing this interview with you. Thanks again.”

Jake replied, “Well, we look forward to it as well. Thanks for thinking of us. Bob will be in touch.”

“Okay, that sounds good. Talk to you soon. Bye.” The phone call then ended.

Like the *Cutting Edge* phone call, this call was short. They were also looking for proof of everything. I immediately emailed my professor and told her about the situation. She agreed to talk to Starr’s team and answer their questions. She then gave me an email address to use. I told her thanks and said I’d email Jake’s assistant right away. I did that and waited for his response.

My professor and Bob ended up having a phone conversation a few days later. She let me know that I “passed” the background check. She said Bob just wanted to make sure I was sane and that the documents were real. She said that she told Bob that I wasn’t making anything up and that she saw the documents firsthand. I was relieved. I passed their test. The interview was most likely going to occur. I started to get excited. The story was going to be seen by even more people now. Finally all of my hard work was paying off!

Bob called me and said that he verified everything with my professor and that they wanted to do the interview. He gave me a few dates when Jake would be in his Chicago studio. We agreed on a particular time and everything was ready to go. I asked how I should prepare. Bob just said to come ready to answer questions about the project and to be prepared to explain some of the more technical aspects. I said I was ready to do that.

As the days got closer to the interview I began to worry again. I thought to myself, what if they don’t conceal my identity correctly? What if I sound like an idiot? What if they don’t like what I have to say? I wondered what they would ask me. I didn’t know how to prepare. I re-read all of the documents to refresh my memory on the project

and tried to prepare myself mentally. I did mental exercises where I tried to imagine myself in the interview situation. I tried to anticipate his questions, but I couldn't think of what he'd ask me. I had no idea. I told myself that they would probably ask about transcranial magnetic stimulation, narratives, and research plans. I was prepared to answer those questions—maybe. I was not very confident in myself at all. I knew I knew all this information, but the uncertainty was making me very anxious. And I had never done a professional studio interview before.

A few days before the interview Bob called me to confirm. I told him I've taken the day off and I was ready. He said great. He believed the story would really take off and he was excited for the interview. He also told me he won't be there, but Jake's team would be. He gave me the address, and I immediately mapped it out on my computer. His studio was right in the heart of Chicago. I kind of knew the area, but I would make sure to leave extra early. I didn't want to be late for this interview.

The day came and I was sweating bullets, and I even put on two coats of deodorant. I was so nervous to do this interview with Jake Starr. What was he going to ask me? What was he going to say? Would it go smoothly? I was so nervous and paced around the house until it was time to leave. I still felt myself sweating, I was so anxious. Nothing could calm me down, but I tried to remember this is what was good for the story. Jake Starr is a respected journalist. Doing an interview with him would bring a lot more publicity to the GAF grant. Perhaps it would even help to get it stopped. I tried to remember this and it helped me a little bit.

I drove down to Starr's studio and entered it a bit early. The first thing I noticed was that the studio was beautiful. There was tasteful hardwood on the floor, nice bricks

as a background and what looked like very expensive camera equipment. The studio was first rate. It certainly seemed like a professional setup upon first inspection. I met the receptionist.

“Hi, I’m Chase Clow for Jake Starr.” She took me to a waiting area and gave me bottled water. She asked if I needed anything. I said I just needed to go to the bathroom. I went to the restroom, but I could tell it was mostly stress. It was the stress that was making me use the bathroom, nothing else. I was so anxious about what was going to happen any minute now.

One of Jake’s team members greeted me back at the waiting room and said that Jake would come talk to me in about 20 minutes, as he was finishing up taping a segment. I said okay and patiently waited for Jake. This was some of the longest 20 minutes I had ever experienced. I sat there running through everything he might possibly ask me in my head. I knew how to talk about narrative, I knew how to talk about transcranial magnetic stimulation, and I knew how to talk about the project. I gained a little bit of confidence and felt a little less nervous. I was prepared; I could do this! As I was sipping my water, Jake walked up and reached to shake my hand.

“Hi-- Jake Starr,” he said, “Nice to finally meet you.”

“Hi Jake, I’m Chase Clow,” I responded, shaking his hand, “Nice to finally meet you, as well. Thanks again for doing a story on this project, I really appreciate it.”

“No problem, this story really needs to go out there. Why don’t we go talk in my office a bit before filming?” He motioned for me to join him as he turned to walk.

“Okay, that sounds good,” and walked with him to his conference room. It was a large room with about 15 chairs around a large table. Jake sat at one of them, and I sat across from him. Jake started our conversation.

“First off, thanks for coming in. I just wanted to go over how this will go before we actually film it.”

“That sounds like a plan,” I said. His professional demeanor and casual and personal way of interacting with me was helping to put me at ease, “Where do we start?”

Jake replied, “Well, I read through the entire proposal and just finished up filming what I’m going to say as background.” I was impressed. I hadn’t realized that he was working on this project while I was waiting. I was excited, as he continued, “As you know, it’s very complicated material, so I tried to make it as simple as possible. I think you’ll like what you see.”

I replied, “Great! I’m very anxious to see what you have put together. I’ve seen some of your other videos and have been very impressed. I’m really excited about how you’ll tackle this issue.”

He said, “Good. Let’s talk about how the interview will go. First off, it’s going to be pretty short. I’m only going to ask you a few questions.” I nodded my head. “First, I’m going to ask you a little background about yourself and who you are. Then we’ll talk about master narratives [i.e., cultural narratives], and finally we’ll talk about the later stages and transcranial magnetic stimulation. Does that seem okay with you?” I was impressed.

“Yes, that seems fine. Is it going to be live, or can we edit things out if I make a mistake?”

Jake said, “Oh, yeah, it’s not going to be live. We can edit it out any way you want. If you feel like you made a mistake, we can just ask the question again. My editing guys are great! Don’t worry.”

I said, “Okay, that sounds good.”

Jake then said, “Also, I want you to try and not use too many big words or over complicate this. This is very complicated material, and we want to make it as easy to understand as possible. I know you’re probably used to talking in an academic environment, but you have to remember that the average person isn’t going to know much about what we’re talking about.” He smiled and said, “Try to explain things in layman’s terms. But don’t worry, I’ll stop you if anything gets too complicated.”

I said, “Yes, this is pretty complicated. I think I can speak on these topics in layman’s terms. I’ve done a lot of research on them and feel confident I can do that.” I found myself feeling grateful that I’d taught undergrads and had learned how to explain complicated ideas more simply. I was also glad I’d been working in a non-academic environment for the last year.

Jake said, “Great! Do you have any questions for me?”

I replied, “No, I think I’m good to go.”

Jake then took me back to the waiting room and said it’ll take about 10 minutes to setup the interview room. He asked if I needed anything, and I said no. He seemed like a genuinely nice guy. He was friendly, explained to me what was going to happen and did it in a welcoming manner. I started to feel more confident. Jake was easy to talk to and thanks to the professional way he ran things, I now knew what questions he was going to ask me. I was prepared to answer all of those questions we discussed.

The ten minutes went by and one of Jake's team members introduced himself and said they were ready to go. I stood up and followed him to the interview room. The interview room had two stools—one for Jake, and one for me. There were big bright lights and multiple cameras (one to focus in on Jake, and one to focus in on me.). One of the team members then showed me how they were going to conceal my identity. He put a big light around me, which then turned me all black on screen. You could only see my profile. He showed me on the screen what I would look like. I looked completely pitch black. He asked if I wanted to wear a hat or anything. I said no, I think what you've done is good enough. The teammate then said, we'll disguise your voice in post-production, so don't worry about that at all. He then explained that Jake is going to show up in a few minutes. They put a mic on me and told me to turn off my cell-phone to minimize any interference. I agreed and did as instructed.

Jake then walked in and said, "Are you ready?" I nodded and said yes. He smiled and said, "Great." I noticed him fixing his tie and trying to make himself look as professional as possible. I was all black on-screen, so I didn't need to worry about that, but I did make sure to wear a collared shirt, to seem professional.

Jake said, "Okay, we'll start out with some introductory questions. Tell me a little about your work for the RI."¹²

I calmly replied, "I was a graduate staff member for the Research Institute for three years. I worked closely with top management and the leader. I helped with literature reviews and research."

¹² Interview transcript (questions and answers) taken from <http://truthinmedia.com/government-program-to-control-religious-thought/>

Jake then said, “Good, that’s exactly what we want. You sound calm and collected. Good job. Now I’m going to ask you some questions specifically about the project. Remember we can go back and ask the question again if you don’t feel comfortable with anything you’ve said.” This was great. I hadn’t realized he would give me immediate feedback, and his reassurance was really helpful. Jake didn’t seem like the typical journalist in this regard, as research seems to suggest that interviewers have little free time, and him taking extra time to reassure me was definitely beneficial, if somewhat out of the norm.

I said, “Okay, I think I’m ready.”

