Public Voices

Volume XVI Number 2

Public Voices

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Public Voices

Volume XVI **Number 2**

Publisher

Public Voices is published by the Institute for Public Service, Suffolk University.

Front Cover

The Massacre at New Orleans. Cartoon Drawing by Thomas Nast, 1867. Caroline and Erwin Swann Collection of Caricature and Cartoon, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print.

Nast depicted President Andrew Johnson—whose presidency is associated with the Reconstruction period that followed the end of the Civil War and the abolition of slavery—as a king to underscore that Johnson's divisive "Radical rhetoric" and "royalist ambition" had resulted in the Memphis and New Orleans race riots of 1866. The cartoon reproduces the events of July 30, 1866, when white delegates, the police, and armed locals shot and killed several dozen African American delegates at the Louisiana Constitutional Convention (Source: https://www.loc.gov/item/2009617747/).

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Public Voices (Online)
ISSN 2573-1440

Public Voices (Print)
ISSN 1072-5660

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The first part of this article describes in detail the work of federal agencies created in the early New Deal, made possible by the discovery of an original source document. In the second part, the Trump Administration's response to the Coronavirus is analyzed in contrast to Roosevelt's assault on the Great Depression.

Analysis and Commentary: Use of Narrative in Public Administration

This paper discusses the author's experience over three decades designing and teaching a course on narrative and management at the advanced undergraduate level. He was inspired to do this by using episodes of the BBC series *Yes Prime Minister* to illustrate public choice theory in a political economy course. His narrative course was initially intended to illustrate a variety of management concepts through the use of fictional works about managers and organizations, taught using the Harvard Business School case method. The evolution of the course, which led to much higher student evaluations, drew on both his research on narrative and management and on student feedback. The course evolved by i) changing from treating texts as illustrations of management concepts to the narrative analysis of texts, ii) shifting from an instructor-centered case method approach to "table work" by student

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A Look Back: History's Lessons for Current Events

The Early New Deal as Public Administration's Finest Hour—And a Comparison of It to the Coronavirus Response

Charles T. Goodsell

Introduction

This article grew from a study of the early New Deal's administrative campaign against the Great Depression. The essay's completion then occurred in the midst of the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic. A comparison between the federal response to these great two challenges then seemed useful. This process yielded new insights about each event and furthermore added thoughts about administrative excellence in general.

An unexpected source for the New Deal study was a chance finding in an antique store of a weathered copy of the program for the Democratic presidential nominating convention of 1936. FDR was unanimously re-nominated for a second term by the convention at Philadelphia in June of that year. That Fall he was reelected by an electoral college vote of 523-11, a ringing political endorsement of what had been accomplished in 1933-1936.

Whereas the program document contained the convention schedule and peons of praise for various politicians, its bulk of almost 400 pages consists mainly of two types of material: corporate advertisements, especially by distillery and brewery owners happy that Prohibition was over; and detailed reports by heads or administrators of all departments and agencies on what had been accomplished by their organizations in the first term.

After perusing these statements, I realized I had run across a treasure trove of "real-time" administrative history. The descriptive material in this essay is largely based on these reports, with some supplemental sources used and noted. The fine detail in most of the statements is highly revealing and, to do justice to what is uncovered, takes considerable space. However, an overall theme prevails. It is that New Deal public administration between 1933 and 1936 embraced a movement of total innovation undertaken at roughly the same time by many organizations. It is in the detail of this creativity and experimentation—all driven by a deep sense of urgency—that the magic of the New Deal administrative experience rests. Things moved so fast that FDR created a National Economic Council composed of cabinet members, agency heads, and himself and Vice President

John Nance Garner just to keep track of developments. Its acting Executive Director, Lyle Alverson, maintained a loose-leaf binder of organizations that later became what we know as the *Government Organization Manual* (Program 1936, 293-294).

The underlying premise of my approach is that vital public administration is a necessary although not complete instrument in social renewal, whether recovering from a depression or recovering from a plague.

As for the first, in many ways, the New Deal had its administrative faults and failures. It by no means erased the Great Depression; that was accomplished by Pearl Harbor. But what it did accomplish, by its feverish, across-the-board array of initiatives, was to offer tangible hope to a beleaguered population. Passing statutes and compiling statistics did not save the day, it was concrete, visible, and reasoned public *actions*, the essence of public administration.

On March 4, 1933, the full, ominous weight of the national (and international) Great Depression fell on Franklin Roosevelt's shoulders. The 1932 election had turned the executive branch over to a Democratic president after 12 years of Republican rule. The same had occurred in both houses of Congress after 14 years.

A former Governor of New York, distant cousin of Theodore Roosevelt, and a man with two crippled legs and a magnificent radio voice immediately initiated a torrent of executive orders, draft bills, and reassuring words for fellow Americans. Shortly one emergency agency after another came into existence, most independent of cabinet departments and charged with a specific mission (see Appendix). It was an exciting moment for the field of public administration.

Alleviating Panic

Long before FDR was sworn in, the Wall Street Crash of 1929 had made a mockery of President Herbert Hoover's promise of a "chicken in every pot." GNP had nosedived, unemployment had soared to 25 percent, and citizens across the land panicked as bankrupt banks robbed them of their savings. In the afternoon of the inaugural, the new President issued a proclamation declaring a national bank holiday. Some states had already done so, but now it included the entire country. Despite questionable authority to take this action, most banks reopened within a month, alleviating the panic.

Over the summer of 1933, the Administration and Congress negotiated a long-term solution to the problem. This produced the Banking Act of 1933. It explicitly gave the government authority to close banks again if necessary. However, it went further by creating a permanent solution to the problem—a Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation to protect banks of all sizes from going bankrupt. By charging them one-twelfth of one percent of deposits for this protection, it did not need appropriations to bail out troubled banks and monitor their soundness. The FDIC began operations on January 1, 1934, and by 1936 more than 14,000 banks were insured with another 1,000 to go (Program 1936, 251-253).

The 1933 Act also applied new regulations to the banking industry as a whole. They included the Glass-Steagall provision which forbade using depositor funds to play the financial markets. To the chagrin of many, this rule has since been suspended (Wikipedia, 1933 Banking Act).

Reawakening the Economy

While alleviating the bank panic helped, the early New Deal took several steps to restart production in the flagging U.S. economy. One was the Securities Act of 1933, which sought to eliminate the practice of insider trading in the stock market. It required a 20-day notice to prospective investors of the practices and records of firms publicly seeking capital. In 1934 a companion law, the Securities and Exchange Act, created the SEC to provide the institutional manpower, expertise, and independence to investigate, monitor, and enforce corporate behavior in accordance with this concept.

While these two laws were accepted by many industrialists as in their long-term interest, a third engendered a bitter fight. The Public Utility Holding Company Act of 1935 applied transparency requirements to electric power monopolies. This industry had been accustomed to sweetheart regulation at the state level and hated the prospect of national control. Leading the charge in this battle was Samuel Insull, whose "pyramids" or layers of holding companies made discovery of noncompliance very difficult. The measure was, however, passed and became a SEC responsibility (Program 1936, 271-275).

Readers will be interested to know that the first SEC chairman was Joseph P. Kennedy, father of President Kennedy. As a Wall Street insider himself, he was a valuable source of behind-the-scenes information for the agency's founders. In 1935 he was replaced by James Landis, author of the public administration classic *The Administrative Process* (1938).

These statues set the stage for economic recovery but did not directly propel it. To this end, the early New Deal took direct steps to "prime the pump" of industrial production. One was extending government credit to the private sector. The principal instrument for this was the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, headed by Jesse Jones.

The New Dealers in this instance did not create a new agency but expanded the work of an earlier one established by the Hoover Administration a few months prior to the 1932 election. Patterned after the War Finance Corporation established under President Wilson to finance World War One armaments, the Republican RFC concentrated on loans to state governments and the financial sector, particularly banks.

At FDR's prodding, Congress expanded the Corporation's authority. Major beneficiaries of RFC loans became bank depositors instead of the bankers. Others were farm co-ops, home mortgage companies, irrigation districts, the fishing, mining, milling and steel industries, processors and distributors of consumer goods, the federal Public Works Administration, and the Chicago school district. The size of loans ranged from over $400,000 down to $10,000. Interest rates were kept low and refinancing terms easy. Total disbursements rose from approximately two billion dollars under Hoover to over six billion under Roosevelt (Program 1936,189-190,195-197).

In addition to using credit as a method of stimulating production, the New Deal recovery agencies consciously employed the fiscal policy of deficit financing. Despite early assurances of candidate Roosevelt that the federal budget would be balanced, the convention program openly endorsed compensatory government spending to lift out of a depression, as espoused by economist John Maynard Keynes (Program 1936, 186-187).

In that regard, the early New Dealers produced only deficit budgets, ranging from $2.6 to $4.8 million. As a result, the national debt rose from $21 billion to $31 billion. Yet since levels of production were inching up, the debt as a part of GNP remained at a steady 40 percent (Wikipedia, New Deal, 23).

The results of the recovery campaign were significant but not dramatic. Estimates of national income registered $80 billion for 1929, $40 billion in 1932, and back up to $60 billion in 1936. Overall production, at 58 percent of 1923-1925 levels in 1933, had recovered to 94 percent by 1936 (Program 1936,185, 187).

Battling Farm Poverty

It is often assumed that the Great Depression began with the Crash of 1929. For city dwellers, this was largely true, but for farm folks, it had begun a decade earlier. Between 1920 and1929 agricultural household poverty was deep and seemingly endless. The sector's capital value sank by $60 billion, only to be hit with another loss of $22 billion between 1929 and 1933. The day FDR became President, millions of farmers were facing disaster. Declining consumer income in the cities and disappearing markets abroad had caused commodity prices to drop to the lowest level since the1890s. Overproduction was creating massive surpluses of rotting food and unprocessed fabric. Farm incomes dropped precipitously, and mortgage payments went unmet. With farmland prices falling and property taxes rising, hundreds of thousands of farms faced foreclosure without recourse. As a result, countless farm families lost their homes and tenant farmers and sharecroppers their livelihood (Program 1936, 241).

Henry A, Wallace, son of Harding's Agriculture Secretary, was the New Deal's Secretary of Agriculture until 1940 when he became Vice President. He launched the Administration's battle against farm poverty by pushing through Congress the Agricultural Adjustment Act, effective in May 1933. It created a new agency within the USDA named the Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

But the agency did not fare well. Over each of the three years of the AAA's initial existence, a different policy was emphasized. Year one focused on reducing the surpluses by paying farmers not to produce key commodities, using a processor tax to finance the subsidies. In the second year, drought conditions lessened production, so plant and livestock education was stressed. In the third year, intensive farming was pursued, for example by turning row crops into grass acreage (Program 1936, 162-163).

This choppy and uneven record was interrupted in January 1936, after the U.S. Supreme Court, in *U.S. vs Butler* (297 US 561), declared the processor tax unconstitutional. Although a new AAA without the tax was created by Congress in 1938, the Butler decision triggered a major rethinking in Wallace's mind. Instead of limiting market gluts to raise farm income, the decision was made to influence supply in such a way that production capacity could be enhanced so that over the long haul farm income would grow.

This approach was embodied in law by the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act of February 29, 1936. Its implementation was carried out by the Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service. Its lineage extended from the Department of Interior's Soil Erosion Service, created earlier to combat Dust Bowl conditions.

The SES made cash payments, but only in return for introducing such practices as crop rotation, curvature plowing, soil enrichment crops instead of soil-depleting ones, and such practices as terracing, liming, and legume winter cover crops turned under as green manure.

In addition to this voluntary approach to administration, the new SES took care not to utilize distant, impersonal techniques, such as mailing checks from Washington. Decentralized offices were set up across farm country. Soil advisors were told to go into the field and converse with farmers personally. Before doing so, they needed to study the peculiar conditions of each locality. Also, they were instructed to give advice only after contacting representatives of community conservation committees, state departments of agriculture, and the extension service of land grant universities.

In addition to expanding farm income in these ways, the early New Dealers battled rural poverty by making credit available to individual small farmers, a privilege almost zero under Hoover. This task was done by the Farm Credit Administration, an independent agency created by executive order on May 27, 1933. It mounted four programs, all using 12 district offices spread across the country. Unlike most other New Deal agencies, all FCA activities connected up in the field with the work of existing institutions.

The biggest joint effort was to finance farm mortgages by directly using government funds for this purpose. To do so quickly, it hired specialized personnel from the Federal Land Banks that had been around since 1916. A second thrust was the purchase of sound but frozen assets, such as property held as security or under lien. To administer this program, the agency turned to private small banks that did this safely under FCA sponsorship. Third, the agency set the stage for financing crop, livestock, and equipment purchases by investing $120 million in the preferred stock of local farm production associations, using as a channel to do this Federal Intermediate Credit banks established in 1923. The final FCA program offered credit to farm co-operatives engaged in consumer marketing; in a quid pro quo, larger co-ops had to let borrowers acquire stock if desired and thus have a vote on the election of directors (Program 1936, 241-243).

In addition to addressing the low income of farm families, the early New Deal sought to advance their quality of life. Many rural households in the 1930s did not yet benefit from electric power as did their urban counterparts. This lack was eliminated by one of its best-remembered federal enterprises of the time, the Rural Electrification Administration.

The founder and administrator of the REA, Morris Cooke, devised a business plan by which to build a power network across the vast reaches of rural America without taking the time and money to create a separate federal power utility.

Cities had been electrified by private utilities at a line cost of $1500 TO $2000 per mile. Cooke had his engineers do the numbers on lighter line specifications of 3 users per mile, constructed on a mass basis. They concluded it could be done for $1,000 and possibly $950 or even $850 per mile, depending on the terrain being covered.

Cooke set up a 20-year, low-cost loan program to pay existing organizations that already possessed the capacity to lay the lines and afterward maintain them and bill customers. In a depressed economy, he had many takers: existing power districts, state agricultural agencies, expanding municipalities, mutual non-profits, and farm co-operatives. By the printing deadline of the convention program $12.1 million had been lent for 71 projects in 27 states coast-to-coast (Program 1936, 279-281).

Another New Deal farm program that attempted to improve farm lives in a radical manner largely failed. This was the Resettlement Administration (RA), established in 1933 under the leadership of New York planner Rexford Tugwell. Originally conceived on a homesteading model for resettlement of families on unused farmland, when this did not work out, the RA shifted to rehabilitation loans for dilapidated farmhouses and committees to negotiate personal debt settlements. Its only lasting accomplishment was to bring the English concept of planned garden city to America in the form of three planned new towns. These still exist as Green Hills, Ohio; Bound Brook, New Jersey; and Greenbelt, Maryland (Program 1936, 245-246, 249-250; Graham and Wander 1985, 188).

Overall, in the first FDR term, farm programs registered significant but not sweeping results. Average farm commodity prices rose from 55 percent of pre-World War levels to 108 percent. Farm bankruptcies declined by 20 percent and disposable farm income rose from $1.5 million to $4.1 million. True farm prosperity had to wait until World War Two, but a good start had been made (Program 1936, 160-161).

Battling City Desperation

Attacking poverty in the city requires different strategies than in the country. City dwellers are not in the business of growing food, hence combatting hunger depends on possessing cash. Also, the place of employment is not one's own land, but one's employer. And if unemployment rates are high, the level of desperation is high.

The New Deal moved quickly on this front. On May 12, 1933, the Federal Emergency Relief Act was passed that created the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. FDR appointed as FERA's head Harry Hopkins, one of the most dynamic members of his inner circle. Hopkins had earlier headed a New York State relief agency. On his first day on the job, Hopkins transmitted millions of dollars to state governors for assistance to the unemployed in their states. While giving the states latitude in the use of the funds, he urged finding jobs over making handouts. In due course, FERA adopted a 50-50 matching federal-state financing ratio that was widely adopted later. It is possible that this is the first mass-use of this device (Graham and Wander 1985, 132-133).

The winter of 1933-1934 was approaching and still millions of families had no working breadwinner. FDR urged Hopkins to look for ways to achieve more progress. For the time being, he suspended FERA's state grants and redirected its staff to tour the nation to collect data on where the worst situations existed and why. In the meantime, to continue relief and job-generation, a temporary new agency was created, the Civil Works Administration. Over two years it spent $815 million (matched by $90 million in state funds) and found 4 million new jobs. These were in local projects that could be quickly mounted without much preparation, such as upgrading roads, bridges, sewers, schools, parks, playgrounds, and swimming pools (Program 1936, 232).

On July 1, 1935, Hopkins demobilized the CWA and launched a major new agency based on the findings of the FERA surveys. This was the Works Progress Administration or WPA. It was destined to become one of the other more famous New Deal bureaucracies.

The pressure was on to take job creation to yet another level. By 1935, despite nearly 3 years of New Deal, 20 million Americans were still unemployed. Again, Hopkins adopted a new strategy, that of creating jobs for specifically employable persons. WPA field administrators were appointed for each state with their own staffs. They were granted wide discretionary authority, limiting WPA headquarters to mainly technical issues.

The outcome was a more free-wheeling style. In most instances, projects originated from local jurisdictions, especially those that offered small-scale work that could be started immediately. Following approval from Washington, many large projects were also undertaken. Examples were new city halls, building levees along flood-prone rivers, and natural disaster recovery.

In addition, WPA funded a number of quirky miscellaneous activities, such as stuffing mattresses, canning fruit, sealing mines, counting cattle, surveying property, and conducting childcare. By 1936 over a million women and men were put to work (Program 1936, 231-234; Graham and Wander 1985, 462-464).

Other projects labeled as elitist by the press caught public attention. These were "Federal Projects," so-called because they were directly run from Washington. More properly thought of as scattered work groups rather than bureaucratic units, they brought together unemployed professionals in performance fields. Five were formed: The Art Project, Musicians' Project, Writers' Project, Theatre Project, and Women's Project. Supported by liberal intellectuals and easily lampooned by critics, their activities left a rich cultural heritage at relatively small cost; Hopkins defended them with the remark, "Hell, they've got to eat just like other people" (Program 1936, 319-320; Graham and Wander 1985, 128-129).

A Flop and Its Offspring

At the same time the early New Deal worked the demand side of the Depression, i.e. job creation, it was working the supply side, i.e. industrial production. The boldest attempt in this second realm was the National Industrial Recovery Act of June 16, 1933 (NIRA). It was a complex piece of legislation that went in separate policy directions, leading to the creation of three New Deal institutions: (1) the National Recovery Administration, (2) what became known as the Public Works Administration, and (3) the National Labor Relations Board. I discuss these developments in that order.

The NRA's mission was no less than rationalizing large segments of American industry under government control at the expense of competitive private free enterprise. The idea came from what was done in World War One to forego the redundancies of competitive capitalism in order to mobilize quickly. FDR, as Assistant Secretary of the Navy at the time, was comfortable with the approach. Support came as well from key corporate figures and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

The experiment was radical. It suspended the anti-trust laws for two years. This provided room for the NRA to join with licensed sectors of private industry to write codes of conduct possessing the authority of law upon approval of the President. Eventually, 521 codes were adopted that governed production, pricing, trade, and labor relations. In effect, the arrangement created public-private cartels in the manner of state corporatism.

Soon, however, the scheme became bogged down by excessive complexity, internal dissension, and growing opposition in Congress. Moreover, it was not boosting production. The White House was in the middle of trying to reorganize the NRA when the U.S Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional in S*chechter v. United States* (295 U.S.495,1935) (Graham and Wander 1985, 273-277).

The Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works—better known as the Public Works Administration— was by contrast very successful. Its status and mission were not affected by the *Schechter* decision. The PWA was directed by the influential New Dealer Harold Ickes. He served in the Cabinet as Secretary of the Interior, but at the same time carried the title Director of Public Works.

Unlike the relatively small-scale CWA and WPA public works projects, PWA sponsored and funded the construction of a number of major projects across the nation. Along with several mammoth dams in the west, PWA built hundreds of post offices, schools, housing projects, veterans hospitals, and flood abatement projects, many of which still stand. One of Ickes' traits as director was to make sure no bribery scandals arose from the bidding of government contracts (Program 1936, 154-156, 293-294).

Another of his characteristics was an insistence on doing sufficient in-depth research to make the right decisions on costly big projects. Local politicians always had their nominations ready and were not timid about applying pressure. This led Ickes to set in motion what we would today think of as a major usage of policy analysis. Within PWA he formed a National Planning Board and appointed to it a small number of well-known experts. The most influential of these was Charles P. Merriam, who later served as a member of the 1937 Brownlow Committee.

Soon the board members realized they too, would need help in carrying out such a gigantic task. Authority was granted in 1934 to convert the NPB to the status of an independent federal agency named National Resources Board. Its activity branched out to a series of study committees made up of private as well as government representatives. These groups issued reports on land and water needs, along with an inventory of the nation's overall resources. Then in 1935, one more step was taken when the body was converted to a National Resources Committee, with the capacity to establish field offices around the country to study and supervise projects firsthand.

A final transformation occurred in 1939 when the name became National Resources Planning Board. By this time, the organization had become highly professionalized and was placed in the Executive Office of the President (Graham and Wander 1985, 277-278; note Karl 1988).

The third major agency given birth by the NIRA was the National Labor Relations Board. This occurred because an NRA code on labor relations had provided for a weak labor board. Schechter did not declare it void as such but the plug had been pulled on its viability. In reaction, its displaced director, Robert F. Wagner, seized the moment to push for a new statute that would create a strong, independent labor board. Roosevelt opposed the idea, but Wagner had long-time ties to FDR as a liberal Democratic Senator in both Albany and Washington. He proceeded to develop and build support for a bill to accomplish labor's aims. The measure passed both houses as the National Labor Relations Act (or Wagner Act) and signed by a converted President on July 5, 1935.

It created the five-member National Labor Relations Board that we know today. It has the power to determine bargaining units, oversee union elections, certify bargaining representatives, and hear and appeal to the courts illegal management actions. Although the NLRB's policies later varied according to the party in power, the agency had become America's lasting high court of labor-management relations (Graham and Wander 1985, 275, 439-440).

Touching People Directly

Investing in physical resources to create jobs or restart production is one thing. Investing in human beings to make decent lives possible is another. A first-rate example of this is the New Deal's famous CCC, or Civilian Conservation Corps. This organization captured the public imagination of its time and is still today recalled fondly.

A project of personal interest to FDR, a statute creating the organization was enacted shortly after his inauguration. As director, he appointed not a brains trust intellectual but Robert Fechner, Vice President of the American Federation of Labor. Fechner took on the task with great seriousness and created a highly unorthodox organization. A large headquarters in Washington was eschewed in favor of assembling resources from a number of existing federal agencies. Each was given a specific slice of the CCC pie to carry out under its own control. From the modest position of chair of a coordinating committee, Fechner retained ultimate responsibility.

Seven contributors were assembled. The War Department was charged with enrolling younger men and constructing and operating the CCC camps. Older corpsmen who had served in the 1917-1918 war were recruited by the Veterans Administration. Sons of relief families were handled by the Labor Department. By 1936 a total of 1.6 million corpsmen were on board. Ten percent were African American and 12,000 Native Americans joined. Women were excluded.

Work projects were selected and designed by the Departments of Agriculture and Interior. Generally speaking, these involved reforesting timbered forests, protecting the soil of agricultural lands, building structures to retard flooding, and constructing parks and picnic grounds. State resource departments too were invited to submit project proposals. The Office of Education gave classes for corpsmen who had not graduated from high school.

This remarkably disaggregated administrative apparatus was also unusual in its handling of appointments to positions of internal leadership. Whereas in the beginning army officers or noncoms occupied all significant positions, as time went on standout CCC boys were designated as field instructors, project foremen, and even camp captains.

As a paramilitary organization, corpsmen wore uniforms, ate at camp messes, slept in barracks, and were subjected to rules of conduct. They were paid a standard wage of $30 a month. Of this amount, $25 was often sent home. They worked from 2,000 base camps located in every state and territory of the nation (Program 1936, 201-202, 205-206, 209).

Another early New Deal program also invested directly in youthful human capital. This was the National Youth Administration. Smaller and less known than the CCC, it nonetheless complemented it in important ways.

Education was stressed rather than outdoor work. The place of work was the community, not the woods or field. And it served young women as well as young men; in fact, all 59 residential camps were for females only. By 1936 they housed 3,100 Depression girls that underwent individual counseling, instruction in health care and work skills, and creative arts exposure (Program 1936, 267-268).

The NYA Executive Director was Aubrey Williams, a former social worker who had been Harry Hopkin's deputy at WPA. Williams's vision for the agency's educational mission was to cover multiple aspects of schools and schooling. One was to upgrade educational facilities across the country. The economic breakdown of the thirties had left colleges and schools in a state of disrepair. Endowments and tax revenue were not available to repair roofs or add classrooms to hold the next generation. NYA spent half its budget on grants and loans to school boards and college trustees. Drawing as well on the resources of FERA, CWA, and PWA, by 1936 50,000 educational buildings were repaired and 2,800 built anew.

A second focus was to assist students to remain in school when parents became unemployed. This was accomplished at the college level by sending funds to the colleges themselves for the purpose of placing undergraduates in part-time campus jobs at a pay rate of $15 a month. Later, aid to graduate students was extended to $25 or $30 per month.

Also, Williams felt high school students from unemployed families must have a chance to become graduating seniors. Tuition for them was also provided, as well as $6 per month for simple items like carfare, hot lunch, or school clothes.

Another NYA program provided young people with on-the-job training that could lead to eventual permanent employment. Cooperating employers agreed to hire apprentices or interns at one-third the entry pay scale, with NYA covering the balance. By July 1, 1936, 210,000 boys and girls age 16-25 were at work under these circumstances in machine shops, newspapers, libraries, youth development programs, agricultural seed labs, and construction contractors. Employers had complete autonomy in operating the OJT programs and determining whether trainees could end with a full-time job.

As was the case with the CCC, the agency's Washington office performed only in an advisory and coordinating role. Williams' instruction from headquarters was: keep Depression girls and boys from "sinking into idleness and despair" and give them "courage to face the present" to "grasp whatever the future may offer" (Program 1936, 263-264).

Collective Human Investments

We learned earlier how FCA helped farmers avoid losing their homes. The same problem existed for city dwellers. In June 1934 Congress passed the National Housing Act, the organic statute for the Federal Housing Administration. Its first administrator, Stewart McDonald, described the law's purpose as making it possible for Americans to have and maintain a home. The reference to upkeep stems from delays in this regard caused by a long Depression.

This need was confirmed by a Real Property Inventory in which thousands of FHA investigators were sent to a sample of 64 cities to assess the condition of family dwellings. They collected data on rents, property values, mortgages, and household income. Among the findings was that over one-half of American houses were in need of urgent repairs that occupants could not afford (Program 1936, 170).

The FHA took on this and related problems in a variety of ways. One was to guarantee five-year home modernization loans from a private financial institution. These were called "character loans" in that borrowers did not need to put up security but only show they had a good reputation and could pay off the loan. Later this arrangement was extended to hospitals and colleges.

Another step was to create community-based Better Housing Committees composed of local volunteers who could encourage and assist the physical betterment of neighborhoods. Some 8,000 of these were formed.

Guaranteed financing was also made available to construct new homes up to $16,000, repayable over 20 years on a schedule roughly equivalent to rent. Also, the FHA used its authority to regulate the home mortgage industry. A maximum interest rate of 5 percent of declining balance was applied nationwide (Program 1936, 219, 221, 223).

Unfortunately, in retrospect, racial injustice was allowed to take place in the FHA home mortgage program. Black people were at times redlined out from the reach of its benefits. White people then bought their improved property at bargain prices, fixed it up and resold it at a profit.

A final early New Deal initiative in the housing area was to augment the reach of the Federal Home Loan Bank System, established in 1932 as a credit reserve for home financing institutions. The FHLBS, bearing the longest string of initials in the New Deal alphabet soup, spawned no less than three more entities, each having lots of initials.

A Home Owners Loan Corporation was created to make small loans to families on relief. These were relatively small credits intended to avoid imminent foreclosures, which at the time exceeded a thousand a day. A second newcomer was the Federal Savings and Loan Association. It sponsored the formation of small S&Ls that were intended to encourage citizen thrift. Later a Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation was added, to protect these modest deposits from loss as the FDIC does for banks (Program 1936, 237, 238-239).

Another collective investment made sure homes were reliably served by radio. The Federal Communications Commission was established in 1934, replacing a weak earlier board launched in 1927. In addition to radio, it regulated telephone and telegraph systems. Facsimile and television were noted as being in development.

In his convention program statement, FCC Chairman Anning Prall noted how important radio had become a factor in politics. Probably with both Roosevelt and Hitler in mind, he heralded it "the greatest known power for good or evil, depending of course on how it is used" (Program 1936, 289-291).

Two Stark Innovations

We end this review of early New Deal agencies with two that opened whole new pathways for our field—and still comprise a major part of it.

One of these was an experiment in mission integration and jurisdictional basis combined. I speak of the Tennessee Valley Authority. It was proposed in 1933 by FDR as a much-needed example of how America did not have to "just grow" but could benefit from national planning. The legislation he submitted for it ignored the Constitution's notion of federalism as such. To give birth to this animal, he appointed as chair of a three-man board of directors Arthur E. Morgan, a strong progressive and devotee of planning.

The resulting organization embraces parts of seven states by occupying the 40,600 square miles of the Tennessee River and its tributaries. Within this territory, TVA embarked on a giant infrastructure project involving a system of ten dams designed to permit the attainment of six intertwined objectives. These were: (1) make the Tennessee navigable along its full length to the Mississippi, despite rapids at a midpoint known as Muscle Shoals; (2) control the violent floods that annually tore away its banks and eroded its soil; (3) use the stored water to irrigate agriculture; (4) provide inexpensive fertilizer for farming from existing nitrate plants at Muscle Shoals; (5) generate low-cost hydroelectric power to stimulate economic growth in the Valley and (6) produce new recreation opportunities in the region's forests and mountains and on dam-created lakes (Program 1936, 211-213, 215, 216).

In its early years, the radical nature of the TVA experiment attracted widespread attention in planning and academic circles. But things changed after 1937 when its two other board members publicly opposed Morgan's leadership. One, H.A. Morgan, felt Arthur was too idealistic. The other, David Lilienthal, was convinced he had surrendered to the private utilities. The controversy that resulted from this fracas made Roosevelt feel he had to replace the founding chair.

Over the following years, the agency gradually lost its glamorous luster and took on the image of just one more power company. Yet its dams and associated waterworks remain as permanent assets for the Valley, silently working for its inhabitants into the foreseeable future (Graham and Wander 1985, 420).

The second stark innovation was Social Security, America's first entitlement program. Its origins can be traced to 1934. At that time Roosevelt and congressional Democrats were concerned about the rising political influence of demagogue Frances Townsend, who was getting wide attention for proposing an automatic federal old-age pension of $200 per month. In addition to distrusting Townsend's motives, the Administration was bothered by its budget-busting and hand-out implications.

When FDR was governor of New York, a state pay-as-you-go insurance plan was studied, modeled after European systems (Graham and Wander 1985, 426). To explore this option at the national level, a Committee on Economic Security was appointed. It consisted of several cabinet officers and chaired by Labor Secretary Frances Perkins, the only female cabinet officer. Realizing deeper research of the issue was needed, an Advisory Council of prominent citizens and welfare experts was formed, chaired by Edwin Witte, professor of economics at the University of Wisconsin. Under his direction the matter was studied closely and, based on the Witte report, legislation was drafted which became the Social Security Act of August 14, 1935.

It created three programs: (1) an obligatory old-age insurance benefit for the employed, financed by payroll taxes; (2) federal grants to states for helping categories of disadvantaged citizens, such as the blind and disabled; and (3) an unemployment insurance program funded by the federal government but administered by the states. A program of compulsory health insurance was also seriously considered by the Witte Committee but dropped because of fierce opposition from the American Medical Association (Witte 1962, 173-189).

A Social Security Board was established with John Winant as chair. Its office was located in Baltimore rather than Washington to signify a nonpolitical status. By the summer of 1936, the social insurance program was in operation, using a crude system of wooden blocks to keep track of accounts. Because of insistence by Southern Senators, racial prejudice initially crept into the program by denying coverage to occupations regularly filled by blacks, such as Pullman porter and bootblack.

In 1946 the agency's name was changed to Social Security Administration. The worker annuity became the Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability (OASD); state-grant categorical assistance was now Supplemental Security Income (SSI); and unemployment insurance still operates under that name but is housed in the Department of Labor (Program 1936, 285-287; Graham and Wander 1985, 391-392).

The Legacy Overall

Considered as a whole, the early New Deal was a staggeringly prolific and inventive period in the history of American public administration. The combination of drastic calamity and Franklin Roosevelt's charisma made it possible, along with a largely compliant Congress.

But bringing the reform surge to life was 26 administrative agencies that performed several different functions. Five dealt with credit-related matters (FCA, FDIC, FHA, FHLBS, RFC), four with regulation (FCC, NLRB, NRA, SEC), four with national planning (NPB, NRB, NRC, NRPB), three with job creation (CWA, FERA, WPA), three with infrastructure (PWA, REA, TVA), and two with youth (CCC, NYA). Five more operated in one policy realm each: commodity prices (AAA), technical advice (SCS), new towns (RA), social entitlement (SSA), and agency coordination (NEC).