Jake first asked me, “What were you told about the proposal as you began working through it?”¹³

I replied, “Yeah, I thought it was benign. They told me it was about trying to figure out what parts of the brain are affected by narrative persuasion. Just to figure it out for academic reasons. So we looked at narrative transportation which is basically how an individual is transported into a narrative, how they understand it...kind of like when you read a good book you get really enthralled by it.”

Jake once again seemed happy with my response, and said, “Great, let’s move on.” He then asked me questions about master narratives or cultural narratives. He said, “The local and regional narrative then is that the brain automatically assumes things because of a narrative we’ve been taught since our childhood, is that it?”¹⁴

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

I responded, “Right, yeah that’s true. We call those master narratives. So in America we have this ‘rags to riches’ master narrative where if you work really hard you can become successful and make a ton of money. So in the Middle East, they always use the example of the Pharaoh. That’s the master narrative that’s in the Qur’an, where there’s this corrupt leader that, you know, is really bad for society. And they use the example of Sadat who was assassinated. When the assassin killed him, he said, ‘I have killed the Pharaoh, I have killed the Pharaoh.’ So they assume that he was relying upon this Islamic master narrative to fuel his actions.”

Once again Jake seemed happy with my response. So far we hadn’t had to go back once. He liked what I was saying and everything was going very smoothly. I started to gain more and more confidence with my abilities.

Jake then asked me about the later stages of the project. He said, “It’s is fairly interesting. I noticed you mentioned they said let’s not talk too much about this because who knows if we’ll ever get there. But when you do read what later stages are, it is a little surprising, it’s called Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation. This is not something that’s science fiction, it’s not something they’ve cooked up. This is a real technique that’s already been used in the past, correct?”¹⁵

I answered him, “Yes, it started out in the psychiatry field when people were depressed and when you’re depressed certain parts of your brain are not functioning correctly. So they created this technology, which is basically a big magnet, and you put it on their brain and it turns off that part of the brain that’s bad or wrong and it would help

¹⁵ Ibid.

them with their depression for several weeks to a month and they'd go back and do it again. So this technology has been around for ten or fifteen years.”

Jake then moved on to how TMS could be used for high tech propaganda. He asked, “So it's very high tech propaganda, what we're talking about in regards to transcranial stimulation?”¹⁶

I replied, “High tech and validated propaganda, yes.”

Jake then asked me one last question, about the research plans and we wrapped up.

Jake then said, “Chase this is all great stuff. That's about all the questions we have for you. You did great. Is there anything you would like to add?”

I said, “Well, I just hope this research gets stopped because I'm afraid that they are going to try and brainwash people.” I then joked, “Well, maybe you shouldn't include that part.”

That was it. That was all Jake asked me. His team took off my mic and Jake shook my hand and said thanks. I asked, “When do you think this will air?”

Jake said, “Well, we're thinking 2 to 3 weeks. We have a lot to do on the post-production side. But we think 2 to 3 weeks. We'll let you know though.”

Jake took me back to the waiting room and shook my hand and said thanks again for coming in. I thanked him for interviewing me and running this story. I told him how grateful I was. Jake then walked away and I went back to my car outside.

¹⁶ Ibid.

* * *

That was it. The whole interview took less than 10 minutes and it was over. I kind of felt like I hadn't really said much and that there wasn't much that they could use. I mean, I didn't really answer anything but 4 questions really. I was curious to see what came of all of this. I felt relieved that the interview was over though. My nerves had completely gone away, and it was finally over. I just got interviewed by Jake Starr and everything was done. It was just a waiting game again. I didn't really know what to think at this point in time. I didn't really think I helped out that much, but maybe they just wanted to ask a few pointed questions. I had no idea how they were going to use it.

During the drive home I felt really glad and happy that I'd done the interview. I thought they could conceal my identity and Jake seemed happy with my responses. I felt like I'd done my duty. I sung to the music in my car and went home and took a nap. I was exhausted from all the anxiety I felt earlier in the day. I needed to rest.

Later that week Bob emailed me and said that Jake was happy with the interview and that the story was coming along nicely and would be out shortly; perhaps in a few weeks. He said that Jake was securing some of the legal aspects to publishing the videos, so there might be a little delay, but it shouldn't be long. I replied that I understood and I couldn't wait for the story to come out and to see the reactions.

About 4 weeks go by, and Bob said that the story was going to air that week. He said he saw the final copy of it and said it was amazing. He said it was really well done. I replied that I was so grateful for Jake doing this, and I couldn't wait to see the video. I was thinking to myself, it was happening again. The story was going to reach even more people now. I was so excited. Thoughts kept racing through my head. What was

he going to say? How was he going to explain everything? How was he going to use my interview? What would it look like? Jake is known for very high value production videos, would this one be the same?

Thursday came and the video was released. I immediately watched it. It was twelve minutes long and had very high production values. It was in full 1080p, there were beautiful graphs explaining the project and my interview was featured prominently in it. Jake spoke with authority and gave his take on the project. The video was entitled “Truth in Media: Government Research to Control Our Thoughts?”¹⁷

I hadn’t expected the high quality of the video, and I was very pleased. He explained the project so very eloquently and clearly. And my interview did seem to help. It’s amazing what 10 minutes of interview footage could do. It really looked and sounded professional. I couldn’t have been happier about it. I immediately called my professor and told her to watch the video. She also marvels at how well it was done. It really looked like a very professional piece of journalism. I showed it to my girlfriend and my friends. All of them were impressed.

Part of me was worried that the video would be removed, like those documents from the *Citizen Watch Post* article. I downloaded the video in high definition, told my girlfriend to do so as well and saved it on multiple hard drives. If the RI took this video down, I was just going to upload it again. This was too good and too damning to not be on YouTube.

¹⁷ paraphrased

I went back day by day and looked at the view count. By the end of the week 50,000 people had watched the video! The video was spreading and it was spreading fast. Doing the interview had been the right thing to do after all! More and more people were learning about the project now. All I could do now was hope that it would get shut down because of all this publicity. Only time would tell with that one, but between the *Citizen Watch Post* and Jake Starr's video, something surely must happen.

I celebrated the release of the video with my girlfriend by going out to a nice dinner. It was finally all over. I finally blew the whistle on the RI. It was a long process, full of self-doubt, despair, failures, and successes, but it was finally done.

Or so I thought...

Chapter 15

Getting Caught

The day of the Jake Starr video I received a message from the director of the RI.

He wrote:

Hey Chase, tell Jake Starr he did a terrible job of concealing your identity. I would have expected more from a respected journalist with all those fancy awards.

That was it, my cover had definitely been blown now; they now knew I was the whistleblower for sure. I didn't respond to the message, as I thought it was best to just ignore it and not implicate myself anymore. A wave of anxiety rushed across me. What was Erkens going to do? What was going to happen to me now? Although my entire experience with this project, my whistleblowing, and life in general, had already made it pretty clear that I'm a habitual worrier, receiving the taunting email message increased my distress. I was once again scared, nervous and extremely anxious. Again, I didn't know what to do. I knew this might happen, but to have it actually happen was something entirely different. It was real now. Getting caught wasn't a hypothesized scenario in my mind anymore; it was actually happening. And my thoughts were getting jumbled, paranoid, hyper-reactive, yet again.

I decided to watch the Jake Starr video again, to see if it was really possible to discern if it was me or not. Unfortunately, you could. How could I have not thought of this earlier? How could *they* not have considered this? Indeed, my profile was easily recognizable. I'm tall and skinny and anyone who knows me could definitely make out my features. A complete stranger could even identify me, by simply putting a photograph of me next to a shot from the video, doing a side by side comparison. But it

was more than that. I move my hands around a lot when I talk, and I did the exact same thing in the video. What was I (not) thinking?! Now I was on hyper-drive identifying the ways that I could easily be identified: I think they just used a pitch shifter on my voice. I'm sure somebody with the knowhow could change the pitch and hear my real voice. My inflections and manner of speaking were all there for anyone to catch me. It was official. I had been caught. There was no way around it. I had to face the consequences now. My thoughts, of course, were self-incriminatory. Would this ever stop? How could I be so stupid to do the video? Why didn't I hide myself more? Why didn't Jake Starr do a better job of concealing my identity?

I stepped back and forced myself to take a breather. I began a process of what I knew to be more rational self-talk. The video was the right thing to do. It got the story out to a much larger audience. It needed to be done. I was ready to face the consequences beforehand. This was all on me. I had to do it. I don't regret it at all. I wouldn't change anything, even though I had now been revealed. I was firm in this belief, but this didn't stop the stress. Stress was something I had to deal with for the foreseeable future. It was my reality now. It was amazing to me how I could feel both extremely paranoid and insecure, and confident and assured in such a short amount of time. Surely, this is part of why whistleblowing is not as powerful as it could be?

I knew I needed to talk to somebody about all of this. I needed to make sense of it all. I turned to my girlfriend, Linda, who had been supporting through this whole ordeal.

"Hi Linda. I have something real important to tell you. They know I was the leaker." She took in what I have said to her, and after a very brief pause, she replied.

"How do you know? What do you mean?"

“I just got a message from the RI basically saying that Jake Starr did a horrible job concealing my identity and they knew it was me in the video.” I was careful not to let myself get swept back into my earlier hyper-drive of paranoia, but I could feel it lurking. Linda responded with a validation of my fears. I was not paranoid.

“Yeah, I didn’t want to worry you, but you could definitely tell it was you in that video....”

“I know,” I began, trailing off as I wonder whether I had been in denial for a large part of this. Who knows? Maybe the denial actually helped me be able to do it.

She continued.

“You did the right thing. You did what you thought was right. You knew this might happen. Do you regret it now or something?” Linda had been so supportive throughout all of this. She knew how my mind worked.

“No, no I don’t regret it, but I think they could do something to me,” I began, heading towards my habitual spiral of fearful self-talk. “Couldn’t the leader tell others? Couldn’t he tell LSWU or the people where I’m working now? Couldn’t he affect my job? He has got to be very angry with me. The man can’t be happy.” Linda doesn’t go there with me. She keeps me tethered to a strong place.

“Yes, but aren’t there whistleblower laws? If he tries anything, you can always get a lawyer and deal with it. But forget all about that right now. Nothing has happened yet. Wait and see. You did the right thing; that’s all that matters now.”

I felt a sense of relief. It’s true, there are whistleblowing laws and protections for whistleblowers. I could always fall back on those if I needed to. Still, I was anxious.

The director could still try and ruin my life. But I feel calmer now. Linda was right. I just have to take this one day at a time. Nothing had happened yet but an email.

I replied to Linda, “Yes, you’re right. I can always get a lawyer if I need to. At least I have that.”

Linda said, “Did you respond to the RI when they wrote you the message?”

“No, I felt it was best not to.”

“Good,” she said.

I am calmer, and begin to process my feelings a bit more clearly. “I just don’t know what to do. I’m really nervous about all of this now. I’m starting to have doubts. I know it was the right thing to do, but was it really? Did I do the right thing by exposing the RI?” It was amazing how quickly I could spin myself back into the spiral of fear.

“Yes, of course,” Linda answered. “You knew this was bad research and it had to be exposed. It was harmful. You thought about this and worked on this for a year. You did the right thing. Don’t worry about that. I’m proud of you, Chase. You did what many would not do. It was the right thing to do. Don’t forget that.”

I felt better about the situation now. She had relieved some of my anxiety, and reassured me that I, in fact, did do the right thing. It wasn’t enough to tell myself these things. I needed to hear it from others. I needed that, and Linda provided that for me.

“Thanks, Linda. I needed to hear that. I just needed somebody to talk to about this. This is really helping. Thank you!”

“Of course. I know this must be hard. You’re my boyfriend, and I love you. I’ll help you with anything you need,” Linda said to me. We stopped talking about the whistleblowing.

* * *

Linda's social support had really been helpful in this situation. But I needed more. I needed to talk to more people. I decided I was going to tell two trusted work friends about my whistleblowing the next day at work. I needed more opinions. I needed more social support. While the research is mixed in this area, some researchers have found that having multiple sources of social support has a synergistic effect (Greenhaus, Ziegert, & Allen, 2012). It is believed that having multiple sources, like friends, family, and co-workers work together to help complement or enhance each other (Greenhaus, Ziegert, & Allen, 2012). So by getting social support from my girlfriend, friends, and co-workers there was a possibility that their social support would combine together and provide me with greater benefit than if I only had one or two sources of social support.

The next day at work at around 9:30am, I texted my coworker Rob, and said, "Can I trust you with something?" Rob and I were both user experience researchers, who tested how individuals interacted with technology. The aim of our work was to create a better user experience, so that the consumer has the best possible time with a particular product.

Rob replied, "Of course." Rob was my best friend at work and I knew I could trust him. I'd told him other secrets before and I knew he wouldn't betray me. I really trusted his opinion too. He was very smart, kind and knowledgeable.

I texted Rob back, "Okay, thanks. Watch this video and tell me what you think. Make sure to watch it on your phone. I don't want it to be on the company computers."

Rob replied, "Okay, will do."

Now I had to wait. I knew it will take at least 10 minutes for Rob to watch the video. The time was just enough to let my nerves kick in. What would he think? Would he think I did the right thing? Would he say the same thing that Linda said? What would he tell me? Throughout this entire process, I was becoming increasingly aware of the way that social support (or the absence of it—even the idea of its absence) was a powerful monitor of navigating my experience of whistleblowing.

I waited the 10 minutes and got increasingly anxious. I really respected his opinion and needed to see what he had to say. After about 15 minutes since I'd sent him the link for the video, Rob texted me back with a one word response.

“Wow.” We're texting, so it was kind of hard to respond as I might have in a conversation. I decided to ask him to have a talk.

I replied, “Yeah, it's kind of serious. Can we talk about this in private? I just want to get your opinions on some things.”

There was an open room around the corner from our office, and Rob and I decided to use it for a quick talk. We walked in, shut the door, and sat down on the chairs around the rectangular conference table. There weren't any windows in this room, so nobody could see us talking, which helped to reduce my anxiety. It would have seemed comical, if it hadn't really been happening. I whispered to him.

“Well, what do you think about all of that?”

“Well, I don't really know what to say; this is pretty big.” He looked at me, waiting for me to respond. I spoke a bit more normally, but I was still conscious that I didn't want us to be overheard, so I was careful.

“Yeah, I felt I had to do it. As you can see in the video the research is pretty scary stuff.”

He agreed. “Yes, yes it is. I can see why you’ve been stressed out these past few weeks.” He had a good point. People who don’t know what I’ve been going through could only see the effects of the whistleblowing on me. I decided to tell him a little more.

“Yeah, it’s been very stressful. Plus, they know it’s me. I got an email from the director of the research group basically telling me he knew it was me. I mean the video didn’t do a good job of hiding my identity.”

Rob responded, “Unfortunately, that’s true. If somebody knows you, they would definitely know it was you in the video.”

I replied, “For sure.” I shared my fears with him. There’s a fine line between launching into paranoia and acknowledging the realistic risk of things that could transpire. “Do you think if our boss here found out I blew the whistle somewhere it could hurt me?” I asked. We work with sensitive information all the time. If the boss finds out he could see me as a liability and I could lose my job over this. In retrospect, I can see how I was recognizing how whistleblowing, while an act in response to ethical concerns, can be twisted to make the whistleblower appear to be the ethical liability (Delk, 2013).

Rob responded in a manner similar to Linda’s.

“Yeah, that’s true. But there are whistleblower protections. He really can’t do that much without getting in trouble. But still, I can see why you’d be worried.” Yeah, I could too. While there are whistleblower protections, pursuing them would open up another whole phase of this experience. It was not really how I wanted to spend the rest of my life. I didn’t want to get a lawyer, be involved with a lawsuit, and then be tainted

by the case for the rest of my life. This was something I did not want to do. I didn't want to be blacklisted as a whistle-blower and barred from future job opportunities if I brought up a lawsuit (Sawyer, Johnson, & Holub, 2006). While blacklisting is not legal, employers are very good at indirectly blacklisting employees from their field, and this was something I did not want to occur in my life (Sawyer, Johnson, & Holub, 2006).

"Yeah, I'm very worried," I confided in him. "I mean, I need this job to live, and I really want to finish my degree."

He said, "Well, I don't really know about all of that."

"I don't know; I'm just freaking out man," I said to him. It was helpful to admit it to a friend.

"Understandable, but just try and stay calm. You have protections," Rob reassured me.

I replied, "Well, I'll try, but this is big, you know? I just don't know what is going to happen in the future."

He replied, "I understand." I asked him one more question.

"Do you think I did the right thing here?" I needed reassurance again that I really did the right thing. It seemed that getting caught had made me reevaluate everything. I knew it was the right thing to do, but I needed to hear it from others.

Rob replied, "Yes, it sounds like terrible research. I think you did the right thing."

I thanked Rob, and then we left the meeting room. Rob's social support helped relieve some more anxiety. He brought up whistleblowing laws and said I did the right thing, just as had Linda. I started to feel better and better about this. These people were

really helping me. They were keeping me sane. I don't know what I would have done if they weren't there to reassure me. That's not hyperbole; I really don't know.

* * *

I still wanted to tell one more person about my whistleblowing, and I decided to Skype my other trusted coworker, Erin. I said, "I want to show you something, but please keep it private. Let me know what you think when you're done watching this. I'm very curious." She replied, "Okay." I trusted Erin immensely. Like Rob, I had told her secrets before and she never betrayed me. I worked with her closely on multiple projects and she was a good person, and I respected her opinion. I knew she was a good person to talk to.

About 30 minutes later Erin responded to me.