In carrying out these duties high success was prevalent but not universal. Seventeen, i.e. a solid majority, were definitely effective in carrying out their mission (CCC, CWA, FCC, FCA, FDIC, FERA, FHLBS, NLRB, NRPB, NYA, PWA, RFC, REA, SEC, SSA, SCS, WPA). Two others did well but did not fully live up to their potential (FHA, TWA). Only a limited contribution was made by seven others (AAA, NEC, NPB, NRA, NRB, NRC, RA).

Evaluating this activity from the standpoint of economic data, over the years of the early New Deal this torrent of government intervention was having an unmistakably positive net effect. The ship of state was in the process of turning around. In 1932 GNP fell by 12.9 percent. The loss in 1933 was 1.2 percent. From then on growth occurred: 1934, 10.8 percent; 1935, 8.9 percent; 1936, 2.9 percent; 1937, 5.1 percent. A similar trend occurred in unemployment rates: 1932, 23.6 percent; 1933, 24.9 percent; 1934, 21.1 percent; 1935, 20.1 percent; 1936, 16.9 percent; 1937, 14.3 percent (Amadeo *2020*).

However, an even more important point must be made. As the array of new agencies set to work, the 123 million Americans aboard that ship of state could *personally experience* the vessel turn. Bank savings were now safe; an expert came to show how to farm better; borrowing money was now possible without a credit rating; the house has a new roof; an electric washing machine is in the basement and refrigerator in the kitchen; the town boasts a new school; the son is sending monthly checks home from CCC camp; a breadwinner long without work has a job.

It is the sum total of this kind of countless *received actions bearing tangible results* that raised the hopes of these 123 million passengers. Yes, the President's fireside chats were comforting, and the laws passed by Congress created the necessary institutions. But the individual improvements in daily life that collectively flowed from the agency programs is what truly made the difference. They did not "cure" the Great Depression, but made it *feel* different. And it is precisely concrete collective action on behalf of a population that is the business of what we call public administration.

Comparison to Coronavirus

In the Coronavirus struggle the enemy is not material deficiencies like financial desperation, but something quite different. Rather, it is a moving ground of independent threat whereby the enemy is a living organism that threatens our very lives, not just our livelihood. It is not a fixed reality that mankind can pinpoint and thereby reorganize, but a self-organizing force of its own that will work on and on until its secrets are exposed.

We explore the contemporary attempt to understand and thereby control this enemy by comparing what is being done by the Trump Administration with what was done under FDR against the earlier enemy. To look ahead, what we find is that while some aspects of fine public administration are eternal, other aspects must at times be quite different.

Presidential Leadership

Our first area of comparison is *the nature* of *presidential leadership.* FDR entered office with the full expectation of using government to end the depression, and that is exactly what he pursued. When Trump took over, he had no idea the virus was coming, and it took precious months to acknowledge its seriousness and take action.

This delay is not too surprising in that he had campaigned against the same bureaucracy he was about to lead, lashing out against "the deep state" and the need to "drain the swamp." Roosevelt, on the other hand, had become very concerned about the economy while he was Governor of New York and had consulted with early members of his brain trust long before taking the oath of office.

When Trump was notified of the first community rather than travel-related spread of Coronavirus, he scoffed, "And again, when you have 15 people—and the 15 within a couple of days is going to be close to zero—that's a pretty good job we've done" (Wan et al. 2020).

By contrast, when FDR told Hopkins that the reduction of unemployment was far too slow, Hopkins placed his program in other hands and sent recovery staff on a tour of the country to get data on where the worst conditions existed and why, leading to the creation of the WPA.

Roosevelt's famous phrase "the only fear we have is fear itself" spoken at his first inaugural, was an exquisite expression of empathy. On the other hand, Trump's utterances on the continuing delays in anti-virus action consist of defenses of himself, contrived by shifting blame to the World Health Organization, China, Barack Obama, or the Democrats generally.

As to ways of communicating to the public, Trump's pattern boils down to angry morning Tweets and misleading monologues in afternoon press conferences. FDR, however, was famous for his intimate "fireside chats." The March 12, 1933 broadcast began: "My friends, I want to talk for a few minutes with the people of the United States about banking" (Samuelson 2020).

The Problem and Its Implications

A second major realm of differences is *the nature of the problem*. The Great Depression brought radical economic dislocation and serious instances of material deficiency, such as hunger, foreclosure, bankruptcy, and unemployment. The problem with the pandemic, however, is that it is a killer on the loose. It has nothing to do with external conditions and everything to do with our own bodies. The secret enemy is unseen, not fully understood, and hits both genders and all ages. Unlike many other issues facing our political system, it ignores class, race, occupation, party, religion, and geography.

A third realm of differentiation is *the mode of government action*. Tangible material deficiencies can be externally attacked by a series of deliberately designed funding or service programs. A depressed economy is more complicated, in that the behavior of masses of investors and consumers is involved. But a contagious virus is entirely a product of nature, thus endlessly more complex and deeply interconnected. Integrated, rather than accumulative, intervention is necessary. Like the weather, Covid-19's mechanisms are self-controlling and only deep understanding provides a chance to predict their course. Elimination of the disease takes years of laboratory work and may be impossible. Passive actions like physical distancing and extra sanitation can cut into disease transmission but do not go to the heart of the problem. Hence straight-forward large-scale uniform programs—the meat and potatoes of public administration—can do only part of the job.

The Organization of Power

Another realm of contrasts is *the organization of power.* In the New Deal, President Roosevelt dominated the scene, especially in the early years. The Administration enjoyed strong support in the Democratic Party and from majorities in both houses of Congress. An array of new bureaucracies created to achieve forceful change was largely successful. A meaningful ingredient in the success was Roosevelt's relation to top administrators. He selected talented men (only one woman, Labor Secretary Frances Perkins) not only for their political views but their suitability to a particular mission. Then, after they were installed, he did not hover over them but gave them the latitude to perform creatively according to their own lights. Absent a scandal or change of course, he rarely intervened except to ask about program outcomes.

The power structure of Trump's response to the Coronavirus could not be more different. To a substantial degree, it was a bureaucracy of fear. Any signs of disloyalty could be the end of a career, regardless of political considerations or legal formalities. This source of instability was worsened by the President's impulsive behavior. He could tweet a surprise command at a moment's notice, reverse himself overnight, or take contradictory action. Just after agreeing to a careful stage-by-stage protocol on restarting state economies, Trump flatly demanded that the Blue states of Virginia, Minnesota, and Michigan be immediately "liberated" from economic restrictions (Miller and Sedensky 2020). In the aftermath, two thousand angry Trump supporters protested stay-at-home restrictions outside the capitol in Lansing.

The White House Coronavirus Task Force is the only federal government entity with a comprehensive mandate to deal with the emergency. Formed on January 29, 2020, it has 25 members and is chaired by Vice President Mike Pence. Only two of its members are professional authorities in the organization's field of jurisdiction. Dr. Deborah Birx, Global AIDS Coordinator for Africa, holds a comparable position in the Task Force. Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, director of the NIH Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, is the principal advocate for a cautious return to the full economy. The rest of the members are Trump people at the political level: cabinet or sub-cabinet officers, agency directors, and advisers in the White House and Executive Office of the President.

The body meets daily. Lengthy 2-3-hour press conferences shown live on cable television are held most afternoons. These sessions are presided over by Pence, and he limits himself to that role. Trump is the star of the show. He reads prepared scripts in a monologue, blurts out spontaneous opinions, and scolds reporters for asking searching questions. Usually only Drs. Birx and Fauci report valuable information and give reasoned answers to hard questions.

This is not an action agency. It is more a debating society and megaphone for the President. With a well-staffed bureaucracy of civil servants, the Task Force could be in a good position to be the central locus of strategic planning and institutional power. But it has no such body.

As a result, a giant institutional power vacuum prevails in how Washington confronts the worst public health emergency of our time. Decision-making is decentralized among scores of officials and organizations scattered throughout the Executive Branch. The same is true in the Legislative Branch, where Members and committee staff make hundreds of substantive decisions that are incorporated in emergency appropriations bills. All voices of influence are heard, including Trump's: but they are singing solo lines, not chorus notes.

Like it or not, a modern government cannot work on an issue of this importance without a large complement of professional civil servants working full-time each day in institutions that operate at full speed 24 hours every day. Unlike the New Deal's extensive use of independent emergency bureaucracies, not a single new administrative organization was created to fight the Coronavirus. This point alone seems to express Trump's disdain for taking both the pandemic and governance itself seriously.

Success and Failure

A final comparison between 1933 and 2020 concerns *their place in history.* The early New Deal must be given credit for removing the nation from the depths of the depression and giving Americans hope for the future. Roosevelt met setbacks later in the thirties with the clumsy court-packing attempt in 1937 and renewed economic downturn in 1938. But when December 7, 1941, came along, Roosevelt's stature and a largely recovered economy were enough to move quickly to yet another historic emergency, world war on two fronts. Overall, the country was fortunate that it experienced both 1933 and 1941 during his presidency.

At present, it would appear that our current Covid-19 crisis, by contrast, happened to come along during the tenure of a far less capable president. Tens of thousands of Americans are dying and over a million stricken. A political and cultural war is going on among Administration insiders, governors, mayors, and public opinion as to whether or not a shuttered economy should be reopened or kept closed to minimize additional morbidity and mortality. The value of the Task Force is being tested as daily attendance of members drops. Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner is doing his own back-channel negotiations with corporate players. The nightly press conferences are becoming shorter and reporters are astonished by presidential urging that irrelevant malaria drugs and poisonous household disinfectants be taken as treatments.

The federal government as the country's most important locus of authority is waning in relevance. Doubt, anxiety, and confusion on the part of the public are growing. The governor of New York, the country's most heavily stricken state, looms larger than the President on daily televised press conferences. Meanwhile, governors of Republican-led states in the South are receiving credit in many quarters for abandoning social distancing and returning to normal.

Trump's leadership as chief executive is deteriorating. Unemployment and GNP levels at Great Depression levels are gnawing at his confidence of reelection. Trillions of relief dollars being appropriated by Congress are taking the public debt to astronomical levels. Programs to avoid private financial devastation by Americans are overloading the federal agencies created for other purposes. Tax rebates are only one-time, payroll protection loans are stalled in banks, and enhanced unemployment coverage is thwarted by an inability to get a phone answered. Big grants and extensive loans are going to the corporations and civil aviation industry, while the states, local governments, and hospitals are hanging on without any coordinated plan or rational allocation system. Supplies of emergency room personal protection equipment are often alarmingly low. Numbers of available Coronavirus test kits needed to test the population at large and thereby judge removal of restrictions are in the thousands rather than millions. Among other problems, this led to "Wild West" competitive bidding among state governors. American public administration is at its nadir, hardly its finest hour.

The Next President's Challenge

On the day a new President takes the oath of office at a Capitol occupied by a new Congress, he or she will face a great challenge. Stated flatly, it is to give the American people hope that by turning away from a personalistic, scattergun, ego-driven presidency, sensible forward progress can be made. This advance pertains to three fundamental needs: the fractured American spirit as again one nation; the tattered economy as again the source of prosperity; and a vilified government as again the conveyer of basic values that are democracy's ultimate promise.

In this essay, I have addressed a narrower but essential concern—the importance of public agencies as a tool of governance. In the 1930s they did their part to rebuild economic and social institutions from the bottom floor of Depression. This was done as a battering ram of over twenty new agencies that knocked down the barriers to recovery one by one.

In the 2020s, the challenge is instead combating a deadly pandemic. This is a very different barrier; its elusive, unpredictable character calls not for multiple administrative poundings but the more delicate task of reliance on the world's most sophisticated medical research along with tentative trial and error. This activity does not possess overt drama, hence it must be accompanied by persuasive presidential leadership that keeps public trust intact nonetheless—not a new New Deal, but a new kind of finest hour.

Recommended New Pandemic Agencies

To this end, a proposed set of institutional arrangements is hereby recommended.

1. Abolish the White House Coronavirus Task Force and replace it with a three-member **Pandemic Avoidance Council** (PAC) located in the Executive Office of the President. Members would be nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate. The Council would be supported by a limited staff. Its purpose is to present the President with proposed strategies and decision options for detecting, preparing for, minimizing, and recovering from COVID-19 and related infections.

2. Establish a **Pandemic Suppression Administration** (PSA). This agency would constitute the master administrative institution of the federal government to protect the nation against a resurgent or new virus. It is of considerable size, possesses independent status, and occupies its own building. The Administrator and Deputy Administrator of the PSA are nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Drs. Deborah Birx and Anthony Fauci are representative of the kind of talent required in these positions.

   A key mission of the PSA is intense engagement in vaccine research. This would be done in collaboration with parallel work at NIH and in laboratories around the world. Other areas of mission concentration are new testing technology, case treatment techniques, social distancing and related behaviors, and the timing of the return of society to a normal state.

   In view of the self-organizing nature of the virus, medical personnel and other PSA professionals are socialized to "open-style" decision making. This calls for reactive conclusions to be consciously fluid, free from prior expectations, and be a product of deep-knowledge contemplation.

   The work of this agency is of particular importance since a vaccine and simple and accurate testing can be the source of a renewal of public trust at the individual level. Achievement of these goals would be equivalent in this regard to the tangible actions of New Deal agencies.

3. Attached to PSA is the **Equipment Acquisition and Allocation Center (**EAAC**).** The purpose of this organization is to act as a central place where orders can be received for test kits, respirators, ventilators, consumable protection and treatment gear, and N95 and simpler face masks. The EAAC would become the civilian equivalent of the Defense Logistics Agency, known to be capable of reporting where every piece of military equipment is at all times. Accurate records would indicate availability of the items, shipment timing, and notification of when additional supplies could be obtained. It would also calculate logical distribution allocation plans when shortages are significant. The presence of this resource would not prevent independent orders or donations.

4. An **Economic Recovery Agency** (ERA) coordinates and facilitates the federal programs that assure citizens and families are not stranded without adequate income during stay-at-

home orders. This includes solving program problems and taking on emergency duties that overload regular missions. The principle at work in these interactions is one of shared responsibility between coronavirus and existing agencies. Divisions of labor are negotiated rather than prescribed. Examples of task/program sharing occurred in the New Deal, namely by the CCC, FHLBS, and NYA.

5. Attached to the ERA is the **Small Enterprise Technical Assistance Bureau.** It has been found that minority businesses, family-owned retail outlets, and enterprises operated for marginal groups frequently have difficulty qualifying for Payroll Protection loans because of the absence of clerical staff or bank connections. This entity would provide personalized help in this regard.

6. While national policy goals adopted by the PAC and PSA must in general hold until revoked, the large size of the country and extensive state and regional differences dictate that the application of national goals will and should vary according to local conditions. To make possible easy and quick communication on such policy applications, a **Federalism Interaction Center** would maintain separate offices or "desks" in State Department lingo for each state and major city. These would be manned 24/7 to suit all time zones and cover weekends. Direct, detailed discussion of local needs or circumstances would go far in lessening the acrimony so often generated in our federal system by seemingly unreasonable or ill-conceived orders being handed down by Washington.

7. **The Strategic National Stockpile** should be removed from the Department of Health and Human Services and elevated to independent agency status. Its importance to the country has been more than proven by the Coronavirus outbreak. It should be allowed to emerge from obscurity and receive sufficient annual appropriations to safeguard the existence of plentiful standby stocks of emergency medical and pharmaceutical supplies.

8. Finally, taking a leaf directly from the New Deal book, four **Federal Projects** should be formed to record and memorialize the travails being experienced in this momentous era. One would collect still photographs, another – paintings, a third – craft products, and a fourth – music composed. Future generations will appreciate such reminders of this historic period.

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Appendix: New Deal Agencies Mentioned

AAA	Agricultural Adjustment Administration (1933-1945)
CCC	Civilian Conservation Corps (1933-1943)
CWA	Civil Works Administration (1933-1934)
FCC	Federal Communications Commission (1934-present)
FCA	Federal Credit Administration (1933-1939)
FDIC	Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (1933-present)
FERA	Federal Emergency Relief Administration (1933-1935)
FHLBS	Federal Home Loan Bank System (1932-1939)
FHA	Federal Housing Administration (1934-1939)
NEC	National Emergency Council (1933-1939)
NLRB	National Labor Relations Act (1935-present)
NPB	National Planning Board (1934-1934)
NRA	National Recovery Administration (1933-1934)
NRB	National Resources Board (1934-1935)
NRC	National Resources Committee (1935-1939)
NRPB	National Resources Planning Board (1939-1943)
NYA	National Youth Administration (1935-1943)
PWA	Public Works Administration (1933-1939)
RFC	Reconstruction Finance Corporation (1932-1947)
RA	Resettlement Administration (1933-1936)
REA	Rural Electrification Administration (1935-1994)
SEC	Securities and Exchange Commission (1933-present)
SSA	Social Security Administration (1935-present)
SCS	Soil Conservation Service (1936-1994)
TWA	Tennessee Valley Authority (1933-present)
WPA	Works Progress Administration (1935-1943)

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A Narrative about Teaching Narrative

Sandford Borins

Introduction

There are three approaches to using narrative texts (novels, movies, television series, plays) in teaching in the social sciences. Though the term "texts" encompasses written works, this paper focuses on moving-image texts such as movies and television series. First, clipping involves the showing of short clips to illustrate management concepts or behaviors. A second approach involves using a very small number of narrative texts in their entirety. In this approach, the text is of importance not just because of clips embedded within it, but because it is used to stimulate a broader discussion of its characteristics such as narrative devices, the ideological position taken by its creators, and cultural antecedents and impact. The third approach is a course entirely based on narrative texts, in which one or more are discussed in almost every session. In this approach, instructors have some broader vision of both their own discipline and of the study of narrative that dictates their choice of texts as well as their analytical approach. Given the increasing degree of engagement with narrative texts between the first and third approaches, they can be thought of as levels.

In this paper, I will discuss my own experience in starting at the second level, showing and discussing complete episodes of the BBC television series "*Yes Prime Minister*" in a political economy course in a management program, and then moving quickly to the third level, establishing a course on "Management and Organization in Fiction." I will explain how the course evolved and, as measured by student feedback, how it improved over the thirty-year period that I taught it.

As this paper is itself a narrative, I have chosen to write in the first person, rather than use the standard academic practice of referring to myself in the third person as "the author." The latter creates a false distinction between the narrator and the protagonist of the story. As narrator and protagonist are one and the same, the first person is a more natural choice and consistent with the choice of voice in most contemporary non-fiction narratives.

Three Levels of Moving-Image Narrative Pedagogy

Instructors frequently use short clips from moving-image texts (mainly film or television series) to illustrate management concepts or skills. The advantage of clipping according to Joseph Champoux (1999), one of its key advocates, is that "film scenes can offer a visual portrayal of abstract theories and concepts … inexperienced students will likely benefit from the use of film because of a greater feeling of reality." Champoux has produced handbooks of film clips to use in teaching general management (2001a) and organizational behavior (2001b). Tyler, Anderson, and Tyler (2009) went a step farther and gave their students assignments to find appropriate clips. McCambridge (2003), in an article using the classic 1957 film *12 Angry Men* to illustrate principles of dialogue, or collective thinking and inquiry, expresses concern that "Undergraduates consistently become engrossed in the video clips and frequently express the desire to see the entire film" – which he believes the instructor must resist. My critique of clipping in *Governing Fables* (2011, 11-12), namely that it is "fundamentally anti-narrative, in the sense that it has very little to do with the cumulative experience of engaging with a complex narrative structure as a structure" applies precisely to McCambridge's (2003) admonition to his students. *12 Angry Men* has become a classic because generations of viewers want to engage with it. No matter how many clips an instructor uses in a course, their purpose remains limited to the illustration of concepts.

Going beyond clipping to show and discuss an entire movie or television series episode is "more than an entertaining means of getting at the same old chestnuts" and represents a much deeper engagement with narrative structures such as plot and characterization or with the ideological vision of the creator of the narrative (Shaw and Locke 1993). In this approach, the instructor requires students to watch a small number of films or television episodes in their entirety, either outside of or during class, and discuss them in class and/or homework assignments. The Hartwick Humanities in Management Institute, founded by John Clemens, a well-known student of literature and film dealing with management, developed 87 case studies intended to support management instructors' engagement with works of literature or films (Peters and Nesteruk 2014). Taylor and Provitera (2011) use the film *Norma Rae* in a labor relations course in a management program because it deals with fundamental questions about why workers unionize and because its pro-union bias confronts the anti-union bias of many students. Van Es (2003) reports on using *The Insider* in a workshop on practical ethics. Borry (2018a, 2018b) uses complete episodes of the television series *Parks and Recreation* in courses on public administration and public sector ethics.[1]

There have been a few instances where instructors have gone to a third level of engagement with narrative texts by structuring every class around the analysis and discussion of a different text. The eminent Harvard psychiatrist Robert Coles was a pioneer of this approach. Coles taught seminars in a number of Harvard faculties (law, business, medicine, government) in which he required students to read a novel a week. In the seminar discussions themselves, he gave students relatively free rein to talk about both the text and its relationship to their lived experience and their expectations regarding the professional careers they were soon to embark upon. Coles reports many such discussions in his 1989 book *The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination.* Coles's research methodology for that book, like many of his others, involved tape-recording interlocutors and then publishing first-person transcripts. Seen from the perspective of academic mores three decades later, it is unlikely that students would be comfortable having their intimate discussions taped and then published (even if anonymized) or that university research ethics boards would permit the practice. Coles has had successors. Joseph Badaracco (2006) and Sandra Sucher (2008) teach a Coles-inspired course on “the moral leader” at Harvard Business School and Leigh Hafrey teaches a similar course at MIT’s Sloan School. Unlike Coles, Badaracco’s and Sucher’s scholarship focuses on analysis of their chosen texts rather than student reaction. On reviewing their books and course outlines, it is clear that these instructors have a vision of management and believe that the study of literary or moving-image texts is the optimal way to teach it.

From *Yes Prime Minister* to a Course Design

I came upon the teaching of narrative serendipitously. In the mid-Eighties I was teaching management students an introductory class in political economy which met weekly in one three-hour session. On the day I gave a ninety-minute in-class midterm, I was looking for something academically relevant but lighter than a lecture for the second half of the class. *Yes Prime Minister* was being broadcast locally, and I was enjoying it so much that I began to record it with then leading-edge VCR technology. *Yes Prime Minister* was also relevant to the course because one of the topics I discussed was public choice theory. The more episodes I watched, the more I suspected that its writers, Antony Jay and Jonathan Lynn, were using public choice theory as its conceptual foundation. Showing an episode or two of *Yes Prime Minister* (on one of the university’s newly-purchased but rarely-used VCR players) worked perfectly to use the 90 minutes after the midterm productively. The students found it both hilarious and thought-provoking. We could discuss both the public choice ideas that I believed were at the core of the program and how it illustrated them.

My success using *Yes Prime Minister* in class took me in two directions. First, I wanted to test my hypothesis about Jay and Lynn consciously using public choice ideas. I traveled to London to interview Tony Jay, and he confirmed my hypothesis and told me about the evolution of his thinking about politics. I also had the satisfaction of hearing his first answer: “Yes, indeed, you’re right – public choice has been a major influence on my thinking. What’s surprising is that no one who has interviewed me before ever recognized it.” My interview with Tony Jay, as well as subsequent correspondence with Jonathan Lynn, led to an article about public choice theory, *Yes Minister*, and the relationship between the two (Borins 1988).

Second, I decided to explore teaching a course about fictional narrative texts (television programs, movies, and novels) that dealt with organizations, either public or private sector. I was an avid audience for these texts, and many quickly came to mind. There were classics – *Twelve Angry Men, Death of a Salesman, Corridors of Power* – as well as some new releases in 1987 and 1988 – *Wall Street, Stand and Deliver, Working Girl*. The distinguished jurist Richard Posner published *Law and Literature* in 1988 and his perspective on the well-established academic field of law and literature encouraged me.

I began to teach a course, which I initially titled “Management and Organization in Fiction” in the Faculty of Administrative Studies at York University in 1990 and took it to the University of Toronto at Scarborough’s undergraduate management program when I moved later that year.

At the outset, I was strongly affected by my experience with *Yes Minister.* I assumed that other screenwriters and novelists were just as influenced by some social or political theory as Tony Jay and Jonathan Lynn were by public choice. That led me to look for theories that would be relevant or applicable to the works of fiction selected. I was searching for conceptual frameworks that would unlock the meaning of other texts in the way that public choice theory unlocked the meaning of *Yes Minister.* I also wanted to show students how these and other management concepts could be applied to, or illustrated, by fiction. As a scholar in strategic management, my search for concepts was wide-ranging and eclectic.

During the first few classes, I lectured on a set of conceptual frameworks that I thought would be relevant to fiction about management and organizations: Erik Erikson's human life cycle theory, ethical concepts such as utilitarian and deontological ethics, Gareth Morgan's (1986) images of organization, Northrop Frye's set of literary archetypes in *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), and finally Richard Posner's (1988) approach to analyzing canonical legal fiction. We then covered several movies (*Wall Street, Twelve Angry Men, Executive Suite, The Confession, Absence of Malice, A Very British Coup*) and literary texts (*The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz, Death of a Salesman, Respected Sir, Corridors of Power*).

I could have chosen to lecture on the texts as well. Lectures would have included topics such as background information about the creator(s), an outline of the plot, narrative devices, application of the relevant concepts, aesthetic assessment of the text, and a reflection on its cultural influence. For the novels, I could have read selected passages, and for the movies shown clips of pivotal scenes.

I decided not to do this, but rather to organize the sessions dealing with the texts as classroom discussions. My classes were small enough – approximately 30-40 students – that discussions were possible. They were that size because the course was an upper-level elective and the topic was atypical in a management program. It appealed to students who were looking for a course that was different from and more humanistic than the rest of their curriculum. I also thought that upper-level students would expect to discuss the material, rather than be the passive audience for lectures.

My go-to model in discussion-based classes was the case method for which the Harvard Business School is renowned, and which is also considered particularly appropriate for the teaching of strategic management. A typical case includes a narrative about an organization's experience up to a given moment and an assignment requiring the students to play the role of a corporate decision-maker, likely a CEO, trying to decide what to do next. Copious data about corporate performance are usually provided so that students can prepare for the discussion by crunching the numbers. The class is an instructor-centered discussion of problems and potential solutions. Cold-calling – essentially a form of naming-and-shaming in which students who have not raised their hands are called – together with basing a considerable portion of the grade on classroom participation enforces student preparation. The instructor-centric nature of the course is reinforced by the use of a lecture amphitheater, with all eyes looking down on the instructor at the front of the room, who is interacting with individual students and validating their ideas by writing them on the blackboard. The class usually ends with a big reveal, in which the instructor divulges what actually happened – the decisions the CEO made and their results – and draws some lessons or implications.

Despite my enthusiasm for this new course, student reaction was mixed. The course's numerical ratings were in the 3's on a 5-point scale. Gradually I realized that narrative texts don't fit the business case discussion model. Most plots are not open-ended nor is there any quantitative data to be crunched. We discussed the topics I would have lectured on such as the application of conceptual frameworks, storytelling devices, and aesthetic appreciation. My problem as a discussion leader was that I had my own ideas, and it was difficult not to divulge them, especially in response to student answers to my discussion questions. Students felt that the discussion was really a journey to a predetermined destination, rather than a sharing of ideas, reactions, and perspectives.

Some students liked the course because it was unique, and they found the discussions enjoyable and the texts appealing. Students who didn't like the course found some texts irrelevant to their experience (such as the machinations of upper-class British parliamentarians in Snow's (1964) *Corridors of Power* or ambitious third world bureaucrats in Naguib Mahfouz's (1990) *Respected Sir*), thought the reading load was heavy, didn't see the point of applying conceptual frameworks to movies or novels, and didn't feel they were being heard if discussions had a right answer predetermined by the instructor.

Getting Better

I was able to find the student evaluation records for the 18 times I have taught the course between 1991 and my retirement in 2020.[2] The clear conclusion that emerges from the data in Table 1 is that the course has been better received over time. The ratings started out decidedly mediocre and now are consistently near the top of the 5-point scale. In addition, in recent years student comments have become both more numerous and more laudatory. The course's capacity, determined by the room in which it is taught, is 35, and it is always over-subscribed. Even at the end of the semester when students are beset with assignments and deadlines, over 80 percent regularly come to class.

Table 1: Teaching Evaluations for Narrative and Management

Date Given	Course Rating out of 5	Instructor Rating out of 5
2019	4.3	4.7
2018	4.4	4.8
2017	4.3	4.8
2016	4.7	5
Fall 2015	4.5	4.7
Winter 2015	4.4	4.8
2013	3.8	4.1
2012	4.3	4.7
2011	4.3	4.6
2009	4.0	4.6
2008	3.7	4.6
2006	3.5	4.2
2005	3.8	4.0
2004	4.0	4.5
2003	3.9	4.5
1996	3.9	4.4
1995	n.a.	4.0
1991	n.a.	3.3

Notes:

1. For 2013 to 2019, course ratings were based on an unweighted average of the following 5 factors: course intellectually stimulating, provided deeper understand of subject matter, assignments improved understanding of course material, assignments provided an opportunity to demonstrate understanding of course material, and overall quality of learning experience in course.
2. For 2013 to 2019, instructor ratings were based on an unweighted average of the following 4 factors: instructor created atmosphere conducive to learning, instructor enthusiasm about course material, instructor explained concepts clearly, and instructor expressed interest in student understanding when explaining concepts.
3. For 2011, instructor rating was based only on creating atmosphere conducive to learning.
4. For 1996 to 2012, scores on a 7-point scale were converted to a 5-point scale.
5. For 1996 to 2012, course rating was based on the following factor: "the value of the overall learning experience [of the course] is." For 1996 to 2012, instructor rating was based on the following factor: "all things considered, performs effectively as a university teacher."
6. For 1991 and 1995, instructor rating was based on the following factor: "Compared with other instructors, I describe this instructor as …"

The improvement in the evaluations provides an impetus to think about the development and evolution of the course, and to interrogate myself about the effect the changes appear to have had on the students. I was able to find my course outlines, which document the evolution.

There were two important exogenous trends affecting my pedagogy. First, technology was changing. At the outset, I had to check video rental stores to ensure that the movies I assigned were available. Now almost any movie I use is available online, with the possible exception of commercially successful new releases that are still in the cinemas. In 1990, blackboards were still widely used. I am one of the 10 percent of the population that is left-handed and must push the chalk rather than pull it. My blackboard writing looks messy and juvenile, which detracts from my message. Fifteen years ago, I began using PowerPoint to present content on legible slides that I make available to students after each class. Second, the student body at UTSC was becoming more diverse, with the vast majority now members of visible minorities, especially South and East Asian. Many students are new Canadians, the children of recent immigrants.

The story of how I improved is incremental and multi-faceted. The course was not failing, so I didn't have to take radical action, rebuilding it from the ground up if it was to survive. Every year when I revised the course, I incorporated fresh ideas and approaches from my research on narrative, I took account of student feedback, and I took advantage of new texts that became available.

From Social Science to Narrative Concepts

As I watched more movies and read more director's statements and interviews with creators, I realized that *Yes Minister* was unique in the extent to which it uses a conceptual framework. In a typical episode, Jay and Lynn take a policy or management issue and then develop a plot that turns on the self-interested motivations of the characters as predicted by public choice theory. Other creators, however, are much more casual in their use of social science ideas. If an idea contributes to the story, they incorporate it either explicitly or implicitly. Their intent is not to illustrate social science concepts, but rather to create films that win critical acclaim and enthusiastic audiences. Realizing this, I began to reject the idea of starting with social science concepts and using them to interpret every movie. Asking which of Gareth Morgan's (1986) well-known eight organizational images are relevant to an organization depicted in a particular movie began to seem like a purely academic exercise.

Rather than presenting social science concepts at the outset of the course, I decided to present standard narratological concepts as well as those I developed in my research. This was, in part, due to the influence of my ongoing research on management narrative. This also reflected my fundamental rethinking of the course. I no longer saw it as a course in the exemplification of social science concepts through narrative but rather a course about the management narrative genre. Therefore, I changed the name of the course from “Management and Organization in Fiction” to “Narratives on Management and Organization” and ultimately “Narrative and Management.”

My presentation of narrative concepts includes definitions of narrative; my four basic concepts of text, story material, narrativization, and fable (Borins 2011, 5-8); four public sector fables and eight business fables (Borins 2011, (Borins 2011, 9-10; Borins and Herst 2018, 5-11); types of narration (omniscient, first-person, ficelle (observer), unreliable or misleading); differences between print and moving image narrative; and differences between documentary, docudrama, roman a clef, and pure fiction narrative. I also introduce McKee’s (1997) model of Hollywood storytelling. I retain Erikson’s life cycle model because of its relevance to understanding characters and to the personal narratives I began to ask students to present about themselves. My objective is to give students a set of tools that we will be using throughout the course.

Though I relegated their role, social science concepts are still relevant. I shifted my attention to the concepts that creators actually use. There are quite a few texts that are either explicitly or implicitly using social science concepts. Movies about the financial crisis (*Inside Job, The Big Short*) need to explain the sophisticated financial instruments – mortgage-backed securities (MBSs), collateralized debt obligations (CDOs) and credit default swaps (CDSs) – that were at the heart of the crisis. Alex Gibney, director of *Enron,* made explicit reference to the Milgram Obedience Experiment as an analogy for the economic pain inflicted by that company. Those movies present the concepts to the audience, so it is my role as instructor to ensure that the students understand their concepts. *Doctor Strangelove*’s implicitly relies on the concept of mutually assured destruction, a derivative of game theory, and *Eye in the Sky*’s implicitly illustrates the philosophical trolley problem. In these instances, I must explain the theory and show how it is relevant to the movie. In a Wi-Fi-enabled classroom, students can access sources such as Wikipedia articles or YouTube videos to reinforce the explanation.

A Steady Stream of New Texts

Table 2 shows all the texts I used the 18 times I have taught the course, working back from the present to its inception in 1991.[3] It also shows the year the text was released, the years I used the text, the topic of the session in which the text was discussed, and why I dropped the text. I used 53 texts total. This reflects the continual availability of new texts, my interest in trying new texts, and student preferences for texts that are up to date. Thus, when I last taught the course in 2019, six of the nine texts I used are from 2010 or later.

When I taught the course for the first time, I used a variety of text formats, including films, novels, and plays. Over time I shifted from literary to entirely moving-image texts. This was in response to strong student preferences as well as the ready availability of movies online through rental on

Netflix or YouTube, which replaced DVD or Blu-ray rental.[4] When I began teaching the course, all the texts were works of fiction. More and more new works in the managerial narrative genre are docudramas and documentaries. Docudramas like *Stand and Deliver, The Winslow Boy,* and *Erin Brockovich* and documentaries like *Startup.com* and *The Fog of War* all were appropriate texts, so I expanded the scope of the course beyond works of fiction.

Table 2: Texts used in Narrative and Management (presented in reverse chronological order)

Text	Format	Release Date	Years Used	Topic(s)	Reason Dropped
Social Network	Film	2010	2011 –	Entrepreneurship	
Spotlight	Film	2015	2016 –	Investigative journalism	
Revenge of the Electric Car	Film	2011	2015, 2018 –	Entrepreneurship, organizational change	
Inside Job	Film	2010	2011 –	Financial crisis, ethics	
The Big Short	Film	2015	2016 –	Financial crisis	
12 Angry Men	Film	1957	1991 –	Small group dynamics	
Eye in the Sky	Film	2015	2016 –	Public sector entrepreneurship, ethics	
Hidden Figures	Film	2016	2017 –	Public sector organizational change	
The Fog of War	Film	2003	2005 –	Life narrative, ethics	
Thirteen Days	Film	2000	2003-12, 2015-16	Crisis management	Replaced by *Hidden Figures*
Enron	Film	2005	2006-15	Strategy, ethics	Replaced by *Big Short*
Zero Dark Thirty	Film	2010	2013-15	Public sector entrepreneurship	Replaced by *Eye in the Sky*
Wall Street	Film	1987	1991-2005, 2015	Mentorship, ethics	Dated
The Insider	Film	1999	2005 – 2017	Investigative journalism, corporate strategy	Dated
Margin Call	Film	2011	2015	Financial crisis	Replaced by *Big Short*
Waiting for Superman	Film	2010	2011-13	Educational reform	Dropped topic
Argo	Film	2012	2013	Public sector entrepreneurship	Story excludes Canadian role
Lincoln	Film	2012	2013	Political leadership	Story too complex
Charlie Wilson's War	Film	2007	2012	Public sector entrepreneurship	Replaced by *Zero Dark Thirty*
Freedom Writers	Film	2007	2008-09	Transformative teachers	Replaced by *Waiting for Superman*
The Class	Film	2008	2009	Transformative teachers	Replaced by *Waiting for Superman*
City Hall	Film	1996	2006-09	Mentorship, politics	Replaced by other political films
All the President's Men	Film	1976	2009	Investigative journalism	Replaced by *Spotlight*
Burnett, A Trial by Jury	Non-Fiction Book	2001	2003-09	Small group dynamics	*12 Angry Men* preferred
North Country	Film	2005	2006-08	Fighting authority	Dropped topic

Remains of the Day	Film	2003	2003-09	Ethics, work-life balance	Dated
Remains of the Day	Novel	1989	1995-2009	Ethics, work-life balance	Dated
Good Night and Good Luck	Film	2005	2006-08	Investigative journalism	Dated
Office Space	Film	1999	2006	Starting a career	Students didn't like it
Stand and Deliver	Film	1988	1995-2005	Transformative teachers	Replaced by *Freedom Writers*
Dead Poets' Society	Film	1989	2003-05	Transformative teachers	Replaced by *Freedom Writers*
Startup.com	Film	2000	2003-04	Entrepreneurship	Replaced by *Social Network*
Elizabeth	Film	1998	2003-05	Leadership	Dated
Henry V	Film	1989	2003-05	Leadership	Dated
Henry V	Shakespeare	1599	2003-05	Leadership	Dated
Doctor Strangelove	Film	1964	2003-05	Satire	Replaced by *13 Days*, *Fog of War*
The Winslow Boy	Film	1999	2003-05	Fighting authority	Replaced by *North Country*
Erin Brockovich	Film	2000	2003-05	Fighting authority	Replaced by *North Country*
Working Girl	Film	1988	1996	Gender and class	
Lodge, Nice Work	Novel	1988	1996	Gender and class	
Absence of Malice	Film	1981	1991-96	Investigative journalism, ethics	Story too complex
Mahfouz, Respected Sir	Novel	1975	1991-96	Work-life balance	Story too unfamiliar
Mamet, Glengarry Glen Ross	Play	1984	1995	Ethics	Too bleak
Glengarry Glen Ross	Film	1992	1995	Ethics	Too bleak
Miller, Death of a Salesman	Play	1949	1990-95	Work-life balance	Too bleak
Death of a Salesman	Film	1985	1990-95	Work-life balance	Too bleak
Richler, Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz	Novel	1959	1990-95	Entrepreneurship	Dated
Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz	Film	1974	1990-95	Entrepreneurship	Dated
Bellow, Seize the Day	Novel	1956	1995	Personal failure	Too bleak
A Very British Coup	Film	1988	1990-95	Politics	Story too unfamiliar
Executive Suite	Film	1954	1991	Corporate strategy	Dated
The Confession	Film	1970	1991	Politics	Story too unfamiliar
Snow, Corridors of Power	Novel	1964	1991	Politics	Dated

When I began teaching the course, like other instructors teaching management and narrative, I simply selected texts that I liked. I came to realize that this reduced the coherence of the course. I began to see my research as a means to a deeper understanding of the texts I like and to the selection of a more coherent set of texts. For example, in the late Eighties and Nineties, I noticed the appearance of several movies about transformational high school teachers, such as *Stand and Deliver* (1988), *Dead Poets' Society* (1989), and *Dangerous Minds* (1995), and I taught each of them. This teaching led me to write a chapter about that sub-genre in *Governing Fables* Borins 2011, 27-61). In the chapter, I discuss both a dominant fable of a successful transformative teacher and its counter-fable. The deeper study of sub-genres in *Governing Fables* enriched my teaching by providing context for any text discussed in class.

Negotiating Business Narratives (2018) analyzes texts and develops fables for three industry contexts: information technology, in particular startups; automobile manufacturing; and financial trading. This led to my selecting one or two texts to present in each of these areas. I show the students how the texts we discussed in class were related to others discussed in the book and how they instantiate a particular industry fable (and its counter-fables). My recent research about the investigative journalism fable (Borins and Herst 2019) provided a fourth industry context.

Though the course could have encompassed only texts about business, I included some that deal with the public sector. I emphasize the difference between private and public sectors by showing that the former is about money, whereas the latter deals with issues of life and death, such as decision making by juries and decisions about the use of military force.

The texts discussed in 2019, the last time I taught the course, show how I presented each sub-genre. *The Social Network* deals with the information technology sector, which should get the attention of every student because almost all of them have a presence on Facebook or other social media sites.[5] I follow a film about information technology with one about investigative journalism, *Spotlight.* I illustrate the chapter in *Negotiating Business Narratives* on narratives about the auto manufacturing industry with Chris Paine's 2011 documentary *The Revenge of the Electric Car.* We address the financial trading industry by discussing two texts about the global financial crisis of 2008-09, an event that still looms large in public and student consciousness (though it is now being eclipsed by Covid-19). Charles Ferguson's documentary *Inside Job* (2010) and Adam MacKay's docudrama *The Big Short* (2015) play well against one another. The former is intended to provoke anger toward the corporate, governmental, and academic leaders Ferguson believes caused the crisis; the latter celebrates the success of the prescient few who anticipated it (Borins and Herst 2018, 37-55).

I then move to public sector narrative texts. The first, *Twelve Angry Men*, is compelling because of its simplicity and focus, as well as its open-endedness in that the jury decides on guilt or innocence but the crime itself is not solved. To emphasize that point, I give students a short article (Asimow 2007) that contends the circumstantial evidence in the case is so strong that a real jury would almost certainly have convicted the accused.

Eye in the Sky uses a military decision whether to order a drone strike on a terrorist cell to raise the ethical issue embodied in the trolley problem, namely whether it is justified to cause the death(s) of innocent people to save the lives of a greater number of innocent people. After the discussion, several students said that the movie made the trolley problem very real, and no longer hypothetical or abstract. *Hidden Figures* deals with organizational change in the public sector, and also resonates with UTSC's new Canadian students because of its focus on racism and sexism. I use *The Fog of War* to end the course because of both its compelling narrative techniques as well as the lesson I draw from Robert McNamara's life that bad decisions can cause deep and lifelong regret (Borins 2011, 201-8).

When I began teaching the course, the protagonists were almost always male. The women that were represented were primarily wives, usually supportive of their husbands, and secretaries (work wives). I found his very problematic in classes that were composed of roughly 50 percent of women. However, more texts in the managerial narrative genre began featuring female protagonists, and I selected these texts as soon as they were released. Some of the early ones were *Working Girl, Erin Brockovich, Elizabeth, North Country*, and *Freedom Writers.* More recent texts included female protagonists in the intelligence community (*Zero Dark Thirty*), the senior ranks of the military (*Eye in the Sky*), and the space program (*Hidden Figures*). The representation of women as protagonists has advanced to such an extent that, when I use a text that has no females in major roles, such as *The Social Network*, that itself becomes a topic of discussion, both regarding the text itself, and more broadly regarding the industry the text depicts.

While female protagonists were a major lacuna only when I began teaching the course, there is still a dearth of Canadian texts that are sufficiently compelling to use in the classroom. To a great extent, English Canadians import their economic and political stories from the US (Stursberg 2019). *Argo* lost its credibility among Canadian students as soon as I pointed out how much the film marginalized the role of Canadian diplomats in the Iran hostage story. *Lincoln* didn't work because Canadian students learn little about Lincoln in the elementary and secondary schools and have not been taught to revere him. They do not understand or care about the docudrama's complicated story material regarding the replacement of the Emancipation Proclamation with a constitutional amendment and the political tactics Lincoln used to achieve this outcome.

From Sage on the Stage to Guide on the Side

Recognizing that a classroom discussion approach based on the Harvard Business School case model wasn't working for all the students, I searched for a better form of classroom discussion. The approach I came up with involves group work. A discussion of a text entails my selecting a handful of discussion questions, assigning students randomly to a group that discusses one question for approximately fifteen minutes, and then asking one member of each group to stand and deliver the answer the group has developed. While the groups are discussing their questions, I circulate around the class to provide clarification, if necessary. After each of these short, usually 2-3-minute, presentations, I open the discussion to comments by the entire class, and then I present my own answer to that question. This approach radically changes the dynamic of the discussion. Students are working collectively to answer questions. When students make their presentations, I either offer praise for a great answer or say they had made a good effort but there are a few other things they could consider. In giving my own answer, I put it forward, not as the only right answer, but as the professor's take. At the end of the class, I present a modest reveal that might involve issues not discussed in the questions, such as the ongoing cultural significance of a text. The whole process of group discussions, presentations, and plenary discussion takes approximately two-thirds of a 100-minute class.

The discussion questions deal with a variety of topics; the management skills (or shortcomings) displayed by a character, the visual storytelling techniques used in a particular movie, an ethical issue raised by a movie, the types of roles portrayed by women in a movie, or the extent and significance of the ways a "based on a true story' docudrama takes liberties with the story material.

In their discussion groups, students can call on their knowledge of the movie, and go online for answers.

For group work, a skills room is a better classroom format than the lecture amphitheater. The skills room is a flat classroom with moveable tables (usually round) and chairs, a podium at the front, and one or more electronic screens on the sides. Students can move around the class and go to a table where a given question is being discussed. The instructor can speak from anywhere in the classroom, controlling the PowerPoint display with a remote clicker.

By changing the discussion format from the instructor-focused Harvard Business School case model to group work I took a major step from a "sage on the stage" to a "guide on the side" pedagogical approach that both I and my student came to prefer (King 1993, Fink 2014).

Story of my Life, Story of my Work

As the course evolved, I became increasingly aware of the "storytelling" school of narrative represented by Boje (2014), Denning (2007), and Ganz (2011) and wondering if there was some way storytelling could be included in my pedagogy. None of the three provided the right model. Denning taught situational storytelling to mid-career executives. Ganz's students are political and social activists, but mine aren't. Finally, Boje's approach would simply be confusing. I decided to experiment by taking two of Ganz's rubrics – story of me, story of us – in a very different direction.

Under the "story of me" rubric, I ask the students to produce a 5-page paper encapsulating their life story, and a 2-minute presentation to the class based on the paper. I expect them to use concepts from the course such as the heroic fable and Erikson's human life cycle model in constructing their written and oral stories. Under the "story of we," I ask them to produce a second 5-page paper and 2-minute oral presentation about a job they had held, such as a summer or part-time job or Co-op placement. They are expected to describe the organizational culture, nature of their work, their boss and colleagues, and the lessons they learned.[6]

When I decided to try this approach in 2011, I realized that for it to work I would have to lead by example. The students would need an example to show how the concepts could be integrated into a presentation. More importantly, they would need validation that it was acceptable to talk about themselves in a candid way with their classmates. I would have to talk candidly about myself.

My "story of me" recounts a string of accomplishments: getting a Ph.D., getting tenure, becoming a prolific researcher and writer, serving for a decade as the founding chair of the Department of Management at UTSC, marrying a wonderful partner, and raising two lively sons. But I also wove into the story some elements on the dark side: the anti-Semitism of mid-twentieth century Canada that induced my parents and relatives to change our surnames to one not identifiably Jewish; a failed starter marriage; despite my success as chair of my department, regret at not seeking a higher administrative position or elective office; an incident where one of my children almost choked to death; and the awareness of mortality that comes from the deaths, some untimely, of friends and family members. I enliven the presentation with a PowerPoint showing personal and family photos. This nuanced presentation is consistent with Erikson's life cycle model, in which everyone carries inside themselves both sides of this dichotomy. It is also a message that if an apparently successful older person has faced hardships and challenges, then it is perfectly acceptable for students to talk about their hardships and challenges.

My work story is about what I call "my gig as a hired pen," the role I played as conference rapporteur for the first six years (1994 to 2000) of the life of the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (capam.org). I explain the role of conference rapporteur and how I interpreted it. I discuss the ways I benefited from the role; sitting in on senior public servants speaking candidly about their experiences (the most fascinating of which was British Cabinet Secretary Sir Robin Butler outlining how the public service prepared for the likely election of Tony Blair's New Labor government in 1997) and traveling to fascinating places in the Commonwealth, often accompanied by my girlfriend. The story pivoted on the following sentence: "When something seems to be really good, the question to ask is whether it will last forever." I then explain why the gig came to an end, in part because I was feeling the intellectual constraints of being a *hired* pen; in part – because retired public servants were willing to serve as rapporteurs for free, in effect undercutting my price; and in part – because my girlfriend had become my wife and we soon had a young son, and I missed being away from them. The presentation ended on an optimistic note because in subsequent years my research on public sector innovation has led to numerous invitations to give presentations – of my own words, not other people's – in equally fascinating places. As in the personal narrative, I told a story that had ups and downs, and a measure of irony.

In a class dedicated to student storytelling, the students hand in their written assignments and present the two-minute versions of their stories. I end the class with my initial reflection on common themes in the stories we have just heard and then invite the students to comment. The written assignments, which I alone read, are more candid than the in-class presentations. I spend part of the following class discussing the papers and presentations and provide a more comprehensive debrief. I make it clear that the students are not being graded on the nature of their experience, but rather on how well they present it. I also discuss the common themes in their papers. Given the new Canadian culture at UTSC, there is considerable discussion of the challenges of immigration, such as parental frustration at unrecognized professional qualifications; financial difficulty; incidents of racism on the part of "old stock" Canadians; and children, who often develop greater linguistic fluency and familiarity with the dominant culture, having to advocate for their parents. Students also share personal misfortunes such as deaths of parents or grandparents, deaths of relatives in wars overseas (a common one is the Sri Lankan civil war), health issues, depression, diseases, disabilities, athletic injuries, bullying at school, and weight and body image issues.

Feedback from the two personal storytelling sessions has been extremely positive. The two reflections expressed most often are that the exercise gave students an opportunity to learn about and empathize with their fellow students and that it provided a valuable opportunity for personal reflection within a coherent intellectual structure. Students have often commented that they began the paper wondering what to write but quickly discovered that they had so much to say that it was hard to keep within the confines of five double-spaced pages.

In addition to the personal storytelling assignments, I share vignettes from my own life, sometimes during class, and sometimes in the 5 to 10 minutes after I arrive in the classroom and before we officially start. I am trying to communicate to the students that their professor has a life outside of the classroom, and to encourage them to share personal narratives with one another. In the class on *The Social Network*, I pass around a worn hard copy of 1993 Facebook from one of the Harvard residences. I use it to illustrate how a technological innovation takes something that exists in the analog world, puts it online, and moves it in a different direction. I also explain that I came into possession of this piece of memorabilia because I spent the 1993-94 academic year as a visiting professor at the Harvard Kennedy School and lived in a faculty apartment in one of the undergraduate residences, where I learned that a "face book" had information (major, dorm room and roommate group, birthday) about all the students living in the residence and was designed to encourage social interaction. As a resident faculty member, I was also included. In the discussion of *Eye in the Sky*, I quote from an email from a friend who had been legal adviser to the Director of National Intelligence during the Obama Administration and had an inside perspective on the story material and the plausibility of the narrativization. Finally, if I make a trip during the semester, I show photographs, for example in London in fall 2019 (demonstrations about Brexit, the British Museum, the National Portrait Gallery).

From Clips to Ads

Moving-image materials would normally be incorporated into a course on management lessons from narrative by showing clips that were illustrative of concepts to learn or of behaviors to emulate. But because clips are not narratives (as discussed at the outset of this paper), I stopped showing clips. By discussing concepts and behaviors without using clips, I am challenging students to sharpen their visual memory, so they are able to refer to scenes in the discussion. I watch the film of the week just before class, so it is top of mind for me too.

Though dispensing with clips, I did want to incorporate some moving-image materials into my classes. I became interested in narrative-based ads because they are mini-narratives, often less than a minute in duration, that are intended to influence the attitudes or behavior of their audience. YouTube has made it easy to find and show these narrative texts in class. In the first class I use ads developed by three different types of Canadian organizations to introduce the idea of narrative. (To compensate for the absence of Canadian films and television series in the course, I try to use compelling Canadian mini-narratives.) The first and best known is a Conservative Party of Canada "just visiting" attack ad about Liberal Party leader Michael Ignatieff.[7] The second is an ad by Sunnybrook Health Sciences Center in Toronto, telling the heroic story of how its innovative emergency room team saved the life of a woman badly injured in a highway accident[8]. The third, an ad by the iconic Canadian fast-food chain Tim Horton's, shows a parental visit to a young woman who has moved from a small town to a big city. The parents, particularly the father, urge her to come home. She rejects her parents' entreaties but then sits down with them to talk at a place they all know and feel comfortable in – Tim's.[9] For each ad, I ask a set of questions to get students to begin applying basic narrative concepts to what they have just witnessed:

- What's the story?
- Who's the protagonist(s)?
- Who's the narrator?
- What's the relationship between protagonist and narrator?
- How are (non-verbal) sound and visuals used?
- What are the subliminal messages?
- What is it trying to persuade you to do?

- Are you persuaded?

We discuss ads to begin other classes, thus engaging students right at the outset. I start one class with “Curfew,” a Canadian Cialis ad in which a middle-aged mom keeps extended the curfew for a very surprised teenage son.[10]. It shows that parts of the story material may be important even if not included in the narrativization. Others ads I show include “Misunderstood,” an Apple Christmas ad about a teenage boy who spends the first day of his family Christmas gathering reclusively staring at his iPad, and then surprises everyone with the video of their activities that he has just made;[11] “Dream Rangers” an ad about Taiwanese octogenarians searching for meaning by going on a motorcycle trip to relive their youth;[12] and “The Master Builder,” a brief history of Volvo Construction Equipment narrated by an energetic young man that is both homage to the firm’s nineteenth-century founder and an exposition of its strategy.[13] I encourage students to make suggestions for commercials or other short videos they want to discuss, and soon they are.

Thought-Provoking Exams

Instructors generally regard examinations as a necessity to ensure student effort, but tedious to grade. My exams always have questions to ensure that students are familiar with concepts (such as the categorizations of both public and private sector fables and Erikson’s stages of development) and narrative techniques (types of narration, visual symbolism, camera placement) and can apply the concepts and techniques to the texts discussed in the course. In addition to questions focused explicitly on the course material, I began including questions to test whether the student could apply the course concepts to other contexts. Over the years, such questions have included:

- Asking the student, in the role of a Canadian-based freelance writer, to develop a pitch to Participant Media (which has funded movies about social issues such as *Spotlight* and *Lincoln*) for a movie about a Canadian social issue
- Asking the student, as a well-known political biographer, to develop a prospectus to a publisher for a biography of former Michigan senator Carl Levin, who was seen in both *Inside Job* and *Enron* holding corporate malefactors to account
- In the years before Robert McNamara’s death in 2009, asking the student, as an obituary writer, to prepare his obituary.

These questions produced a wide variety of answers, which relieved the tedium of grading. Many students informally told me they appreciated their novelty and intellectual challenge.

But What Do the Students Learn?

Though I am glad that students gave Narrative and Management strongly affirmative feedback when they took it, it is also important to ask if, in the long term, it created value for them. The best way to answer that question would be to sample students five or ten years after they have taken it. This is difficult to do for an academic program, let alone for one course within it. In the absence of such a test, I will speculate about how it could help them in the future.

The Narrative and Management course, as it has now evolved, develops several skills and provides ideas that will be valuable to future managers. One important component of the course is writing and presenting two personal narratives. Having a clear and compelling personal narrative is an important component of identity and self-efficacy (Bruner 2003, McAdams 2003). More specifically, it can be invaluable in elevator pitches, job applications and interviews, and first dates. In addition to the benefits of telling one's own story well, these two exercises develop a general skill in storytelling, which can be transferred to other contexts.

A second skill the course develops is participating in task-oriented groups. The course provides opportunities every week for students to work as a part of a group responsible for developing, in fifteen minutes, a coherent answer to a question about the film they were assigned. Having watched these student groups at work, I observe students recalling and applying what they saw in a film, digging up information with quick online searches, and attempting to convince their colleagues that they have a good answer. Students also have several opportunities to serve as spokesperson for the group.

By developing their personal narratives and analyzing a variety of texts, from approximately 2 hour-long feature films to ads as short as 30 seconds, the students get experience in constructing a narrative. This will certainly be of value in some organizational functions, such as marketing, advertising, and corporate communications.

In the personal narratives, I encourage students to apply Erik Erikson's model to their own lives in terms of the challenges they have recently experienced or are currently experiencing: competency versus inferiority, identity versus role confusion, and intimacy versus isolation. Its value goes beyond that, however, in terms of understanding adults older than themselves dealing with the challenges of middle (generativity versus stagnation) and late (integrity versus despair) adulthood. In their own families, it provides a way of thinking about and empathizing with their parents and grandparents. In the context of work, it is valuable in understanding older colleagues. Unless they are planning to begin their working lives in a technology startup, they will join larger and more bureaucratic organizations and will find at the outset that most of their colleagues, and especially bosses, are older. A younger employee who empathetically understands older colleagues is more likely to be mentored than one who doesn't, and by being mentored, likely to move ahead faster.

As the course has evolved, I have decreased the emphasis on seeking "management lessons." That said, there are certain fictional or actual characters whose behavior is, for better or worse, exemplary. Juror Number 8 (portrayed by Henry Fonda) models a flexible intellect, unbiasedness, and personal courage. President Kennedy, as depicted in *Thirteen Days*, models similar characteristics. The contrarian hedge fund managers portrayed in *The Big Short*, model open-mindedness and an ability to dig deep to test their hypotheses. Colonel Powell in *Eye in the Sky* exemplifies unshakeable determination to achieve a military goal. Robert McNamara's life story makes us wonder what flaw led so capable and brilliant a man to be complicit in ill-advised decisions about the Vietnam War that haunted him for the rest of his life. Each of these characters could influence students as they develop their own patterns of behavior in the workplace.

Despite content that seems unconventional within a management program, this course does have much to teach management students – an argument I have made to academic colleagues who over the years expressed curiosity about what I was doing and how it fit into the program.

Conclusion: Another Chapter in the Narrative?

Teaching this course was one of the most rewarding experiences of my academic career. There is the intrinsic enjoyment of (re)watching and discussing some of my favorite movies. The course also provided an opportunity to watch, learn about, and teach new films. Sometimes they appealed to students (*Spotlight, The Big Short*) and sometimes they didn't (*Lincoln, Argo*). Either way, the experience is worthwhile. The course also integrated research and teaching, a rarely-achieved goal, because I brought to the classroom some of the texts I have written about.

The course provided an opportunity for me and for younger people to share our life experiences in a supportive setting. Their life experiences are sometimes like mine, sometimes different, but always fascinating. In contrast, I have found that many academics late in their careers become alienated from their students. They have different experiences, different cultural landmarks and preferences, and use technology in different ways. They have less and less to say to one another. This empathically was not my experience.

Finally, the course provided a sense of satisfaction and achievement. I came up with the idea for it from my experience. I designed and built it. Then I tested it against student feedback and kept improving it. The continuing level of approval that it received provided a sense of ongoing satisfaction. I looked forward to and felt energized every time I went into the classroom to teach it. Therefore, this narrative about teaching narrative is heroic. It is not heroic in the Hollywood sense that I was coping with an ongoing set of escalating challenges. Rather, it is the heroism of taking an original inspiration and improving, shaping, and fine-tuning it – the heroism of intellectual creation.

In hindsight, the timing of my retirement from teaching in 2020 was fortuitous. The course has a level of intense personal interaction that the online teaching environment necessitated by the Covid-19 Pandemic cannot provide. Even assuming a return to traditional classroom teaching without the necessity of physical distancing in the future, the outlook for this course is uncertain. As discussed in the literature review, courses on narrative and management or political science are rare, and this one is unique within that small world. I wrote this article, which reports in considerable detail on my success with this type of course and pedagogy, to encourage readers to make this course, or at least aspects of its content or methodology, their own.

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Endnotes

[1] A recent personal experience highlighted the difference between clipping and showing an entire episode. In my public management course, I intended to show a 22-minute episode of *Veep* in a class on public sector budgeting because it illustrated the well-known "Washington monument" ploy, in which an operating agency volunteers a budget cut it knows will be unacceptable to the political authority. I asked before class if students would be troubled by the program's profanity, expecting no one would. However, one student said they would. To minimize the time that student would be standing outside the classroom, I reduced my use of the episode to a 6-minute clip. The excised 16 minutes included subplots, narrative devices, and a depiction of male-on-male sexual harassment, all of which would have been interesting discussion topics in a class on narrative and management. However, the clip was entirely sufficient to make my point in the public management class.

[2] I was chair of the Department of Management at UTSC from 1991 to 2003, with a greatly reduced teaching load and didn't teach the course every year. After 2003 I had a normal teaching load and taught it every year except when on full-year research leave.

[3] Observant readers will notice that *Yes Prime Minister* is not included in Table 2. With its laser-like focus on the interplay of power-seeking individuals in a public sector context and the often-Orwellian use of language by politicians and public servants, it was a perfect text for my public management course. *Yes Minister* has been extremely influential politically and culturally in the UK and indeed globally (Borins 2011, 63-102). However, there is less to say about it in a narratives course because most episodes are stand-alone so that it lacks temporality, the characters are presented only in the context of their work, and there are no subplots. Though I used *Yes Prime Minister* for many years, in recent years when given the choice, students – unwisely in my view – began to prefer the warm and idealistic *Parks and Recreation* or the profane and cynical *The Thick of It* or *Veep.*

[4] Undoubtedly some students use file-sharing sites such as Putlocker. At the beginning of the course, I make clear my view that creators of content deserve to be compensated and I encourage students to use sites and sources that pay royalties.

[5] *The Social Network* is a great first text for other reasons as well. It has some complexity, as the narrativization incorporates flashbacks during a deposition-taking for Zuckerberg's thrown-over partners' lawsuits. It exemplifies conflicting narratives and a dominant fable and a counter-fable. Most of its female roles are demeaning (party girls, groupies, a crazy girlfriend), which begins an important discussion of the depiction of women in film and women's traditional marginalized role in the technology sector. Finally, I show that screenwriter Aaron Sorkin took great liberties with the story material, which begins an ongoing discussion about the ways in which creators of docudramas shape their story material.

[6] The two personal narrative assignments replaced a midterm exam.
[7] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xSgHmbh7ZVY (accessed June 8, 2020).
[8] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vbpjKZkwLW8 (accessed June 8, 2020).
[9] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lAkbNtRHkNc (accessed June 8, 2020).
[10] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJPGqHq-D3Y (accessed June 8, 2020).
[11] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03KQTCEM08k (accessed June 8, 2020).
[12] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vksdBSVAM6g (accessed June 8, 2020).
[13] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8eidcQ1BPEA (accessed June 8, 2020).

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The Influence of Film on Attitudes about the American Dream: Audiences and *Forrest Gump* and *Idiocracy*

Michelle C. Pautz and Jennifer Lumpkin

Narratives play an essential role in society cultivating a shared identity and ensuring that identity is transmitted to future generations; oftentimes, these narratives take many forms. Film is one such narrative medium that provides a very accessible form of art and entertainment to a significant portion of the population. According to the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), 263 million people in North America[1] in 2017 went to the movie theater (MPAA 2017, 3). And these data on cinema attendance do not encapsulate the numbers of people who watch movies via on-demand and internet streaming services. It is difficult to fully capture the size and scope of the movie audience in the U.S., but a few figures offer some indication. Worldwide, the number of subscriptions to online video services increased 33 percent in 2017 over the previous year to 446.8 million (MPAA 2017, 3). And in the U.S., consumer spending on home entertainment increased 20 percent in the last year (MPAA 5).

Given the scale of movie audiences, and the attributes of the narrative form, the question invariably arises as to whether or not film can influence its audience. These questions have been the foundation of numerous investigations, particularly in the context of politics, public policy, and the work of civil servants (c.f. Pautz 2018, 2016, 2015; Pautz and Warnement 2013; Holzer and Slater 1995; Paddaock 2001; McCurdy 1995). These studies have documented the importance of film in shaping attitudes and opinions about government, as well as shown that film can influence audiences. This power of film should be of interest in considering the origins of citizens' perceptions about government and their demands for government action (or, perhaps, inaction) for politicians and public administrators.

Of interest here is the ability of film to influence its audience about the nature of the "American Dream" and one's ability to pursue it. As we will discuss in greater detail, the notion of the American Dream is that hard work and perseverance will lead to a prosperous and fulfilling life because America affords the opportunity for one to experience a "rags to riches" story (Rank et al. 2014). Indeed, the ideal of the American Dream "represents the heart and soul of the country" (Rank et al. 1). And this articulation of the American Dream's foundational role in society should be of interest as we seek to understand attitudes about government and the ability of government to assist citizens pursuing fundamental aspects of American society.

In an effort to investigate the ability of film to influence perceptions and attitudes about the American Dream, we recruited movie audiences to watch two films that offer a perspective on the American Dream, *Forrest Gump* (1994) and *Idiocracy* (2006), and one additional film (*The Italian Job*) as a control. Audience members completed a questionnaire before the film and answered the same questions after viewing one of the three films. We found that film appears to influence audience attitudes about the American Dream and that a quarter to half of audience members changed their responses to particular questions after the movie. We discovered that a more positive portrayal in a movie, such as *Forrest Gump*, seems to align with a more optimistic audience response whereas a more negative portrayal, as in *Idiocracy,* seems to align with more pessimism.