"Wow, Chase. That's some pretty heavy stuff. I think you really did the right thing, though. I mean what they're trying to do to religious people is terrible. It's great that you got this out there. It was the right thing to do." Erin's comment was very reassuring.

"Thanks, Erin. It was hard, but I thought the research needed to be in the public eye. I'm glad I did it. Thanks for watching the video," I replied to her.

That was the extent of our conversation. I didn't need to hear any more from Erin. I didn't even have to ask her if she thought what I did was the right thing to do or not. She came out and said it right away. My stress level started to decrease even more. I did do the right thing! It was worth the risks! My whistleblowing needed to be done, so I did it! Multiple people agreed with me and I felt reassured. I felt empowered as well. I

did the right thing, and now I felt very confident about it. I could take on the consequences. I knew I could. The reward was worth the risks!

Social support (or the comfort and assistance one receives from individuals or groups; Flannery, 1990) has been shown in the literature to help those in stressful situations. For example, Araya, Choatai, Komproe, and de Jong (2006) found that social support directly influenced mental distress in postconflict displaced Ethiopians. When one has people around them to help them through difficult situations, mental distress decreases. Chao (2011) also writes that social support is negatively related to mental problems. It was also found in that study that high social support acted as a buffer against stress, while low social support did not.

I was fortunate enough to have many people give me social support, including my girlfriend, friends, and colleagues. Had I not had those individuals in my life, my wellbeing may have suffered. I am truly grateful for all the help these individuals provided me.

A particularly powerful aspect of social support goes beyond the simple support and reassurance that is provided. It appears that when confronting a traumatic experience, social support can also be linked to one's ability to grow from that experience. In 2009, two scholars, Prati and Pietrantonio reported on a meta-analysis of 103 studies, on social support and posttraumatic growth. By closely looking at the work done by many scholars, they were able to identify the link. While I wouldn't necessarily call my experience as a whistleblower traumatic, Prati and Pietrantonio's extensive review of the literature on social support, shows that its impact is not negligible, or simply affective. When individuals have the support of their peers, well-being increases. Social

support helps one process what could readily be repressed, denied, or otherwise distorted by the levels of fear and anxiety that accompany traumatic experience. That was certainly the case with me, and continued to be the case when I faced the negative consequences that were to come.

Chapter 16

The Aftermath

Now that I'd been "caught," I decided that it was best to let the professors who were directing my work, and who were on my current dissertation committee, know it was me that blew the whistle on the RI. I felt it was only fair to them. They needed to know what I had done. I didn't want them to feel duped or misled by me. They were going to find out sooner or later anyway, so I thought I would just do an ethical pre-emptive strike.

I wrote my two co-chairs about my whistleblowing and gave them links to the *Citizen Watch Post* article and the Jake Starr video. With the confidence I'd gained from talking to Linda, Rob and Erin, I felt that my committee would think I did the right thing and would be okay with my actions. This was not to say I wasn't nervous. I still felt anxiety about doing this. Who knows what they could say. But I could definitely feel the mediating effects of the social support on the emotions and self-talk that had almost crippled me earlier.

After I emailed my co-chairs about my whistleblowing I did not hear anything from them for 2 months. Yes, TWO MONTHS! I had not waited idly by. They were definitely avoiding interaction with me. I'd written multiple emails and heard nothing. They just straight up ignored every email I wrote them.

This was not a good sign. I told myself that it could only mean that they did not approve of what I had done. It was difficult, because I was living in Chicago, and they were in a southwestern state, so I couldn't just go to their offices and confront them. But in some ways, the written record made it much more blatant and obvious.

My anxiety levels were through the roof at this point. My co-chairs were messing with my dissertation. They weren't reviewing my drafts and they weren't giving me feedback. They weren't doing anything! They were delaying my progress to a halt. I couldn't believe it. How could they just ignore me like that? What was going on? I was extremely angry and pissed off. They had to respond to me! My future depended on it.

I decided that I was going to write them an ultimatum email. I wrote in the email that I needed to hear back from them within 2 weeks or I would have to find a new committee. I marked the seriousness of this by explaining that they were delaying my progress and I would be unable to finish my dissertation if they kept ignoring me. It was a very serious email. I told myself that they would have to respond. They did, but even then, I had to wait two weeks for their email messages.

I finally heard from both of my co-chairs. The first co-chair wrote that she could no longer work with me because my research interests no longer interested her. I knew this was a lie. My anger at the evasiveness propelled me to write back a very blunt message. My message stated, "It's a shame that departmental politics have clouded your judgment. You were very excited about my research before I told you about my whistleblowing, but now all of the sudden they no longer interest you? That doesn't make any sense. Plus, you didn't respond to me for two straight months. I am very disappointed in how you handled this." She did not reply to that email. Well that was one committee member down. I was extremely angry with this professor. Obviously, anger is less silencing than anxiety, at least with me. I told myself that she was a coward and was too scared to work with me because I was now "tainted" in the department. It's good that I was in Chicago at this time, because if I was in this southwestern state, I

might have gone to her office and engaged in a heated conversation about how she was a coward and was too scared to fight for the right thing. Who knows how that might have affected me? But nevertheless, the negative consequences had begun. I'd lost more than two months on my dissertation and a committee member. For anyone who understands the time clock on graduate education, that is not insignificant. Delays such as this can add whole semesters to how long it takes to graduate, and each semester is not simply costly in terms of time. I'd lost my graduate support and was having to pay for my own tuition. Each semester was now costing me over thirteen-hundred dollars, as I no longer was receiving aid from the school. I could no longer work for the RI and since I wasn't teaching at LSWU, there was no tuition waiver. I actually had to go into debt to finish my degree.

Co-Chair #2 also wrote back as well, saying he was sorry that he had not responded to me for so long. At least his response felt more sincere to me. He said that this was a very difficult situation for him, as he had friends in the RI, but also felt that whistleblowers often get treated unfairly and he wasn't sure what to do. I replied that I understood that it must be difficult, but that I was disappointed that he ignored all my emails and delayed my progress. I said I needed to know if he would continue to work with me or not. He replied that he had to give it some thought. I said that was understandable and I would give him a few weeks to think it over. I really needed this individual to be on my committee if I wanted to finish my dissertation. If I had to wait a few more weeks, then so be it. The problem was, I waited over two months and he never responded to me, despite repeated emails to him asking what his decision was. He also took what I considered the coward's way out and ignored the situation, instead of taking

it head on. His silence was telling. He cared more about his friendships with RI members and departmental politics than me. He was no longer going to be on my committee. I had enough. I decided that I would no longer have him as my dissertation chair. Essentially, I “kicked him off.”

At this point in time I was completely helpless. I had no committee and had wasted an entire semester not working on my dissertation because my committee refused to work with me or even respond to me. I couldn't believe it. But at the same time, I had known there would be negative consequences to blowing the whistle on the RI. The organization was very powerful in the department, and apparently scared other professors. Still it hurt and pissed me off. I had lost so much time and money. The whistleblowing had hurt me for sure. I didn't even know if I could finish my dissertation anymore. I had no one to work with. I didn't know what to do! Whistleblowing on the RI might have just cost me my degree. I had spent 5 years working toward this degree and gone into considerable student loan debt to complete this PhD. Who knew how long I'd be paying for this? To have it all taken away because I did the right thing just infuriated me. I was so angry. I was fuming!

I needed to find a new committee, and I needed to find one quickly. I called Dr. De la Garza, a professor I had taken a few classes with, to talk about my situation. I had a good relationship with her and felt I could trust her with my information. I told her everything about how my committee had completely ignored me and refused to work with me due to my whistleblowing.

She replied, “So they just didn't respond to you at all, all semester?”

I said, “Yes, that’s right. They just completely ignored me, and then made bullshit excuses about why they couldn’t work with me. I think they are scared. Or maybe they just don’t agree with what I did. I don’t know. They won’t talk to me!”

She responded, “I can’t believe it. That’s terrible. That’s really disappointing.”

I said, “I know. I don’t even know what to do anymore. I think I’ve been tainted in the department. I don’t think I can finish my degree. No one will work with me probably. Everybody is scared of me and what I did. The RI is too powerful.”

Dr. De la Garza replied, “No, not everybody thinks you did the wrong thing. The RI is powerful, but there is also a lot of worry amongst some faculty members about the RI’s research. They think it is unethical too. They just won’t speak up. That’s one of the signs of its power. Money talks.”

I said, “Well, that’s good that others question the ethics of the research, but I need to find a committee and find one fast. I mean, if I don’t have a dissertation committee, I have nothing. I can’t finish.”

She responds, “Don’t worry, we’ll find you something. Let me do some digging around for you.”

I said, “Thank you. That would be very helpful. I really appreciate it! I really want to finish this degree I’ve been working on for so long.”

A few days later Dr. De la Garza calls me and says that she has a plan. She said, “I was thinking, maybe we can work together. I could be your chair and I could find two other people that are sympathetic to your whistleblowing and aren’t scared to work with you. I’ve already got a couple of scholars in mind who might be very interested in your experience and what it has to say about whistleblowing.”