We proceed as follows: first, we detail the ability of film to influence audiences and situate this effort in that broader research context. Then we discuss the notion of the American Dream, its origins, and why it matters. From there we explain our methodology and provide detail about the films selected for this study. We then share the data collected and our analysis before concluding with implications and possible future steps.

Ability of Film to Influence Audiences

The ability of film to influence its audience has been established. In a 2018 study, Michelle Pautz contends that film can and does affect audiences for a number of reasons: (1) the size and scope of movie audiences, (2) the ability of film to inform, (3) the very nature of the viewing experience, and (4) lengthy efforts to control and regulate the content of films (5-9). Consider each of these points in turn. First, film audiences are huge. In 2017, more than three-quarters of Americans and Canadians[2] went to the cinema at least once (or 263 million people), according to the MPAA 2017 report (5). And, in the U.S., more than $20.5 billion was spent in the same year on home entertainment content as online video content viewing continues to increase dramatically (MPAA 5). From 2016 to 2017, there was a 21 percent increase in the number of online video subscriptions in the U.S. (MPAA 5). These figures demonstrate the massive size and scope of film audiences.

Second, Pautz (2018) argues that film can influence audiences because of "…its ability to inform, shape ideas, and even depict historical events...[as] watching a movie brings to life scenarios, events, and periods in history and provides a vehicle for understanding those circumstances, regardless of accuracy" (6). When we watch images on the screen, we get a sense of how historical events unfolded—regardless of the accuracy of their portrayal—and we gather insight about what it must be like to work in a particular field or experience certain events. For instance, many of us may not know what it is like to be a police officer and put our lives on the line every day, but watching movies about cops might help us glimpse that life and give us some sense of the work of cops. These images can and do affect our views of cops as a result (Pautz 2016), as well as the work of government officials, or bureaucrats (c.f. Pautz and Warnement 2013), as well as politicians (c.f. Gianos 1998). Portrayals of journalists in film can also affect attitudes (Milan 2010). The depiction of social issues, including same-sex couples and marriage, on the screen can be influential (Riggle, Ellis, and Crawford 1996).

Third, watching movies can be a completely consuming experience that captivates our sense of sight and sound in a way little else may, especially given the rapt attention we give to films in the confines of a cinema. Holzer and Slater (1995) note that "[t]he visual image is encompassing, immersing. It allows for the total suspension of disbelief" (77). Lee and Paddock (2001) contend that viewing movies in a cinema is "psychologically persuasive" (n.p.).

Finally, throughout its entire history, Hollywood and its products have been subjected to pressures to regulate and control its content because of persistent concern that it can and does influence audiences. This is epitomized in the Production Code and the work of the Hays Office whose work originated out of fears that Hollywood was indecent and corrupting viewers (c.f. Mintz and Roberts 2010; Giglio 2004). During the height of McCarthyism in the United States, the spotlight once again shone on the film industry as there was worry that Hollywood was full of Communists subverting the security of the nation. Then, in the 1960s, the film industry got ahead of burgeoning criticism about the images shown on screen and self-imposed a rating scheme, which was updated again at the end of the 21st century. These events demonstrate concern about what is being shown in movies out of a recognition that film can and does influence its audience.

As we consider explanations for the ability of film to influence audiences, we would be remiss if we do not discuss the ability of the medium to affect political socialization. Of the many factors that contribute to the attitudes and beliefs Americans hold, popular culture and various forms of entertainment play a role. Even more significant as we consider the ability of film to influence individuals, is the recognition that movie audiences are most frequently comprised of young people, who are in the most formative years of their political socialization. Again turning to data from the MPAA, in 2017, people between the ages of 12 and 17 attended an average of 4.9 movies at the cinema, higher than any other age group; and the second most frequent cinemagoer were individuals between the ages of 18 and 24 (MPAA 2017, 3). In other words, people who are in the most formative years in cultivating their political beliefs and attitudes are also the ones most likely to see movies at a local theater.

With this foundation, scholars have explored how films can affect their audiences. Kolker (1999) documents that narrative forms, including film, can shape our perceptions on particular topics or issues. Wilson et al. (1992) contend that media exposure to societal ills, such as rape, helps educate and change opinions. Riggle, Ellis, and Crawford (1996) made similar findings about same-sex relationships. In terms of political views, Orega-Liston (2000) argues film can affect public perceptions of government broadly. Glas and Taylor (2018) note that the depiction of authoritarianism in movies can affect political attitudes. In one study, Pautz (2015) finds that about a quarter of audiences changed their opinions about government and the intelligence community and military more specifically after watching *Argo* and *Zero Dark Thirty*. In a follow-up book, Pautz (2018) expands this research and reaches similar conclusions about the ability of movies to affect audiences, both in terms of their general attitudes about government and specific policy issues, such as climate change.

The American Dream: Understanding Its Origins and Its Meaning

This research attempts to build on the preceding work regarding the ability of film to influence audiences. With intensifying polarization in the U.S. and growing debates over whether America can be made great again, it seems appropriate to unpack an enduring piece of American identity—the American Dream—especially as the role of government in society undergirds such pursuits. It is plausible that the simple mention of the concept could send different individuals down very distinct paths of explaining the concept, but there are some essential themes and elements of this conceptualization. In essence, the notion of the American Dream is the idea that if an individual is willing to work hard and take advantage of opportunities that present themselves, the individual can have a prosperous and satisfying life (Rank et al. 2014, 1). And in some cases, this hard work can result in a "rags to riches" story.

This conceptualization of the American Dream is very much an ideal. For Americans, this represents the value placed on hard work and perseverance. And for others, this ideal motivates them to pursue a life in the United States. The American Dream is a fundamental piece of the national identity and suggests that "…no matter where he or she comes from…[he/she can] exert considerable control and freedom…" over one's life (Rank et al. 2).

The specifics of the American Dream may vary from person to person and may also vary over time. For some, the American Dream "…was marriage, kids, a nice house supported by two generous incomes" (Samuel 2012, 196). "Today, the American Dream continues to place a heavy emphasis upon economic prosperity with financial security, along with other ambitions as well—finding and pursuing a rewarding career, leading a healthy and personally fulfilling life, and being able to retire in comfort" (Rank et al. 2014, 3).

While the notion of the American Dream is intertwined in the history of the United States and embodied in some of its earliest citizens, the first mention of the term came in 1931 in James Truslow Adams' *The Epic of America* (Rank et al. 2014, 2). In the volume, Adams asserts that the American Dream

> …has lured tens of millions of all nations to our shores in the past century. [But it] has not been a dream of merely material plenty, though that has doubtless counted heavily. It has been much more than that. It has been a dream of being able to grow to the fullest development as a man and woman, unhampered by the barriers which had been slowly erected in older civilizations, unrepressed by social orders which had developed for the benefit of classes rather than for the simple human being of any and every class. And that dream has been realized more fully in actual life here than anywhere else, though very imperfectly even among ourselves (as quoted in Rank et al., 5-6).

Lawrence Samuel (2012) concludes that "America would have been a much different place without its Dream, it is safe to say, all of us probably affected in some way by it" (Samuel 2012, 196).

It is up for debate as to whether or not the American Dream is obtainable (especially now), but its mythology persists. Samuel (2012) argues that while the American Dream crashed and burned after the postwar America in the 1960s, the concept is still very apparent in today's society.

Economists and pollsters have long tried to measure the existence of the American Dream. In one study, economists constructed an index of the American Dream and explored the percentage of children who earn more or less money than their parents did at the same age and found that achieving the American Dream was virtually assured for children in the 1940s (Leonhardt 2016). However, of those individuals born in 1980, only half of them earn as much as their parents, indicating a slowing of this aspect of the American Dream (Leonhardt 2016).

The Pew Research Center investigated Americans' attitudes about the American Dream and their perceptions of their ability to achieve it. According to a 2017 poll, only 17 percent of respondents said that the American Dream is out of reach for them, indicating the vast majority think they can or will achieve it (Smith 2017). The same poll asked what the American Dream means to them and, increasingly, Americans say that it is about personal freedom and a good family life rather than becoming wealthy (Smith 2017). About a third of respondents—36 percent—said their family has achieved the American Dream and another 46 percent said they were "on their way" to achieving it (Smith 2017). Seventy-seven percent of respondents said the freedom to choose how to live is an essential piece of the American Dream; other key components of the American Dream include having a good family life (70 percent), retiring comfortably (60 percent), making valuable community contributions (48 percent), having a successful career (43 percent) and owning a home (43 percent). However, when respondents are asked about the future, they are more pessimistic. According to an NBC/*Wall Street Journal* Poll in August 2017, only 35 percent of respondents are confident that their children's generation will be better, and 61 percent are not confident (NBC/WSJ Poll 2017).

Explorations of the American Dream in Film

The significance of the American Dream is as a narrative, and its cultural role and value. Researchers have concluded that the American Dream is widely known and understood among Americans regardless of race or class (Rank et al. 2014). With this foundation, we turn to existing research on film and the American Dream, enabling us to situate the present study. Winn (2007) explores how the American Dream is communicated in contemporary American film and categorizes those depictions into three categories. The first category is "moralizing mobility;" these are the films that depict rags to riches stories in which working-class characters strive for upward mobility. The second category, according to Winn, is "moralizing failure." In this category, movie characters fail to move upward socially and/or economically because they have immoral motives; but, for many such characters, the end credits of the movie roll after the character has experienced a conversion of some sort where the character learns working-class values. The final category is "moralizing the material" which encapsulates movies depicting distressed upper-class characters that benefit from their relationships with lower-class characters who show the former how to have a full and happy life.

Through Winn's analysis, four conclusions about movies and their portrayal of the American Dream are drawn. First, the American Dream and materialism, which is often associated with it, is not criticized or doubted in films. Second, though corruption is often found among upper classes and an issue, members of the upper class can be redeemed. Third, the morality of the working class is prominent and valorized in film. And, finally, mobility—usually upward—in society is the reward for individual success. Winn concludes "[c]ontemporary Hollywood films reaffirm the supremacy of the American Dream despite an ever-worsening economy that squeezes the middle class and forces the working class into low-paying services jobs, an economic situation that furthers the gap between the rich and the poor in the United States" (Winn 2007, 128-129).

Some additional research has looked at the frequency of the American Dream in film. In one example, Pileggi et al. (2000) explore the top 120 grossing movies about business between 1927 and 1995 and look for evidence of the American Dream and how its depiction has varied over time. In 68 of those films, they find that the American Dream is often shown with cautionary hope.

Accordingly, there is ample opportunity to investigate further the American Dream in film from a variety of perspectives. We pull together the discussion of the ability of film to influence audiences and effect political socialization along with the previous efforts to chart the portrayal of the American Dream on film in the research reported here. Film can and does influence audiences and we seek to understand what effect film has on audiences of films that depict the American Dream in various ways.

Film Selection: *Forrest Gump* and *Idiocracy*

Two films were selected that depict male leads attaining the American Dream in the form of a prosperous and satisfying life, and a third film was used as a control. Both *Forrest Gump* and *Idiocracy* were selected as films that embrace the American Dream and one's ability to achieve it—albeit using different tones. *Forrest Gump* (1994) looks back at mid-20th century American history through the passive gaze of a simple Southern man, and *Idiocracy* (2006) looks several hundred years into the future with the time travels of a stunningly average Army librarian. Both films emphasize that above-average intelligence is not a necessity for achieving the American Dream; rather, to achieve the American Dream, one should focus on doing his/her job, regardless of obstacles, and taking advantage of opportunities as they present themselves. When we leave our protagonists in *Forrest Gump* and *Idiocracy*, each has had their hard work rewarded with a stately home, substantial wealth, and loving family. Because of their successes, our lead characters experience upward economic and social mobility, the lesson being that good, hard-working, moral people will succeed (Winn 2007, 42-43). The inclusion of *The Italian Job* is intended to serve as a control film since its plot (described below) has little to do with the essential elements of the American Dream; accordingly, viewers' attitudes and opinions about the American Dream should see little change pre- and post-viewing. This methodology is an attempt to further determine if films do influence audience attitudes on a given topic because if a control film unrelated to the topic is introduced, it should not yield any significant changes in viewers' opinions before and after watching the film.

Forrest Gump

Forrest Gump[3] walks us through pivotal moments in 20th century America by following the life of the endearing—if a bit haphazard—titular character, played by Tom Hanks in an Academy Award-winning performance. Due to attributes such as his dedicated heart and running skill, Forrest's below-average IQ does not stand as a barrier to education, career, financial stability, or meaningful relationships. Indeed, Forrest attends college on a football scholarship, finds friendship and his own heroism as a military man, starts a successful shrimping business, has his money wisely invested, and marries the love of his life. At the end of the film, we see Forrest outside of his large home, putting his bright, young son on the bus to school. We could hope that for having the advantage of more developed intelligence, Forrest's son may do even better in life than his father. Connecting with the categorizations Winn offers of the American Dream on film, Forrest embodies "moralizing mobility" as hard work and determination enable Forrest to achieve much.

Idiocracy

Idiocracy[4] depicts a dystopian future where anti-intellectualism is the new norm. Army Corporal Joe Bauers, a man who is average by every metric including height and IQ, is drafted into a human-freezing experiment and awakens 500 years later to a time where corporations dominate every aspect of American life and immediate gratification is the only motivating force for individuals. In this world, the general atmosphere of hostility toward reason and social responsibility is the result of generations of prolific breeding by the less intelligent factions of the population. As Joe gets his bearings in the trash-filled dust bowl of America, he is discovered to be the most intelligent person on the planet. As such, Joe is tasked with solving the world's problems, including food shortages and a tanked economy. By successfully replacing a corporate sports drink with water to grow crops, he is ultimately able to convince the population that they can trust him to work on these dire issues. The film concludes revealing Joe as the President living in the White House with his wife and three intelligent children. After a lifetime of avoidance when faced with the options to "lead, follow, or get out of the way," Joe has finally acquiesced to lead. Returning to Winn's characterizations of the American Dream on film, *Idiocracy* embodies both the category of "moralizing mobility" through the character of Joe and "moralizing failure" through President Camacho and political elites.

Control Film: *The Italian Job*

The inclusion of a control film, *The Italian Job* (2003), was chosen as it does not speak to the American Dream directly. The movie is a remake of the 1969 Michael Caine-led caper of the same name. While many of the characters are American and pivotal scenes take place in the United States, the American government and attainment of the American Dream are of no importance to the action or storyline of this heist film. *The Italian Job* was selected as our control film because it was made around the same period as *Forrest Gump* and *Idiocracy* and is neutral on concepts surrounding the American Dream. Where *Forrest Gump* and *Idiocracy* depict many of the life milestones associated with the American Dream—e.g. education, family, wealth, homeownership, happiness, freedom, societal acceptance—*The Italian Job* remains focused on the execution of a caper and the extraction of recompense.

Film Selection and Methods

Looking at the American Dream and film's ability to influence an audience, *Forrest Gump* and *Idiocracy* give us varying perspectives on what it means to count one's life a success. Each valorizes the hard work of the middle class by offering a scenario where an American need not be of an elite class to lead a fulfilling existence (Winn 2007). Both films indicate that an average American can succeed by simply pushing through the trials along one's path. While each lacks an excess of intellect, both Forrest and Joe have qualities—like perseverance and common sense—that make their successes possible. Both characters also exhibit patriotism, as shown through their service in the armed forces. The depiction of the government in both films is generally negative; in *Forrest Gump*, we are reminded of events such as Watergate and the Vietnam War, and in *Idiocracy* the public servants oblige as little more than barely upright ringleaders in the mob-ruled parody of democratic governance.

To explore whether or not these films may exert influence on their audiences and attitudes about government, research was designed to survey viewers' attitudes before and after watching a movie. This approach is predicated on past work, including Pautz (2018, 2016, 2015, 2013) and Glas and Taylor (2018). Movie audiences were recruited from a mid-sized, private, religiously affiliated university in the Midwest. Upon gathering for the screenings,[5] participants were given a questionnaire[6] to answer, then the film was screened, then the same questionnaire was administered after the film. Viewers were given identifying numbers so that their responses before and after the movie could be compared while keeping participants' identities anonymous. Sixty-one viewers participated across three films.

A few additional details about the approach are warranted. First, viewers were able to self-select into the movie they watched, whether they chose *Forrest Gump, Idiocracy,* or the control film, *The Italian Job.* Participants were given little detail about the project and the researchers' desire to better understand how film depicts the American Dream and any potential ability of the movies to influence. Second, viewers were recruited from an undergraduate student population with varying motivations,[7] therefore, it is difficult to know how any of those motivating factors may or may not have affected the data gathered.

We had a variety of expectations for outcomes based on the film the viewer watched. For the *Forrest Gump* audience, we anticipated that viewers would come away with more positive views of where the nation was heading and the ability of people to achieve the American Dream. For participants who watched *Idiocracy,* we expected the opposite. And, as we discussed our rationale in introducing a control film previously, we expected viewers of *The Italian Job* to maintain similar opinions before and after viewing the film.

Audiences and the American Dream

After establishing the parameters of the study, we turn to the study's participants and their attitudes about the American Dream. Viewers ranged in age from 19 to 25, with about 60 percent identifying as female and 40 percent male. The most common majors among our viewers were political science (28 percent), communications (15 percent), and international studies (8 percent), with additional majors representing a wide variety of fields. In an effort to avoid non-response on the topic of political-party identification, viewers were instead asked a proxy question regarding how much the government should be doing to help meet the needs of the people. About 75 percent of our viewers believe that the government should be doing more, while about 25 percent believe the government is doing too much. All of our viewers were domestic students.[8] [9]

While the students who participated in our study were not demographically representative of a broad population of the nation or of young adults, they represent an appropriate starting point for research into the ability of film to influence the American dream. Druckman and Kam (2011) maintain that using students as experimental participants is worthwhile and does not pose the inherent problem to experimental research that others might argue. Additionally, given the ages represented in this study, their attitudes and beliefs about the American dream should be investigated as they are the cusp of establishing their own lives and pursuing their own goals.

After detailing who participated in this study, we discuss next the insights these audiences offered organized around the following themes: views on the nation, government, and trust; assessment of today; predictions about the future; the American Dream; and money and wealth.

Views on the Nation, Government, and Trust

We begin with viewers' sentiments about the present trajectory of the United States, and responses to these questions are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Views on the Nation, Government, and Trust, Pre- and Post-Viewing[10]

Question	Pre	Post	Percentage Change
In general, do you think things in the nation are headed in the right direction or wrong direction?	Right Direction: 16.4% (10) Wrong Direction: 45.9% (28) Unsure: 37.7% (23)	Right Direction: 26.2% (16) Wrong Direction: 45.9% (28) Unsure: 27.9% (17)	23% (14)
How much do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?	Just about always: 0 Most of the time: 24.6% (15) Some of the time: 73.8% (45) Not at all 1.6% (1)	Just about always: 0 Most of the time: 31.7% (19) Some of the time: 68.3% (41) Not at all 0	15% (9)

Viewers across all three films believe that the United States is headed in the wrong direction, which is unsurprising and aligns with widespread public opinion. When asked before the movie if they thought the nation was headed in the right or wrong direction, 46 percent indicated wrong direction with 38 percent unsure and the remaining 16 percent said it was headed in the right direction. Twenty-three percent of participants changed their opinion after watching a movie, with the largest percentage change from viewers of *Idiocracy*; 34 percent of participants who watched this film changed their opinion. Of the viewers of this film, about half were more optimistic about the direction of the nation and the other half were less optimistic. On the whole, after the movie, 46 percent said the nation was headed in the wrong direction, 26 percent said right direction, and 28 percent unsure. The biggest change came in a decrease in the number of viewers who were unsure. All 17 percent of *Forrest Gump* viewers who changed their response after the film decided that the country is actually headed in the right direction. The same was true for the 14 percent of *The Italian Job* viewers who changed their responses after viewing the film. However, less than half of the viewers who changed their response after watching *Idiocracy* became more optimistic; 60 percent decided they were unsure or that the country is actually headed in the wrong direction.

Participants were also asked about how much, and with what frequency, they could trust the government to do what is right. Before the viewing, 25 percent said they could trust the government most of the time, while 74 percent said some of the time. After the movie, 32 percent said they could trust the government most of the time and 68 percent said some of the time. Only 15 percent of respondents changed their opinions after the movie. It is interesting to note that no viewer indicated that the government could be trusted to do what is right just about always.

Overall, these results suggest that most viewers in this study are not all that confident in the direction that the country is heading and offer only moderate trust in government, at best. After viewing the movies, there was some slight improvement in these assessments, and the biggest change came from viewers of *Idiocracy*, which might be explained because that film takes a particularly grim view of the future so perhaps viewers improved their opinions slightly thinking that, in reality, things are not *that* bad. Attitudes about the direction of the nation and trust in government are likely to be fairly deeply held beliefs and a change in those opinions should not be all that likely after watching a movie for a few hours. We will see with additional results other areas in which attitudes shifted more dramatically.

Assessment of Today

In keeping with our interest in the American dream, we asked respondents about their own situation in life and their situation in comparison to their parents' lives at that same point, in an effort to chronicle further any possible effects of viewing the films. When queried about their lives today in comparison to their parents' standard of living, most respondents were optimistic about their lives today and very few of them believe their lives are worse than their parents at the same time. Prior to the movie, 76 percent of respondents said their lives were better than their parents' lives, 22 percent said they were about the same, and only two percent said they were worse. After the movie, 71 percent said their lives were better, 26 percent said they were the same, and three percent said they were worse. Only 20 percent of respondents across all three films changed their views. In each film, only a handful of viewers (three or four) changed their responses to this question before and after the movie and the changes in opinions were mixed in both *Forrest Gump* and *The Italian Job*; however, the four viewers who changed their answers after *Idiocracy* all became more negative in their assessment of their lives today versus their parents' lives. These findings are not surprising given the demographics of the participants and that they are afforded the opportunity to pursue a college degree at a four-year, private institution.

Predictions about the Future

Several questions asked participants to convey their views about the future and depending on the question, responses changed before and after the movie between 30 percent to 46 percent of the time. Participants were a bit more hesitant about the future generally, but when asked about their own future and the future of their family, they were more optimistic. These changes in opinions pre- and post-viewing are notable and can be found in Table 2.

Table 2: Expectations for the Future, Pre- and Post-Viewing[11]

Question	Pre-Viewing	Post-Viewing
In general, would you say life in America is better, worse, or about the same as it was 50 years ago for people like you?	Better: 59% (36) About the same: 24.6% (15) Worse: 16.4% (10)	Better: 57.4% (35) About the same: 19.7% (12) Worse: 16.4% (10) Unsure: 6.6% (4)
In general, do you think America's best days are ahead of us or behind us?	Ahead: 18.3% (11) Depends 56.7% (34) Behind: 11.7% (7) Unsure: 13.3% (8)	Ahead: 19.7% (12) Depends: 47.5% (29) Behind: 19.7% (12) Unsure: 13.1% (8)
Do you think the future of the next generation of Americans will be better, worse, or about the same as life today?	Better: 41.0% (25) About the same: 14.8% (9) Worse: 27.9% (17) Unsure: 16.4% (10)	Better: 34.4% (21) About the same: 24.6% (15) Worse: 18.0 (11) Unsure: 23.0 (14)
In America, each generation has tried to have a better life than their parents, with a better living standard, better homes, a better education, and so on. How likely do you think it is that today's youth will have a better life than their parents?	Very likely: 15% (9) Somewhat likely: 66.7% (40) Somewhat unlikely: 16.7% (10)	Very likely: 13.1% (8) Somewhat likely: 77.1% (47) Somewhat unlikely: 9.8% (6)
Do you think the future of the next generation of your family will be better, worse, or about the same as your life today?	Better: 33.3% (20) About the same: 46.7% (28) Worse: 6.7% (4) Unsure: 13.3% (8)	Better: 44.3% (27) About the same: 36.1% (22) Worse: 9.8% (6) Unsure: 9.8% (6)
Compared to your parents' generation, do you think in general your opportunities to succeed in life are better, worse, or about the same as theirs?	Better: 53.3% (323) About the same: 25.0% (15) Worse: 16.7% (10) Unsure: 5.05 (3)	Better: 63.9% (39) About the same: 21.3% (13) Worse: 11.5% (7) Unsure: 3.3% (2)

Table 3: Percentage Change in Responses across Films

Question	**Aggregate Percentage Change**	***Forrest Gump***	***Idiocracy***	***The Italian Job***
In general, would you say life in American today is better, worse, or about the same as it was 50 years ago for people like you?	30%	28%	24%	43%
Do you think the future of the next generation of Americans will be better, worse, or about the same as life today?	46%	56%	48%	50%
In America, each generation has tried to have a better life than their parents, with a better living standard, better homes, a better education, and as on. How likely do you think it is that today's youth will have a better life than their parents?	37%	59%	25%	36%
In general, do you think America's best days are ahead of or behind us?	31%	41%	24%	36%

A majority of respondents said life in America today is better than it was 50 years ago both before the movie (59 percent) and after the movie (57 percent). The remaining viewers were roughly split between life being worse today than 50 years ago or unsure. Thirty percent of viewers changed their responses and viewers of *The Italian Job* saw the biggest change with 43 percent of those viewers changing their opinion. These results are without explanation as the control film had little to offer about life today versus decades ago. This film is a heist movie that takes place in the present day and other than the protagonists succeeding in stealing a lot of money from a former partner who turned against them; thus, the film does not speak to the American dream directly. Related, when asked if America's best days were ahead or behind us, most respondents (57 percent) said it depends prior to viewing, while 18 percent said the best days are ahead, and 12 percent behind. After the movie, 31 percent of respondents changed their opinion, but nearly half (48 percent) still said it depends, with the remaining responses split between ahead or behind. The largest change of responses came from viewers of *Forrest Gump*, with 41 percent of those viewers changing their opinion. Post-viewing responses for *Forrest Gump* display a shift away from the irresolute depends or unsure responses to the more finite ahead or behind responses. Half of those who changed their response had decided after the film that America's best days are ahead of us. This might be attributable to *Forrest Gump*'s depiction of the unseemly parts of America's recent past including the need to fight for civil rights and the horrors of unnecessary wars like Vietnam. After being reminded of those indignities, a reasonable person could not be faulted for thinking that those were not the best days for America.

In thinking about the next generation, both abstractly and more concretely with regards to one's own family, most viewers were cautiously optimistic. In response to the question as to whether or not the future will be better or worse than life today, 41 percent of respondents said it would be better, 28 percent said worse, and 15 percent said the same (with the remainder unsure) prior to watching the movie. After the movie, 34 percent thought it would be better, 18 percent worse, and 25 percent said about the same (again, with the remainder unsure). This question saw one of the largest percentage change in responses pre/post movie with 46 percent of respondents changing their opinion after watching the movie. Thirty-eight percent of viewers of *Idiocracy* changed their response, 50 percent of viewers of *The Italian Job,* and 56 percent of viewers of *Forrest Gump.* Of the viewers whose responses changed after viewing *Idiocracy*, nearly 75 percent moved toward a more pessimistic take on the future. The inverse was true for viewers who changed responses after viewing *The Italian Job* and *Forrest Gump*, 71 percent and 60 percent becoming more optimistic about the future after watching the films, respectively. This difference could be connected to the overall tone of each of the films, with *Idiocracy* having a distinctly dark take on what the future holds for America. Thinking about today's young people and how things will be for them in the future, most viewers (67 percent) indicated that they are somewhat likely to have a better life than their parents, with an additional 15 percent saying they are very likely to have a better life. Only 17 percent indicated that they were somewhat unlikely. After watching the film, 37 percent of respondents changed their opinions and confidence in having a better life grew. Post-viewing, 77 percent said they were somewhat likely to have a better life, 13 percent said very likely and only 10 percent said somewhat unlikely.

When it comes to one's own family and circumstances, most respondents think the future will be fairly status quo. When asked about the future of their own family, viewers prior to the movie said 33 percent thought the future would be better, 47 percent thought it would be about the same, and seven percent said it would be worse (with the remainder unsure). A quarter of viewers changed their responses after the movie and viewers in aggregate seemed slightly more optimistic. Forty-four percent said after the movie that the future would be better, 36 percent said it would be about the same, and the remaining 20 percent were split between unsure and worse. Respondents who watched *Forrest Gump* saw the largest change in pre/post responses with 35 percent changing their response. In comparison, only 17 percent of *Idiocracy* viewers changed their minds and 21 percent of *The Italian Job* viewers. *Forrest Gump* viewers who changed their response after watching the film generally moved in the direction of optimism, with 83 percent moving in a positive direction. *Idiocracy* and *The Italian Job* viewers who changed their responses were split fairly evenly between those who became more pessimistic and those who became more optimistic.

Similarly, viewers were cautiously optimistic about America's future. They were asked if America's best days were ahead or behind us and the largest percentage said it depends (57 percent pre-viewing, 48 percent post-viewing). Thirty-one percent of viewers changed their opinions after watching the movie, with 41 percent of *Forrest Gump* viewers, 24 percent of *Idiocracy* viewers, and 36 percent of *The Italian Job* viewers.

The American Dream

The preceding discussion provides the context in which viewers responded to explicit questions about the American Dream. After watching these movies, respondents appeared less optimistic about achieving the American Dream and more said it was impossible to achieve it (see Table 4).

And about a third of respondents changed their answers pre/post-viewing. There was also some movement in response to questions about the role of government in facilitating the American Dream as well. Viewers were asked if the American Dream was impossible to achieve. Before the movie, 48 percent said no, 28 percent were neutral, and 18 percent said yes. After the movie, 39 percent said no, 25 percent were neutral, and 26 percent said yes. Thirty-two percent of viewers overall changed their responses to this question with the biggest change coming from *Forrest Gump* viewers (47 percent changed their responses). This compares to 45 percent of viewers of *Idiocracy* and only 14 percent of viewers of *The Italian Job*. Of *Forrest Gump* viewers who changed their responses, 75 percent moved toward agreeing with the statement that the American Dream has become impossible for most people to achieve. A similar shift, though not as strong at 60 percent, occurred with *Idiocracy* viewers who changed their responses. Viewers who changed their responses after viewing *The Italian Job* were split. The American Dream conjured in *Forrest Gump* and *Idiocracy* with large homes, family, and immense wealth may seem out of reach to our viewers, who were generally young adults with years of school and, potentially, large amounts of student debt in front of them. In the absence of Alabama hurricanes and government mishaps to depend on to catapult them into financial security, our viewers may have taken a more pessimistic stance regarding the American Dream after watching their films.

Table 4: The American Dream has become impossible for most people to achieve[12]

Response	**Pre-Viewing**	**Post-Viewing**
Agree	18.3% (11)	26.2% (16)
Neutral	28.3% (17)	24.6% (15)
Disagree	48.3% (29)	39.3% (24)
Unsure	5.0% (3)	9.8% (6)

Viewers were also asked whether or not the government has a role to play in achieving the American Dream and the number who answered in the affirmative grew after the movie. Before the movie, 62 percent of viewers said the government has a role, 31 percent said it depends, and five percent said no. Post viewing, 72 percent said yes, 20 percent said it depends, and seven percent said no. Twenty-one percent of viewers changed their opinions evenly distributed across the three movies.

Money and Wealth

The final category of questions asked viewers to respond to questions about money, wealth, and income disparities as the definitions of the American Dream and cultural conceptions focus heavily on these topics. When asked if the distribution of money and wealth is fair or should be more even in the U.S., a majority (64 percent) said it should be more even, a quarter (25 percent) said it was fair, and the remainder were unsure. The overwhelming majority of respondents did not change their opinions after watching the movie and only ten percent changed their opinions, keeping the distribution of responses about the same.

Additionally, viewers were asked their level of agreement with the statement because of the widening gap between the incomes of the wealthy and everyone else, America is no longer a country where everyone, regardless of their background, has an opportunity to get ahead and move up to a better standard of living. Responses to this statement were more divided. Prior to watching the movie, 40 percent agreed, 33 percent disagreed, and 22 percent were neutral. After watching, 43 percent agreed, 28 percent disagreed, and 16 percent were neutral. A third of respondents changed their level of agreement before and after the movie. Seventy-two percent of viewers who changed their responses after viewing *Forrest Gump*, coming from stances evenly split among agreement and disagreement, decided they were unsure if they agreed with the statement, with the remainder moving toward neutrality. Of *Idiocracy* viewers who changed their response, 67 percent moved toward agreement with the statement. Two-thirds of *The Italian Job* viewers who changed their responses moved away from total disagreement to either being neutral or unsure.

Pre and Post Viewing Changes

Integral to the foundation of this study is the hypothesis that films can and do affect their audiences. While much of the preceding discussion unpacks the attitudes viewers expressed about different questions related to the American Dream and its pursuit, this section affords an opportunity to consider the change in responses to questions in aggregate and across each of the films. These findings were summarized in Table 3.

It is noteworthy that in the span of a few short hours watching a movie, upwards of a third of audiences changed their answers to questions about life today and the future. Of course, it is impossible to prove that watching one of these films precipitated the change in response, but it is interesting to contemplate the effects these movies could have on audiences. In two of these questions, over half of the viewers of *Forrest Gump* changed their answers. Of the 56 percent of viewers who changed their response to the question about the future of the next generation of America, 60 percent became more optimistic. The same held true on the question about the likelihood of today's youth having a better life than their parents; of viewers who changed their response after viewing *Forrest Gump*, 60 percent became more optimistic. Finding that upwards of a quarter to a third of responses changed comports with some existing research in this area (c.f. Pautz 2018; Pautz 2015).

Characterizations of the American Dream

Closed-ended questions enable us to glimpse one aspect of viewers' sentiments about the American Dream; therefore, we also asked respondents, both before and after viewing the movies, to articulate the American Dream and what it takes to achieve it. In describing the American Dream, a majority of respondents included concepts such as success, career, prosperity, family, and opportunity. Notably absent among descriptions of the American Dream was homeownership, with less than 10 percent of respondents including it in their definition. This is a departure from previous generations' definitions of the American Dream (Samuel 2012) and may be attributed to the shift in expectations of career and salary from older to younger generations (Leonhardt 2016).

Figure 1: Visualization of Factors Needed to Achieve the American Dream, Pre-viewing across all films

Figure 2: Visualization of Factors Needed to Achieve the American Dream, Post-viewing across all films

Little change occurred between pre- and post-viewing descriptions of the American Dream, but an articulation of what is needed to achieve the American Dream did change after viewing the films. The word cloud in Figure 1 uses font size to show the frequency of words used across all respondents when asked what is needed to attain the American Dream before viewing their respective films. Hard work, education, money, determination, opportunity, equality, and ambition were among the most frequently used terms. Looking at pre- and post-viewing word clouds for *Forrest Gump* (Figures 3 and 4) *Idiocracy* (Figures 5 and 6), and *The Italian Job* (Figures 7 and 8), we see shifts in general opinion about what is needed to achieve the American Dream. While hard work remained the most frequently used term both before and after viewing, opportunity and perseverance increased in frequency in post-viewing responses and the frequency of determination dropped off. *Idiocracy* respondents also kept up the frequency of hard work both pre- and post-viewing, but with this film, education experienced an increase while money was the term to fall behind. There is little difference in *The Italian Job.*

The changes in pre- and post-viewing responses to what is needed to achieve the American Dream might be attributed to the content of the films. In *Forrest Gump*, the protagonist is successful not because he has a resolute purpose that propels him forward, but rather he is successful because he takes each opportunity as it presents itself, such as with army recruitment and the shrimping boat enterprise, and pursues it until it comes to a natural conclusion. This depiction of the path to success may have influenced viewers in what they believe is necessary to achieve the American Dream. Similarly, viewers who watched *Idiocracy* may have been influenced by seeing what it took for the protagonist to realize success. In the film, much is made of Joe's relatively superior intelligence, and his ability to identify underlying issues and problem-solve ultimately carries him to a position of great power and comfort. The increase in emphasis on education for respondents following their viewing of *Idiocracy* is in line with the values portrayed in the film, suggesting that the film did have an influence on viewers' perceptions of what is needed in order to achieve the American Dream.

Figure 3: *Forrest Gump,* pre-viewing

Figure 4: *Forrest Gump*, post-viewing

Figure 5: *Idiocracy*, pre-viewing

Figure 6: ***Idiocracy*****, post-viewing**

Figure 7: ***The Italian Job*****, pre-viewing**

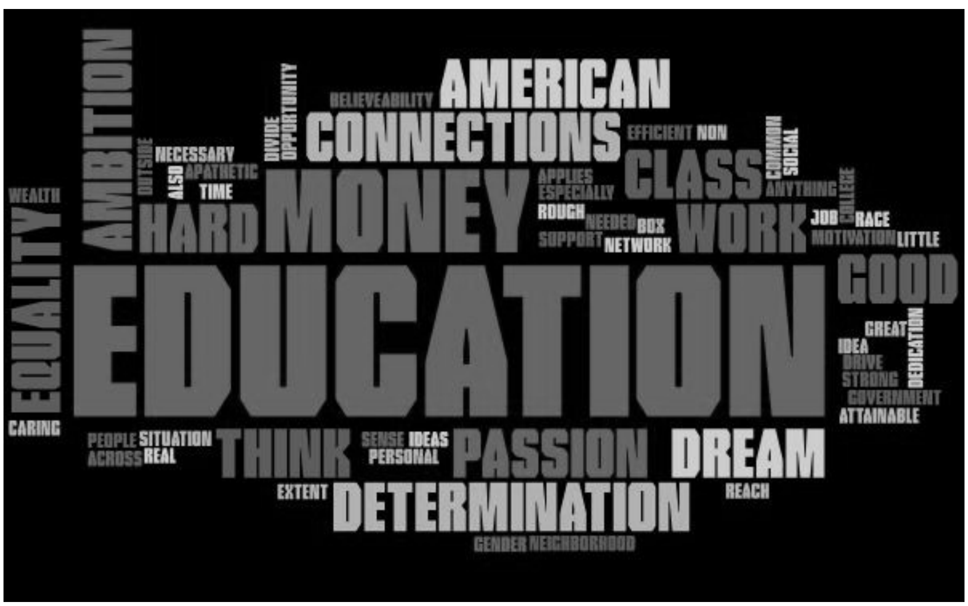

Figure 8: *The Italian Job*, post-viewing

Discussion

In our investigation of the reaction of audiences to the American Dream as depicted in *Forrest Gump* and *Idiocracy*, alongside the control film of *The Italian Job*, we offer several summary points. First, our study affirms prior research described earlier—audience attitudes and opinions can and do change after watching a movie. While it varies by a specific question, we observed as many as half of our audience members change their response to the same question posed before and after a movie. We also found that in some instances, responses changed very little. There is evidence that questions that were more narrowly focused and did not endeavor to capture general attitudes about the direction of the nation or government saw more respondents change their answers. For example, questions about trust in government (see Table 1) only saw a small percentage of viewers change their opinions. This makes some sense as these are deeply held beliefs about the nation, and we should not expect fundamental shifts in these opinions after a brief movie. When the questions were far more specific about the future for the individual respondent, we did see larger shifts in responses pre-/post-viewing. This comports with our expectations as well as other research that demonstrates movies on particular topics may very well affect opinions on those topics. These findings add to the growing literature about the ability of film to influence audiences and the need for additional research in this area.

Second, our research focuses on this particular group of movie viewers' attitudes about the American Dream and whether or not it is attainable for people like them. Generally, viewers here felt that while income disparity in America has made upward economic mobility impossible for some people, achieving the American Dream is still possible for most people. These viewers were optimistic about the future generation's quality of life and displayed even more confidence in that viewpoint after watching *Forrest Gump*. Interestingly, while there was a strong consensus among our viewers that their standard of living is better than that of their parents, our viewers were somewhat less optimistic about their opportunities to succeed when compared with previous generations. In addition to personal traits such as work ethic, our viewers recognize opportunity as a key component to attaining the American Dream (see Figures 1-5). As even a perceived lack of opportunity could affect the pursuit of success, cognizance of the influential nature of film is vital in understanding perceptions of the American Dream. These insights make sense given the demographics of our respondents and the optimism for the future often seen with young people during their college years.

Third, the film with a positive tone appears to positively influence the audience while movies with a negative tone appear to do the opposite. More specifically, *Forrest Gump* is an uplifting story that demonstrates that obstacles can be overcome, both on an individual level and on a broader, societal level. This sense of optimism appeared to leave viewers in this study more optimistic about the future and their ability to succeed. By contrast, *Idiocracy* presents a grim look at the future where the future United States consists of a large pile of garbage and incompetence running the government. Viewers of this movie were more pessimistic about the future. These findings align with our initial expectations in this research and they bring us back to the underlying premise of this research that movies may affect audiences.

Finally, an important component of this study was a modification to existing research protocols: the addition of a control film. It was thought that a control film might help demonstrate that some films can affect audience attitudes about a particular topic whereas other films do not. Here, viewers of *The Italian Job* were not expected to change their opinions much, but that is not what we found. At this juncture, we do not have a ready explanation for the apparent effects of the control film on viewers as we did not expect to find one. It is possible that the changes in opinions were a function of other factors besides the film, but it is difficult to know (and of course, the same could be said for changes in opinions in the two films of particular interest in this study). It could be that *The Italian Job*'s depiction of individuals living affluent lifestyles may have influence audiences more than we initially expected in designing this research. More work is undoubtedly needed.

Future Research

This area of research offers many paths in future studies. As we previously noted, the introduction of a control film in the research design was an advance in this area of investigation and our expectations of this design were not met. Accordingly, this highlights a need to continue to explore this methodological approach. Second, this methodology focuses on the attitudes of viewers immediately after viewing a film. There is reason to wonder whether those effects are lasting and whether or not they dampen over time. Future efforts should pay attention to this dimension. It may also be worth investigating how film treats particular historical events in the nation's political history may also prove beneficial. Third, this study utilizes a particular research population that does not permit broad generalizability to the entire nation, so different means should be used in gathering a more representative population to ascertain opinions pre-/post-viewing. And, of course, a larger population would be useful, particularly in conducting more rigorous statistical analysis of changes in responses. Fourth, it might be instructive to follow a particular group of viewers over time and see if watching a movie months prior may still result in altered attitudes and opinions. Put differently, after collecting post-viewing data right after the movie, it would be worthwhile to ask the same individuals a few months later to see how they respond to the same questions. Finally, as the times and environment in which films are watched may influence viewers, it is important to note that additional research should be conducted as these data were collected during the 2017-2018 academic year and much about the mood of the nation has changed, from deepening partisan divides to the realities of living with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusions

This research offers some additional support for the existing literature positing that film may affect audience attitudes about various topics. Here the focus was on the American Dream in a positive, utopian depiction in the film *Forrest Gump,* in a pessimistic, dystopian depiction in the movie *Idiocracy,* and in a third film, *The Italian Job,* which was meant to serve as a control. While some prior research focuses explicitly on policy topics or a particular kind of civil servant, the use of the American Dream sought to gauge whether just a few hours in front of a movie might alter the opinion of viewers. Our work demonstrates that film can be a vehicle for influencing attitudes about the American Dream, at least with the viewers in this study, and that an optimist portrayal can have positive effects while a pessimistic one the opposite. The mood of citizens and the possibility that they may be swayed in their attitudes and opinions by entertainment media is instructive for observers of government and individuals who work in the public sector as they strive to be responsive and serve the citizenry. Film continues to be a narrative vehicle that merits research given its ability to affect attitudes and contribute to political socialization, as these factors influence the citizens and their views on the public sector.

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Endnotes

[1] The MPAA compiles data for US and Canadian audiences combined.

[2] The Motion Picture Association of America does not disaggregate American and Canadian box office data for whatever reason, so it is impossible to pull just U.S. data in this instance.

[3] Based on the book of the same name by Winston Groom, *Forrest Gump* was a critical success. Of its many accolades, the film won six Academy Awards including Best Picture. The computer-generated imagery (CGI) achieved by Industrial Light & Magic earned the Academy Award for Best Visual Effects and delighted audiences by depicting the main character interacting with historical figures such as John F. Kennedy and John Lennon in archival footage. *Forrest Gump* was also a commercial success, earning nearly $25 million in its opening weekend and surpassing $677 million with its cumulative worldwide gross (Internet Movie Database 2018).

[4] *Idiocracy* earned just over $177,000 during its limited release opening weekend and less than $500,000 with its gross domestic box office. These paltry sums are attributed to a lack of marketing on the part of its production company, Twentieth Century Fox, which critics suspect feared offending the big-name companies, such as Costco and Starbucks, that are poked fun at throughout the film. Reviews of *Idiocracy* were split. While some praised the bleak satire for its

performances and shrewd pop-culture prophecies, others lampooned the film for its subpar visual effects and suggestion of support for eugenics.

[5] Screenings were held during the winter of the 2017-2018 academic year.

[6] Copies of the questionnaire are available from the authors via email.

[7] Some attended because pizza was provided, some attended because extra credit was offered by a faculty member, and some attended because they wanted to watch the film.

[8] Acquiring information about our participants' movie-viewing habits was also important to our understanding of the opportunity film has to affect audiences. Viewers were asked how often they typically watch movies, and the majority (82 percent) responded that they watch movies once a month or more. This is consistent with national numbers on the viewership for adults aged 18 to 29 (Morning Consult. 2018a. Frequency of going to movie theaters to see a movie among adults in the United States as of October 2018, by age group. In *Statista - The Statistics Portal*. https://www-statista-com.libproxy.udayton.edu/statistics/538259/frequency-going-to-the-movies-age-usa/ [accessed November 23, 2018]; Morning Consult. 2018b. Average number of movies watched through streaming services on a monthly basis among adults in the United States as of February 2018, by age group. In Statista - The Statistics Portal. https://www-statista-com.libproxy.udayton.edu/statistics/815519/movie-watching-streaming-service-us-by-age/ [accessed November 23, 2018]). It is worth noting that this age group views more movies, both through internet streaming services and in theaters, than any other age group.

[9] When prompted to select the ways in which they generally watch movies, a majority of participants, 87 percent, indicated that they use an internet streaming service. About half of our participants stated that they view films in theaters and/or on television. Personal film collections were the least common means by which our participants generally watch movies. These figures mirror the national averages for U.S. movie viewers stated in the Motion Picture Association of America's 2017 Theatrical and Home Entertainment Market Environment (THEME) report. The report shows an upward trend in money spent on digital home entertainment and a decrease in demand for physical formats, such as DVDs. The report also indicates that both theatrical consumer spending and home entertainment spending have increased since 2013 (*THEME Report* (Rep.). 2017). Motion Picture Association of America. https://www.mpaa.org/research-docs/2017-theatrical-home-entertainment-market-environment-theme-report/ [accessed November 23, 2018]).

[10] Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of viewers.

[11] Numbers in parentheses indicate number of viewers.

[12] The number in parentheses refers to the number of viewers.

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Teaching Research Ethics through the Use of Film

Richard W. Schwester

Research methods and statistical training in public administration and public policy curricula are devout in their efforts to impart theoretical knowledge and practical social science research skills. Often glossed over, perhaps due to time constraints given the breadth and difficulty of research methods, is a discussion of research ethics. Even if ample time is devoted to such discussions, the nature of this material can be somewhat mundane even though critical to the research process. The purpose of this article is to show how specific film excerpts can be used to underscore some of the most important ethical foundations of social research.

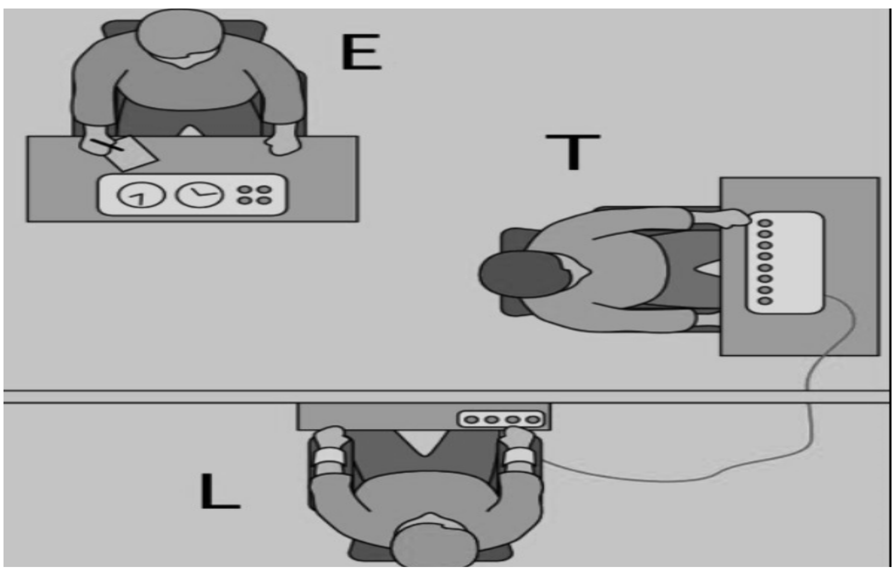
Harm Principle

The protection of human subjects is central to research ethics. Simply, you cannot harm your research subjects. The general rule is as follows: the burden of participating in a research study cannot outweigh the potential benefits. All steps must be taken to minimize harm. In medical research, for example, chronically or terminally ill patients are sometimes exposed to treatments that can be painful or have adverse side effects. However, the potential benefits of these treatments (e.g., increasing one's life expectancy or curing them) outweigh the burden of the treatments themselves. The notion of the harm principle was first articulated by utilitarian philosopher John Stuart Mill. In his book *On Liberty*, he stresses the importance of those with power exercising that power responsibly by simply preventing harm whenever possible. This holds especially true for non-consensual harm.

The film *Ghostbusters* (1984) can be instrumental in teaching the harm principle. This film chronicles three parapsychologists who are fired from academia and harness their entrepreneurial spirit to develop a business to catch ghosts. A very small portion of this film, however, reaffirms some of the most fundamental tenets of research ethics. This film humorously underscores the fundamental importance of doing no harm to your research subject. The opening scene of this movie features Dr. Peter Venkman (portrayed by veteran actor Bill Murray) conducting research with two of his subjects. His project examines the relationship between negative reinforcement and its impact on extrasensory perception (ESP) ability. Dr. Venkman is holding up what are referred to as Zener cards, which is a deck of cards that have one of five different symbols on them (circle, plus sign, three vertical wavy lines, square, and star). These cards were developed in the 1930s to test ESP ability by psychologist Karl Zener.

Here is how Dr. Venkman (Bill Murray) proceeds to collect his data: He holds up a card so that the symbol is facing him. The research subject cannot see the symbol on the Zener card. He then asks the subject to think about, visualize, and ultimately name the symbol on the back of the Zener card. If the subject is correct, nothing happens. Another card is raised, and the research subject tries to name the next symbol. If the subject answers incorrectly, the subject is given a short electric shock. The male research subject in the scene gives Dr. Venkmen an incorrect answer, and Dr. Venkmen in turn shocks him for roughly one to two seconds. The male subject twitches, grunts, and spits a piece of chewing gum on to the table before him. While comical in the moment, this scene excerpt underscores Dr. Venkmen's failure to minimize harm.

Figure 1: Milgram Experiments Research Design



Arguably the most infamous research study that brought research ethics to the forefront, was conducted by Stanley Milgram (1963)—a Yale University social-psychologist who wanted to study obedience to authority. The experiments began in 1961 and they entailed the following. There were three individuals – the experimenter, the teacher, and the learner (see Figure 1 above). The experimenter served as the chief authority figure. The teacher was the one that followed the orders of the experimenter. The learner received the "stimulus" administered by the teacher per the orders of the experimenter. The participants drew slips of paper to determine if they were going to fill the teacher or learner role. Unbeknownst to some of the participants, everyone was given a slip that read "teacher." Hired actors filled the role of the learners regardless of the fact that their slip of paper read "teacher." Thus, what you have are experimenters, who are the authority figures, and hired actors who were planted to fill the learner role. The rest of the participants thought that they had randomly been selected for the teacher role.

The experiment involved having the teacher teach the learner word pairs. The teacher would then quiz the learner on these word pairs. The learner could select one of four answers by pressing a corresponding button. For every wrong answer, the teacher – by orders of the experimenter – would electrically shock the learner. For the first wrong answer, the shock administered to the learner would be 15 volts. For every wrong answer thereafter, the voltage would be increased by 15 volts. The fact of the matter is no electric shocks were being administered. The teachers, however, thought they were shocking the learners because the learners were acting as though they were being shocked (e.g., screaming, banging on the partition that separated the teacher from the learner).

If at any point the teacher wanted to stop the experiment, the experimenter would say: "Please continue." If the teacher indicated for a second time a desire to stop, the experimenter would say: "The experiment requires that you continue." If the teacher indicated for a third time his or her desire to stop, the experimenter would say: "It is absolutely essential that you continue. If the teacher indicated for a fourth time a desire to stop, the experimenter would say: "You have no other choice, you must go on." If the teacher indicated for a fifth time a desire to stop, the experimenter would stop the experiment. The experiment would also be stopped if the hypothetical electric shock voltage reached 450 volts (Milgram 1963). Ultimately, what did Milgram find? The vast majority of "teachers" (65 percent) administered the final 450-volt shock, despite the fact that many of those expressed their displeasure and uneasiness of participating. Some even offered to return the money paid to them for participating in the study in exchange for stopping the experiment. The ethical implications of Milgram's work are profound. Many of the "teachers" were emotionally distressed, which would clearly violate the harm principle.

The film *Experimenter* (2015) reenacts the research conducted by Milgram. The entire first half of the film is dedicated to this, while the second half chronicles the challenges Milgram endured from the ensuing societal outcry stemming from his research. One poignant exchange between Milgram and a character named Curtis shows how Milgram sidesteps the many ethical issues embedded in the very design of his research experiments.

CURTIS: "You forced people to torture other people."

MILGRAM: "No."

CURTIS: "To see if they..."

MILGRAM: "No, no, no. That is alien to my view. No one was forced. The experimenter told the subject to perform an action. What happened between the command and the outcome is the individual, with conscience and a will, who can either obey or disobey."

The fact of the matter is from a research ethics perspective, Milgram chose to place the blame on each individual for expressing what he interpreted as free will, even though the nature of his experiment coerced through repeated and forceful commands that the research subjects continue administering electric shocks despite an expressed a desire to quit the experiment. The scenes depicting Milgram's experiments in *Experimenter* are powerful and underscore the necessary protocols and protections of human subjects.

Informed Consent

Informed consent is arguably the foundation of research ethics. It is the process of getting permission from each and every research subject that participates in any study. In addition to getting permission from the subject, the researcher should inform each research subject of the following:

- The nature of the research.
- All known risks of participating.
- The potential benefits of participating.
- That participation is completely voluntary.
- That the research subject may quit at any point.
- All information obtained that can be linked to a specific research subject will remain confidential (anonymity is preferred). You should also disclose the limits of confidentiality – i.e., data coding, disposal, sharing, and archiving of data.
- Participants should be given a contact person in case they have questions or concerns about the research (Smith 2003).

Usually, research subjects are made to sign a document outlining these stipulations. Informed consent is verbal if one is conducting a telephone interview.

Voluntary participation is arguably the most important tenet of research ethics. Social scientists are ultimately dependent upon people. People are the primary source of information needed to conduct research. There is a natural reluctance to have a research participant leave a study. However, regardless of how important the study might be, or how important any given individual may be to that study, if any person chooses to leave the study then that decision must be respected. Some research ethicists might find it to be ethically questionable if you even attempt to persuade a person that wants to drop out of a study to stay – even if this is done in a non-coercive way.

Ghostbusters comedically shows a clear violation of informed consent. During the ESP exercise, the following exchange takes place:

DR. VENKMAN: “Nervous?”

MALE SUBJECT: “Yes. I don't like this.”

DR. VENKMAN: “You only have 75 more to go. Ok? What's this one?”

The scene depicts a research subject that is clearly under duress. He simply does not like the exercise. He has voiced his displeasure, yet the researcher casually dismisses these feelings and moves on with the experiment. Without exception, all research subjects participate voluntarily. If there is any doubt whatsoever regarding the comfort level, or a research subject’s willingness to continue, the researcher has an ethical obligation to remind the subject that their participation is voluntary (the subject must be told this upfront before the start of the study as well). A research subject can drop out whenever he or she wishes. Following another electric shock, this exchange between Dr. Venkman and the male research subject ensues:

MALE SUBJECT: "Hey! I'm getting a little tired of this."

DR. VENKMAN: "You volunteered, didn't you? We're paying you, aren't we?"

MALE SUBJECT: "Yeah, but I didn't know you were going to be giving me electric shocks. What are you trying to prove?"

All research protocols – i.e., what is expected of human subjects, everything they have to do (or are not allowed to do) – must be conveyed beforehand. This is part of a process called informed consent.

The importance of informed consent was brought to the forefront following the Tuskegee syphilis experiments conducted by the U.S. government in the early 1930s. The experiment wanted to test the impacts of untreated syphilis. There was a treatment group – which consisted of 399 African-American males from Tuskegee, Alabama. These males had advanced syphilis. The control group consisted of 201 uninfected males. Even though the infected males were told they would be treated, they were not. The purpose of the study, unbeknownst to the infected treatment group participants, was to observe the effects of the disease pre and postmortem. In the early 1930s when the study began, there were no antibiotics. By the 1940s, antibiotics became available, and it had become apparent that antibiotics could effectively treat those with syphilis. Still, antibiotics were not administered to those in the treatment group. This study lasted for four decades, and many of the treatment group participants had died from advanced syphilis.

From an informed consent standpoint, those recruited for the treatment group were not made aware of what the study entailed, nor did the government ask for their permission to participate. In fact, they were recruited with the understanding that the federal government would be providing treatment for a life-threatening disease. The treatment group participants were never told they had syphilis. The Tuskegee experiments shed light on the need for rigid informed consent procedures so as to protect human subjects from the risks of research by allowing them to (1) fully understand the ramifications of participation and (2) by allowing them to freely choose to participate.

The film *Miss Evers' Boys* (1997) chronicles the events of the Tuskegee experiments from the point of view a nurse, Eunice Evers, who was instrumental in deceiving the participants of the study. Nurse Evers influenced the men to keep participating in the study even though they were forced to undergo painful spinal tap procedures and were withheld real treatment for their affliction. She was instrumental in deceiving the research subjects, which is captured in the following exchange:

EVERS: "You don't intend on telling them they have syphilis, do you?"

DR. DOUGLAS: "Well, if they have it, we'll have to tell them something, won't we?"

EVERS: "Well, maybe we'd better not use a word that they have never heard before, scare them off."

DR. DOUGLAS: "So, what are we supposed to tell them?"

EVERS: "Well, just tell them there's something wrong with their blood. They all know bad blood." The film powerfully captures the unconscionable nature of these experiments, and it shows the worst consequences of unethical behavior in the so-called pursuit of knowledge.

Bias and Data Manipulation

Humans by nature have innate and learned biases that permeate every aspect of their lives both consciously and subconsciously. This holds true for the social scientist as well. This is why the "laws" of how to conduct social science research need to be followed precisely. And while it is virtually impossible to eliminate all bias in research, the goal is to minimize bias in one's research design, data collection, and analysis. Unfortunately, there is evidence that a small but significant minority of researchers have allowed their preconceived notions and biases to negatively impact their research with respect to manipulating data or falsifying results (Fanelli, 2009). The reasons why some researchers may engage in this type of unethical conduct may be to support a hypothesis, create groundbreaking or influential results, support one's political or social points of view, or satisfy the tacit wishes of whoever funded the research. Revisiting the movie *Ghostbusters*, in addition to harming his research subject, Dr. Venkman undermines the integrity of the research project by (a) knowingly introducing bias and (b) falsifying results. He knowingly introduces bias by treating the two research subjects very differently. The male research subject is treated with sarcasm and disdain. Dr. Venkman gives you the impression that shocking him is comical.

Dr. VENKMAN: "Think hard. What is it?"

MALE SUBJECT: "Circle!"

DR. VENKMAN: "Close (sarcasm emphasized), but definitively wrong" (as he proceeds to administer a short but painful electric shock).

The female research subject, on the other hand, is treated warmly. Moreover, she is not shocked at all – not because she has correctly identified all of the symbols, but because she is someone whom Dr. Venkman has taken a liking.

DR. VENKMAN: "Ready? What is it?"

FEMALE SUBJECT: "Figure eight."

DR. VENKMAN: (As he holds up a card with a plus sign symbol on it) "Incredible! That's five for five. You can't see these, can you. You're not cheating me are you?" (This is said in a playful and friendly manner).

FEMALE SUBJECT: "No, no… I swear they are just coming to me.

Dr. Venkman clearly biases his research by treating the two subjects very differently and then falsifies his results by telling the female subject that she correctly identified all of the symbols when she did not. Ironically, the male subject did correctly identify one of the symbols, yet Dr. Venkman still shocked him.

Deception in Research and "Covert" Research

Deception is by definition unethical. Is this a correct assumption? With regard to research, it depends on the nature of the research. Many researchers will argue that deception is necessary to conduct certain research. For example, a sociologist interested in drug dealing would likely have to misrepresent him or herself to gain access and trust initially. Researchers dealing with deviant behavior or criminal behavior are going to have a difficult time asking for informed consent in a traditional sense. Asking for informed consent in these circumstances would, at a minimum, compromise the integrity of the research, and may even lead to the researcher being harmed. Researchers sometimes need to conceal their identity and their overarching purpose – similar to law enforcement agents trying to infiltrate criminal networks go undercover. Is this deceptive? Absolutely it is. Is it unethical from a research standpoint? It probably is not. *Experimenter* touches on the aspect of necessary deception as part of the research process in the following exchange:

DONNA ABBOTT: "How do you justify the deception?"

MILGRAM: "I like to think of it as illusion, not deception. Semantics, you may say, but illusion, you know, has a revelatory function, as in a play. Illusion can set the stage for revelation, to reveal certain difficult-to-get-at truths."

DONNA ABBOTT: "But still, when you go to see a play, you pay for a ticket. You know you're seeing a play. These people didn't know it wasn't real. You tricked them."

MILGRAM: "'Hello, today we'll be doing an experiment about blind obedience to malevolent authority. I'd like for you to pretend that this machine is delivering painful shocks to a person in the other room.' How truthful do you think that would be?"

DONNA ABBOTT: "But if you think of it, really, 'you' were delivering shocks to your subjects. Psychological shocks."

While deception is sometimes necessary, if the burdens of deceiving your research subjects outweigh the benefits, then the project should not proceed.

In certain experimental research you have a treatment group and a control group where a placebo will be administered to the control group, and all of the participants, regardless of their group, do not know if they are administered a real or phony treatment. This is technically deception. However, if the participants are informed about this possibility prior to the research study, then this type of deception is ethical. Deception does place participants at risk to some degree. And if deception is deemed necessary for the research, then it is incumbent upon the researcher to make sure that this deception has no long-term consequences for the participants. When there is deception in research, "debriefing sessions" are typically held with all of the research participants. The purpose of these debriefing sessions is to explain that deception was used and why it was used.

This provides participants with an opportunity to discuss and hopefully reconcile any possible ramifications or issues that may stem from the deception used within the research.

Stopping the Dr. Venkmens: How IRBs Promote Ethical Research

IRBs – or institutional review boards – are chiefly responsible within U.S. colleges and universities for ensuring that research protocols are in place to protect human subjects. Any individual affiliated with a college or university that is conducting research using human subjects must have their research protocol reviewed by the IRB. The IRB process, rules, and regulations that apply to human subjects researchers are derived from the Protection of Human Subjects provision in the Code of Federal Regulations.

Again, **all** research involving the use of human subjects must go through the IRB process. Research based on existing data, archival documents, or official statistics is generally exempt. IRB approval is generally necessary if your research requires the use of any of the original data collection methods – i.e., survey, interview, focus group, observation, or experimentation. What constitutes a human subject may be a matter of interpretation to some, but according to the IRB, it is a living person where a researcher collects information (private and/or non-private) through "intervention" or "interaction." Intervention could represent some kind of experimental research design, while interaction could include surveys, in-depth interviews, focus groups, and observation. American University provides a flow chart style online survey that assesses whether your research will need IRB approval (see http://www.american.edu/irb/IRB-Forms.cfm). Tools like this are very good resources for fledgling researchers and students that may be unsure as to whether their research requires IRB approval.

As part of the IRB process, an individual's research protocol will be scrutinized to ensure that human subjects are protected. Special emphasis is placed on the protection of so-called vulnerable populations or special classes of populations. This may include, but is not limited to, children, inmates, the elderly, the mentally impaired, and those that might be terminally ill. The rationale is that additional protocols need to be in place to ensure that these special classes are protected against any potential harm that might result from being part of a research study. The IRB also requires that researchers complete a human subjects training program. The Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative – also known as CITI – is a common method by which researchers fulfill their need to complete human subjects training (see https://www.citiprogram.org/).

If you are going to conduct research using human subjects, you need to submit your research protocol to the IRB. This research protocol is essentially your proposed methodology. Your data collection instruments will be heavily scrutinized by the board. For example, if you plan to use a survey, then the precise wording and structure of the survey instrument must be presented to the IRB for review. Informed consent forms need to be submitted as well. My institution, John Jay College of the City University of New York (CUNY), provides an informed consent template that can be molded to fit most studies (see Box 1 below). As you can see, the template includes provisions that convey the purpose of the study, its duration, and the approximate number of participants. The potential risks of participating and ways of mitigating such risks, as well as the benefits of participation, are discussed. Finally, the fact that participation is voluntary is heavily underscored, as is how the information gathered will be protected.

Box 1

Informed Consent Template – John Jay College of Criminal Justice (CUNY)

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled "_________________."
The purpose of this research is to ____.
We plan to enroll approximately __________ participants into this study. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to____. Participation should take about_______________ (minutes/hours/minutes/hours per week) for a duration of _______(days/weeks).