I say, “That would be great! Thanks so much!”

She replied, “No problem. I’ll get back to you in a week or so with updates.” I thanked her again and the phone conversation ended.

I thought to myself, “Yes! I have a new committee now. Maybe it’ll all work out!” Dr. De la Garza kept her promise and found two other people to work with me on my dissertation committee. That disaster seemed to have been averted. I was so happy and grateful that Dr. De la Garza had the courage to work with me.

* * *

Months passed and I was working on my new dissertation topic. Things seemed to be progressing along nicely. I was writing and my committee was replying back to me. Everything appeared to be back on schedule. Then I received a letter in the mail from the PhD director.

In the letter, the director wrote that I am behind in my degree and that I now was being placed on academic probation. I thought to myself, “What? I’m behind because my old committee refused to even speak to me. That’s not my fault at all!” I had to meet certain deadlines or I might get kicked out of the PhD program. I immediately thought this was due to my whistleblowing. I couldn’t be certain because I didn’t confront the PhD director about it, but it was the only thing that made sense to me. I didn’t even consider at the time how hypervigilance has become my immediate way of confronting bad news. I was hyper-vigilant about everything. It was stressing me out and making me paranoid. But again, I was finding that if I became angry, I’m more likely to respond forthrightly and directly, than if crippled by anxiety.

I responded back to the director and said, “I am behind because I had to change my dissertation committee three times. Why am I being placed on probation?” The director replied that I am in my fifth year and haven’t finished my dissertation. He said that the degree is supposed to be finished in four years, and I was behind. I reiterated that it wasn’t my fault, but he didn’t care. I even checked the school website and it said I have 8 years to complete my degree. I wasn’t behind at all. I told the director this, but he didn’t care. He said departmental policies were different than University ones.

I was infuriated. I knew people that took 6 years to finish their degrees and they weren’t on probation. I couldn’t believe it! I got the feeling that this was all due to my whistleblowing. So, I could tell myself that it’s the whistleblowing, technically, but it’s bureaucracy that was adding to my distress. Had it not been for the whistleblowing, I’d likely be done, far less in debt, and certainly not facing probation.

I became increasingly worried and thought I might not be able to finish my dissertation by the deadline. I began to think the department was trying to kick me out of the program for my whistleblowing actions. I got more and more paranoid. Dr. De la Garza thought I could finish in the allotted time, but I was not sure. All I could do was try at this point. I chalked this up to another negative consequence of my whistleblowing on the powerful RI. This is what I signed up for when I started the whistleblowing process, and these were the consequences I had to face. I’ve learned that it goes with the territory.

Much has been written in the literature about the negative consequences whistleblowers face. For example, Bjorkelo (2013) writes about how some whistleblowers are bullied after the blow the whistle. Workplace bullying occurs when a

person in a more powerful position harasses or gives unwanted attention to a person with less power. Examples can include ostracism, selective downsizing, unfavorable job evaluations, and social isolation. While I don't necessarily consider the negative consequences associated with my whistleblowing bullying per se, they were somewhat similar. I was ostracized by my former committee, I was given unfavorable job evaluations when I was put on academic probation, and I was certainly socially isolated, as I felt I had very few people I could talk to in the department. Workplace bullying is something whistleblowers must overcome when their identity is revealed.

Further, Delk (2013) reports that whistleblowers oftentimes lose their position, endure physical and emotional strife, and are sometimes treated differently by their coworkers. I felt this happened to me during my whistleblowing experience. My committee certainly treated me differently, and I definitely experienced physical and emotional strife, as I was angry, nervous, and got sick a lot during this time period. Had I not blown the whistle on the RI, my well-being and social standing would certainly have been improved. Greaves and McGlone (2012), while examining whistleblowers, also found that whistleblowing negatively affects well-being. Emotional distress appears to be a significant consequence of whistleblowing and potential whistleblowers need to keep this in mind when deciding to come forward.

Like other researchers, McDonald and Ahern (2000), when studying nurses who blew the whistle (a very popular topic in the whistleblowing literature), found that these individuals faced demotion, reprimands, threats, rejection from peers, pressure to resign, and being treated as a traitor. While I'm not a nurse, I can certainly relate to some of these consequences. I felt like many in the department felt I was a traitor, for instance,

especially when my own committee, people who were supposed to be behind me 100%, refused to even speak to me. I was completely rejected by these individuals. And I also faced demotion if I didn't pass all the requirements of the academic probation.

Mesmer-Magnus and Visweswaran (2005) did a meta-analysis, analyzing 26 samples, on whistleblowing intentions, actions, and retaliation, and found that when organizations are dependent on the continuation of the unethical work or when they no longer need the whistleblower, retaliation is more likely to occur. In my situation, the RI was dependent on the multi-million dollar grant to stay in business, and they certainly didn't need me anymore, as I no longer worked there. So I was in the perfect position to face retaliation. I can't be for certain that the RI actually retaliated against me and turned professors against me, as I had no proof, but it was a possibility. Mesmer-Magnus and Visweswaran (2005) also found that other forms of retaliation include coercing the whistleblower to withdraw the accusations, excluding the whistleblower from the organization, isolation, character defamation, disgrace of the whistleblower, exclusion from meetings, and harassment. Organizations also might try to silence the whistleblower completely, prevent public knowledge of the complaint, try to discredit the whistleblower, and discourage others from coming forward (Mesmer-Magnus and Visweswaran, 2005). The RI certainly tried to prevent public knowledge of the complaint, as they immediately had the leaked documents taken off the internet once they were revealed. The RI didn't want the public to know what they were doing at all, so they used their power and authority to remove damning evidence of their unethical work.

All of this research points to the fact that whistleblowers face severe consequences when deciding to come forward. It is a burden they must face if their

identity is revealed. Social isolation, retaliation, demotion, and harassment, are all commonplace amongst those who choose to blow the whistle on unethical research. Potential whistleblowers must keep this in mind and have good social support to help them through these difficult times, as outlined above. Without coping strategies, whistleblowers mental and physical health may be negatively affected, along with their professional lives. Unfortunately, whistleblowing comes with its consequences.

Despite the consequences, the rewards turned out to be worth it. In December, 2013 the GAF project was shut down.

Chapter 17

Reflections & Insights

Approaching whistleblowing through a creative nonfiction lens (Gutkind, 2012) helped me immensely as both a researcher and a whistleblower. Not only did I gain greater insight as a scholar studying the concept of whistleblowing, but the process actually helped me understand my whole whistleblowing experience in a way no other way could. The practices of reflection, description, and analysis, with a public audience in mind at all times, combine in a manner that prevents a myopic lens or reinforcement of a simple perspective. In this chapter, I'd like to share some of the insights I gained by writing my dissertation in this manner, to help future whistleblowers during the difficult experiences that are part of whistleblowing. Additionally, I'd like to suggest some avenues of research that I believe would contribute greatly to our knowledge of whistleblowing. As I applied existing literature to my reflection, I was able to see how my preparation as a scholar of organizational communication helped me raise additional questions, and I believe many could benefit if whistleblowing scholars would consider investigating them further.

To begin, what insights or tips do I have for future whistleblowers?

First off, it's hard, it's stressful, and it takes a lot out of you. That sounds so basic and common sense, but the reality of the stress and difficulty is unlike many of the typical, socially acceptable challenges we face routinely as part of our work lives. Additionally, whistleblowing is not just some easy process that one can do in a night and call it a day. The whole whistleblowing process involves many different stages and a

rollercoaster of emotions. It is difficult, and at times you will feel like giving up and just crying.

It is important to move through the challenges and stress, and continue to ‘fight the good fight.’ If you have decided to be a whistleblower, it’s very likely that your beliefs are strong and that you are doing what you’re doing because of an underlying faith in standing up for what is right. Don’t get demoralized if it doesn’t work the first time, or the first twenty times; just keep trying. The challenge is harder than most times we speak up for causes, when others around us may readily speak up and join us. The whistleblowing experience is lonely. It’s difficult to lose the social systems that have supported you in what you are doing. I know that’s easier said than done, but my experience as a whistleblower over these past three years has helped me realize there are some strategies one can take that can help during the process.

The most vital element, from the very start, is social support. Looking back at my entire experience, it is clear in my mind that I could not have blown the whistle if it wasn’t for my friends and colleagues who provided vital social support to me. As one can tell by reading my previous chapters, I was a nervous mess during most of the story. I constantly doubted myself, thought the worst, and believed I couldn’t do it. Luckily, I had friends and loved ones to help calm me down, to reassure me, and to let me know that I was, in fact, doing the right thing. Without them, I’m really not sure the whistleblowing would have occurred. I thank them immensely. But the real element that is vital is not just that I had these friends, but that I turned to them. Whistleblowing is a somewhat paranoid venture—one where it’s easy to begin to close down your regular communication. So, I advise future whistleblowers, not only identify those who are part

of your social support network, but *use it*. Make sure you have friends, family, colleagues, and loved ones with whom you can talk. Make sure these are people you can trust, and make sure they have your best interests at heart. Listen to your gut, but listen to them, as well. They will help you see the bigger picture, and at the same time, they will help ground you. For example, talking with my girlfriend after I got caught helped realize that I did, in fact, do the right thing with the whistleblowing, and she helped me understand that there are whistleblowing protections I could turn to, if needed. Additionally, talking with my work colleagues helped to validate the whistleblowing to me, despite the risks, as they reassured me that blowing the whistle was the right thing to do as well.

Additionally, you will need trusted confidants. You won't be able to talk about the whistleblowing with everybody, so you will need a few close friends with whom to share your experience. Keep these people close, and trust the right people. When considering who to trust, and I'm sure it's different from person to person, but for me, I looked for people who had not betrayed my trust in the past. Further, I looked at people who I considered to be good friends, people who had my best interests at heart. If you can't trust somebody fully, it might be best to choose a different person to talk to, as untrustworthy individuals may make the whistleblowing process more difficult. They may tell others about your intentions, or even worse, they might try and sabotage your efforts. Keep your good friends close; you'll need them. And don't forget to just have fun with them, as well. Maintain the friendships; don't simply talk about the whistleblowing all the time, no matter how tempting it might be. Getting involved in

everyday social activities with my friends actually helped to get my mind off of my experience for a while. That was really important.

Second, be prepared to be anxious, nervous, and stressed out. I learned very quickly that stress would be a major part of your life during the whole whistleblowing experience. It's very likely that you'll be stressed about the unethical acts you uncovered, about coming forward, about leaking documents to the press (if you decide to do that), about talking to the press (if you decide to go that route), and about getting caught (if you choose to remain anonymous). Whistleblowing is stressful; there is just no way around it. It is an action some might consider betrayal, and it will consume your life. I say this: if you are thinking about blowing the whistle, make sure you have some anxiety reduction strategies handy. And if you don't have any, learn some! I used music, taking naps, and social support as my ways of coping with the stress. I realize that may not work for everybody. But, there are a ton of strategies out there that one could use. One could use breathing strategies, exercise, writing, or a myriad of other stress reduction techniques. All that matters is that you have something you can fall back on. Without some sort of strategy, the stress will consume you. As my story indicated, the stress is immense!

Third, it is important to expect change or to anticipate that that things will not go your way. Looking at my experience, I had to change outlets, reveal my name, experience negative consequences, and I got caught. During each stage of the process there was uncertainty and change. When I first talked to the *Cutting Edge* editor, and he asked me for my name, I had to make the split second decision to reveal it to him. In that moment, my entire strategy of remaining completely anonymous shifted, as somebody

now knew who I was. Everything changed in a moment. Future whistleblowers, expect this to happen to you as well. There will be times when you have to change your entire strategy at the drop of a hat. I even had to change outlets during my experience, which involved even more change. How one decides to navigate that change is what needs to be considered. I say, trust your instincts and friends and loved ones. Deep down, you know what is best, and you should trust yourself. You may make some mistakes, but having trust in yourself is key when navigating change. Change and uncertainty are all parts of the whistleblowing experience. While it's cliché to say, expect the unexpected. You never know what new hurdle you will have to jump over. Have trust in yourself, and when possible, discuss potential new directions with trusted confidants. While I did not seek professional help, this is also an avenue one could take. Talking to counselors and therapists may be beneficial during this trying time.

Fourth, it is important to learn to speak in lay terms especially if what you are disclosing involves specialized knowledge or in-group ways of talking about it. For me, this was very important because I had to discuss complex neuropsychological topics with individuals not familiar with them. Jake Starr even told me to speak in non-academic terms, so that his viewers would be able to understand all that was happening in the grant. I imagine this is very similar to many whistleblowers' experiences, as no matter your field, you will be forced to talk to somebody outside of it, if you choose to blow the whistle to an external source. If you're uncovering financial fraud for example, you'll have to discuss complex financial terms to the press. It is important to be able to discuss your topic in easy to understand terms. I learned a lot from Jake Starr's experienced way of working with me, based on his knowledge of how the public responds to news. I was

lucky because I had taught undergraduates, and was therefore used to distilling complex theories into easy to understand concepts. Also, my job as a researcher of user experience had me routinely explain complex statistics to clients unfamiliar with such concepts. Not everyone may not be this lucky. Potential whistleblowers must be able to explain their concerns in a way that will get others concerned as well. Perhaps discuss the potential wrongdoing with friends outside of your industry, or perhaps you can write it out and think critically about how to make the topic easier to read. Think of someone you know who knows very little about what you do—could you tell them in a way that would help them not only understand what you are saying, but be interested in it? When we get used to working in a particular setting, we often don't realize how accustomed we've become to speaking or writing in particular ways. The last thing you want is for someone's eyes to "glaze over" when you share your information. In summary, it is important to know your concerns well enough that you can talk about them with ease. Using industry jargon or technical terms may turn off potential outlets, and your story may never get out there, and the wrongdoing may never get challenged. Learn to speak in layman's terms.

Fifth, know your own ethics and morals. As can be seen in my experience, ethics drove many of my actions. I felt obligated to report the unethical research to somebody. I knew what I personally had come to consider 'right' and 'wrong,' and acted accordingly. I didn't use just one ethical framework, but rather, many. My friends, and my own constant internal dialogue, helped me determine what was right or wrong in my situation. Cavico's (2003) work is a good first read, as it discusses many of the ethical stances mentioned in this work. While I've stressed that it's important to trust your

instincts, it was very useful to have some external markers to help give me a sense of what I was doing. For example, my friends let me know that my whistleblowing actions might hurt more people than I actually considered. Thus, I realized that it was really important to me that I try to hurt the least amount of people possible. Also, it was through thoughtful contemplation that I initially realized I had the “dreadful obligation” to come forward and report this wrongdoing. Potential whistleblowers must have their own code of ethics to live by. What is “right” and “wrong” for you? Is risking coworker’s jobs ethical to you? Is reporting wrongdoing worth it, despite the negative consequences? The answers to those questions will come from your own ethical and moral stances. It is important to realize what is important to you and live by those codes. Without them, you may be lost and unable to determine how to move forward with your whistleblowing.

Finally, expect negative consequences after blowing the whistle. While you may never get caught and nothing bad may happen to you, it is important to be prepared for the worst. You might lose your job, get sued, become socially isolated, or face demotion, amongst other things. Be prepared to face those consequences. Have backup plans and strategies that you can use if negative consequences befall you. Social support is also key here, as you will need people to talk to if anything bad happens. Be prepared to get a new job, possibly in a new industry, when you decide to blow the whistle. Be prepared to be ostracized. Some people may say that you can never be fully prepared for these things, but I found that an awareness of the fact what was happening to me was to be expected actually helped me. Since I’m an academic at heart, I started reading about whistleblowing, and once I’d started reading, I was able to compare what I was going

through to what I was learning. One thing I learned, and which I suggest, is thinking about the negative consequences in a rational manner and then imagine solutions to them. Is there another job you can apply for? Are there trusted coworkers who will help you if you get caught? Is there a lawyer you know, who can help you with whistleblowing protections if a lawsuit comes about? Think about these things and have good solutions before they actually happen. Is there someone you can talk with to help you brainstorm? While all negative consequences can't be anticipated, having solutions to some will help reduce stress and anxiety.

In addition to the personal advice that I just provided for other whistleblowers, I became aware of several fruitful areas of interest for whistleblowing scholars while writing this dissertation. Thanks to the creative nonfiction process, I came to see whistleblowing as multifaceted and involving many different parts. This is something that I suppose many scholars would agree with, but by emphasizing my firsthand description of the scenes and experiences that made up my story, the simultaneity of the various facets became viscerally apparent to me. Researchers studying the topic usually focus in on just one component of whistleblowing when investigating the phenomenon, and this is understandable, when one considers that research is usually identified by the primary emphasis or focus of one's studies. However, emphasizing one topic, while beneficial in some regards, misses the entire picture—and the “big picture” is simultaneous and dynamically and interrelatedly varied. One must combine the different experiences to get to the whole, not simply look at multiple variables theoretically. The dynamics are embedded in the personal experience. Without such understanding, researchers, and those who read their work, will be left in the dark. The creative

nonfiction approach to a real life whistleblowing experience is one way of doing this, and I encourage researchers use this method with other whistleblowers to come to a better understanding of what exactly the whistleblowing experience is like. In short, creative nonfiction involves the “5 Rs:” real-life, reflection, research, reading, and ‘riting’ (sic) (Gutkind, 2006). Essentially, it is important to write about a real-life event, reflect upon it to embrace the reader, conduct research on the topic, read works from other authors for inspiration, and write from both a creative and craft perspective (e.g., editing and making sure it reads well). Creative nonfiction is not just some sort of autoethnography or memoir, but rather is research in itself. It involves telling a true story and backing it up with facts and research to further bring about immersion and to teach the reader. That aside, several topics did come up that haven’t been discussed in the literature very much, and I think warrant further study.