The foreseeable risks of participation in this study are____________________ (minimal/more than minimal/significant). In order to minimize these risks, we will _________________. The possible benefits to you are ___________________________. The potential benefits to society are_____________________________________.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have a right to refuse to participate without consequences. If you decide not to participate your decision will not affect your relationship with John Jay College or_________________________. If you decide to participate, you may discontinue participation at any time. You may refuse to answer any specific questions or refuse to engage in any task at any time during the study. Withdrawal or refusing to answer specific questions or engage in specific tasks will not result in any consequences to you and will not affect your relationship with John Jay College or _________________________________.

Information gathered from you will _____________________________ (describe how data is coded, stored/how confidentiality/anonymity will be assured/whether or not data will be destroyed, etc.).
[FOR TREATMENT STUDIES] The treatment provided to you during this study is/is not experimental, meaning that (it has/has not been studied in people such as you). You should be aware that there are/are not alternative treatments that may benefit you. These include ___________________________. If, during the course of the study, you experience ______________________ (specific serious known side effects) or any other serious side effects, your participation in the study will be discontinued and you will be provided with _________________ (alternative treatment/referral). ____________ will be done to assess for any side effects or adverse reactions.

Your signature below means that you have read this consent form, that you fully understand the nature and consequences of participation and that you have had all questions regarding participation in this study answered satisfactorily. If you have further questions about this research please feel free to contact the Principal Investigator, _____________________ at _________________.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant please feel free to contact the John Jay Institutional Review Board Office at jj-irb@jjay.cuny.edu, or (212) 237-8961.

Article Recap

This article focuses principally on the ethical dilemmas that researchers face, and it does so while referencing films that touch on these ethical issues both comedically and dramatically. All social science research needs to be conducted with the highest ethical standards, especially as it relates to the treatment and protection of human subjects. Central to this is providing students with tangible conceptions of what human subjects protections entail. *Ghostbusters*, *Miss Evers' Boys*, and *Experimenter* demonstrate instances where research ethics principles are violated, especially as it relates to informed consent. Informed consent is the process of getting permission from each and every research subject that participates in any study. In addition to getting permission from the subject, the researcher should inform each research subject about the nature of the research, all known risks of participating, the potential benefits of participating, that participation is completely voluntary, and that the research subject may quit at any point. The importance of informed consent is discussed in the context of a hypothetical research scenario depicted in the film *Ghostbusters* and the Tuskegee syphilis experiments conducted by the U.S. government in the early 1930s. Following this, ethical issues stemming from the Milgram experiments are touched upon. Such issues include emotional distress inflicted upon the research subjects, the notion of voluntary participation, and the use of deception in research.

Codes of ethics are instrumental in setting behavioral standards throughout many professions. A code of ethics needs to be followed precisely whenever conducting research as well. This article provides a foundational yet important understanding of what researchers must do to protect their human subjects, but also the integrity of the research process. Moreover, without adherence to strict ethical standards, we cannot be certain that the research conducted is both valid and reliable. This article also stresses the importance of educating students, some of whom will preside over research projects and have the responsibility of protecting human subjects. Lessons learned vicariously through film, one comedic and two dramatic, can articulate the principles of research ethics in a way that is hopefully lasting.

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Appendix

Research Ethics Timeline (1932-Present)

1932-1972: The Tuskegee Syphilis Study, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health, studied the effects of untreated syphilis in 400 African American men. Researchers withheld treatment even when penicillin became widely available. Researchers did not tell the subjects that they were in an experiment.

1939-45: German scientists conduct research on concentration camp prisoners.

1944-1980s: The U.S. government sponsors secret research on the effects of radiation on human beings. Subjects were not told that they participated in the experiments. Experiments were conducted on cancer patients, pregnant women, and military personnel.

1947: The Nuremberg Code for research on human subjects is adopted. The Allies use the document in the Nuremberg Trials to convict Nazi scientists of war crimes.

1953: James Watson and Francis Crick discover the structure of DNA, for which they eventually would share the Nobel Prize in 1962. They secretly obtained key x-ray diffraction data from Rosalind Franklin without her permission. She was not awarded a Nobel Prize because she died in 1953 from ovarian cancer (at age 37), and the prize is not awarded posthumously.

1956-1980: Saul Krugman, Joan Giles, and other researchers conduct hepatitis experiments on mentally disabled children at The Willowbrook State School. They intentionally infected subjects with the disease and observed its natural progression. The experiments were approved by the New York Department of Health.

1950s-1963: The CIA begins a mind-control research program, which includes administering LSD to unwitting subjects.

1961-1962: Stanley Milgram conducts his "electric shock" experiments, which proved that many people are willing to do things that they consider to be morally wrong when following the orders of an authority. He publishes Obedience to Authority in 1974.

1964: World Medical Association, Helsinki Declaration. Ethical principles for research on human subjects. Revised several times, most recently in 2001.

1974: Congress passes the National Research Act, which authorizes federal agencies to develop human research regulations.

1974: William Summerlin admits to fabricating data by using a marker to make black spots on white mice at Sloan Kettering Cancer Institute. He was developing a technique for transplanting skin grafts.

1979: The National Commission releases The Belmont Report, principles of ethical research on human subjects. The Report becomes a key document in human research ethics regulations in the U.S.

1982: William Broad and Nicholas Wade publish Betrayers of Truth, claiming that there is more misconduct in science than researchers want to admit. Their book helps to launch an era of "fraud busting" in science.

1989: The NIH requires that all graduate students on training grants receive education in responsible conduct of research.

1989: The National Academy of Science publishes *On Being A Scientist* (revised in 1994), which is a free, short book on research ethics for scientists in training.

1992: The National Academy of Science publishes *Responsible Science: Ensuring the Integrity of the Research Process*. The book estimates the incidence of misconduct, discusses some of the causes of misconduct, proposes a definition of misconduct, and recommends some strategies for preventing misconduct.

1994: The Clinton Administration declassifies information about secret human radiation experiments conducted from the 1940s-1980s and issues an apology.

1994: Two scientists, who worked at Philip Morris, Victor DeNobel and Paul Mele, testify before Congress about secret research on the addictive properties of nicotine. If the research had been made public, the FDA or Congress might have taken additional steps to regulate tobacco as a drug. Many states and individuals brought litigation against tobacco companies, which led to a $206 billion settlement between tobacco companies and 46 states. The scientific community also publishes more data on the dangers of second-hand smoke.

1995-2003: Dozens of studies are published in biomedical journals that provide data on the relationship between the source of research funding and the outcomes of research studies, the financial interests of researchers in the biomedical sciences, and the close relationship between academic researchers and the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries.

2002: The NAS publishes Integrity in Scientific Research, which recommends that universities develop programs for education in responsible conduct of research (RCR) as well as policies and procedures to deal with research ethics.

2002: Scientists publish several papers in prominent journals with direct implications for bioterrorism. A paper published in the Journal of Virology described a method for genetically engineering a form of mousepox virus that is much deadlier than the naturally occurring strain. A paper published in *Science* shows how to make poliovirus by obtaining supplies from a mail-order company. In 2003, the American Society for Microbiology (ASM), the National Academy of Sciences, and the Center for Strategic and International Studies held a meeting to discuss the censorship of biological research that poses security risks. Journals agree to self-censor some research.

2004: The EPA suspends the CHEERS study due to criticism from advocacy groups and members of Congress, who claimed that the study was intentionally exposing children to pesticides. The EPA revised its human subjects rules in response to a Congressional mandate to strengthen protections for children and pregnant or nursing women.

2009: Someone hacked into the email server at the University of East Anglias Climatic Research Unit (CRU) and posted on the internet thousands of emails exchanged between climate change researchers at the CRU and researchers around the world. The emails showed that the researchers refused to share data and computer codes with climate change skeptics, who called the incident "climategate."

2010: Susan Reverby, Professor of Women's Studies at Wellesley College, uncovered documents concerning unethical research experiments on human subjects conducted by the U.S. government in Guatemala from 1946 to 1948. The research involved intentionally infecting over 1,300 subjects with venereal diseases to test the effectiveness of penicillin. Only 700 subjects were given penicillin and 83 died as a result of the study. The subjects were not informed that they were participating in an experiment.

SOURCE: Reprinted and adapted from: David B. Resnik, National Institutes of Health
http://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/resources/bioethics/timeline/ (accessed September 16, 2014).

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Voicing the Problem of Administrative Burnout and the Solution of Caring Organizations

William Hatcher

In Fall 2017, I started feeling tired, not just at night and in the morning, but throughout most of each day. To wake up in the morning, I had to set multiple alarms. My immune system was weak. I was constantly catching colds. At home, I was moody and grumpy with my family. At work, I found it difficult to concentrate. I was overly stressed. I struggled to complete normal tasks related to my job. Even though I love teaching, researching, and the overall job of being a university professor, I was not as happy at work as I had been in the past. I was exhausted. I was burned out. To address the issue, I dug into the literature on burnout. I read the research, but I also read news reports and essays on how others have addressed issues of burnout. I looked for "how-to" guides to deal with burnout. When watching movies and reading books, I started thinking about burnout. Honestly, I became a little obsessed about burnout.

Due to stress-reduction techniques, behavioral changes, and an improved environment at work, I no longer, thankfully, feel exhausted and burned out. Going through this process, I realize that public administration has done little to address the problem of burnout, though scholars and practitioners in the field have faced decades of anti-bureaucracy sentiments from politicians, the public, media, and also from other scholars. Burnout harms the professional and personal lives of public employees, which decreases the effectiveness of public institutions and in doing so limiting the ability of government to help communities. By limiting our public institutions, burnout, therefore, hurts democratic governance.

The origin for this paper is my experience with burnout. The paper is informed by my search to address the problem. This search drove me to write about the problem and hopefully start a discussion in our field about how we can study burnout, not letting other fields do all of the research, and develop strategies for practitioners to abate burnout. I found that being kind to oneself and having managers and colleagues that are caring is one of the main solutions to burnout. Thus, I argue that the field's first steps are to voice the problem and argue for the importance of caring organizations.

Voicing the Problem of Burnout

Employee burnout is a serious problem for both public and private organizations (Hang et al. 2003; Golembiewski et al. 1998). Burnout negatively affects organizational performance (Cropanzano et al. 2003; Halbesleben & Buckley 2004), workplace happiness (Bakker & Oerlemans 2016), and the health of employees (Schaufeli & Greenglass 2001). The World Health Organization (WHO) recently recognized that

> Burn-out is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterized by three dimensions: 1) feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; 2) increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; and 3) reduced professional efficacy. Burn-out refers specifically to phenomena in the occupational context and should not be applied to describe experiences in other areas of life (WHO 2019).

What causes burnout syndrome? The Mayo Clinic's (n.d.) definition of job burnout provides a useful list of causes, supported by research. According to the Mayo Clinic (n.d.), burnout is largely caused by unhealthy workplaces where workers have unrealistic and unclear job demands, little support, and no clear barrier between work and other parts of their lives.

The negative effects of burnout can be costly for organizations, in particular in such serving professions such as teaching, medicine, and social work, and for society in general. For example, the cost of burnout among doctors in the U.S. health care system has been estimated at $7,600 per physician (Huang 2019). Another example is how burnout has been implicated in both diminished organizational performance and workplace depression in the education sector (Diaz 2018).

Employee burnout is, therefore, an important topic for researchers and practitioners looking to improve the health and well-being of workers and the performance of organizations. Workplace stress and burnout not only have societal and economic costs but can even endanger democratic governance—or at least that is one interpretation of the nation's current governance crisis, as a lack of trust in government and the presidency of Donald Trump have left public administrators tired, overworked, and less able to respond to the public's needs. I argue here that positivity in the workplace of public agencies is a key feature of democratic governance, one that is threatened by bullying, stress, lack of curiosity, and creativity, anger, and generally undemocratic behavior. I discuss burnout by considering how the fatigue felt by public administrators is harming the work of government, society, and democracy in general. I begin by reviewing the literature on administrative burnout, discuss its negative effects on democratic governance, and conclude by suggesting philosophical—rather than managerial—tools for combatting burnout in public agencies. Theodore Roosevelt perceptively said that "we are the Government, you and I" (Meyers 1902, 521). It, therefore, stands to reason that, if we in contemporary society are tired, our government will be tired, too.

Despite the seriousness of the problem, though, public administrators have done little to address it. A search of the field's major journals returns few studies examining burnout, and the research in our field focuses on relations between management and employees (Marvel 2017) and employee motivation (Bakker 2015). As a first step, researchers and practitioners in public administration need to listen to the voices of workers in the profession suffering from burnout. Thus, part of my aim here is to prompt professionals to consider the issue, first through the lens of the relevant scholarly literature. I then propose using works of fiction—novels, television, and movies—as a means to convey the significance of burnout to public administration students and professionals. I close by sketching out how burnout can be integrated into public affairs programs and discussing strategies for how the problem can be addressed, in particular calling for public administrators to ensure that they are working to build "caring organizations," that is, public agencies that promote the well-being of both their clients and their employees.

But first, I want to stress that this paper uses the WHO definition of burnout as *a chronic workplace stress that is not addressed and leads to exhaustion* and the Mayo Clinic's description of the causes of burnout. Additionally, I want to identify the theoretical framework that I plan to use throughout this paper and especially in the strategies section. With the WHO labeling burnout a syndrome, the problem is being discussed throughout academic and the news media. One example is a recent column in *The New York Times* by the organizational psychologist Adam Grant (2020). The column reviews research by Grant and others demonstrating how burnout is because of one's workplace and social situation and the problem can be treated by adjusting demands on one's time, receiving support, and having more control over one's life. As Grant discusses, this is the demand-control-support model of addressing burnout (Van der Doef & Maes 1999). This paper is guided by the demand-control-support model, which will inform the voicing of the problem and the strategies for promoting caring organizations in public administration.

Administrative Burnout

Professional burnout has been conceptualized in various ways from the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution organization to the present. Being tired at work, historically, has been a recurrent problem for the participants in industrial economies. For proponents of scientific management in the late 1800s, burnout was viewed in terms of employees' inability to perform their duties. However, with Mary Parker Follett's introduction of the humanistic approach to public administration, the well-being of employees began to receive greater attention and to be recognized as crucial for the overall health and performance of organizations.

Definitions of administrative burnout have tended to associate it with stress. In the literature, burnout has been widely discussed in studies of the human service professions, such as nursing, teaching, mental health, and social work (Cartwright & Cooper 2008; Maslach & Leiter 2016; Jackson et al. 1986). Burnout has been shown to have adverse effects on workers' energy levels on the job, engagement with others, attachment to their profession, heart health, and relationships with friends and family and has even been linked in some cases to depression (Grant 2020; Iacovides et al. 2003; Maslach & Leiter 2016). As workplace stress mounts, it can become unmanageable, leading to burnout.

When it comes to identifying burnout in employees, the standard instrument is the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Cartwright & Cooper 2008). This instrument was constructed based largely on research conducted in the human service professions, though burnout of course affects other public and private organizations (Cahoon & Rowney 1989). Thus, research in the public sector has identified nursing, policing, and air traffic control as three "high stress government jobs" (West & West 1989, 43) that are prone to burnout. I contend, moreover, that the decades of anti-bureaucratic rhetoric and policies, along with the drive to do more with less funding, have created an environment in which administrators in most, if not all, public professions experience burnout.

The problem is usually discussed in terms of health issues associated with the challenges that individuals face at work and the resulting impacts on their performance and that of their organizations overall. However, I am convinced by those who argue that the problem needs to be viewed in more of an aggregate manner within public organizations. When public employees are burned out, just as is the case with workers in other fields, their organizations suffer and with them the overall performance of the government.

In U.S. public organizations, administrative burnout is further linked to our political system. Notably, the WHO (2019) definition quoted above speaks of burnout as a problem that has been "unsuccessfully addressed." The overall state of politics in the U.S. fits this definition. I make this assertion because of the following reasons. First, individuals do not trust the government. Second, President Donald Trump is testing the limits of the nation's democratic institutions and disregarding established political norms—and the bureaucracy is one of his main targets. Lastly, for decades, the very notion of bureaucracy has been criticized by politicians, citizens, and even public administrators themselves through such movements as New Public Management. These factors have caused stresses that are not being adequately addressed and may be resulting in burnout.

As noted, burnout causes public servants to be less engaged in their work and some of them to leave their positions (Kim 2015). Burnout has been shown to have adverse results for hospital workers, schools and teachers, firefighters, and janitors (Grant 2020). Public organizations that are populated with administrators who are dealing with burnout may be less effective in implementing needed policies, less creative in their work, and less concerned about the people whom they serve. Likewise, burned-out administrators and the agencies that employ them may be less inclined to treat clients humanely and may result in injustices by the government against its citizens.

The demands of the modern economy and societal pressures raise the question of whether administrative burnout can be managed and, if so, how. It is clear that dealing with the multiple and competing demands of modern life can induce burnout, for which reason there is currently much discussion of work-life balance. Research on organizational performance has demonstrated the importance of fostering and maintaining a managerial culture that respects this balance (Beauregard & Henry 2009), which scholars and armchair psychologists alike have recognized as the preferred solution to workplace stress and burnout. However, it has often been argued that an effective work-life balance is nearly impossible to achieve (Khazan 2019); in fact, attempts to pursue it may likewise produce stress and disengagement from both work and life—in other words, more burnout.

A more comprehensive solution to the problem seems needed. Identifying such a solution requires a broader view of burnout within which a more systematic treatment for the syndrome can be identified. In exploring this notion, I take into account the effect of burnout on public administration, communities, and democracy overall.

Public Administration Theory and Burnout

With a clear overview of what I term *administrative burnout*, we can now explore how burnout relates to public administration theory (Frederickson, et al. 2018). To discuss how burnout affects public administration, it is useful to think about how schools of thought in public administration theory (Frederickson, et al. 2018) would treat burnout. Since public administration theory has not explored burnout in detail, this brief discussion is structured as a hypothetical exercise about how some of the major schools of thought would treat the problem of burnout. As mentioned, public administration under scientific management most likely would, today, view burnout as just one of the normal outcomes of organizations and would call for economic incentives to be used to abate the effect of burnout on efficiency. New Public Management (NPM), emphasizing economics and efficiency, has focused on public choice and the importance of individuals; therefore, the burnout problem by NPM would most likely be treated as an issue that should be solved by individuals and through collective solutions. On the other hand, New Public Administration (NPA) and its focus on fairness and social equity would most likely treat burnout as a community problem that demands collective solutions.

The theoretical concept of emotional labor is useful as a framework for us to explore the relationship between public administration theory and burnout. This link has been noted by a number of studies, such as work by Brotheride and Grandey (2002). In public administration, the work by Mary Guy and her colleagues (2008) has advanced our field's understanding of emotional labor. As noted in the Mayo Clinic's (n.d.) materials on the problem, burnout comes about from feeling a lack of control in a work environment that may be dysfunctional with extreme job demands that interfere with life outside of work. While structural factors, as discussed, definitely produce these causes of burnout, relational factors matter also. How people treat one another in organizations, in particular how managers treat their employees, will most likely influence the magnitude of burnout in an organization. Emotional labor deals with the relational factors among professionals and the individuals that their organizations serve (Guy et al. 2008).

For many types of jobs, "workers suppress their private feelings in order to show 'desirable' work-related motions" (Guy et al. 2008, 6). In an organization that features structural factors likely contributing to burnout, such as unrealistic job demands, and relational factors such as workplace bullying, employees have to exert more energy to conduct emotional labor, which, in turn, makes it more likely that these employees will feel burned out. Accordingly, being aware of the emotional labor as a theoretical concept can help us use it as a lens to understand burnout and also, as discussed later, identify strategies to address burnout in public organizations.

Burnout, Public Workplaces, and Democratic Governance

Burnout in public workplaces multiplies the problems that contribute to the burnout and are also symptoms of it in a kind of a feedback loop. Burnout resulting from workplace bullying may make its victims more likely to bully others, and stress may both cause and be a result of burnout. Once such a vicious cycle takes hold in a workplace, it may prove difficult to disrupt. My argument is that the burnout syndrome extends through many private and public organizations and communities and thus into the fabric of American democracy.

I would like to discuss a few of the issues contributing to this problem. First, bullying in the workplace is a pervasive problem in private and public organizations (Einarsen & Skogstad 1996; Glendinning 2001). Its characteristics—aggression, harassment, and violence—if left unaddressed, drain the productivity and resources of organizations and undermine their moral and legal standing. Aggressive employees impede productivity, and the unfairness of harassment breeds stress (Vartia 2001). Even rudeness, if allowed to become widespread, costs organizations in terms of fueling employee turnover and increasing for employees who endure it the risk of depression (Kivimäki et al. 2003). Most of the research into bullying has been conducted in European countries, in particular Scandinavian ones, and in public rather than private organizations. In one study, Venetoklis and Kettunen (2015) found that around a fifth of surveyed public sector workers in Finland reported being bullied, with women being more likely to experience the problem than men.

In the U.S., extreme incidents of bullying are usually treated as workplace violence, which both the federal (Rubin & Alteri 2017) along with state and local governments (Nigro & Waugh 1998) have addressed through various policies. The effectiveness of these policies, however, is unclear. For example, Rubin and Alteri (2017) found that only 1% of federal employees who felt that they had been the victims of discrimination in the workplace—often involving non-sexual harassment—had filed complaints. A climate of impunity like this is a breeding ground for burnout as the vicious circle of burned-out employees being bullied and then bullying others perpetuates itself.

Public administrators, through their actions or failure to act, can help either to resolve ethical problems or to allow them to spread in their organizations (Godfrey & Zashin 1981). They need to be proactive in terms of enacting policies forbidding bullying behaviors and sanctioning those who violate them (Fredericksen & McCorkle 2013). Administrators in both public and private organizations, but especially the former, also need to work to alleviate the stress caused by heavy workloads and interpersonal conflicts and stop its spread through organizations. By focusing on organizational justice, they can ensure that workplaces become and remain environments in which dignity is promoted, fairness is respected, and discrimination is unacceptable (Greenberg 2004). Administrators also need to work to eliminate burnout because, as discussed above, it causes disengagement from work and may stifle creativity and curiosity (Leiter & Maslach, 2016). Ensuring engagement and creativity in an organization requires extensive resources and active leadership (Hewison & Holden 2016).

Economic and social connections in environments in which burnout and bullying occur are not conducive to democratic behavior because such behavior is built on mutual respect and the expectation that losses in the political arena are rarely permanent and therefore need not be a source of stress or anxiety and because it requires considerable creativity to address the problems that organizations face. For all of these reasons, burnout impedes democratic processes in organizations and communities alike, for its effects are felt on both the individual and the societal levels. One key arena for confronting the problem is public administration education, to which I now turn my attention.

The Use of Fictional Narratives in Education about Burnout

The solution to the problem of administrative burnout is hiring and advancing public administrators who have the skills to promote caring environments within their organizations—bureaucrats, in other words, who understand the causes and effects of burnout and are willing to do the hard work necessary to address them. Caring and curious administrators are, in other words, the treatment for the burnout syndrome in governments. It is accordingly imperative that teachers and scholars promote caring environments in their classrooms. In particular, students need to develop an appreciation of the negative effects of burnout, and for this purpose, I suggest, fiction can be an effective pedagogical tool.

Numerous movies, novels, and other dramatic and literary works have explored the issue of burnout. I focus here on a few that I consider particularly useful for conveying a sense of what administrative burnout is and the dangers that it poses to organizations. Using fiction in this way in the classroom and organizational training, I suggest, can help to convince future and current public administrators to insist on caring workplaces and to work proactively to address burnout. In the following discussion, I survey some works of fiction that teachers and training specialists may find useful when seeking to educate those who are committed to public administration about workplace burnout and the problems associated with it.

I begin with a consideration of one of the best-known depictions of bureaucracy, Franz Kafka's *The Trial*. The novel's protagonist, Joseph K., is accused at the outset of an unknown crime and spends the rest of the book trying to navigate and generally failing to understand a tangled legal bureaucracy and is executed in the end without ever knowing why. College and even high school students often focus on the negative depiction of bureaucracy when analyzing this novel, and indeed it can serve as a cautionary tale for public administrators regarding how discouraging and frightening it can be for the average citizen to engage with governmental agencies. At the same time, though, current and would-be administrators can benefit from a reminder that the irrationality of the processes and decisions that Joseph K. encounters is entirely inconsistent with the ideal bureaucracy imagined by the pioneering scholar of organizations, Max Weber. In any case, as Parks (2013) observed in an essay for the *New York Review of Books*, the anti-bureaucracy theme in *The Trial* is common in modern literature, and I have already mentioned the corrosive effect of this attitude on democratic governance. Those involved in public administration are well aware of this negative stereotype and know how important it is to focus on the positive contributions that public agencies make.

More instructive for public administrators than Kafka, then, are works of art that shed light on how burnout occurs. Fiction provides numerous examples of burnout caused by oppression, corporate greed, stupidity, callousness, and even boredom. The latter issue is explored in the 1999 film *Office Space,* a comedy about contemporary tech company workers whose dissatisfaction with their work routine, food options, and living quarters leads to burnout and, eventually, a scheme to steal from their employer. Another comedy that illustrates burnout in organizations—this time, on the small screen—is *The Office*, which tells the stories of Jim Halpert, who is unfulfilled by his job in a dying industry (selling copy paper), his clueless boss, and his half-crazed office nemesis and sometimes friend, Dwight Schrute. Rather than advancing his company, Jim often feels the need to combat his boredom by playing pranks on Dwight, which while humorous in the show is a form of workplace bullying.

Among the depictions of extreme burnout on the big screen are the character played by Michael Douglas' character in *Falling Down* (1993)*,* whose emotional problems lead him to violence. Another example is the force of burned-out revolutionaries who take on corporate America in *Fight Club* (1999)*.* And while George Orwell's *1984* (1949) is perhaps too well known to be of much use for the purposes described here, a similar dystopia was created by Terry Gilliam in the 1985 film *Brazil*, in which an oppressive police state shackles individuals to a torturous routine that creates and perpetuates burnout.

Lastly, returning to the printed word, David Foster Wallace's *The Pale King* (2011) adopts a Kafkaesque view of bureaucracy in describing how the boredom endured by workers at the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) drives them to distraction. The work is boring, as is the location (Peoria, IL). The novel was unfinished at the time of Wallace's death, but the themes of boredom and normality are clearly the main concern as they lead the characters to burnout and suffering amid the absurdity of the IRS bureaucracy (Gourley 2018).

The image that emerges from these narratives is of bureaucracy as a mind-numbing and absurd set of practices that breeds deviant behaviors. The truth, of course, is that, in public administration, bureaucracy is simply the organization of human activity. Works of fiction often zero in on the conditions that foster burnout within organizations, returning frequently to a few key themes:

1. Burnout makes workers miserable.
2. Burnout destroys professional and personal connections among individuals.
3. Burnout can, at times, undermine organizations and even societies.

It is, again, necessary to acknowledge that fictional representations of bureaucracy nearly always distort its purposes and effectiveness. Nevertheless, the bureaucrats who appear in novels and movies serve as a reminder to public administrators of their responsibility to ensure that the positive aspects of their work—their rationality, evidence-based decision-making, use of merit as the main criterion in hiring and advancement, and so on—receive emphasis in their classrooms and scholarly writings.

Teaching about Burnout in Public Affairs Programs

The seriousness of the problem demands that burnout be addressed in the education and training programs that influence public administrators. That is, public affairs programs in colleges and universities need to integrate the concept of burnout—identifying, preventing, and treating it—

into their curricula. The five core learning competencies established by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) can be used as a basis for developing assessments and exercises for teaching about burnout. In the Table, these competencies are matched with student learning outcomes for classes and possible assessments or exercises.

Table 1: Burnout and NASPAA's Five Core Competencies

NASPAA Competency	Student Learning Outcome	Possible Assessment
Lead and manage in public governance	Be able to identify the problems that burnout causes for public organizations	Review a case study of burnout and write a reflection paper on its impact on organizations
Participate in and contribute to the policy process	Examine the negative impact of burnout on public administrators' ability to contribute to the policy process	Write a reflection paper about the impact of burnout on employees' achievement of work goals
Analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions	Describe the deleterious effect of burnout on organizations' problem-solving capacity	Participate in a simulation of decision-making in an environment characterized by burnout
Articulate and apply a public service perspective	Describe the deleterious effect of burnout on administrators' ability to apply a public service perspective	Reflect on the problems that burnout causes for public administrators seeking to articulate a public service perspective
Communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry	Describe the deleterious impact of burnout on organizations' efforts to communicate and interact with a diverse workforce	Research the adverse effects of burnout on organizations' cultural competency

These learning outcomes and exercises can be incorporated into all of the courses in a typical public affairs program but are especially pertinent to the topics of leadership, organizational theory, human resource management, and public budgeting and to surveys of public administration. Students in a public budgeting course might, for example, identify the costs of burnout for public organizations and attempt to quantify these costs for a particular organization in a follow-up assignment. Another exercise might involve an invited speaker discussing the challenges that burnout poses for leadership and specific examples of burnout in his or her career and organization.

Public affairs programs can also incorporate discussions of burnout into other aspects of students' experiences. These discussions can begin during orientation, with program leaders making clear to students the importance of their own mental health and that of their colleagues throughout their studies and careers. Again, invited speakers can speak with authority about the warning signs and dangers of burnout, both mental health professionals and local government officials; alumni may be particularly effective in this context.

Strategies for Public Administration

Recognizing the problem is, of course, the first step in addressing administrative burnout. I have sought to begin the conversation here by defining burnout and sketching out the dimensions of the problems with which it is associated by surveying some of the scholarly literature. I have also suggested works of fiction that may prove useful in discussions of burnout for public administrators and students preparing to enter the field. I want to close by discussing additional strategies for how public administration as a field of practice and inquiry can address burnout, using the ideas of the demand-support-control model and emotional labor.

Our discipline needs to research burnout, first. As discussed, we know little beyond that how the concept affects private management and specific areas of the public sector, such as social work, healthcare, and public safety. Next, as detailed, we need to incorporate burnout into the curricula of public affairs programs. In this essay, I have provided some guidance for programs to link instruction and assignments on burnout to NASPAA's five competencies. Additionally, annual meetings in our discipline should include panels on the problem of burnout – how we research and how we teach it. We should develop case studies to illustrate burnout and provide guidance to workers, like it is done in healthcare, social services, and public safety.

At the start of this essay, I discussed my burnout, and at the risk of making the manuscript too personal, I want to return to the causes of that burnout. In addition to the feeling of exhaustion that I experienced during a period of high demand for work in a specific area, I also felt little support to accomplish that work in an environment where I felt as though I had little control. My burnout fit the demand-control-support model perfectly. Using the demand-control-support model (Van der Doef & Maes 1999), we can analyze more specific administrative causes for public managers to understand burnout in their organizations and develop strategies to address those causes.

Demand

Public administrators work under numerous demands that may contribute to administrative burnout. First, for decades, the public sector has experienced revenue shortfalls due to the public's demand to have low taxes but consistent and at times growing public services (Welch 1985), working in such a constrained environment is most likely contributing to administrative burnout. Second, the deconstruction of the administrative state (Lewis 2019), especially at the federal level, is a demand that most likely is contributing to burnout. A weakened administrative state leads to a decrease in the quality of public services and a feeling among public administrators that it is difficult, if not impossible, to complete their work. Lastly, the public's declining trust, perhaps one of the top issues discussed for decades in political science, affects the morale of public administrators and in turn makes burnout more likely for public servants. These three broad demands of limited resources, declining administrative infrastructure, and decreased public support affects the control and support that public administrators have in their jobs.

Control

In his seminal book *Bureaucracy,* Wilson (2019) argued how autonomy leads to public administration that is more effective, compared to administration where public managers have little control. Recent research has demonstrated the benefits of bottom-up management for sustainable solutions (Sandhu & Kulik 2019). Red tape is often pointed to as the pathology that causes public administration to have a lack of control over their work (Wilson 2019), and the amount of red tape is viewed as being the product of organizational structure – i.e., top-down vs. bottom-up. However, Kaufmann, Borry, and DeHart-Davis (2019) showed how red tape is due to more factors than organizational structure. There are most likely many factors causing public administrators to feel as though they have little to no control, such as: red tape; unrealistic demands from political superiors, the public, and managers; micro-managing; hostile work environments; finite resources; and many others. Teachers having to follow testing requirements, healthcare practitioners having to input data in redundant technologies, and social workers feeling as they have little ability to improve the lives of the communities they serve are just a few specific examples of control being lost and environments where the syndrome of burnout may spread.

Support

So, what can be done to address burnout in our public organizations? The last part of the demand-control-support model provides that answer for public administration. Studies show that nurses and firefighters, who work in helpful and supportive environments, are less likely to report emotional problems (Grant 2020). Public administrators need more support from the public, their political superiors, and their direct managers. We need organizations that are caring. We need managers in those organization that are caring bosses. To be supportive, organizations need to be caring.

Concluding Thoughts on Caring Organizations

Caring organizations look out for the welfare of both their clients and their employees. Public administrators often find themselves feeling tired and fatigued and, eventually, if they find no relief, burned out and therefore are unable to do their best to serve their communities. Conversely, communities often contribute to the problem by placing unrealistic demands on public servants and providing them with insufficient resources. Uncaring organizations promote rudeness (Johnson and Indvik 2001) and even more negative instances of workplace behavior.

At times, organizations allow, even encourage, workplace bullying. In extremely toxic organizations, discrimination is allowed or even encouraged by management and/or organizational culture. Bullying and especially discrimination can lead to burnout. Administrators need to speak out about burnout, and the problem needs to be discussed frankly and comprehensively in public administration programs in colleges and universities and in training sessions for administrators. Useful in this education effort, I have argued, are works of fiction that dramatize the various aspects of burnout, and how public affairs programs can integrate burnout in their curricula. Highlighting burnout will help public servants understand how the problem can hinder the development of caring organizations and put in place uncaring ones.

Going forward, faculty in public administration programs need to conduct research on burnout and use the results to inform their teaching. Public administrators for their part must remain cognizant of the problem and vigilant about confronting it in their agencies. In order to achieve these goals, first and foremost, the members of public organizations need to encourage positivity within them. Kindness toward clients and colleagues alike go a long way toward canceling out the negativity that fosters burnout. So, also, it is necessary to confront the bullying that occurs in the public sector and ensure that MPA programs communicate to students the importance of positivity and the negative effects of harassment. In short, structural changes are necessary in the ways in which public agencies are managed, for instance by introducing policies that allow employees greater flexibility in scheduling and encouraging them to take a vacation and mental health days.

Accordingly, caring organizations are ones that do the following:

- empower employees;
- fight against bullying;
- and protect against discrimination can help alleviate the problem of administrative burnout.

Addressing burnout, then, means empowering public administrators to discuss such issues as bullying, fatigue, and unreal expectations. These discussions help to lay the foundations for caring public organizations, in which administrators serve their communities while at the same time seeing to it that their employees are protected and happy—and, therefore, not burned out. The result of promoting caring public-sector organizations will be more productive employees and agencies that are better equipped to serve the public interest.

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Counting out Trump: Vigil over an Untoward Presidency through the Midterm

Ed Gibson

Introduction

Donald Trump's election as the 45th president prompted strong reactions. What follows is my narrative. One college professor's response to the roiling American politics of 2017 and 2018 is unrepresentative: idiosyncratic by definition. Yet the themes running through messages from these two years may resonate, now that the President's toxic effect on the Constitution he swore to "preserve, protect, and defend" has become clear. A collateral concern finds institutional checks on the presidency so frail that they seem overmatched.

Hypocrisy or, at a minimum, utter lack of reflection would be required not to admit that disapproval of President Trump's policies amplified the concerns raised here. When it was their turn conservatives were alarmed by President Obama's immigration offensive: the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) executive action. Other potential overreaches by the Obama administration included U.S. military intervention in Libya and the Department of Health and Human Services' (over?)broad interpretation of the timing and stringency of applying the Affordable Care Act's provisions. However, one didn't need to be a conservative during the Obama administration or a liberal during the Trump administration to advocate for Congress ceasing its supine deference to the Executive Branch in areas from foreign policy, including military action, to trade, to justice and law enforcement. Those agitated by what Rudalevige termed a "new imperial presidency" (2006) have followed the accretion of presidential power during the post-Watergate era. But the most recent assault on constitutional governance is unprecedented.

This material, curated from personal emails to colleagues, family, and friends, had been private. The expressive license created by exchanges among trusted correspondents yields an intimate voice, compared with broadcast messages. Therefore, the thoughts, emotions, confusion, and concern come across through raw, albeit polite, expression.

This account drew from more than 500 email messages between the inauguration and the midterm election, consisting of roughly 200 pages, which averaged almost daily but alternated between spikes and gaps. For example, 28 messages between Saturday and Monday, July 14-16, 2018, dealt with the coverage of Brett Kavanaugh's nomination to replace Justice Anthony Kennedy and the aftermath of the Trump-Putin news conference in Helsinki. This flurry of communication followed by just a month a period of extremely low engagement, with only nine out of the 60 days from April 16 to June 14 having politically oriented email messages. One reason for that decreased correspondence was end-of-semester activities, and another was the time devoted to canvassing prior to the June 12 Virginia primary for the eventual 10th Congressional District nominee.

Email messages may seem too hasty and transient to be the basis for any kind of archival effort. For curators of correspondence the act of "pinging off an email" suffers by comparison with "laboring at a desk in the fading light" on a letter (Wilson 2019). Readers can exercise their judgment about the care and effort (or lack thereof) expended on these messages. The excerpted, unedited text will reveal grammatical errors, misspellings, and abbreviations, to the extent they were present in the original messages.

The major sections follow the well-known stages of responding to grief—denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance—also applied to organizational change (Zell 2003). This arrangement doesn't fit perfectly. Indeed, the stages do not proceed serially in life (nor do the messages) but constitute the framework for accounting for an emotional struggle against unyielding reality. One clarification is that *denial*, in my case, did not mean denying the election results. Instead, denial connoted a refusal to admit that something fundamental had changed with Donald Trump becoming president: takeover of the executive by "someone who characterized virtually everyone in government as idiots and incompetents over the course of a campaign" (author 2017, January 14). Failing to take his campaign rhetoric seriously revealed a faulty assumption that candidate Trump's transition would mimic previous outsiders. But taking charge of the government did not alter his rhetoric, as it had for Ronald Reagan's and Jimmy Carter's.

When the expectation proved unfounded that the new president would conform to a traditional role, the resulting *anger* replaced denial. Subsequent stages proceeded apace and require no explanation until the last. *Acceptance* did not encompass President Trump's behavior or even necessarily his legitimacy, aside from his legitimate claim on at least 270 electoral votes in the 2016 election. My acceptance reflected a dawning awareness that Trumpism was neither fluke nor passing fancy but was rooted in the deep-seated rejection of the legitimacy of our governing institutions by the coalition in power. Those institutions and President Trump both could not be legitimate for the reason that two physical objects cannot occupy the same space. One would have to give way to the other.

Ultimately, acceptance of President Trump's real, profound, and possibly lasting effect on American political institutions translated readily into hands-on opposition to one of his congressional enablers who represented my Virginia district. The period of acceptance, the last stage in this account, overlapped neatly with the midterm campaign.

From the preceding admission, this account can be discounted as ideologically freighted and that characterization cannot be refuted easily. Hopefully, the content of these messages will reveal something aside from mere partisanship: the earnest worry that institutions we rely on as citizens and that I teach about as a public finance professor were under threat. The ultimate assessment of the account's credibility rests with readers.

Within the stages of grief, email excerpts are arranged episodically, interspersed with brief transitions. Important facets of the Trump administration's first two years were omitted: Justice Gorsuch's appointment; international relations, except for the Helsinki summit; economic policy; reaction to Charlottesville; initial government shutdown; John McCain's death; and personnel changes, aside from James Comey's firing. Yet the arc of included events and my reactions to them presumably will suffice to shape this narrative.

Denial

Following Election Day the realization set in that the successor to our first African-American president had staked his ground on the fringe of his new party by peddling the falsehood that the man he sought to replace was not born in the U.S.

From Election to Inauguration

It wasn't apparent prior to President Trump's inauguration that his governing was to be as norm-shattering as his campaigning. As someone whose business is government, teaching about it anyway, open-mindedness, as much as could be marshaled, seemed the best course. Recriminations were pointless.

> [11/9/2016] *"Amtrak corridor" delivered its 100 electoral votes from VA to ME. Add the West Coast and Southwest, and you've got the makings of an electoral victory. The Democrats will have to eat humble pie, but we are at least still a party, who nominated one of our own.*
>
> *Anyone want Comey gone now? Might be the only thing between us and a bunch of Trumped-up investigations of a new enemies list.*
>
> *Tuesday's election was a coin toss that landed on its edge, teetered a little, and fell to the Republican. Just like 2000 (according to the Supremes) and 2004…. That's my wrap on 2016, which I won't refer to anymore. My calendar is now permanently recalibrated: to Year 1 AT, when Virginia's next governor will be chosen.*

> [1/12/2017] *I listened to his press conference last night, with difficulty (but you take the bitter with the sweet), with an ear for what he might say that gets beyond the 46% who voted for him. That's actually a high figure, because a few percentage points represent votes against his opponent. Listening through my partisan filter is tough, but very little came through that sounded like outreach. There were a lot of promises, particularly far-fetched about the timetable for Tom Price's confirmation, followed in what sounded like a week or two by a plan to replace the ACA with "something wonderful"….*
>
> *No question he [Comey] screwed up…. I just don't see the prospect for a better chief investigator chosen by the incoming regime... There's certainly history for the FBI director getting a bye. Why's that job so tough to fill? Is Robert Mueller the only person on*

the planet with the capacity to complete his tenure with distinction? If there's another such person, I despair of the chances of this bunch finding him or her.

[1/14/2017] *So the argument as I understand it is that President Obama wasn't sufficiently anti-corporate. That may be true, but of the Democratic presidential candidates, he's certainly the least cordial toward business since Fritz Mondale, who lost 49 states (if he were D-MI instead of D-MN, he'd have lost 50 states). There's a wing of the Democratic Party, probably poised to become the dominant wing, that's more skeptical of capitalism than the President appears to be, but it couldn't pass anything in 2009 and 2010. That leaves it, at least to me, an open question as to whether it's how he wanted to conduct his economic policy or how he thought it most pragmatic, either economically or politically, to conduct it.*

[P]lausibly conducive of Obama's legacy to Trump's candidacy is the former's cerebral affect. Unlike Reagan, Obama did little to connect with the poorly educated among the electorate. He eschewed the emotional content of political messaging (hated soundbites) and used thoughtful arguments and big words. So there's a big opening for someone making simplistic, even illogical arguments using elementary school vocabulary (except for some choice words that you don't hear in—at least in my—elementary school). All that goes to say that we can't take President Obama out of his time, which is still an anti-government, pro-business landscape. How else to explain the election of someone who characterized virtually everyone in government as idiots and incompetents over the course of a campaign?

Trump Administration in Context

From the inauguration I hit upon the unoriginal temporizing tactic of tracking the passage of the presidential term: 15 days equivalent to roughly one percent; 29 days a closer approximation of two percent. But January 20, 2021, was far away. Meanwhile, would conventional politics and public opinion corral the administration? The Women's March gave reassurance that a steady and firm activist pulse persisted in the body politic.

[1/21/2017] *Never underestimate the vertebral deficiency (continuing the health analogy) of representatives with 22 months to go until Election Day 2018. I agree with you about Speaker Ryan, but in the immortal words of fictional VPOTUS "Bingo" Bob Russell: "A leader without followers is just a guy out for a walk."*

[T]here are between a half-million and million, maybe more, marchers out today in major cities around the country, which won't escape the notice of Congress. Not everyone has a safe, gerrymandered seat… (two dozen flipped seats = Speaker Pelosi).

[F]act check…. 1) Wash. Post puts the nationwide Women's March at 2 million.... 2) "Bingo Bob" put it in the form of a question: "You know what they call a leader with no followers? Just a guy talking [sic] a walk."

The diffuse influence of two million citizens peacefully yet forcefully assembling failed to halt the parade of abandoned governing norms, which shocked those accustomed to giving provisional credence to government positions and pronouncements.

[1/23/2017] *"[A]lternative facts" .... I used to think Frank Luntz was the last word in misleading spin, but he's yesterday's news. Kellyanne [Conway] should hurry up and trademark it because the sky's the limit: T-shirts, bumper stickers, etc.: "Alt-facts for the alt-right"!*

His improbable victory still fresh, President Trump's reelection was too distant and imponderable even for consideration. But the question of voters returning blanket authority to the Republican Party for the 116th Congress could be confronted squarely. In the interim, it remained to be seen how much of the President's agenda would be pursued.

[1/29/2017] *When poll numbers start dropping for representatives like ours…there's going to be more noise. Also, the courts will create quite a bit of pushback, I believe, just as they did for the Obama administration when it overreached its authority.*

Here's the first sign of shakiness by a (my) representative (not jumping ship yet, but clearly sensitive to a rising tide) .... "Representative Barbara Comstock, a Republican whose Northern Virginia district includes a large Muslim population, said that Mr. Trump's action had gone 'beyond the increased vetting actions the Congress has supported' and called for the White House to quickly exempt holders of green cards from the order" [Fandos 2017, January 29].

[2/6/2017] *[W]ould the persistence of that kind of incapacity at the White House free up members of the cabinet to be more independent? Nikki Haley at the UN seems not to be concerned about toeing the administration line on Russia. We have generals and CEOs heading large departments. Will they lead if a vacuum develops from incoherence at the White House? That'd be almost a Westminster model of cabinet government (absent the legislature): strange after steady accretion of White House power, interrupted only by Watergate, since the New Deal.*

[4/25/2017] *Republicans were famously isolationist, right? I'm not sure when it was they became the party of global engagement/intervention.... [T]here's a strong nativist strain, going back at least to the Know-Nothings, whom Lincoln (the first Republican) didn't embrace—couldn't, because of their antipathy to his core German-American constituency—but also was careful not to dismiss. All I know is that great empires, ours too, have profound responsibilities. A few months ago marked the 100th anniversary of our first involvement in European conflicts and subsequent dismemberment of the Great Powers' empires.... I can see the emotional appeal of [Pat] Buchanan's and Trump's argument for wanting out of the empire business. But it's not clear the latter really means it.*

[5/1/2017] *Trouble is, the same thing that makes them low-information voters makes them low-wage or unemployed workers. Absent unions, they have virtually no economic agency.... The first big eye-opener for me on this was Nixon-McGovern when I couldn't find anyone who worked with his (mostly "his" in those days) hands that wasn't for Nixon. Even their unions in some cases, since many belonged to unions, even in North Carolina, gave tacit support (except for the Teamsters, which gave Nixon full-throated support).*

These folks were concerned, even when most aspects of their lives were only threatening to change, about the pace of transformation: in the economy, social conventions, etc. So someone who seemed unapologetic about reverting to the bygone era was appealing….

The nostalgic yearning they had when they heard Nixon came from intuiting that somehow the game had become rigged against them, which is now patently obvious. But they should not have trusted Nixon, as became apparent after he let them down. My hunch is that they'll feel similarly let down this time. Nostalgia isn't a policy.

An Illusion of Normalcy

Another hopeful sign of typical public administration came from professionalism within the administrative (derided as "deep" by some) state. FBI Director James Comey's transition to the new administration undergirded this hope.

> [2/16/2017] *It's tempting to wade into the rehash of the election, exemplified by Downie's (2017) concluding sentence: "The sooner he faces the consequences for his colossal mistake the better." I'm looking forward (2% of President Trump's term over and 6% of the 115th Congress—begun 2 1/2 weeks before him)…. I believe what Downie is missing—his portfolio doesn't appear to include DoJ—is that Comey's professional training is as a prosecutor…. In our system, the U.S. Attorney functions as the "top cop" for a federal district. If s/he thinks a provable crime has been committed, then it's prosecuted. If not, there's no prosecution, hence no crime. And that's what Comey appears to me to be saying about the two situations: one (Clinton's server) involved a potential crime and the other (Trump campaign's Russian connection) didn't. It's Downie making the political equivalency between the two, because, in my view, he lacks the perspective or has made no effort to approach the question of Comey's conduct from an administrative perspective…. Why I continue to be grateful that Comey is still in his job is due to my belief that if something criminal did develop in this administration, he would pursue it, recommend prosecution if warranted, and constitute fully as much of a pain in the butt for Trump as he did for Clinton.*

Finally, public opinion promised resistance, even if diffuse and divided, which inevitably, it seemed, must be taken into account by the Trump administration. The most reliable and helpful compilation of polls came from fivethirtyeight.com ("538"), formerly a feature of the *New York Times* and eventually a freestanding website operated by its founder, Nate Silver.

> [4/24/2017] *If I hear another commentator say that polls like ABC/Washington Post and WSJ/NBC can't be believed anymore, I'm throwing a shoe through the screen…. At the end, Nate Silver made 2016 a 2-4% race, with a final margin of 2.1%: at the lower end, but in the range, and well within the margin of error. If memory serves, that's about where Silver put the projected margin for 2012, with the "surprise" that year about an equal distance in the Democrats' favor.*
>
> *[A]nother high-quality poll with the same message: base holding, but that's all (*Murray 2017, April 23*). If President Trump were Prime Minister Trump and belonged to the Likud Party, that might be enough…. This administration is a tad more than 1/16th through its term. That's the same proportion as a cup of buttermilk included in a gallon jug*

of whole milk. Not enough to ruin it (assuming you don't like buttermilk—if you're not sure, you probably haven't tried it), but definitely enough to flavor it.

Anger

My initial discounting of the assault on the U.S. government was rooted in “guard rails”: appointees to the administration, who supposedly could protect us from the President’s worst impulses. FBI Director Comey’s history as a career prosecutor promised unbiased administration of justice, given our constitutionally independent judiciary. As events dispelled this illusion, the threat to our system of government no longer could be denied.

Director Comey’s Firing

In the wake of his precipitous firing, faith in resistance by the administrative state would no longer be vested in Comey. But his leaked notes of meetings with President Trump furnished Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein—charged with supervising the investigation of connections between the Russian government and the Trump Campaign after Attorney General Sessions’ recusal—a rationale for appointing the special counsel.

> [5/10/2017] *I remember how crazy the stories sounded in the Washington Post 45 years ago. And how convincing the denials seemed. Where are Woodward and Bernstein when you need them?*
>
> *When the Wall Street Journal has a headline like this, you've had a bad day: Investigators Step Up Russia Probe.*
>
> *“In the weeks before President Donald Trump fired FBI Director James Comey, a federal investigation into potential collusion between Trump associates and the Russian government was heating up, as Mr. Comey became increasingly occupied with the probe....”* (Harris & Lee 2017).
>
> [5/11/2017] *Is it only me, or is it a given that when you've been labeled a "showboat" by President Trump, an ironic sensibility is necessary? Hopefully, former Director Comey has that.*
>
> [5/12/2017] *From: Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Mitchell et al.*
> *To: Bannon, Kushner, Miller et al.*
> *Date: Until further notice*
> *Subject: Key points*
> *#1) Don't record anything.*
> *#2) If anyone did record anything, burn it.*
> *#3) Watch “All the President's Men”!*
> *#4) Consult with George Stephanopoulos re: getting out while the getting's good (ABC is flush, but Fox may have openings soon).*
>
> [5/13/2017] *It's a very bad thing that impeachment has been so loosely discussed since Bill Clinton was gratuitously prosecuted for illicit sex.... There are many, many steps that*

Congress needs to step up to, starting with exercising oversight, questioning instead of blithely flakking the WH line, and advising on rather than rubber-stamping nominations. Starting with the FBI director. So why are we talking about kicking it into 5th gear, when the car's still in "park"?

[5/23/2017] *If they're not careful, Keith Schiller will be delivering more termination notices. Now there's a security guy who gets it: loyalty to the boss before loyalty to the Constitution. Who cares about that pesky oath?*

[6/6/2017] [*M]ost presidents find a way to extend their support into the initially skeptical group and at least mollify the disbelievers (following the Billy Martin rule—also effective in the classroom—to "keep those who hate your guts apart from those who haven't made up their minds yet"). But "reforming" healthcare isn't doing that, and firing Comey isn't doing that.*

[6/7/2017] *[L]ong, slow climb back from the bad old days of Hoover's highly politicized FBI. Think there's been some unfortunate backsliding.*

[6/8/2017] *What is the credibility of the President's picked spokesperson? Isn't that the very person expected to say what she's saying? Mind you, this is the same authority who said she'd heard from "countless" FBI agents that Comey was discredited there and turned around within 2 sentences to admit that she knew very few people in the FBI. If they were, in her words, countless, either she isn't much of a counter (like to 10) or she's not one to let the truth get in the way of a useful narrative. But I'll bet she passed the crucial loyalty test. HINT: not the one contained in her oath.*

The Chimera of Special Elections

Special congressional elections provided an early reading on the energy opposing President Trump. They also confirmed the rigidity of an electoral configuration that only returned Republicans until Conor Lamb's victory in Pennsylvania's 18th District in 2018.

[5/8/2017] *I agree that the Democratic Party is in tough shape…. But they do know what they stand for…. Should liberals learn to over-promise and downplay problems? I believe that's "fighting the last war" (remember most new presidents are picked to negate their predecessor). On that theory, the next president could well be low-key, decent, facing problems as they come--not ducking, not pandering, and not demagoguing. It's fundamental contradictions that finish parties. The Whigs came to stand for nothing. Then, they ceased to be a factor in U.S. politics. Faster than you can say "Millard Fillmore"!*

[5/16/2017] *It's too late once they start losing elections. My prediction is that Paul Ryan, assuming he makes it until 2018, will be the last Republican Speaker of the House. That would be sad, because it really was the Grand Old Party, at least for a century: the first truly national party, with Republicans from different regions sharing common views.*

[6/22/2017] *Ossoff got virtually the same percentage of the vote 2 1/2 months later that he got in the primary. After $30 million more combined spending, the needle didn't move a* *notch…. [N]ow it's time for him to move on and start making his film about this candidacy. We'll see what happens in 2018. If Rep. Handel doesn't want to be the shortest-serving congresswoman from Georgia, in addition to being the first, she's going to have to consider carefully her options on the AHCA.*

Bargaining

The President's intentions crystallized within his first year. There would be no "reboot"; no Trump 2.0. Whatever President Obama, in particular, and his predecessors of both parties had left as policies and norms of governing would be fair game. It remained a matter of conjecture and hope how much of this legacy could outlast Trump's presidency.

Health Care "Reform"

No issue illustrated President Trump's frontal assault on his predecessor's accomplishments as much as the attempted repeal of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), termed "Obamacare" by its opponents.

> [3/9/2017] *[T]he individual mandate helps to finance the program, as opposed to enriching insurance companies through the 30% surcharge…. If Ryancare should crash and burn, which isn't quite even money in my view, but gaining every day… this may be one of the provisions that sticks in a more bipartisan retool emerging from the wreckage.*

> [4/25/2017] *The conflict between the populism he ran on and the Republican orthodoxy he's quasi-embraced--until it starts looking like a loser—is the stuff "disjunction" (more Skowronek [1993]) is made of. If he's not careful, there's a pantheon of disjunctive [sic] presidents, John Quincy Adams, Franklin Pierce, Herbert Hoover, and Jimmy Carter, he wouldn't want to join.*

After four months' deliberation, the House passed the American Health Care Act (AHCA), which then could not pass the Senate.

> [7/16/2017] [Two] *2 have come out against it. But one of them, Susan Collins, appeared to be using the "hall pass" from Mitch McConnell she gets periodically: making a fuss (and preserving her "moderate" credentials), without making any difference. If not for John McCain, I'm pretty confident these "principled" stands would have turned into empty gestures, as the Senate would have proceeded to debate the bill (8/10/2017). [T]his concerns 8% or so of the healthcare system: the exchanges. There's not a peep about the 92% of this domain, which is functioning better than before. A second problem is that this was always going to be the roughest sledding... trying to induce healthy people to get the insurance that 99 times out of 100 they're not going to benefit from. Finally, there is the absence of (the opposite of) concerted effort. Government is capable of influencing the private sector to shift direction slightly, not 180 degrees, but maybe enough on the margins to help the policy converge. The Department of Defense did so when our defense-industrial base had to consolidate.*

Proof of indifference about policy details emerged with the administration's support of the Senate's "skinny repeal" bill: gutting major parts of the ACA with nothing to replace them. The President's disappointment showed in his Tweet after Senator John McCain's thumbs-down verdict on the legislation: "3 Republicans and 48 Democrats let the American people down. As I said from the beginning, let ObamaCare implode, then deal" (Trump in Pear and Kaplan July 28, 2017, A1).

> [8/11/2017] *Besides, there aren't yet 50 votes for any particular bill; just 49 votes for the possibility of a bill. Actually, Collins, Murkowski, and McCain were the Republican Party's salvation, if such a thing is possible after this administration.*

Even after that seemingly final disposition, the Graham-Cassidy Amendment would have replaced ACA's Medicaid expansion with block grants to states.

> [9/22/2017] *I fear that this will pass the Senate, with Murkowski bought off and McCain unwilling to cross his friend, and only Rand Paul to take their place. It may be tougher than expected in the House, but I don't believe there are 23 Republicans to be found who are willing to face primary challenges. Better to throw their states—California (14 Republicans), New York (9 R's), New Jersey (5 R's)—under the bus.*
>
> *Breaking news says that John McCain will vote "No!" That should be dispositive if Senators Collins and Paul stick to their guns…. And then there's the truism that paybacks are hell (POW = "not my kind of hero").*

> [10/21/2017] *Senator Collins. Now that she's staying in the Senate, it gives an interesting perspective. Not that she won't disappoint in the future, but she's shown real independence on health care and, I believe, would as well on "rule of law" issues (like interference with the Special Counsel).*

End of the First Year

After his only major legislative victory, a tax cut package, President Trump turned to non-legislative assaults on his predecessor's legacy, beginning with the executive order that had created DACA: the protected status for "Dreamers."

> [9/1/2017] *This would be among the stupidest possible political moves—I'm leaving aside the moral question—by an administration that's already chalked up some doozies. Guess it's all about the base.*

> [12/17/2017] *The "party of Lincoln" is a historical artifact. It's the party of Trump now and for the future. No one's going to let them live it down. (Nevertheless, we're going to get through [sic] this... already 22 and 2/3 percent done with his term... but who's counting!)*

Depression

With Congress increasingly irrelevant, the President's performances eclipsed Washington and dominated the world stage.

Imperial Presidency

As fractiousness foreclosed further legislative action and the locus of governing shifted to the White House, the specter of extra-constitutional action loomed.

> [1/27/2018] *[B]ut the Republican Party is not a monolith, nor would that be possible while our two-party system lasts. There is a segment of the Party, I believe, who could be quite content under a fascist regime, along with a decent slug of independents. But libertarians won't tolerate the authoritarianism and old-line conservatives won't go along with the attacks on DoJ, FBI, etc. The Democrats have a mirror conflict between the liberal wing (Pelosi, Sanders, Warren) and the corporatist wing, which produced the Clintons and Chuck Schumer: this conflict on full display during the short-lived government shutdown. So far the Republicans seem to be managing their conflict more successfully, united by anti-Obama sentiment and the true north of tax cuts. With tax cuts achieved and the Obama years fading ever so slowly, let's see how this "marriage" lasts.*
>
> [2/1/2018] *[I]nfallibility of Madisonian federalism. Madison's gone; we're here. Not sure what he'd do; but it's clear what we have to do. Support the principle that no one is above the law. And Mueller and the FBI, even Rod Rosenstein, are the only ones working that beat. Paul Ryan, a tower of jello. Mitch McConnell, couldn't pin him down with tweezers. Demagoguery is on the march, patriotism hijacked by jingoists (recall it's the last refuge of scoundrels), and statesmanship nowhere evident.*
>
> [3/3/2018] *That's an interesting metaphor…. On the one hand, a black hole emits nothing… whereas this White House is on an emission spree. On the other hand, the black hole rips apart and ingests anything close to it, which does seem to fit, whether you're talking about, on the micro-level, the dismembered reputations and professional standing of those who've served or maintained close associations or, on the macro level, the Republican Party. I guess the tie-breaker is that the black hole is supposed to be chock full of dense substance. That's the one that doesn't fit at all. I believe the better metaphor is cotton candy because you take a few gooey kernels and spin them up into something of impressive size (size is key). All it does, in the final analysis, is to make you sick to your stomach.*
>
> [3/17/2018] *Here's the best election analyst's…take on PA 18th. That "enthusiasm gap" gets ever more pronounced every time the White House, including presidential whisperers Stephen Miller and Mike Pompeo, indulges its id….*
>
> *This [Andrew McCabe's] firing reeks, especially when you contrast it with the pardon of "Sheriff Joe"…. They will not all appreciate this in Trump Country (and he can't lose any, because, unlike Obama or George W. Bush, no one's coming on board to replace them)…. And his gratuitous tweet on top of everything: "great day for democracy"? Maybe, but not in the way he thinks. I believe when the story of this administration is written—here's hoping I have the trajectory right—this will be the watershed week: Lamb,*

Daniels (Clifford), and McCabe. Unforced errors—oh for three—and no upside for any [sic] those fights. It's clear he's taking his own political advice. Much more of this and his people will be begging Bannon to return.

PS: While watching the early returns from PA 18th, we passed a milestone: 2/7 of this term.

[5/16/2018] *I recently re-watched "All the President's Men" and recommend it to anyone who needs a refresher on just how sleazily government agencies can operate when political appointees' personal compasses only direct them toward power or money. Has anyone in this administration had a civics class?*

Helsinki Summit

When Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin finally met, the President's deference at the press conference afterward prompted rare criticism within his party, led by dying Senator John McCain.

[7/16/2018] *Here it is...*
https://www.mccain.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2018/7/statement-by-sasc-chairman-john-mccain-on-trump-putin-meeting

"Today's press conference in Helsinki was one of the most disgraceful performances by an American president in memory. The damage inflicted by President Trump's naiveté, egotism, false equivalence, and sympathy for autocrats is difficult to calculate. But it is clear that the summit in Helsinki was a tragic mistake…." (McCain 2018).

There's an amazing disconnect here, not only the superficial one between Russia's actions and the apparent absolution by this statement, but also what it reveals about the President's view of his office. Here's a person known to be allergic to apologies freely apologizing for the country's actions. So he must not view himself as implicated….

I think that's an astounding characteristic of this presidency (3/8 done later this week): the free-agency, devoid of any responsibility for or identity with the institutions of government. We've never seen anything like it. Even Reagan took responsibility for what the country had done, even while criticizing it.

I was curious, given the across-the-board condemnation…how this was playing on Fox. So I watched 10 minutes of Sean Hannity's program. "Peace through strength" was the mantra. The summit was great... NATO was now great, thanks to straightening out our former allies. Then came the clips of the President's answers, heavily excerpted with questions omitted. Hannity loved him raising the (non-sequitur) issue of the DNC server (could not tell it was a non-sequitur because the question was cut) and led the post-news conference interview by telling the President how strong the DNC server issue came across. Couldn't even ask a question until he got that in. Next, he interjected about the 33,000 missing emails… and I turned the channel. If that's your source for news, you're wondering what all the fuss is about.

[8/4/2018] *[R]egardless of the source being Putin's GRU, presidential tweets, or State TV (aka Fox News), it's an appropriate use of propaganda to describe what's purported to be true…. [F]ake news vs. false news vs. misstatements vs. alternative facts is too subtle a distinction. Since the President has taken to calling the news "fake news" … his regular,* *intentional, self-serving misinformation has to be called something distinctive: propaganda. I think this also conveys that those on the receiving end are being duped…. [T]hat'll at least provide a clue when reality starts to sink in that they're not "sick and tired of winning"; they're just sick and tired, and addicted and marginalized and indebted and isolated and disgusted. Then, someone's going to get blamed. When FDR came in, Wall Street fell into disrepute for a generation. That's about the time the current crowd deserves in the political penalty box.*

Paul Manafort Guilty

Guilty verdicts were reached by the jury in Paul Manafort's trial on eight of 18 counts for fraud and money laundering (LaFraniere 2018, August 22).

> [7/17/2018] *Or maybe he's banking on a pardon... but that won't be a "get out of jail free": either for the recipient or the issuer. Sheriff Joe or Jack Johnson, he ain't. Manafort represents neither a sympathetic figure nor a beneficent (as opposed to self-interested) move. It'll reek of obstruction... a bit too hypocritical from the "party of social order" (remember Gerring's [1998] 3 pillars?) for uncommitted voters, who are out there (talked with a couple today on GOTV outreach).*

Justice Kavanaugh

With two branches of government firmly in Republican hands, Brett Kavanaugh's nomination to fill the seat vacated by retiring Justice Kennedy, if confirmed, would cement control of the third. The outcome seemed assured until the outbreak of a bitter confirmation fight, which followed allegations of sexual abuse while Kavanaugh was a student at Georgetown Preparatory School.