First, I think it is vitally important that scholars study social support to a greater degree. While social support has been investigated in great detail when it comes to worker stress, research has not focused in on social support and how it affects whistleblowers specifically. For example, Cohen and Wills (1985) looked at what they called the buffering hypothesis at work, Flannery (1990) examined psychological trauma, and Viswesvaran, Sanchez, and Fisher (1999) investigated work stress. However, questions such as, “How does social support help or harm (or perhaps both) whistleblowers?” “How should whistleblowers best leverage social support to help reduce anxiety associated with whistleblowing?,” and “How many different avenues of social support should a whistleblower ideally have?” need to be asked and investigated. Researchers must understand how social support affects whistleblowers. If my

experience is any example, it is quite possible that social support may be a “mixed bag,” as it helped to relieve some anxiety, but also brought about increased anxiety in some situations. What types of social support are most beneficial? How can one reduce the negative effects of social support, while increasing the positive aspects?

Second, researchers should study the constant state of change whistleblowers face during each different aspect of the whistleblowing experience. For example, what happens when a whistleblower is asked to reveal his/her identity? What happens when a whistleblower gets caught? How do whistleblowers navigate this change? One way researchers can study this is by examining liminality. While liminality, or the ambiguous stage one passes through during the ‘before’ and ‘after’ stages of a ritual or event (Beech, 2011), is typically studied from an anthropological perspective (take for example Davis, 1975; Dressman, 1997, and Turner, 1979), it could also apply to organizations and whistleblowers as well. There are different stages to whistleblowing, such as uncovering the unethical act, deciding what to do about it, actually blowing the whistle, and the aftermath. These different stages all have ambiguity, liminality, associated with them, and it would be beneficial if whistleblowing researchers examined this in greater detail. If liminality and ambiguity can be minimized through thoughtful contemplation or by talking with others, stress and anxiety associated with whistleblowing may also be able to be minimized as well. Researchers must study the liminality of whistleblowing to see how this ambiguity affects whistleblowers in order to better help out whistleblowers.

Third, as I mentioned earlier, whistleblowing is stressful, and whistleblowing researchers such as Lennane (1993) and McDonald and Ahern (1999) would agree, as they studied the stress associated with the act. Research may benefit from examining the

different strategies one can do to help reduce this stress. For example, are there any techniques that work especially well? Are there particular things whistleblowers can do to help minimize anxiety? Additionally, it may be beneficial to see how stress and anxiety affects whistleblowers. How does it affect their relationships, their wellbeing, and their health? Questions such as this need to be asked and answered by whistleblowing researchers in the future.

Fourth, when studying whistleblowing ethics, I think it may be beneficial to take a more holistic approach and examine ethics from many different perspectives. Typical whistleblowing research focuses in on just one form of ethics when discussing the topic. If my experience is any indication, whistleblowers may use multiple forms of ethical frameworks when deciding how to go about their whistleblowing. For example, they may use relational ethics at one stage and practical virtue ethics at a different stage. Researchers may need to come up with new ethical frameworks to help explain this phenomenon. How does a whistleblower decide to use a particular framework at a particular stage in the process? What does it mean that whistleblowers are using multiple frameworks when deciding what is “right” and “wrong?”

Fifth, whistleblowing scholars should study organizational culture in greater detail. While cross-cultural comparisons abound, more attention should be focused on the different dimensions of culture, like Berry (2004) did. Currently, research in this area is in the theoretical sphere, but future researchers could actually examine real world situations and see if Berry’s seven dimensions and hypotheses are, in fact, correct. One should also examine how a culture of “team spirit,” “cohesiveness,” and “trust/confidentiality” influence perceptions of whistleblowing. For example, in my case,

my organization was very cohesive and had a lot of team spirit. How does that affect willingness to come forward when wrongdoing is encountered? Is whistleblowing seen as a form of betrayal in organizations with these cultural values? If I had to guess, I'd say my organization's cohesiveness made my coming forward more difficult, because I was essentially breaking trust and confidentiality by bringing my concerns to an outside party. I certainly felt like I was betraying my organization when I first brought my concerns to my trusted professor. Researchers could study other whistleblowers in real world situations and see if this is also the case for them as well. In addition, one could look at organizations with a culture of secrecy and see how that influences whistleblowing. If secrecy is a valued cultural trait in the organization, how does that influence potential whistleblowers? Is it more difficult for them to come forward?

Sixth, researchers should study whistleblowing harm in greater detail. When I was talking with my friend Gerry, he brought up a lot of good points about how there would be a lot of collateral damage if I blew the whistle. Essentially, blowing the whistle might not just affect those doing the unethical research, but it also might affect individuals outside of the organization (like the students of the professors in charge of the GAF research). How does that collateral damage affect whistleblowing intention? Additionally, how does that influence perceptions of the whistleblowing? Are whistleblowers viewed more negatively when there is a lot of harm outside of the organization in question (such as lost jobs, tainted careers, etc.)?

Finally, researchers should investigate the best ways of talking with the press. While writing my dissertation, I could not find any sources that specifically dealt with talking with the press from a whistleblowing perspective. How exactly should

whistleblowers approach and talk with the press? How can one ensure their anonymity? How should one discuss the unethical act? How does one learn to speak in layman's terms? All these questions and many more need to be investigated by whistleblowing researchers so as to help future whistleblowers. While practical research is not an avenue explored by many scholars, it would benefit whistleblowers immensely.

In sum, there is much more to study in regards to whistleblowing. Future avenues of research are rife with opportunity. With more real-world examples of whistleblowing, like the one I wrote about in this dissertation, even more areas will come to light. With that, I suggest that whistleblowing researchers take the creative nonfiction approach more often when studying the phenomenon. Learning exactly what it is like to be a whistleblower is critical to understanding the topic. If all research remains hypothetical or "in the lab," many different aspects of the topic will be missed. With this, I also ask whistleblowers themselves to come forward and share their stories. By learning what these whistleblowers went through, much more can be understood.

My experience as a whistleblower within an academic setting has left me in a somewhat ambiguous situation at this point. Perhaps the experience is not fully "complete." As such, while I've been working on my dissertation and will be earning a Ph.D., questions about what my future role in the academy, academic research, or related fields, remain. As an avid scholar and someone who loves research, my own interests have been influenced by this experience. In this way, I intend to study the many different ethical frameworks whistleblowers use when going through the process. I plan to look at multiple frameworks, and not just one, so as to come up with a new theory on whistleblowing ethics. Additionally, I see the lack of social support research on

whistleblowing very problematic, and I would consider studying this in much greater detail in the future as well. I would seek out other whistleblowers and interview them about the social support they experienced during their ordeal. This way, I can see if their experiences are similar or different than mine.

I would also like to thank all of those that read this dissertation, both academics and non-academics alike. I hope it adds to the growing body of research on whistleblowing and brings about new ideas to contemplate. There is a lack of stories from actual whistleblowers in the literature, and I hope this changes in the future. I specifically did not address other whistleblowers' experiences, because I wanted to make sure my story was the central focus, as I had a lot to tell, and it was multifaceted and brought about many different avenues of study. By focusing in on others' stories, I would not have been able to delve as deep into my particular story, and I think delving deep is vitally important with this type of research. However, researchers should talk to other whistleblowers and gather insights from their experiences, so as to grow to this body of literature. I hope my work is the beginning of such a trend.

Bibliography

- Araya, M., Chotai, J., Komproe I. H., & de Jone, J. T. V. (2007). Effect of trauma on quality of life as mediated by mental distress and moderated by coping and social support among postconflict displaced Ethiopians. *Quality of Life, 16*(6), 915-927.
- Barnett, T., Cochran, D. S., & Taylor, G. S. (1993). The internal disclosure policies of private-sector employers: An initial look at their relationship to employee whistleblowing. *Journal of Business Ethics, 12*(2), 127-136.
- Beech, N. (2011). Liminality and the practices of identity reconstruction. *Human Relations, 64*(2), 285-302.
- Berry, B. (2004). Organizational culture: A framework and strategies for facilitating employee whistleblowing. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal, 16*(1), 1-11.
- Birchall, C. Transparency, interrupted: Secrets of the left. *Theory, Culture & Society, 28*(7-8), 60-84.
- Bjorkelo, B. (2013). Workplace bullying after whistleblowing: Future research and implications. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 28*(3), 306-323.
- Bjørkelo, B., Einarsen, S., & Matthiesen, S. B. (2010). Predicting proactive behaviour at work: Exploring the role of personality as an antecedent of whistleblowing behaviour. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 83*(2), 371-394.
- Bjorkelo, B. & Madsen, O. J. (2013). Whistleblowing and neoliberalism: Political resistance in late capitalist economy. *Psychology & Society, 5*(2), 28-40.
- Bolsin, S., Faunce, T., & Oakley, J. (2005). Practical virtue ethics: healthcare whistleblowing and portable digital technology. *Journal of medical ethics, 31*(10), 612-618.
- Bouville, M. (2008). Whistle-blowing and morality. *Journal of Business Ethics, 81*(3), 579-585.
- Cavico, F. J. (2003). Private sector whistleblowing and the employment-at-will doctrine: A comparative legal, ethical, and pragmatic analysis. *S. Tex. L. Rev., 45*, 543.
- Chao, R. C. (2011). Managing stress and maintaining well-being: Social support, problem-focused coping, and avoidant coping. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 89*(3), 338-348.