> [7/25/2018] *Sounds as though Judge Kavanaugh has a real handle on being an appellate judge. Perhaps he could keep on doing that job…. Seriously, there's a difference between a justice and a judge…. [S]coring the decisions of Justices Thomas, Alito, and Gorsuch on the factors of pro-gun/anti-gun, pro-life/pro-choice, pro-employer/pro-employee, etc. and projecting those associations forward, I'll posit that you could predict with 90 percent confidence where Justice Kavanaugh would come out. So where's the judging?*

> [9/28/2018] *Justice Kavanaugh will, with near certainty, cut away as much of Roe v. Wade as Chief Justice Roberts will stand for (quite a bit).*
>
> *He'll support the constitutional right of Americans to arm themselves with everything this side of rocket-propelled grenades. And he'll affirm the executive's right to go his merry way as the chief law enforcement official, commander in chief--including whatever due-process-less rendition can be dreamt up for Americans swept up in anything that might be construed as terrorism, and chief arbiter of what Congress really meant by legislation (as delimited by signing statements), and he'll rely on impeachment as the appropriate check and balance for all of the above.*
>
> *I agree with the Weekly Standard, which happens once in a blue moon, that the best thing about the hearing was Rachel Mitchell, who asked careful questions and got answers on the record (senators' "preening" is inconsistent with posing actual questions)…. I don't agree with the Weekly Standard that yesterday showed America in decline. Instead, it was*

a teachable moment. We are learning, very painfully, about privilege, entitlement, and payback, which should lead to our becoming, as a society, a bit more reflective, deferential, and persuadable.

[10/1/2018] *The imperial presidency (most recently examined by Andrew Rudalevige [2006]) worries me a lot. I admit… (and did, in real time) vis a vis DACA: good politics but bad law. So let the Supreme Court hold that crosses the line. As long as they're even-handed. That is, don't say the executive is powerless to determine whose immigration status to prioritize (excessive delegation), but empowered to keep different folks out based on a thinly disguised religious test (permitted delegation). And don't say that national security, which in authoritarian hands means whatever the strong man says, has one delegation test, but the environment (one of these days, soon, it could be a national security issue) has a different one.*

[10/4/2018] *For the majority of five, assuming Roberts goes along, to sit around reading phrases written over two centuries ago—when some men could be chattels and nearly all women were; when militia meant military and armed conflict meant war; when "nice" meant subtle, "signify" meant matter, and no educated person completed an address of any length without executing the proper use of "would" vs. "should" and "will" vs. "shall"—and pretend they know what that text means today, without any cognition of the intervening history, can only lead to loss of the Court's privileged place as a generally accepted institution.*

One of the few, in the wake of the President's active discrediting of the Dept. of Justice and FBI—its reputation resurrected through a dozen years of patient work by a man, whose patriotism so eclipses his vacuous, summertime soldiering, sunshine flag-waving, hectoring hoax of a chief executive, that it's mortifying to watch them in a split screen!

[10/5/2018] *What do you call a Democrat voting for Justice Kavanaugh's confirmation? Senator Manchin (and intent on staying so).*

Halfway through the remarks of Senator Susan "Hall Pass" Collins... Senator Manchin must be taking his first clear breath in a week, not having to wear #50 on his jersey…. At the same time, a tough day for VPOTUS Pence, who'd have dearly loved the photo op of voting "aye"!

Acceptance

As explained in the introductory paragraphs, *acceptance* did not connote acquiescence to Donald Trump's presidency. It meant bowing to the imperative that his "show" had become the nation's reality. No changing the channel; just changing the government!

Home Stretch

Dueling narratives fueled the election campaign during the late summer and fall. Images of President Trump's rallies, focused on caravans of Central American would-be immigrants, sharply contrasted with small-gauge town halls and debates involving Senate and, especially, House contestants.

> [7/19/2018] *Here in my local exurban district, we have a state senator whom the Virginia Citizens Defense League—the organization for gun enthusiasts believing the NRA is too tame—gave a 100% voting score….*
>
> *In contrast, the neighboring state senator, Jennifer Wexton, who represents (now) suburban Loudoun County, warranted only a 19% score from the VCDL. That was enough to get her targeted by her principal primary opponent for kowtowing to the NRA's (rated her an "F") agenda, but not enough to cost her selection by Democrats in VA-10. So Rep. Barbara Comstock finds herself facing an opponent tailor-fitted to a district Hillary Clinton carried by 10 percentage points…. David Wasserman of the Cook Political Report rated "Lean Democratic" right after Wexton's primary win (Incidentally, Wasserman rated Dave Brat's seat, which used to belong to Eric Cantor, a toss-up as of 2 weeks ago).*

> [8/17/2018] *VA-10 provides a near-perfect microcosm of the midterms, with Rep. Barbara Comstock's challenger given 3 to 1 odds... Democratic-leaning folks I talk to seem more enthusiastic... inclined to chat a little, which is unusual (the previous elections I worked, no one relished canvassing calls). From Republican-leaning contacts, I don't get much push-back, just hang-ups, and they don't tend to identify as Republicans—if they say anything, it's that they're not Democrats. And I'm working voter lists located in Comstock's wheelhouse.*

> [8/23/2018] *This caught my interest, even though my district's race isn't on the list: everyone figures that Rep. Comstock's reelection (VA-10) is toast (doesn't mean that everyone is right). Yet 3 out of the 25 are other Virginia contests... As the last surviving state political machine, so tagged by V.O. Key [1949], Virginia's (without the Slims) "come a long way, baby" since the days that Sen./Gov. Harry Byrd had it all locked down here.*

Ultimately, two countervailing trend lines emerged: one centered in suburban communities on which contests for the House increasingly depended and the other driven by rural constituents of "red state" incumbent Democratic senators.

> [9/25/2018] *[L]ooking increasingly like a Blue swell rather than a wave. Enough to swamp the speakership dreams of the intrepid Steve Scalise, the last-of-<u>The-Young-Guns</u> Kevin McCarthy (now that Cantor and Ryan hung theirs up), or the scary Jim Jordan. But not enough to dislodge Mitch McConnell.*
>
> *["Tight Race in CD07: Dem running strong against Tea Party incumbent," 2018, September 25] Couldn't happen to a more deserving guy [Rep. Brat]—the Pat Garrett of the Republican Party... isn't that what you'd call the guy who did in one of the <u>Young Guns</u> [Cantor, Ryan, & McCarthy 2010]?*

> [10/1/2018] *I'm afflicted with undue optimism. Perhaps, we're not haywire... could be it's just a national mid-life crisis. Rather than dyed hair, extramarital affairs, and sports cars, most of the male half of our polity has opted instead for vicarious indulgence through their elected leader. Not to worry. We'll be back to cardigans, meatloaf, and bridge club before you know it!*

Speaker Pelosi

Out of the surprisingly one-sided results in the House, which continued to build the new Democratic majority for weeks after Election Day, emerged the likelihood that a once-in-a-generation political leader would reclaim her speakership.

> [11/7/18] *The incoming configuration, according to a factoid I heard last night, hasn't happened since 1987… a freshly minted [Democratic leader as] speaker (Jim Wright). House Democrats may prove to be that stupid... There may be a few [new representatives] willing to cast a vote for the best-qualified Speaker (in a generation) notwithstanding their districts.*

> [11/28/18] *Speaker and president are the two Constitutional offices with real ability to move an agenda. The President obviously holds the reins, but the Speaker can jam him pretty effectively and, with a 40-seat gain (17 more than majority), has enough margin to play very effective defense. I've mentioned this before, but prospective-Speaker Pelosi is on the verge of joining a select group who gave up the gavel and reclaimed it: Henry Clay, Thomas Reed ("Czar Reed" until his speakership foundered in opposition to the Spanish-American War), Sam Rayburn, and the 18th-century speaker of the 1st and 3rd Congresses, whose name escapes me.*

Shutdown

President Trump's parting shot, while he held congressional majorities, was to begin what would become the longest government shutdown ever. While Trump enjoyed carte blanche in initiating this cruel slap at a third of federal public servants, its end had to be negotiated, on Speaker Pelosi's terms.

> [12/12/2018] *That's an illustration of why you don't want someone who's "not been in this line of work before" (McConnell 2017) [in McCaskill & Schor 2017] at the highest levels of government. The President has yet to learn lessons (e.g., count your votes) that Speaker Pelosi mastered before junior high.*

> [1/24/2019] *Perhaps this fiasco will mark the beginning of the end of "Government is not the solution; government is the problem." Or going a dozen years further back, tirades against "pointy-heads in Washington"!*

Conclusion

Well before his inauguration the Trump presidency appeared poised to defy long-standing political norms. Yet some of the lessons that can be drawn from the foregoing personal sketch of events can be put in familiar terms, with old features of the political landscape rearranged in untraditional ways.

The first aspect of the traditional political terrain that matters in a different way than before is the two-party system. For nearly two centuries, perhaps longer depending on when one dates its origin, the reliance on two principal parties arguably stabilized U.S. politics. Yet candidate Trump defeated more than a dozen competitors, whose bona fides as Republicans exceeded his, for the nomination. Once in the White House, however, he could rely on party discipline to move his agenda. An illustration is Republican support for the “skinny repeal” of the ACA, which was forecast by the Congressional Budget Office to reduce the number of insured Americans by 15 million and increase individual insurance premiums by 20 percent (Pear and Kaplan 2017, July 28), garnering the votes of 94% of the Party’s senators (and no Democrats).

Also exerting influence over events, despite President Trump’s apparent efforts to undercut them, were the political institutions of law enforcement and the legal system. However much President Trump’s pardon of freshly convicted former Sheriff Joe Arpaio undermined it, the rule of law was affirmed by Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein, a Trump administration political appointee *and* career prosecutor with the Department of Justice, appointing Special Counsel Robert Mueller to investigate the Trump campaign’s possible connection with the Russian government. Another institution serving as a check on the Trump administration was the news media. A Rand Corporation study (Kavanagh et al. 2019) found that news organizations including the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* maintained their journalistic tone despite being taunted and derided as “fake news.” Notwithstanding the Rand study’s title, *Facts Versus Opinions*, the information landscape has grown much more complex, featuring much more damaging kinds of misinformation than opinion: conjecture; spin/propaganda; wish/preference/superstition; and falsehood.

Finally, notwithstanding the haze created by the welter of misinformation foisted on the public, opinion polls played a significant role in backstopping political actors. The disapproval by a majority of the public, steadily exceeding those approving of President Trump’s performance, even as margins varied, has been a novel aspect of his presidency (Enten 2018). Democrats’ substantial new majority in the House, with Speaker Nancy Pelosi reclaiming her gavel, showed the direct political implications of public opinion.

For all that was familiar about responses to the Trump presidency, a disquieting and startlingly novel reaction was his committed base’s rock-solid faith in the President. This support seemed to affirm the observation often attributed to Abraham Lincoln: “You can fool all of the people some of the time, and some of the people all of the time…” (in Sandburg 1951, 142). That President Trump has fooled the latter group was suggested by *New York Times* reporting (Barstow et al. 2018, October 2) on the source of his wealth. My summary (comprising nine points, excerpted below) was shared with colleagues shortly after it appeared but elicited virtually no response. I posit that the non-response to this exposé is symptomatic of Americans’ numbness to elites’ legerdemain in the Great Recession’s wake—so emblematic of Wall Street’s corruption and chicanery.

> [10/4/2018] *Here's the short version…. But you should treat yourself to the original since it's unbelievably well sourced.*
>
> 1. *Fred Trump was the master entrepreneur and “self-made” billionaire the President claims to be….*
> 6. *When inheritance reared its ugly head, father and son got busy devaluing the empire Fred had built. After identifying the least scrupulous appraiser in the City, they came up with the scheme of further devaluing Fred's holdings by creating dummy*

partnerships between Fred and his wife, with a small-enough sliver given to the kids to make their mom and dad both "minority owners" (49.8% each), which made the buildings worth even less (because minority interests lack control over investment decisions)….

9. *When both mother and father had passed, the kids—against the father's express wishes, evoking the peasant-turned-farmer-turned-land-baron in Pearl Buck's [1953/1931] The Good Earth enjoining his ungrateful sons from selling the land—sold what remained of his apartment empire. The sale, I believe in 2004, but I could be off a couple of years, of the bled, semi-dismembered, and de-capitalized remains of Fred's properties brought something like three-quarters of a billion dollars, of which DJT's [Donald J. Trump] share was about $160 million. That's money, so my memory is probably more reliable than for dates.*

So much for the self-made entrepreneur. As I said, you should do yourself a favor and read this marvelous, page-turning (for a finance guy), patriotic, Pulitzer-worthy journalistic tour de force.

Beyond the account of the tortuous route by which Donald Trump's fortune was amassed, a roadmap emerged for that method being applied, as president, to issue after issue: including international relations, trade, and the economy.

> [10/6/2018] *But consider the meta-explanation buried in the saga of the Trumps' money. The father built an empire, which the son first devalued… then, rebranded as his creation. Isn't that the template for what we're being told is happening to the U.S.? The economy he inherited he'd trashed ("slowest recovery in history"), but now is the greatest. Same thing with our alliances: NATO was the "best ever" after the 2-hour emergency confab—necessitated by his prior-day meltdown—he emerged from to claim $40 billion in European commitments, previously pledged to the Bush and Obama Administrations. Same thing with the modestly revised NAFTA ("worst deal ever"), now the marvelous USMCA. See a pattern? Trash what you've inherited (at no cost or inconvenience to yourself) thanks to predecessors' long, patient, self-denying efforts, then, after driving the assessment down for that purpose, reassess it back to its valuation and way beyond for the purpose of self-aggrandizement. Hence, the claimed $10-billion empire (which is actually closer to the $2 billion he could've amassed simply by investing what his father bequeathed to him in CDs). So we owe a debt of gratitude to the NY Times not only for the specific account of the sleazy (and ungrateful) money grab that defrauded the IRS and State of New York but also for the window it opens on the con we're currently enduring as citizens.*

> [3/28/2019] *[T]he President's MO, from when he was still in short pants (and already a millionaire, thanks to serving as Daddy's landlord and housekeeping service). Inherit, rebrand, claim credit, and publicize.*

Wielding the capacity to rebrand the U.S. government is a frightening prospect. No doubt, modern comparators exist: FDR's government identified as New Dealers, and Reagan's conservative appointees viewed themselves as part of his revolution. Even Kennedy's short-lived New Frontier suffused the personas of NASA and the Peace Corps. Until the Pendleton Act begat the federal civil service, nearly unlimited discretion remade governments at every transition in the image of the president's party. But the New Deal, Reagan Revolution, and New Frontier did not constitute mere cults of personality, even if the presidents who led these political movements exercised an outsized hold on the public imagination. And spoils-based governments of the "common man" (Mosher 1982) owed allegiance to parties, not presidents. In contrast, President Trump's makeover of the federal government seems to demand personal rather than political allegiance, lacking Reagan's overarching ideology, unless nativism is accorded ideological standing. Also lacking, apparently, are adherents within the "deep state" attuned to the President's cues. Perhaps the constitutional oath accounts for contrary binding commitments (Rohr 1986).

Rebranding the Executive Branch in the President's image—along with his trove of biases, falsehoods, grievances, and gifts: the last including his nearly unprecedented command of daily news cycles—and subverting its constitutional basis are ongoing. If constitutional government persists, the cause will be the resistance mounted by the loose confederation of media, public servants, activists, and a majority of voters at the midterm.

Confirming the hunch that President Trump perpetrated on the American polity a ruse of valueless rebranding will require the work of historians. Yet the job of citizens is perhaps more challenging: making judgments in real time, in order to preserve the self-government we inherited. The prospect of reclaiming a functional democracy is more hopeful than it was when President Trump took office. Still, we have a long way to go.

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Career Insight

Reflections after a Colleague's Rude Remarks

Dana Smith

Introduction

Because we live in an increasingly, ever-changing global world, it is critical to educate public service professionals about global trends such that they are better prepared to address the needs of their clients (Smith & Cheung 2015). Similarly, public service educators must have adequate global knowledge and skills to effectively prepare future practitioners. To assist with this, many U.S. colleges and universities support the development of faculty by providing resources for international travel to conferences and for study abroad programs (Gabel & Healy 2012). However, preparation for a contentious encounter with a public service professional from another country (while traveling) is not typically one of those resources.

The Story

I was scheduled to present my research on the Thursday morning of a three-day meeting of social work educators in Europe. I showed up 30 minutes early to make sure I could load my PowerPoint presentation onto the computer, meet the moderator, and get a feel for the setup of the room. I met another presenter, we introduced ourselves, struck up a conversation, and dubiously assisted the other presenters in getting situated when they arrived. About ten minutes before the session was to begin, the moderator appeared. She was kind and provided details about how the session would progress. I felt at ease. I was confident about my research and presentation and very happy that in about 90 minutes, it would be behind me and I could go out and explore all things French.

At the top of the hour, the moderator began the session. She explained that each of the five presenters would have 15 minutes to speak and that she would be the timekeeper. She also mentioned that there would be a 15-minute Q & A period at the very end. With that, she announced the first speaker, stating her name, university, and topic. This process continued with the next three speakers. Speakers one, two, and three provided informative presentations and were mindful of the time. The fourth presenter announced that he had a co-presenter and that his co-presenter would start first. Mr. Co-presenter took the floor and began to explain his work in the former Soviet Union. He said that prior to the fall of the Soviet Union, there were no social problems. It seemed obvious that he was talking about the period just prior to the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet states (U.S. Department of State, n.d.). He then stated that, since that time, many social ills plagued the people and thus he had to start from "scratch" to develop ways to help them. He went on for a while, explaining this body of work that he had established without a social work foundation on which to build. Intertwined in his presentation were strong negative comments about the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) – the accrediting body for U.S. social work programs and his disdain for U.S. American social work practice. I was the next speaker and my presentation focused on assessment procedures developed in response to requirements from CSWE, the very entity that he had disparaged. Prior to this moment, I was prepared and cool as a cucumber, but now I felt flush as I searched my mind and heart for the right way to approach this situation. In just moments, I would be standing before the audience. My mind began to race, "do I need to respond to his accusations...am I supposed to defend the CSWE and U.S. social work practice...I'm fairly certain that I am the only U.S. American in the room, I'm ready to represent my work and my program, do I need to address him too?" Suddenly, I felt responsible for our accrediting body and the practice of social work in the United States. His insults had instantly turned me into some sort of ambassador for U.S. social work. I tried to come up with a clever response to his comments, some sort of defense. Then, I whispered "help" to my higher power and immediately sensed that the greatest defense was to do the very best presentation I could. My work would speak for me, for social work in my country, and for CSWE. Knowing that successful interactions often begin by building trust and rapport, I decided that a strong and interesting introduction to connect with the audience was warranted and all else would surely fall in place! At least I hoped it would. I slowly exhaled, focused on Mr. Co-presenter, and noticed that he was not really being mindful of the time. Seconds later, the moderator stated that there were only three minutes left for their presentation. He seemed quite surprised. He rounded out his last few statements and left about two minutes for his colleague to speak to the audience of 30. The colleague hurriedly made several statements and brought their presentation to an end.

Now, it was my turn. I walked up to the front of the room as the moderator announced my name, topic, and university. At this point, I assumed many now knew that I was from the U.S. At least anyone familiar with one of the largest U.S. cities became aware since the moderator had just mentioned my University, which bears the name of my city. I smiled and before I could stop myself, I stated my name and institution again. I was feeling unusually nervous. I told everyone that I wanted to start by sharing a little story of how I came about the research project that I would soon be sharing with them. I told them that nearly four years ago as a new employee I was attending our social work faculty meeting where the discussion was about finding a new way to assess our curriculum and program. As a "new kid on the block", I was eager to impress everyone. Thus, I offered the idea of using the admissions essays that students had submitted and creating a mirror assignment for senior students in my field practicum courses. This would allow us to compare any changes in the knowledge, skills, and values of students between the time of admission and exit from our program. They thought the idea was brilliant and, of course, they then said, "YOU set it up, YOU collect the essays, and YOU can be responsible for analyzing these data for our program." I got a bit of a chuckle from the audience and felt ready to focus on the details of my presentation. Initially, my hands were a bit shaky, undoubtedly because of the intimidation I felt from the man that had just made negative statements about social work education in my country. He sat just a few feet away to my right. I couldn't help watching his body language in my periphery. About halfway through my presentation, I found my confidence and lost the hand-tremble. I even made a statement about CSWE while acknowledging that he had also mentioned the Council all while making laser-focused eye contact with him. He gently nodded at me with a half-smile – or perhaps it was a smirk. The energy in the room was palpable, all eyes were on me and I experienced very positive vibes from the crowd. I finished within my 15-minute time slot and I sensed that my presentation was well received.

The moderator stated that it was now time for the Q and A period. She placed chairs at the front of the room for speakers to sit while responding to questions. Mr. Co-presenter remained in his seat slightly to the side of the room, rather than joining the panel upfront. The first question was directed at him. A woman appearing to be a senior adult, perhaps a septuagenarian, stated that she too was from the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.) and she eloquently explained that there absolutely were social ills in the U.S.S.R. and that there were social service workers that assisted with the issues. They had protocols and processes in place before the disbanding of the Soviet states and that the speaker stating that there were no problems previously, was simply incorrect. She also stated that to say he had to create solutions and interventions from scratch because he had no predecessors was completely untrue. He immediately chimed in with a defensive rebuttal to which she confidently responded (without making eye contact) "My comments are not personal, they are true and the statements you have made are not true." You could have cut the tension with a knife. Next, the moderator said, there are other questions for other presenters, so I will have the last word on this subject before we move on. At this time, she explained that she too was from the former Soviet Union and that she concurred with the comments made by her colleague, aptly declaring that Mr. Co-presenter's comments were indeed untrue.

Others in the audience asked questions and one, in particular, stated that she was impressed with the approach to assessment that I described because it was a positive approach. She explained that at her institution they tended to approach assessment by looking for problems rather than successes, which she viewed as a negative approach. This gave me the opportunity to share the importance of the value of strengths-perspective in the practice of U. S. social work. Her compliment and my opportunity to respond with a jewel of U.S. social work practice seemed like poetic justice as time was up and thus, it became the closing statement of the session.

Discussion

As a researcher attending an international conference, I was eager to share my findings with colleagues from around the world. Naïvely, I did not consider the possibility that at an international conference, there might be social workers with strong negative opinions about the practice of social work in the United States. I actually thought the opposite, —they would be so wrapped up in their own practices of social work that my presentation might actually go unnoticed. After all, this was a meeting primarily of European educators taking place in a European country.

This experience awakened in me a quest for knowledge about advances of social work across the globe. I knew from my own studies that U.S. social welfare and subsequently U.S. social work had its roots in charity work in England that aided the poor (Farley et al. 2003). Having the knowledge that the origins were in England, I developed an uncritical generalization and held a false belief that advances in social work practice in England and other European countries nearby had likely outpaced social work practice in the U.S. Thus the feelings that my presentation might simply go unnoticed or be "old-news" to a majority Western European audience. However, in dialog with several U.S. colleagues, I soon realized that work around social work education in the United States was so advanced that programs in some other countries had begun to adopt some of our educational practices and protocols. Discussions with several Western European colleagues after my presentation validated the fact that there is indeed an interest, among them, in U.S. social work education practices. Armed with this information, I now have fresh perspectives to share with students and colleagues. This is yet another benefit of an international experience for the professional development of a public service academic.

One of the best things about this encounter was recounting my experience to colleagues, who took a genuine interest and offered valuable commentary and feedback. A couple of them even encouraged me to find a venue to publish or otherwise publicly share my experience so that others could learn from it.

Implications and Conclusion

We have the opportunity to learn from all experiences and we know that reflection and discussions with trusted colleagues can help soothe angst and provide perspective. Processing experiences can be used as a tool to help us understand and reframe our thoughts about extreme encounters (Throop & Castellucci 2011). Lessons learned can then be used to identify implications for our conduct and professional work going forward. Two key implications for public service educators and their institutions have been identified. There should be 1) preparation for faculty on how best to get or seek support from the academy in contentious international or domestic settings and 2) preparation for educators that will engage colleagues in international settings, similar to the type of preparations provided for professionals of transnational corporations and in the field of international business.

It is not common for public service academics (e.g., teachers, social workers, criminologists, sociologists, and public administrators) to be taught about personal comportment for international travel and conferences. We teach students to be ready for various experiences they may have in their professional lives but who prepares us? Perhaps our model of preparation includes venues like this journal that allows academics to learn from one another. As we strive to learn and grow, sharing our experiences is sure to be an inspiring way to help us all become greater masters of our crafts.

In conclusion, there is a global interest in U.S. public service practices and there are rich practices in other counties from which we (U.S. Americans) can and do learn. In fact, comparative studies in social work whereby the focus is the comparison of practices in different countries (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Liao, 2004) is useful and supported by several international social work and social welfare journals that publish such manuscripts. In addition, for many years, organizations such as the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IAASW), and the European Association of Schools of Social Work (EASSW), have provided opportunities for social workers across borders to meet, build relationships, and exchange ideas and practices by participating in their international conferences. Through such opportunities, we thrive, becoming better equipped to educate future public service professionals who will practice in a world even more globally interconnected than that of today.

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Film Review

Irresponsible Storytelling in *Hotel Mumbai*: Implications for the Spread of Islamophobia

2018, Anthony Maras, Director

Reviewed by *Del Bharath*

Hotel Mumbai recounts the 2008 terrorist attacks that targeted public locations throughout Mumbai, India. The movie opens with the group of South Asian men on a small rubber boat, listening to the voice of Brother Bull (who is never shown) provide encouragement and details of their mission. They land in a heavily polluted area and make their way to busy streets to catch taxis to various destinations to carry out planned attacks that culminate at The Taj Hotel.

The Taj, a gilded architectural spectacle, is in stark contrast to the preceding images of the city's dirty, crowded areas. At the Taj, "Guest is God," and staff pay exceptional attention to detail and provide a high quality of service to ensure guests' satisfaction. Main characters are introduced, including staff members (Arjun, a waiter, and Hemant Oberoi, the executive chef) and wealthy guests (Indian-Muslim Zahra and her new American husband David, their infant son and nanny). While the newly married couple is at dinner, separated from their son and nanny, The Taj is attacked. The movie follows the movements of staff who try to hide and protect guests; the efforts of some untrained police who heroically try to coordinate a rescue mission; and Zahra and David's attempt to reunite with their son. *Hotel Mumbai*'s finale has casualties on both sides, but ultimately The Taj is freed from terrorism. *Hotel Mumbai* is an intense, well-acted portrayal of the events, but there are issues in its storytelling. The film industry is known for dramatizing and altering "real" events for theatrical and production value (Stoddard & Marcus 2010). While recounting actual 2008 events, *Hotel Mumbai* uses biased storytelling, villainizing religious Muslims and perpetuating the stereotype of Muslims as terrorists. This can spread Islamophobia.

Islamophobia is the generalized fear or hatred of Islam and Muslims. Ethnic groups such as Arabs, Sikhs, and South Asians who look similar to western perceptions of Muslims can be targeted as well (Ogan et al. 2013; Zaal 2012). Islamophobia centers on the beliefs that Islam is resistant to change and incompatible with modernity, other cultures, and religions; is a violent and aggressive, barbaric and sexist political ideology; thus, justifying discriminatory practices in the exclusion of Muslims; and normalizing anti-Muslim attacks (Awan 2014; Semati 2010). Currently, Islamophobia is on the rise; highlighting the terrorist actions of a small group of Muslims, intensifies the hatred toward the religious group as a whole. This raises ethical questions about the storytelling as *Hotel Mumbai* provides a one-sided narrative of religious Muslims as terrorists, potentially adding to Islamophobia.

Hotel Mumbai accurately demonstrates aspects of terrorism, such as recruitment efforts. Extremist groups recruit potential members with lower social status and education (Lee 2011) from poverty-stricken areas with high levels of unemployment (Ullah et al. 2018). The terrorists in the movie were shown to be in awe of the city and new to the luxuries of Western life, such as modern toilets. Recruiters also use the promise of financial compensation to families as an incentive for participation (Ullah et al. 2018). In the movie, Imran, a terrorist, calls his family to determine if they received the promised money and is distraught to find out that they have not. However, religious Muslims are "othered" throughout the movie. There is an "us vs. them" mentality of religious Muslims against everyone else.

The Hindu-Muslim conflict provides context for the biased perspective of Muslims. Violence between these groups has occurred since the Mogul empire where religious differences sparked conflicts incited by both sides (Sen & Wagner 2005). The partition of British India during India's independence created two rival, independent states – Pakistan and India (Ullah et al. 2018). Inter-communal violence continues to occur today (Bohlken & Sergenti 2010; Mitra & Ray 2014; Tausch et al. 2009) despite attempts at reconciliation (Sen & Wagner 2005). However, while the movie portrays the Muslims as the aggressors (which they were in this case), Hindu groups have chiefly been the instigators of violence in the Hindu-Muslim violence in India with police support for the Hindu majority (Mitra & Ray 2014). The Hindu-Muslim conflict has spread to the US, where Trump has received support from Hindus in America who believe that he will address the Muslim "problem" (Kumar 2016).

Muslims are the most significant religious minority in India where Hinduism is the primary religion; however, since the partition Muslims have experienced economic disadvantage fostering poverty and low education rates (Tausch et al. 2009). Economic factors, in addition to historical and religious differences, heightens resentment between groups (Bohlken & Sergenti 2010; Mitra & Ray 2014). Terrorists highlight differences between themselves and "infidels" who are the root of their problems. For example, Brother Bull emphasizes the differences between the haves (the infidels) and the have-nots (the terrorists). He states, "look around you, my brothers. Look at all they have stolen from your fathers, from your grandfathers" (Maras 2019) harkening to the partition and othering the Muslims from other Indians. The divide is deepened through Arjun, a poor Sikh who wears a pagri (turban) and is similar looking to the terrorists but who is othered from Muslims. Arjun explains his pagri as "a symbol of honor and courage and removing it would bring shame to his family" to a scared guest who considers him "one of them" and asked that he remove the turban. He was willing to remove it as she was his guest (Maras 2019), but she admits her fear and he states, "we all are but to get through this we must stick together" (Maras 2019) increasing the "us versus them" dynamic of the movie.

The othering of religious Muslims is most apparent in the portrayals of Imran and Zahra. Imran, a deeply devout, religious Muslim, performed Dua (a prayer asking for something humbly) before the attacks and became somewhat hysterical when he believed he ate pork. He disobeyed Brother Bull's orders which conflicted with his beliefs such as touching a deceased woman's bra and killing Zahra while she was praying. Conversely, Zahra represents the opposite of the religious Muslim as a wealthy woman who drinks, had premarital sex, does not cover her body or hair, and lives a modern lifestyle in European countries with her white American husband. She even denies her religion while hiding in the restaurant when someone suggests she is "one of them". During the siege, Zahra speaks to her mother and scoff at her suggestion to pray (Maras 2019). Zahra only turns to religion, by performing Salah (prayer), after watching her husband being killed and believing she, too, is to die. Prayer saves her life.

Muslims are further othered through the portrayal of God. At the Taj, there is an altar set up with pictures of Jesus Christ, Krishna and Radha (a Hindu God and Goddess), Sikh Guru Nanak, and a picture of a mosque. The pictures are shown briefly but demonstrate a collectiveness in the Taj where all religions are welcome. When Arjun enters the workplace, he bows to the altar, highlighting his devoutness. At the Taj, "Guest is God," and when the conflict begins, for some, there was no question of laying down their lives to protect their guests. Service expected to God is one of self-sacrifice – to protect those who could not defend themselves. Even Arjun's daughter is named Seva, which means service. Contrary, the Islamic men were portrayed as calling out to God in their attacks and acts of terrorism. Islamic self-sacrifice is expected in vengeful acts of punishing infidels, and devotion to God is violent and angry.

Islamophobia has real consequences. Civil rights violations and attacks on Muslims have escalated (Zaal 2012) after the 9/11 attacks in the United States. Tensions between Muslims and other groups have been occurring for decades despite the low percentage of Muslims worldwide engaging in militant activities (Ogan et al. 2013). Acts of retaliation not only occur in person but also online (Awan 2014) perpetuating hate against Muslims. Muslims of all races are targeted, such as Ilhan Omar, a female Democrat and elected U.S. Representative for Minnesota. Ilhan has been under attack from Republicans, the President, and his followers. She has received death threats from Trump supporters (Pilkington 2019) who call for her deportation (even though she is an American citizen). The fear and contempt of her Muslim faith are evident, and the threats of violence against her are even more alarming.

Negative attitudes toward Muslims also impact ethnically similar people who are targeted because they are perceived to be Muslim, for example, Sikh citizens who were negatively profiled on flights (see Semati 2010).

Islamophobia has consequences for foreign policy (deciding who is allowed into the country), the provision of foreign aid, and even with the treatment of members of Congress and the military. Muslims are connected to political views of countries, especially political conservatives who reject Islamic beliefs and who promote Islamophobia (Ogan et al. 2013). Continued negative portrayals of Muslims in film can lead to increased fear of and violence against them. This calls for ethical, less biased storytelling in film.

Film has an important role to play in influencing public perceptions and, more specifically related to public administration – film informs perception around policy issues (McCurdy 1995). Muslims and Islam have predominantly been portrayed negatively in the media, whether through fictional accounts (movies and television programs) or news outlets. This impacts the perceptions of audience members who may not interact much with the minority group (Ogan et al. 2013; Saeed 2007;

Zaal 2012). In *Hotel Mumbai*, this biased portrayal of religious Muslims serves to desensitize the public and legitimize fear and hatred toward Muslims (Zaal 2012), allowing for the public's reinforcement of anti-Muslim rhetoric and Islamophobia (Saeed 2007).

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