Chiu, R. K. (2002). Ethical judgment, locus of control, and whistleblowing intention: A case study of mainland Chinese MBA students. *Managerial Auditing Journal*, 17(9), 581-587.

Chiu, R. K. (2003). Ethical judgment and whistleblowing intention: Examining the moderating role of locus of control. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 43(1-2), 65-74.

Cohen, S. & Wills, T. A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 98(2), 310-357.

Coker, A. L., Smith, P. H., Thompson, M. P., McKeown, R. E., Bethea, L., & Davis, K. E. (2002). Social support projects against the negative effects of partner violence on mental health. *Journal of Women's Health & Gender-Based Medicine*, 11(5), 465-476.

Davis, M. (1989). Avoiding the tragedy of whistleblowing. *Business & Professional Ethics Journal*, 8(4), 3-19.

Davis, W. (1975). The myths and rituals of liminality: Parts I-III. *History of Religions*, 14(4), 282-321.

Delk, K. (2013). Whistleblowing: Is it really worth the consequences? *Workplace Health & Safety*, 61(2), 61-64.

Digiman, J. M. (1990). Personality structure, emergence of the five-factor model. *Annu. Rev. Psychol.*, 41, 417-440.

Dressman, M. (1997). Resistance, liminality: Reading and ideology in three school libraries. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 27(3), 267-315.

Dworkin, T. M. & Baucus, M. S. (1998). Internal vs. external whistleblowers: A comparison of whistleblowing processes. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 17, 1281-1298.

Flannery, R. B. (1990). Social support and psychological trauma: A methodical review. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 3(4), 593-611.

Galek, K., Flannelly, K. J., Greene, P. B., Kudler, T. (2011). Burnout, secondary traumatic stress, and social support. *Pastoral Psychol*, 60, 633-649.

Giroux, H. A. (2008). The militarization of US higher education after 9/11. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 25(5), 56-82.

Greaves, R. & McGlone, J. K. (2012). The health consequences of speaking out. *Social medicine*, 6(4), 259-263.

Green A. D. & Latting, J. K. (2004). Whistle-blowing as a form of advocacy: Guidelines for the practitioner and organization. *Social Work, 49*(2), 219-230.

Greenhaus, J. H., Ziegert, J. C., Allen, T. D. (2012). When family-supportive supervision matters: Relations between multiple sources of support and work-family balance. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 80*, 266-275.

Gusterson, H. (2009). Project Minerva and the militarization of anthropology. *Radical Teacher, 86*, 4-16.

Gutkind, L. (2006). *The 5 R's of creative nonfiction*. Retrieved from <http://kostrewa.pbworks.com/5+rs+of+Creative+Nonfiction.doc>.

Gutkind, L. (2012). *You can't make this stuff up: The complete guide to writing Creative Nonfiction from memoir to literary journalism and everything in between*. Da Cap Press / Lifelong Books: Philadelphia, PA.

Healy Place. (2012). *Transcranial magnetic stimulations (TMS) for depression*. Retrieved from <http://www.healthypace.com/depression/depression-treatment/transcranial-magnetic-stimulation-tms-for-depression/>

Janis, I. L. (1997). *Groupthink*. University of Notre Dame Press: Notre Dame, IN.

Johnson, J. D., Donohue, W. A., Atkin, C. K., & Johnson, S. (1994). Differences between formal and informal communication channels. *The Journal of Business Communication, 31*(2), 111-122.

Kaptein, M. (2011). From inaction to external whistleblowing: The influence of the ethical culture of organizations on employee responses to observed wrongdoing. *Journal of Business Ethics, 98*(3), 513-530.

King III, G. (1999). The implications of an organization's structure on whistleblowing. *Journal of Business Ethics, 20*(4), 315-326.

Kraut, R. E., Fish, R. S., Root, R. W., & Chalfonte, B. L. (1990). Informal communication in organizations: Form function and Technology. In I. S. Oskamp & S. Spacapan (Eds) *Human reactions to technology: The Claremont symposium on applied social psychology*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Langford, C. P. H., Bowsher, J., Maloney, J. P., Lillis, P. P. (1997). Social support: A conceptual analysis. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 25*, 95-100.

LeCompte, M. (1978). Learning to work: The hidden curriculum of the classroom. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 9*(1), 22-37.

- Lennane, K. J. (1993). Whistleblowing: A health issue. *British Medical Journal*, 307 (6905), 667-670.
- Loo, C. K. & Mitchell, P. B. (2005). A review of the efficacy of transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) treatment for depressions, and current and future strategies to optimize efficacy. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 88, 255-267.
- MacDonald, H. (2007). Relational ethics and advocacy in nursing: Literature review. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 57(2), 119-126.
- Martin, B. (1999). *The whistleblower's handbook: How to be an effective resister*. Jon Carpenter: Charlbury, UK.
- Martin, B. & Rifkin, W. (2004). The dynamics of employee dissent: Whistleblowers and organizational Jiu-Jitsu. *Public Organization Review: A Global Journal*, 4, 221-238.
- Mayo Clinic Staff. (2015). *Tests and procedures: Transcranial magnetic stimulation*. Retrieved from <http://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/transcranial-magnetic-stimulation/basics/definition/prc-20020555>.
- McDonald, S. & Ahern, K. (1999). Whistle-blowing: Effective and ineffective coping responses. *Nursing Forum*, 34(4), 5-13.
- McDonald, S. & Ahern, K. (2000). The professional consequences of whistleblowing by nurses. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 16(6), 313-321.
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). *Brainwashing*. Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/brainwashing>.
- Mesmer-Magnus, J. R. & Viswesvaran C. (2005). Whistleblowing in organizations: An examination of correlates of whistleblowing intentions, actions, and retaliation. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 62(3), 277-297.
- Miceli, M. P., & Near, J. P. (1984). The relationships among beliefs, organizational position, and whistle-blowing status: A discriminant analysis. *Academy of Management Journal*, 27(4), 687-705.
- Near, J. P. & Miceli, M. P. (1985). Organizational dissidence: The case of whistleblowing. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 4, 1-16.
- Perrucci, R., Anderson, R. M., Schendel, D. E., & Trachtman, L. E. (1980). Whistle-blowing: Professionals' resistance to organizational authority. *Social Problems*, 28(2), 149-164.

- Perry, N. (1998). Indecent exposures: Theorizing whistleblowing. *Organizational Studies, 19* (2), 235-257.
- Prati, G. & Pietrantoni, L. (2009). Optimism, social support, and coping strategies as factors contributing to posttraumatic growth: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Loss and Trauma, 14*, 364-338.
- Ray, S. L. (2006). Whistleblowing and organizational ethics. *Nursing ethics, 13*(4), 438-445.
- Rothschild, J. (2008). Freedom of speech denied, dignity assaulted: What the whistleblowers experience in the US. *Current Sociology, 56*(6), 884-903.
- Russel, D. W., Altmaier, E., & Van Velzen, D. (1987). Job-related stress, social support, and burnout among classroom teachers. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 72*(2), 269-274.
- Salomone, K. L & Gandel, P. B. (2004). Talking with the press: To improve your institution's news coverage, you can become a first-rate, professional news source. *Educause Quarterly, 2*, 61-65.
- Sawyer, K. R., Johnson, J., & Holub, M. (2010). The necessary illegitimacy of the whistleblower. *Business and Professional Ethics Journal, 29*(1/4), 85-107.
- Seal, D. W., & Agostinelli, G. (1994). Individual differences associated with high-risk sexual behavior: Implications for intervention programmes. *Aids Care, 6*(4), 393-397.
- Suresh, S., Oliveira, D. G. S., & Suresh, S. (2015). The effect of audio therapy to treat postoperative pain in children undergoing major surgery: A randomized control trial. *Pediatr Surg Int., 31*(2), 194-201.
- Tor. (2015). *Tor: Overview*. Retrieved from <https://www.torproject.org/about/overview.html.en>.
- Turner, V. (1979). Frame flow and reflection: Ritual and drama as public liminality. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies, 6*(4), 465 – 499.
- Viswesvaran, C., Sanchez, J. I., & Fisher, J. (1999). The role of social support in the process of work stresses: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 54*, 314-334.